

Myriad 431

Chapter 431: The Final Member (3)

"Are you telling the truth, Brother Su?"

"Of course." Su Yu said, "Who else do you want to bring along for the ride? Feel free to tell me about it. I'll try to get them into my team as well. Don't pick strong students. I need weaker students to give them an impression that you guys are trying to drag me down. I can't have the others figuring out the relationship between us, right?"

Meanwhile, Lin Yao was completely stunned. His imaginations ran wild. Was the Mutual Aid Club really so influential? Su Yu could actually control the format of a tournament organized by the single character faction?

Right, his teacher was one of the organizers as well. Perhaps...his teacher had a hand in this?

That must be it!

At that, Lin Yao asked, "Brother Su, you'll even allow me to take someone with me? Will that affect your plan?"

"Don't worry about it."

"Then...what do you think about my senior brother?"

"Yang Sha?"

"Yeah."

"Sure." Su Yu replied, "But we need to ensure that he is one of us as well. You can tell him a little bit about the Mutual Aid Club. But don't tell him about me. Just let him know that he will be guaranteed a slot. That much is enough. As for whether he's willing to believe it, that's up to him. You can even consider developing him as your downline and recruiting him into the club. But remember, only a single

line of communication can be maintained. Once he joins, he will be directly under you. He won't be able to contact any of the other members."

Developing his own downline? Lin Yao's heart thumped. Had he reached a level where he could develop his own downlines now?

"Brother Su...would this be too early? Why don't I observe and test my senior brother more. If I really find him suitable, I'll recruit him. If not, then you don't need to give him this spot in your team."

"Sure. Do what you think is right."

After ending the call with Lin Yao, Su Yu smiled. There was no need for him to show his face to everyone. That would make him look like a pleb. Unimportant individuals like Yang Sha could be handled by Lin Yao.

And even if Yang Sha ended up exposed as a member of his secret club, it would not affect him. He would be fine so long as Lin Yao kept his mouth shut.

"Liu Hong..."

In truth, he was also quite happy to see Liu Hong's position in the single character faction strengthening. That way, Liu Hong would serve as a good shield. Without a strong position, Liu Hong wouldn't have been able to do anything to him through this tournament so easily.

His best counter against this ploy was to challenge the Top 100 Ranking and enter the top 10 or even the top 3 and establish that he could win the tournament even alone. With that established, he would then be able to spread news about Liu Hong's ploy. Only then would people believe his words and question Liu Hong.

But right now, nobody knew Su Yu's real strength. As for Liu Hong's confidence in him, that might not even be true confidence. Liu Hong could very well be doing something as simple as spreading his eggs in multiple baskets. He had nothing to lose since his little brother and students wouldn't be able to win the tournament anyway.

"It would be great if I could get this selfish person into a position of power. If he becomes the faction master, things would be even more interesting. When trouble comes knocking, that fellow will be the first to run."

Su Yu smiled. Of course, he wouldn't underestimate any opponent. Although he had grown considerably during his seclusion, a lot of old students would be participating. He was not afraid of the single character faction if it was one on one fights. But if it was one against five, things could still get dangerous.

The other participants would definitely pick strong students as their members. Naturally, luck would play a bigger role if the teammates were really picked at random.

"Since this is a tournament organized by the single character faction, the academy might turn a blind eye if they play some tricks during the team allocation..."

Su Yu exhaled deeply. The other higher ups of the academy would be more than happy to see one less competitor for their people. They would be more than happy to see him saddled with weak teammates. None of them would really speak up for him.

They would probably only speak up if people like Zhan Hai were also assigned weak teammates. Otherwise, they would keep their silence. That was the reality of things.

All that was actually part of the rules of the game.

The single character faction was allowed to do this because the tournament was organized by them and the slots were supplied by them. Any other faction could do the same if they were willing to pay as well.

"Who should I pick as the final teammate?"

Su Yu sank into thought. He needed a more reliable person as the final teammate. He couldn't rely only on himself.

People like Zhang Hao had most definitely been given their own slots. They might not participate in the tournament. But even if they were participating, it wouldn't be too proper for Su Yu to drag them into the desperate matches that he was going to face.

"That person needs to be strong, not afraid to fight all out, and not afraid of death. And that person also needs to be immune to the single character faction's reprisals after the tournament..."

Suddenly, a name appeared in Su Yu's mind.

His eyes flickered as he smiled. Interesting. Would that person be interested to join?

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Deep at night.

Mental Tempering Garden.

Su Yu was knocking on a door.

A gloomy voice rang out from behind the door, "Who is it?"

"It's me."

After a momentary wait, the door swung open. As usual, Zhou Hao was clad in a simple martial outfit. He was looking at Su Yu with doubt and caution in his eyes.

"Can we talk inside?"

Zhou Hao moved aside, allowing Su Yu to enter. But every move of his radiated caution.

Su Yu!

Su Yu was actually visiting him!

What was Su Yu planning to do?"

"Have you recovered?" Su Yu looked at Zhou Hao's arms before sitting down. He smiled and said, "Your teacher is still stuck in a limbo of despair. But you seem to be recovering nicely instead of sinking into despair after your defeat."

"Despair?" Zhou Hao had a stubborn expression as he said, "As long as I am still alive, why should I despair? I am already used to near-death experiences."

"Used to it...yes. Adaptability is indeed a terrifying force." Su Yu smiled, "Sit down. Why are you being so cautious? This is the academy. What can I do to you?"

Zhou Hao said nothing and sat down opposite him.

"Do you want more strength?" Su Yu started.

Zhou Hao calmly replied, "That was the only reason I came out of the wilderness."

"Do you dare to fight with your life on the line?"

"What do you think?"

Su Yu smiled and nodded. "You do. I don't know what is going on with your teacher, but I reckon he can't spare you any attention anymore. Someone like you would probably be ruined without the help of your teacher. You won't be able to get more resources, progress, or cultivate your willpower. I know about the Thousand Mountain Art you cultivate. It is an art famous for causing its cultivator to be stuck below the Infinite Strength Realm. That must be why you have come to the academy. But now, you have yet to find a way to cultivate your willpower, right?"

Zhou Hao said nothing. Xia Yuwen was indeed ignoring him. After all, Xia Yuwen himself was still bedridden. Zhou Hao had basically been abandoned.

"Do you know about the tournament for the slots of the Willpower Grotto? In the grotto, you can grow your willpower rapidly and catch up with those old students. Otherwise, you would probably be stuck in the Great Strength Realm for life."

Zhou Hao asked, "Are you asking me to join the tournament?"

"Yes. Join my team." Su Yu said, "Teams of five will be formed for the tournament. I will need to carry three deadweights with me. I don't want the fourth person to be a deadweight as well. You are not too impressive, but you currently lack a backer. You also have no resources or background. But you are fearless in fights. I need someone like you. Even if you end up killed during the tournament, I won't feel anything. You're the perfect candidate."

In truth, Zhou Hao was actually very strong. He was probably stronger than even some students in the top 30. More importantly, this guy was a savage during combat. He was fearless. Each attack of his would be launched with the intent to kill.

During his match with Su Yu, he had been willing to fight on even after suffering crippling injuries. He was an incredibly troublesome opponent to face.

Zhou Hao grinned, "I heard that a lot of experts will join the tournament. Can the two of us win?"

"Why not?" Su Yu said, "As long as you have the guts to obstruct the opponents I need you to obstruct, I am confident we can win. For example, an opponent like Zhan Hai. I will need you to obstruct him while I deal with his team. We can naturally win after that. But if you fail in your task, our chances will become much lower."

"Zhan Hai?"

"Number one in the top 100. A student who had fought a Skysoar without losing before. Can you obstruct someone like him?" Su Yu said, "If you can, then we can cooperate. If you can't, things will be more difficult for us."

"Someone capable of fighting Skysoars..."

Zhou Hao's face turned solemn. But after a while, he grinned again as he asked, "Can we kill during the tournament?"

"You're aiming to kill him?"

"No. But if we can't kill during the tournament, he will have some misgivings when I fight him in a suicidal manner. In that scenario, I am confident I can keep him occupied for some time."

Zhou Hao added, "A cultivator without the courage to kill isn't scary. As long as there is fear, openings can be found. Truly scary cultivators are those without fear. If he dares to kill, I won't be able to hold him down."

Su Yu nodded. "You're right. He wouldn't dare to kill. Don't worry. Your teacher's heart might be dead, but he is still alive. Zhan Hai wouldn't dare to kill you. If he is weaker, maybe he won't have as many misgivings. But you're only a Great Strength cultivator. He won't dare to be too heavy-handed..."

"If that's the case, I'll be able to stop him."

Su Yu smiled and said, "Fine. I look forward to working with you."

He stood up and said, "If you want a slot, then you need to fight hard. If you're not interested, forget it. You can try to get a slot from your teacher. Maybe you can get one without fighting."

Zhou Hao grinned and said, "I prefer fighting with my life on the line for what I want."

Su Yu also smiled, "I like to do that as well. It feels much better to get what I want with my own hands. Unfortunately, you're too weak. I'm afraid this will be the only time we can work together. Remember to not provoke me anymore in the future. I know you're not afraid of death. But I am afraid of death. Although I am no stranger to death, I am still afraid of death. Due to my fear of death, I prefer killing those who can pose a threat to me."

With a smile on his face, a thick killing intent burst out of Su Yu's body before vanishing. The killing intent was so intense that even Zhou Hao took a step back by instinct.

His face turned solemn.

Su Yu had grown even stronger than before.

"People who lack strength will need to put their lives on the line for more opportunities. I am here for you because you are not afraid of doing that. If you're not willing to do so, don't blame me for abandoning you."

Su Yu smiled before walking out of the door. Zhou Hao was actually a very good partner. As an opponent, he was scary and troublesome. But as a partner, he would be very useful. Su Yu loved working alongside fearless people like Zhou Hao.

In terms of strength, Zhou Hao might even be weaker than Qiu Yi. But if the two fought, Qiu Yi would be the one to die.

Strictly speaking, Zhou Hao was very similar to Su Yu.

Su Yu was also fearless and crazy in combat. He had died way too many times in his dreams, to the point he was numb to the fear of death. As for Zhou Hao, he was also someone who had experienced the threat of death many times. If Su Yu guessed right, this fellow had probably grown up in a den of beasts.

Or he might simply be a feral child who had grown up in the wilderness where demonic beasts were more frequently seen.

Chapter 432: So Pitiful (1)

After meeting Zhou Hao and reaching an agreement with him, the 19th arrived.

The tournament would be held on the 20th.

Only when Su Yu met Xia Huyou on the 19th did he realize what had happened during his seclusion.

...

Su Yu did not spend much time talking with Xia Huyou and went to the books depository instead.

Books depository. Top floor.

These two days, Wu Jia had been staying indoors. Chen Yong had been using the time to teach her about the ignition of blood essence.

When Su Yu arrived, Chen Yong invited him to sit down with a smile and asked, "You're out? How's your cultivation of the Sky Sundering Saber?"

"Martial Uncle, I finished cultivating it."

Chen Yong was slightly stunned, but he quickly recovered and sighed as he said, "What a genius. The path of willpower has actually delayed your progress. If you had concentrated on physical cultivation, you would probably be a Skysoar already."

In only a few days, this kid had completed the cultivation of the Sky Sundering Saber. If he wasn't a genius, who could be called a genius? Chen Yong was in awe of Su Yu's talent.

Su Yu smiled and said, "Not really. Without the multiple character faction, I wouldn't have gotten all these opportunities. I wouldn't have gotten the chance to meet the Xia Family and learn their cultivation method."

Grotto, merit points, Sky Sundering Saber...

If he hadn't joined the multiple character faction, he would have a much harder time getting access to all that.

Without the fake formula he sold, where would he have gotten his first windfall? How could he have obtained the chance to enter the grotto so frequently? People had only believed in his fake formula due to the multiple character faction's reputation.

Chen Yong smiled and said nothing else.

Beside them, Wu Jia curiously asked, "Junior Brother, are you at the Infinite Strength Realm already?"

"Nope."

"No? Oh..."

Wu Jia sounded slightly disappointed, but she was also relieved. She said, "I'm going to reach that realm soon. I formed another character recently. I now have eight characters."

Su Yu smiled and said, "Incredible, Senior Sister!"

Wu Jia's character technique wasn't a particularly powerful one. It only required 10 foundational characters.

Although Bai Feng had come up with the disassembly method, Chen Yong still requested that Wu Jia walk the stable path and form 10 characters before her advancement. That way, she would be able to strengthen those 10 characters during her breakthrough.

She would definitely need way less time forming more characters now than she would forming and advancing new characters to the second tier after her advancement.

Wu Jia was happy at first, but she soon turned gloomy as she said, "Even after growing stronger, I am still as strong as a top 70 student. And that is only if the top 100 are still at the same standard as before. In truth, everyone is growing as well. I might not be as strong as a top 70 student anymore."

Everyone was growing.

She had spent two months recuperating, delaying her own cultivation. Even if she were as strong as a top 70 student before, her new strength might not be enough for her to maintain the same ranking.

Su Yu comforted her, "Don't worry. You will be able to catch up with everyone soon, Senior Sister. By the way, Martial Uncle, has Grandteacher taught Senior Sister the Heaven Shaking Sutra?"

Chen Yong gave him a deep look and said, "A cultivation method is not something that can be taught lightly. Su Yu, think it through before making this decision."

Chen Yong knew very well that the actual owner of the cultivation method was Su Yu, not Hong Tan. And a cultivation method couldn't be taught lightly.

Even the basic version of Xia Family's cultural art was not something that would be taught to anyone easily. Only their direct descendants from the main branch would be taught that cultural art.

Even Xia Chan was not taught that cultural art previously. She had only been taught that art recently after Xia Huyou obtained a better alternative with 36 apertures. From this, one could see how important cultural arts were.

Chen Yong knew about that cultural art as well, but he didn't ask for it. Nor had he asked for it to be taught to Wu Jia. If that was really something from the multiple character faction's predecessors, it would be fine. But it wasn't.

Su Yu smiled, "Martial Uncle, cultivation methods exist to be cultivated. Senior Sister has a slot to the grotto, right? With this cultivation method, she might even be able to open dozens of apertures in the grotto."

The Willpower Grotto would be a great opportunity for her to grow.

If she missed this grotto, it would be hard to find another opportunity where she could open so many apertures at once.

Chen Yong inhaled lightly and said, "You know how valuable this cultivation method is. It was why the Xia Family had agreed to teach you the top-tier Sky Sundering Saber so easily. Otherwise, Marquis Xia would have given you a much harder time before giving you the Sky Sundering Saber."

In truth, this cultural art was almost equal in value to the Sky Sundering Saber.

Su Yu smiled and said, "That is why I want Senior Sister to cultivate it as well. I wouldn't have dared to reveal it otherwise. Now that the Xia Family knows the cultural art as well, even if the others know about it, they have to consider the consequences before trying to snatch it."

Since the Xia Family already knew the cultural art, it would be more acceptable for the multiple character faction to know it as well. Otherwise, they would need to be constantly cautious of the hidden enemies that might try to snatch their cultural art.

Beside them, Wu Jia looked completely lost. She asked, "What Heaven Shaking Sutra?"

Chen Yong softly said, "A foundation cultural art with 36 apertures. It is comparable to a top-tier heaven-grade cultivation method in value. It was something your junior brother obtained through one of his fortuitous encounters. It didn't come down from the predecessors of our faction. Now, your junior brother is offering it to you..."

Su Yu hurriedly corrected, "Martial Uncle, that was a cultivation method created by both Grandteacher and Teacher..."

"..."

Chen Yong laughed and said nothing else to Su Yu. He looked at Wu Jia and said, "Your junior brother does not wish to see you miss out on this opportunity. If you are lucky, you might even be able to open 36 apertures with this cultural art in the grotto. With 36 apertures, you can rapidly reach the ninth stage after entering the Skysoar Realm. At that time, you only need to cultivate the Myriad Text Sutra and accumulate more strength to break through into the Cloudbreach Realm."

That was why foundation cultural arts were so coveted.

At the Mental Tempering Stage, apertures were much easier to open. If one could open 36 apertures during that time, one would instantly reach the ninth-stage Skysoar Realm the moment one's willpower and characters reached the corresponding level.

Although most foundation cultural arts did not have follow up arts for one to cultivate at higher cultivation levels, it did not matter. With 36 apertures opened, one would be able to open the Myriad Text Sutra apertures easily. And the early advancement into the ninth-stage Skysoar Realm would also grant one more strength for self defense.

Even after moving on from the foundation art to the Myriad Text Sutra, one would still be stronger than other cultural researchers in the same level. Any foundation cultural art was an invaluable treasure.

Wu Jia looked at Su Yu in astonishment. Her junior brother was actually so lucky? Of course she knew about foundation cultural arts. But she had not expected her junior brother to have one in possession. And now, she was going to receive it as well...

She suddenly slapped the back of Su Yu's head and chided, "Junior Brother, have you lost your mind? Why did you trade something like this for a different cultivation method? Physical cultivation methods are not valuable at all! The Xia Family has taken advantage of you!"

Wu Jia had a look of heartache as she said, "You should have cultivated it in silence and reached the ninth-stage Skysoar Realm without anyone knowing. At that time, even Invincibles might try to recruit you..."

Su Yu laughed, "Senior Sister, what's the point of getting recruited by Invincibles? Great Xia King is an Invincible. Should I pay him to be my teacher with the cultural art?"

"You should! He would definitely agree!"

Su Yu smiled, "Senior Sister, what's the point? Buying the position of a student like this will only hurt my own reputation. It has no substance to it."

Wu Jia gloomily said, "But you're very talented. Teacher has been repeating over and over how talented you are. Since you are always being bullied with us, you might as well find an Invincible to be your teacher and leave the multiple character faction. I have been wanting to leave for a while. What a pity that I can't bring myself to leave Teacher. Why would I want to be a member of the multiple character faction otherwise?"

Chen Yong rolled his eyes and said, "Lass, I'm still here."

Wu Jia grumbled, "Even if you're here, I'm speaking the truth. Junior Brother is so impressive, but he is being constantly suppressed because of us. He would have been treated like the most valuable piece of treasure if he hadn't joined us."

Chen Yong had nothing to say. He felt quite helpless.

Su Yu smiled and said, "Senior Sister, the multiple character faction is a good place. We don't have a lot of people, so nobody is around to fight us for resources. The moment something happens, our backers will come immediately. Why? Because Martial Uncle and Grandteacher have no other successors. They have no choice but to back us up. Just look at the pitiful single character faction members. They have too many people. You can kill a few of them and their teachers will need to think about consequences and worth before actually doing anything. Why? Because they have too many members. A few dead members won't be that big of a deal."

"That's true."

After thinking about it, Wu Jia nodded in agreement. She seemed to have completely forgotten about the cultural art already.

Su Yu was starting to get a headache speaking to his senior sister. He said nothing else and gave Chen Yong a jade talisman. Accepting the talisman, Chen Yong gave Su Yu a look before sighing. He said nothing.

Su Yu wasted no time and asked, "Martial Uncle, is Zhou Pingsheng still the deputy head manager?"

"Yeah."

"I heard that his student, Di Feng, and a few others were talking drivel all over the academy. There is no need for you to waste your time on them. These people are incapable of doing anything apart from running their mouths around. Even then, they aren't really that good even when it comes to talking."

Su Yu sounded somewhat disappointed as he said, "I wanted to use the tournament tomorrow to teach them a good lesson. It's a pity that the Discipline Hall has suddenly punished them. These sorts of punishments won't really hurt them. They are completely pointless. These people won't remember these punishments. They are very forgetful. Before long, they will put this incident behind them. And because of these punishments, my plan to act against them has been delayed as well."

Wu Jia was about to say something when Chen Yong smiled and said, "You are all fellow students. There is no need to be too harsh against them."

"True. I doubt those students have the guts to provoke you. It must be Zhou Pingsheng. That fellow is clearly not a good person. What a pity. He has been let off too easily this time."

As Su Yu said that, he focused on Chen Yong's face. But Chen Yong was expressionless.

Su Yu said, "But this fellow is really quite useless. This is the same guy who lost tens of thousands of merit points to me in a scam not long ago. What a piece of trash. There is no need for you to do anything to him, Martial Uncle. I will deal with him sooner or later."

Chen Yong gave Su Yu a deep look. With a simple and honest smile, Su Yu said, "Don't worry, Martial Uncle. People like him are too power hungry. He cares too much about fame and wealth. And now, he has lost both fame and wealth. People like him will probably blame everyone in the world except himself for his current predicament."

Chen Yong frowned slightly. Su Yu continued, "People like him will eventually die because of his own greed."

Chen Yong stared at Su Yu for a very long time before smiling, "You're right."

Su Yu also smiled, "Therefore, you don't need to waste any time on him. The multiple character faction is already too small. It is not worth losing more people over someone like that."

"You..."

Chen Yong then looked at his confused student before smiling. Su Yu was very smart. But he still preferred his own student. It was very tiring to be too smart as smart people would always think too much.

This kid would probably be the future of the multiple character faction. But he still felt closer to his dumb student. And he also felt more accomplished teaching someone like her. He couldn't help but pity his junior brother. With a student like Su Yu, one would probably have the urge to cough blood on a daily basis.

Chen Yong moved on from the topic and asked, "Are you sure you're joining the tournament tomorrow?"

"Yeah." Su Yu nodded and said, "Liu Hong is turning the tournament into team matches. Everyone will be split into teams of five. He is probably preparing to put some deadweights in my team."

Chen Yong frowned and said, "He's rigging the matches?"

"I think so."

"How audacious of him." Chen Yong coldly said, "I'll be there tomorrow. Let's see how he's going to pull that off."

Su Yu smiled and said, "Don't get angry, Martial Uncle. It's not necessarily a good thing to expose him. This will ruin the tournament that so many people are looking forward to. The single character faction can simply decide not to hold the tournament anymore. In any case, some of the elders have already been given some slots so those elders won't care. This will only turn the public against us, even if the single character faction will also attract some hostility because of it."

There was really no need to escalate this issue. The single character faction could simply refund the 10,000 merit points sponsored by the academy and cancel the tournament. The elders that mattered already had their slots anyway, so the single character faction would still be able to open the grotto despite the cancellation of the tournament.

If needed, they could give even more slots to some elders to shut their mouths. As for the students, they would place the majority of their blame on Su Yu and the multiple character faction instead of Liu Hong. That was how humans were.

And that would be the consequences of making a fuss about the matter. As for Liu Hong, he wouldn't suffer either way.

Chen Yong frowned and said, "Then we won't participate."

"No!" Su Yu smiled, "I need to join. I can't let them have a good time. Don't worry. I am still confident. But I do need to trouble you for something."

"Yes?"

"I am thinking of sending the fire crow to Teacher Zhao Li. Teacher and Grandteacher are both not around. Can you help with the transportation?"

"Fire crow?"

"Yeah. Hes offering to refine my cultural weapon with his lifebound fire. I don't trust him so I would prefer to have Teacher Zhao around. After all, he's a master smith."

"Sure..."

Chen Yong was quite surprised. "The fire crow is actually willing to refine your weapon with his lifebound fire? He will lose a lot doing that. How did you persuade him?"

"I had a talk with him about the future. He was moved by my sincerity."

"..."

Chen Yong completely ignored all of that. What a load of nonsense!

...

Half an hour later.

Wentan Research Center. Prison Zone.

Chen Yong had an indifferent look as he opened cage number six.

The fire crow remained completely still. With a casual wave of his hand, Chen Yong grabbed the crow in his hand. His grip was so tight that the fire crow's tongue was sticking out of his mouth. He seemed to have been turned into a meatball by Chen Yong.

With the meatball in hand, Chen Yong looked at the water elemental and demanded, "Give me some water essence."

The water remained silent.

Chen Yong opened the cage and said, "So are you giving the water yourself or do you want me to take the water from you?"

"Chen Yong..." The water elemental softly said, "If I give you more water essence, my cultivation will drop..."

"You sure talk a lot."

With a snort, Chen Yong grabbed at the water elemental. The water elemental struggled as best as he could, unleashing a burst of willpower that gave Su Yu the illusion of facing a furious sea.

But that illusion only lasted for a split second. In the blink of an eye, the illusion had been crushed. In Chen Yong's hand was a clump of rubbery substance. As he squeezed, a drop of transparent water came out.

Then, Chen Yong threw the rubbery clump back into the cage before locking it again. All the other beasts were shivering in fear.

Chapter 433: So Pitiful (2)

Inside cage number one, the water elemental slowly returned to his original form. But his body looked somewhat dim compared to before. Previously, his body was crystal clear but now, his body had turned somewhat dark and murky.

"Chen Yong...it has been so many years. And you've still not broken through. You sure are patient."

The water elemental's emotions were complicated.

As a seventh-stage Cloudbreach, even in a weakened state, he wouldn't be completely helpless. Yet Chen Yong had been able to so easily squeeze a drop of water essence out of his body.

Chen Yong ignored the water elemental and looked at Su Yu with a smile, "Even though the fire crow is willing to refine your weapon, you might not be able to withstand the power of his lifebound fire. This

water essence is a treasure. In fact, the essence of the five elements are all treasures. With this water essence around, you can protect your sea of willpower from the power of fire."

"Thank you, Martial Uncle."

"Don't worry about it." Chen Yong smiled, "These beasts are all weaklings. Don't take them too seriously. If you really don't know what to do with them, just kill them. I can see that you're intending to subdue them, but that's pointless. Teacher still has a few Mountainsea beasts locked up deeper inside the floor. If you really want a mount, you can get your grandteacher to tame a Mountainsea beast for you instead. Those beasts have been locked here for too many years. Your grandteacher has been thinking about slaughtering them already. If you intend to make them your mounts, they will probably agree."

Su Yu was dumbstruck.

Mountainsea beasts?

Holy shit!

Just what was his grandteacher planning?

He was actually rearing Mountainsea beasts in the research center?

The expressions of the beasts in the room changed. When Su Yu visited them in the past, they had always carried a sense of superiority before him. But Chen Yong had actually personally arrived to help Su Yu with the refinement of his cultural weapon. Chen Yong had even squeezed a drop of water essence out of the water elemental for Su Yu's sake. On top of that, he was also offering to get Su Yu some Mountainsea mounts.

If that really happened, wouldn't things be over for them?

Even the suanni, a member of a powerful race, could no longer keep silent. He hurriedly said, "L-Lord Chen, this little one is willing to become Lord Su's mount!"

Chen Yong glanced at the suanni with cold eyes.

"Do you think you're worthy of that? Shut your mouth."

Rumble!

A bolt of lightning struck the suanni and left multiple fresh wounds on his body.

"A mere ninth-stage Skysoar is dreaming of becoming my martial nephew's mount?"

Chen Yong coldly said, "Know your place. You are merely livestock. On the Allheaven Battlefield, I have killed even ninth-stage Cloudbreach suannis before."

"..."

Su Yu looked at Chen Yong blankly. Really?

But...didn't his teacher say that his martial uncle had not entered the Allheaven Battlefield for many years? Also, his martial uncle seemed really domineering today. Was his martial uncle aware that he was acting completely out of character?

Chen Yong said nothing else and left with the fire crow and Su Yu.

After walking out of the room, he smiled and said, "There is no need to be too gentle with these beasts. You need both carrot and stick when dealing with them. I won't stop you from trying to subdue them, but if you don't thoroughly subjugate them, they might end up turning against you in the future."

"Thank you, Martial Uncle!"

He could see that Chen Yong was helping him subjugate the beasts. One of them would be the good cop while the other would be the bad cop.

As for how well this would work, they would need to wait and see.

...

Prison zone.

All the beasts sank into silence.

After a long while, the shadow sighed, "It's time for us to cease our delusions. Su Yu is much more important than we thought. You guys understand what Chen Yong said earlier. Even back when Bai Feng tried to subdue us, Chen Yong had not shown his face. But now...We can see that Su Yu is probably more important than even Bai Feng."

None of the beasts said anything.

Suddenly, the water elemental said, "Even now, Chen Yong has yet to reach the Mountainsea Realm. He has already been a ninth-stage Cloudbreach for a very long time. The Myriad Text Sutra of the human race requires no more than a fusion of eight apertures for their advancement. He must have fulfilled the requirements long ago. Why is he still stuck?"

The Myriad Text Sutra only allowed one to open 72 apertures. Thus, one only needed to fuse 8 apertures at the maximum to become a top-tier Mountainsea.

Was Chen Yong still incapable of that?

Impossible!

It had been too many years. And Chen Yong wasn't someone who had barely reached the Cloudbreach Realm. Back then, this fellow was also a famous top genius of the multiple character faction.

The suanni and mountaindrill bull were naturally unaware of that. But the shadow knew about Chen Yong's past. He said, "His advancement won't be that big of a help to the multiple character faction. He might even attract more unwanted attention to them. Is it possible that this fellow is deliberately holding himself back? Maybe he has fused seven apertures into one fused aperture before moving on to fuse seven more apertures into a second fused aperture. And he can keep repeating that..."

The water elemental understood what the shadow was insinuating.

The white civet also understood.

The white civet said in shock, "You mean that he only has nine fused apertures and nine unfused apertures left in his sea of willpower?"

The implication behind those words were too scary.

Did that not mean that he could complete the nine fused apertures any time he wanted? He could instantly jump from the ninth-stage Cloudbreach Realm to the ninth-stage Mountainsea Realm.

That was because each stage of the Mountainsea Realm required one fused aperture. Meanwhile, he had nine fused apertures ready. Each of those fused apertures was a product of fusing seven apertures together. In truth, he was already capable of advancing if he wanted. But he wouldn't be forced to advance as he still had some unfused apertures left in him.

The shadow sighed, "I don't know. But he has really been stuck at this level for too long. Even if my guess isn't completely correct, there is no way he has only produced one fused aperture after so long. He might be waiting for something. And if my guess is right, he is basically a future peak Mountainsea."

The white civet said with shock, "If that's true, he is way too patient. Also, forcefully suppressing his advancement might result in the collapse of his sea of willpower. His willpower will be too powerful for his sea of willpower to contain..."

"I don't have an answer to that."

The shadow did not have a concrete answer. He had merely been guessing. He said, "If he is really capable of instantly reaching the ninth-stage Mountainsea Realm, he will definitely be able to gain a powerful strength. But he might also destroy his own physical body easily as his body won't be given any chance to adapt to his sudden increase in strength. Is that fellow planning to completely give up on his physical body?"

The beasts were unable to guess what Chen Yong was truly planning. Eventually, they gave up trying to figure him out and stopped talking.

The multiple character faction was simply filled with freaks. From the members they had seen, Bai Feng was actually the least talented one, also the friendliest one among the multiple character faction members...

Yes. Apart from the times when Bai Feng was there to extract their blood, he was actually quite friendly and easy-going most of the time. Meanwhile, Chen Yong was always gloomy and unpredictable.

As for Su Yu, he was too treacherous. He had been lying to them from the very beginning. He had never cared too much about their lives.

There wasn't even a need to mention Hong Tan. In his eyes, they weren't even life forms. They were nothing but materials.

They sank into silence again. It seemed like surviving would only become harder and harder.

...

Zhao Li's research center.

The fire crow started spitting fire from his mouth. Since there were two Cloudbreach experts present, he was trembling with fear. The two Cloudbreach experts were giving off a pressure that was just as heavy as the presence of a Mountainsea.

The fire crow had the urge to start cursing.

Was there a need for this? He was only helping the kid temper his cultural weapon. Was there a need for the kid to get two Cloudbreach monsters that could basically be viewed as Mountainseas to monitor a puny Skysoar like him? Was he really so scary and devious?

Zhao Li stood there silently, completely ignoring Chen Yong. He didn't really like Chen Yong that much.

Instead, he was smiling as he talked to Su Yu, "This fire crow isn't completely useless, I suppose. The lifebound fire of their race is known as an excellent fire for smithing. What a pity that this lifebound fire is a racial ability instead of a character ability. Even if you can form a character of the fire crow language, it still won't be of much help in smithing."

Su Yu asked curiously, "What if I can learn their racial ability? Will the resulting fire be even better than the one you're using?"

"That would be hard to say. After all, fire is merely one of the tools you can use when smithing. It isn't compulsory. But there are indeed several types of fire that are actually quite good. For example, the fire of the fire elemental race, the fire of the fire crow race, the fire of the fiery dragon race...They are all excellent for smithing."

Su Yu nodded. He could try getting the fire crow race's racial ability.

This ability was probably related to apertures.

Since this fire was useful for smithing, there was no harm in giving it a try. After all, he had promised Zhao Li to help finish his incomplete earth-grade weapon after reaching the Cloudbreach Realm.

"Are you doing this in preparation for the tournament tomorrow?"

"Yeah."

"This is actually a good idea. But this fire is also quite a vicious weapon since it can harm one's sea of willpower. Don't use it unless you're faced with an actual enemy. You will turn anyone who is not an enemy into your enemy if you use it on them. You can slowly recover your willpower after it is burned, but the damage to one's sea of willpower will actually harm the root of one's willpower cultivation. That will be much harder to recover from."

Su Yu nodded. He was aware of that.

"Teacher, would this flame be useful for you as well? If it is useful, I can leave this crow with you..."

"Forget it."

Zhao Li showed no interest. He said, "This crow is too weak. He's only a seventh-stage Skysoar. I might consider him if he's a seventh-stage Cloudbreach. A seventh-stage Skysoar is basically garbage. Even when I encounter something like this in the Allheaven Battlefield, I would be too lazy to capture one. Hong Tan sure has a lot of free time in his hands to be capturing weak birds like this."

Fire crow: "..."

He continued trembling in fear.

He also felt like crying.

He wanted to say that he was useful. He wasn't garbage. But...why did even he himself feel like he was garbage? He couldn't even serve as a stove well enough!

"L-Lord, I can fl-fly very fast! Lord Su can use me as a flying mount!"

Zhao Li shot the fire crow a bored glance. He couldn't even be bothered to give a reply.

Ignoring the fire crow, he said to Su Yu, "Enter the Skysoar Realm as soon as possible. Stop wasting your time messing around with those people. As for the slot, if you really want one, there is no need to join the tournament. I can get one for you."

Su Yu stared at Zhao Li blankly.

Zhao Li said, "If they refuse, I will ban their faction from the Source Qi Secret Grotto. What's the big deal?"

"..."

Chen Yong kept his mouth shut. Inwardly, he didn't know what to feel.

Zhao Li was right. If he really asked for one, would Zhou Mingren agree?

Yes!

Even if Zhao Li was asking for a slot on Su Yu's behalf, Zhou Mingren could only sullenly agree to it.

Su Yu was somewhat speechless. This old man was making it seem so simple and easy. He said, "It's fine, Teacher. I'll get it myself!"

If Zhao Li did it, he would end up owing Zhou Mingren a favor. You could ask for someone's favor occasionally if you were worthy of it. But it was never a good idea to ask for favors too many times.

Thanks to the influence of the fourth principal, Zhao Li had been able to live a comfortable life in the academy. That would all change the moment he involved himself in these internal struggles. Anything could happen after that.

One of the reasons Zhao Li had such high status in the academy was his neutrality. After granting the academy the rights to run the Source Qi Secret Grotto, the entire academy owed him a favor.

But if he involved himself in these internal struggles, his special status in the academy would start being challenged. Hearing Su Yu's words, Zhao Li made no further offers. At this point, the fire crow was almost done with the weapon refinement.

When the refinement was done, Zhao Li took out his hammer and broke the water essence before covering the weapon with it. He reminded, "You can remove this layer of water essence when you want to use the fire. When you're not using the fire, you can keep it sealed with the water essence. It won't affect your normal use of the weapon.

"Remember, the moment you release the seal, you will be harming your opponent's sea of willpower with each attack. This is the water essence of a seventh-stage Cloudbreach. It is powerful enough to keep the weapon sealed for several months. If you remove the seal entirely, you will be able to unleash the full power of a seventh-stage Skysoar, but you will only be able to do it once. This can be considered a trump card. Use your discretion when deciding when to use it."

Su Yu nodded. He couldn't help asking, "Teacher, does this mean that with this weapon, I might be able to kill even Skysoars as well?"

Zhao Li looked at Su Yu and said, "You stand a chance against those below the seventh stage. Forget about those higher than that. This fire crow is only a seventh-stage Skysoar. Even against Skysoars below the seventh stage, this fire will only be a threat to cultural researchers. As for warriors, they can still deal you a heavy blow even with their sea of willpower injured."

"I understand."

Su Yu nodded. This would indeed serve as one of his trump cards from now on.

Against Skysoar cultural researchers at around the third or fourth stage, he might really be able to kill them if he could catch them by surprise.

One could never have too many trump cards. Su Yu was very pleased with this new trump card. From now on, he would no longer need to fear opponents capable of fighting Skysoars.

The water essence seal on his saber could be freely adjusted to control the output of his fire attack. With this, his saber would finally be worthy of its name: the Sealing Saber!

He couldn't help but say, "With this, my Sealing Saber has finally obtained an ability befitting of its name."

"..."

Both the Cloudbreach cultivators decided to ignore him. Sealing Saber? Did this kid know no shame? Was this even a weapon used for sealing? Could this kid be less shameless?

Beside them, the weakened fire crow had a gloomy expression. Even after paying such a huge price, he was still being ignored by everyone. How pitiful.

And he didn't even have the courage to attempt an escape. This Great Xia Cultural Research Academy was feeling more and more dangerous nowadays. Even when he was volunteering himself as a mount, nobody wanted him. How pitiful.

Chapter 434: Team Formed (1)

20th of October.

The Character Faculty was holding a tournament with five slots of the Willpower Grotto as the rewards. Countless students had signed up for the tournament. There was a large arena in the Dao Preaching District. This massive arena was generally used as the venue for any large-scale events at the academy.

...

The arena was already filled with people early in the morning.

These tournaments had always been able to garner the interest of the various students. Even the ones who were too weak to participate could have a good time as spectators.

This tournament, in particular, was even more interesting since the old students were also allowed to join. Rumors were also floating about that teams of grandparents and grandchildren would be fighting side by side, further stoking the interest of the masses.

Amid the crowd, Yang Sha looked at his junior brother and frowned as he whispered, "Junior Brother Lin, the rules have yet to be announced. And Teacher has been staying silent about it as well. How did you find out about it in advance?"

Lin Yao hurriedly scanned their surroundings before whispering back, "Senior Brother, be careful when you're speaking. There are too many outsiders here!"

This senior brother of his was really giving him a headache. Was this the kind of matter you could mention in public?

"Just trust me. If you're unwilling to trust me, there's nothing I can do."

Lin Yao felt very strongly that his senior brother still needed to be tested more. His senior brother was too bad at keeping secrets. If someone like that was recruited into the Mutual Aid Club, he could easily be the leak and end up exposing the club's existence.

In Lin Yao's eyes, the Mutual Aid Club was a great and impressive organization. The club was filled with countless hidden big shots.

Not long ago, a catalog was released in the voice transmission talisman. And the items available for sale in the catalog had nearly given him a heart attack.

Heaven-grade cultivation methods, heaven-grade martial techniques, top-tier yellow-grade foundation cultural arts, earth-grade cultural weapons... All sorts of treasures he had never dreamed of seeing had appeared in that catalog.

If it weren't for the fact that he had been getting along well with his senior brother recently, he wouldn't even have been willing to pull his senior brother into the club. Yet his senior brother wasn't even taking his words seriously! His senior brother was definitely going to regret this!

There was basically zero chance that he and his senior brother would be given any slots. Their teacher had only been given a single slot and he would definitely keep it for his own breakthrough into the Cloudbreach Realm.

The slots were too valuable. Even a lot of the top 100 students had yet to get a slot. And here was Yang Sha, doubting him when he was giving them a chance to get a slot for each of them.

Yang Sha shut his mouth. But he was still doubtful of Lin Yao's words. If they hadn't even been informed anything by their teacher, who was in charge of the tournament, how had Lin Yao found out about the tournament format?

And how was Lin Yao so sure that they could each get a slot? How was he supposed to trust Lin Yao?

But since he was already here, he might as well go with the flow. He wasn't going to be able to get a slot himself anyway.

...

At the same time, Wan Mingze and company arrived.

Hu Qiusheng looked at Wan Mingze and said, "Mingze, are you not participating? Maybe you can get an extra slot for yourself if you do join."

Wan Mingze merely shook his head and said nothing.

Too many people were participating in this tournament. And a lot of them were at the peak Mental Tempering Stage and ninth-stage Infinite Strength Realm. Thus, even someone like him wasn't confident in getting a slot. There were too many variables. Since he already had a slot, there was no need for him to take part in the tournament.

Apart from the 5 slots given as rewards of the tournament, the single character faction had also given out 13 slots to the various elders. In total, they had given 18 slots away. And the recipients of those 13 slots had mostly been decided by this point.

Hu Qiusheng smiled and said, "What a pity. Among us, you stand the highest chance of getting something out of the tournament. By the way, is Su Yu participating?"

Su Yu was very strong as well. But Hu Qiusheng didn't think that Su Yu was strong enough to become the ultimate winner of the tournament. That was especially true since the single character faction might target him. With them targeting him, he would have an even smaller chance at winning anything.

Wan Mingze frowned and softly said, "I'm not sure. I hope he's not joining since he will only find himself in more trouble. The single character faction is currently furious at him. And they have quite a lot of students over 30. A lot of them have been stuck at peak Mental Tempering Stage for a long time..."

Hu Qiusheng asked, "Even if they're going to target him, they won't dare to do it too openly, right?"

"We can't be sure."

Wan Mingze shook his head. After all, those people were the organizers. They had probably planned a series of actions to deal with Su Yu if he decided to join the tournament.

While they were talking, a group of people arrived.

Zhao Ming and the other referees of the top 100 challenges stood on the stage. With a hearty laugh, Zhao Ming said, "As a referee from the House of Hundred, I am an embodiment of justice and fairness. Therefore, I will be the head referee of this tournament."

A lot of people felt relieved to hear that. It was good that the referees weren't those from the single character faction. The referees from the House of Hundred could still be trusted.

Next, a different Cloudbreach stepped onto the stage and loudly announced, "The Discipline Hall will be monitoring this tournament."

...

At the spectating zone beside the stage.

Liu Hong had a wide smile on his face as he stood behind Elder Sun. With a frown, Elder Sun grumbled, "We are clearly the ones who have offered the slots for this tournament. Why are these people here again? Must they get involved in everything?"

Liu Hong said, "Don't worry, Elder Sun. Fairness is what we need for this tournament. After all, the academy has also paid 10,000 merit points for this tournament. Since they want to get involved, let them be. That way, they won't have the chance to accuse us of being unfair after the tournament."

"Has Su Yu registered?"

"Yeah."

Liu Hong smiled, "Don't worry, Elder Sun. I will take care of him."

Elder Sun nodded. Liu Hong continued speaking, "As for Qian Hai and the other martial nephews, I will try to assign them into teams with strong students. That way, they will have a higher chance at winning something."

Elder Sun said nothing. Qian Hai and company were the students from his line of the faction. They weren't his direct students, but they were mostly the students of his students. Thus, he would naturally be happy if they could get some of the slots.

The single character faction had over 100 researchers. But they only had 32 slots for themselves. Even as an elder, he was not able to get too many slots. He had only gotten 3 slots in total. After all, they had to split the slots between too many people. But that was not enough for him.

After all, students were not the only ones allowed to enter the grotto. The Skysoar teachers could enter as well. According to the rules, a single Skysoar would occupy two slots all by themselves. A Cloudbreach would occupy three slots. Of course, the grotto was not that big of a help to a Cloudbreach so this wouldn't really be a concern.

But in a situation where Skysoars could enter, nobody would say no to more slots.

Elder Sun's expression remained the same as he said, "Is Pingsheng fine with this?"

Liu Hong said, "Senior Brother Zhou won't mind. His favorite students are Di Feng and Qiu Yi. But you know that these slots are no longer that useful for him with the ban on his students."

Zhou Pingsheng had six students. Two of them were Skysoars. As for the rest, apart from Di Feng and Qiu Yi, he had two students over 30 that were below the Skysoar Realm.

As for Zheng Yuming, Huang Qifeng was one of his six students. Four of them were Skysoars. And one of them was a student over 30 who was stuck below the Skysoar Realm.

Of Hu Wensheng's two students, Chen Qi was too weak while Guo Shengquan was decently strong. But he was an outlier that wasn't too close to the single character faction.

Zhou Pingsheng had actually been given two slots. The slots had been given before the scandal. Those two slots were meant for Di Feng and Qiu Yi. With the ban on them, he could no longer use the slots on them. But instead of returning the slots to the faction, he gave them to the other two other students of his who were still below the Skysoar Realm.

Everyone noticed the special treatment Zhou Pingsheng was enjoying, but nobody said anything. It was unknown how many of them were unhappy with that.

Liu Hong softly added, "Elder Sun, I'm actually trying to prevent Senior Brother Zhou from getting more slots."

"..."

Elder Sun said nothing and waited for more explanation.

"Senior Brother Zhou has already been given two slots. And he only has two students who can put those slots to use. He doesn't need more slots. However, he had still requested more slots from me...But there are already a lot of eyes on him. I'm worried that if we keep giving him what he wants, more unfavorable things might happen to us."

Elder Sun glanced at Liu Hong and asked, "Did he really ask for more slots from you?"

"Yeah."

"Ignore him. What an idiot. Why is he still so active? Does he really think that everyone is blind? Old Zhou can protect him once, but not forever. Also, did we really buy the formula for 100,000 merit points previously?"

"We only spent 82,000 merit points on it..."

Elder Sun nodded. Old Zhou had already taken the blame for all that. It was not worth arguing with Old Zhou over those things.

"Liu Hong, keep your mouth shut. Don't run your mouth around. Do you understand me?"

Liu Hong smiled bitterly and said, "I understand. But Elder Sun, I am actually quite afraid. I have been maintaining a low profile since my teacher entered seclusion. But this time, Senior Brother Zhou had requested for the matches to be rigged in favor of his people. I don't dare to disobey him, but it really isn't a good idea. I have no choice but to tell you about this. If he comes after me, I hope Elder Sun can speak out on my behalf.

"If I really listen to him and help him get more slots, he will definitely sell them since he no longer has anyone under him that can use the slots. It will be fine if he ends up selling to our own people. But what if he sells to outsiders? Elder Sun, I will end up as the scapegoat. I will be the one to suffer. In that case, I might as well come clean, even if it will offend Senior Brother Zhou."

Elder Sun indifferently said, "Just do what you need to do. Little Zhou has forgotten himself recently. It's time for him to get a good wake-up call. You're the person appointed by Old Zhou to oversee all our members below the Skysoar Realm. Just do your job and ignore him."

"Thank you, Elder Sun."

Liu Hong expressed his gratitude with a relieved expression on his face.

Elder Sun said nothing else. After checking the time, Liu Hong flew into the sky before landing on the stage.

Chapter 435: Team Formed (2)

"All of you already know the purpose of this tournament. A lot of people are participating. Since no age limit has been placed, we have 8,330 participants."

Numerous students exclaimed in surprise. There were so many of them? That was a terrifying number. With so many participants, just how long would the tournament last?

Liu Hong smiled and said, "To save everyone's time, we have decided to adopt the format of team matches for this tournament. Generally, we work in teams of five or ten when operating on the Allheaven Battlefield. Thus, we will be holding our matches in teams of five as well. This will both save time and help all of you get used to team battles in advance.

"All of you will be randomly assigned into teams of five. Someone will ask this: Why aren't you guys allowed to form your own teams?"

"Because that is not the luxury you have at the Allheaven Battlefield. There, you will be receiving your assignments from the military, and your teammates will be different depending on the assignments you have been given. You will not be able to form whatever team you want as well.

"You are either strong enough to work alone or you will be working with random teammates. The military will not change the way they operate for you alone. And you are not qualified to question the way they do things. Whether your teammates are strong or weak, that will depend on your luck."

"Therefore, don't even bother questioning this tournament format. That will be the same as questioning the operation of the entire human race. If you are unhappy with this format, you are free to not participate. We won't force anyone to join."

What else could the students say if he was putting it like that? Indeed, this was how the military operated for missions of smaller scale. If the students thought that this was unfair, they could simply not participate. It wasn't like participation was mandatory.

Liu Hong said, "Fate will decide who you get as your teammates. Remember, you are not allowed to harm your own teammates. Nor are you allowed to abandon your teammates."

Someone couldn't help but ask, "What if a teammate is too weak and keeps ending up as the target of our opponents? Are we supposed to keep protecting the weakling?"

"Remember this. They are your comrades-in-arms. You should not be leaving them behind."

Liu Hong's voice turned cold, "This is the principle we operate by in the Allheaven Battlefield. Even if you are assigned to a team with your enemy, both of you need to watch over each other. If one of you ends up dead during the mission, the survivor will also be executed. That is how things work. That is how we do things at the Allheaven Battlefield. Nothing will change for the sake of your feelings.

"If you don't like this, if you're unhappy, if you think this is wrong, feel free to not participate in the tournament. This system of random team assignment is one of the reasons why the people of the various prefectures, academies, and armies have been able to work together in the Allheaven Battlefield.

"Of course, there are exceptions to the rule of not leaving anyone behind. When your teammate is in a situation of sure death and the act of helping that teammate will lead to your death as well, there is no need for you to throw your life away. The military does not encourage you to lose your life needlessly. At that time, you can elect to flee or to pick your fights.

"Today, all of you will be given a chance to experience the assignment system of the military. This will give you more experience working with strangers, and it will be beneficial for your own survival when you head to the Allheaven Battlefield in the future.

"There are 8,330 of you. 1,666 teams will be formed. Only a single team will last until the very end and grab all the slots available."

The moment Liu Hong was done speaking, a clamor erupted from the students. This was a terrible tournament format. Five slots were offered, yet all of them would be won by one team.

Liu Hong gestured at the crowd and shouted, "Silence! The other participants won't be getting any slots, but the top ten teams will still receive other rewards. For the second place, you can get a Mountainsea willpower text each. For the third place, you can get an earth-grade martial technique manual each. For those in the fourth through the tenth places, you will be given a Skysoar willpower text of the Myriad Text Sutra each."

That placated the students to some extent. Fortunately, the other rewards were actually quite good as well.

Mountainsea willpower text, earth-grade martial technique, Myriad Text Sutra's willpower text...all these were treasures. With all these rewards, they would have a much higher chance of getting something out of the tournament.

After all, with all the additional rewards, a total of 50 students would be able to win something from the tournament.

Noticing the satisfied expressions of the students, Liu Hong smiled and said, "I'm glad to see that you're happy with these rewards. The Character Faculty has taken the initiative to hold this tournament and offer these precious rewards in order to help everyone grow better and enter the Skysoar Realm as soon as possible. Hopefully, this will also strengthen the human race as a whole."

"..."

Done with his speech, Liu Hong waved his hand. At his order, a large machine was lifted onto the stage.

"Everyone, each of you will draw a plate from this machine. A total of 8,330 plates are in there, numbered 1 through 1,666. Each number will be etched onto five different plates. Those with the same number will be assigned to the same team."

"Regardless of whether you're in the academy, on the battlefield, or somewhere else, luck is a part of your strength. Do not make the mistake of thinking that luck is not real. A non-factor. Know that some races out there specialize in cultivating the dao of luck. Luck is very real.

"If you end up with weak teammates from your draw, do not be prejudiced against them. Every single person has their own use. If you end up with strong teammates, do not forget yourself. Think about the fact that you are now baggage. Will they be prejudiced against you? If you don't want that to happen, do your best to showcase your abilities."

At the same time, a Cloudbreach walked up the stage and stopped before the machine. After sending his willpower into the machine and giving it a scan, he shook his head in the direction of the spectating zone. No problems had been found.

Old Huang was standing in the spectating zone. Apart from him, a lot of other people were there as well. Chen Yong was there. Zhao Li was there. And so on.

Only a few Mountainseas had arrived, but there were a lot of Cloudbreach cultivators present.

Old Huang said nothing. Nothing unusual was found. In that case, there was nothing he could say.

On the stage, Liu Hong smiled. Why even bother inspecting the machine? He was a good guy. How would he do something like mess with the machine? That was a cheap trick unbecoming of him. He would never do something so stupid.

The students themselves were the ones making the draws. If he was going to do something, he was naturally going to do it against the students, not the machine.

Sure, they could inspect the machine. Could they inspect every single one of the students as well? More importantly, those students wouldn't be willing to receive a thorough scan either.

"Get on the stage and make your draw."

With that, the students started getting on the stage to make their draws. There were a lot of them, but they were moving in an orderly manner. It didn't matter if they made the draw earlier or later, so it would be unbecoming for them to squeeze against each other just to make a draw. As cultural researchers, they had enough self-respect to not do something so barbaric.

...

Beyond the stage.

Amid the crowd, Su Yu did not know what to feel after looking at the crowd.

He saw an old man with white hair getting on the stage, walking alongside a bunch of teenagers. He couldn't help but think of his own father when he saw that.

His father was nearly 50. If his father was a member of the academy, he would also be one of the pitiful ones who was still stuck at the Infinite Strength Realm at such an old age. And he wouldn't even be one of the stronger Infinite Strength cultivators. He would be one of the weaker ones. He would probably be weaker than even some Great Strength students. How pitiful.

Su Yu couldn't help but feel some sympathy toward those grandpas and grannies.

Perhaps he should just end the match for them cleanly when encountering them in the tournament. They were too pitiful. He would do them a favor and help them retire earlier, giving them the break they deserved.

One student after another stepped onto the stage and drew a plate from the machine. Some were busy looking around for their teammates. Some were focused on the stronger students, trying to figure out the number drawn by those students.

This was actually quite an interesting tournament. This segment was more like a gamble than a test of skills.

The students were moving at a fast pace. Before anyone knew it, over a thousand students had taken their draws. Before long, it was the turn of Lin Yao and Yang Sha to make their draws.

Yang Sha took another glance at Lin Yao. He was starting to understand what his junior brother had been talking about previously. The tournament would be held in teams of five. With this format, they would naturally stand a chance if they were assigned to a team of strong students. Perhaps...they would be assigned to Zhan Hai's team? Or a team of some powerful old students?

How did his junior brother find out about this? And how could his junior brother be sure that they would be assigned to a strong team? He did not think too much and reached into the machine.

Nothing had been done to the machine. But something had been done to some students. Yang Sha had no idea what happened, but when his hand reached into the machine, a plate fell into his palm.

Number 600.

Beside him, Lin Yao nonchalantly reached into the machine and took out a plate. On the plate, the number 600 could be seen as well. The two exchanged gazes in shock. They had really been assigned to the same team!

Nearby, Liu Hong was cursing inwardly. What were these idiots doing? Why were they still standing on the stage? Get off the stage already!

Old Huang was also paying close attention to the stage. His eyes flickered as he glanced at Elder Sun, who remained completely still. Old Huang frowned. He seemed to have sensed a faint aura flashing over the bodies of those two. Instead of grabbing a plate from the machine, the plates had actually been attracted to them.

His face changed slightly as he sent his willpower over.

Elder Sun indifferently said, "Old Huang, don't just scan a student randomly. This is not proper."

"You..."

Old Huang had an unsightly expression. He cursed inwardly.

The single character faction seemed inept at everything except these cheap tricks. He suspected that the same trick had been used on some other students as well. Damn those bastards!

As for the proof of that...even if he knew what was happening, it would be hard to find one.

He might be able to find something if he could arrest some students and scan their bodies for foreign auras before proceeding with that line of investigation. But that would be a lot of work and any proof he found that way wouldn't even be strong enough for him to do anything with. The single character faction could easily refute a proof so weak.

Sure, he could always perform a deeper investigation to find out more, but what would be the end result of that?

Canceling the tournament?

Old Huang suppressed his anger and decided to wait and see. If some of the students actually started complaining, he could perhaps use that as a chance to do something about it.

His gaze landed on Su Yu. Were these guys doing this to target Su Yu?

Or were they only doing this for the slots?

And sure enough, he sensed the same unusual aura on the bodies of a few other students. He looked at Elder Sun and snorted, "A mere Mountainsea is stooping so low for a few slots? If you're unwilling to give the slots to outsiders, be honest and don't waste everyone's time with this tournament."

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Chapter 436: Team Formed (3)

Elder Sun nonchalantly said, "Old Huang, as the master of the Discipline Hall, you should be careful with what you say. Also, weren't you guys the ones who had forced us to give out these slots? We are paying out of our own pockets to open a grotto. But a bunch of greedy individuals came together to force our hand. Is this fair? Old Huang, think about it."

Old Huang was actually speechless.

Yes. That was indeed unfair. The single character faction was paying with their own resources to open the grotto. The elders had indeed attended the meeting with selfish agendas.

Everyone was clear about that.

Even if the other elders were here, they would have nothing to say.

Old Huang sighed inwardly and said nothing else.

At that moment, a certain student stepped onto the stage. And all the other students parted to make way for him.

"Zhan Hai!"

"He already has a slot, right? Why is he here? Shameless!"

"Damn it! This fellow is capable of reaching the Skysoar Realm even without the grotto. Why is he fighting us for this chance?"

"What's his number?"

"..."

A clamor erupted among the students. Zhan Hai was the number one student in the Top 100 Ranking. He was a peak Mental Tempering Stage and ninth-stage Infinite Strength student.

A student like him was already guaranteed to enter the Skysoar Realm even without the help of a grotto.

Zhan Hai ignored all the students and made his draw. After taking a look at his plate, he indifferently announced, "Number 988. Where are my teammates?"

Someone amid the crowd cheered. Clearly, that person had drawn the same number as well. After Zhan Hai, one strong student after another made their draw as well.

Jiang Mu, Li Minyu, Dai Qing, Hu Zongyu, Lin Qing, Liu He, Wang Peng...

Numerous famous top 100 students could be seen walking up the stage.

And some of them were people that had already been given their slots. After all, the single character faction had not restricted anyone from participating in the tournament. With one extra slot, one would be able to get an additional person from their side into the grotto.

Eventually, it was Su Yu's turn to get on the stage as well. He was trying very hard to keep a low profile. But when he stepped on the stage, the crowd still sank into silence. Whispers started coming out of the crowd.

"Su Yu is here as well."

"He is way too bold. This is a tournament held by the single character faction. Is he not afraid that the single character faction will target him?"

"Yeah. The tournament is going to be held in team battles. He won't be fighting alone. What if the single character faction assigns their people with strong teammates and sends him into a weak team? He stands no chance at all!"

"..."

Su Yu's appearance had attracted a lot of attention.

Su Yu said nothing. He silently walked forth before reaching into the machine. Just as he was about to reach further, he felt a plate flying into his palm. He glanced at Liu Hong and smiled before leaving the stage silently.

Liu Hong must have done something to him during their previous meeting. He should be more careful in the future.

After taking a look, he saw the number 600 on his plate.

While he was thinking, he suddenly noticed someone nearby. He cried out, "Senior Sister..."

Wu Jia had just finished drawing her number. When Su Yu called out to her, she awkwardly said, "I'm only here for fun. Don't worry. I'll surrender if I'm faced with an opponent I can't defeat. I won't mess around. I'm only here to annoy them more. If I can meet some single character faction members during the tournament, I'll be sure to beat them up!"

"..."

Su Yu was speechless. What was she doing here? When he turned his head to look at Chen Yong, his martial uncle merely smiled and said nothing. It wasn't a bad idea for her to join a tournament and gain more experience.

Of course, she also needed to hold back from doing something stupid like fighting an opponent she couldn't defeat to the death. If she could control herself, this tournament would be a good opportunity for her to improve her skills.

Liu Hong was right. This was actually how the Allheaven Battlefield worked. It was a good idea to get used to it during their time in the academy. At the very least, one would not be completely clueless when one entered the Allheaven Battlefield in the future.

One would be able to experience the feeling of having a useless teammate in advance. That way, one would be able to stay calm in the future when encountering useless teammates at the Allheaven Battlefield.

As someone with the combat strength of a top 70 student, Wu Jia was not weak at all. Out of the over 8,000 participants, only around 100 of them would actually be able to defeat her. Su Yu could only accept their decision. There was nothing he could say about it.

The two walked off the stage together. Wu Jia happily said, "I got the number 888. This is a good number! How about you, Junior Brother?"

Su Yu suddenly laughed and softly asked, "Senior Sister, do you think anyone will notice if we exchange our numbers now?"

Right after he asked the question, someone squeezed through the crowd and stopped beside him. With a gloomy voice, that person complained, "Forget it. We can't exchange numbers. I was about to buy a few hundred plates before selling them to interested buyers. But I have only sold one before the Discipline Hall caught me. I was even fined 100 merit points for that! How greedy!"

"..."

Su Yu stared at Xia Huyou speechlessly. What an incredible fellow. Even in such a situation, he could still come up with a way to make money.

"You're not participating?"

"No. Isn't it tiring to fight all the time?" Xia Huyou declared confidently, "I am a businessman. My motto is to get rich and coexist peacefully. I don't enjoy fighting. It's only a slot. I won't fight for something like that. In any case, I already have one. Why bother?"

"You already have one?"

"Yeah." Xia Huyou laughed heartily, "Guess who I got it from."

"Who?"

"Vice Principal Xia Changqing." Xia Huyou smiled smugly, "I went straight to him demanding for a slot. We're both from the Xia Family. He has no excuse to reject me. Imagine my surprise when he really gave me one. It feels really great to get something without spending a single cent!"

Su Yu did not know whether to laugh or cry. True. Since Xia Huyou had personally visited Xia Changqing to ask for a slot, could Xia Changqing say no? Not many people knew who Xia Huyou actually was, but would Xia Changqing not know who this little fatty was?

He really had no good excuse to reject this little fatty so he could only say yes. It would seem like this little fatty was actually quite good at being a menace.

Xia Changqing had definitely been unwilling to give Xia Huyou a slot. After all, his own grandson, Xia Yuwen, was in a competition against Xia Huyou for the position of prefect.

Xia Huyou smiled and asked, "Are you interested in buying some information I have? I can tell you about the teams of the stronger students. I gathered a lot of information when I was running around buying the plates earlier."

"Has the single character faction formed any strong teams?"

Su Yu did not care about anything apart from the single character faction.

"Yes." Xia Huyou softly said, "They have one. That's a very strong team. The two students of Zhou Pingsheng are in that team. Both of them are over 30 in age. They used to be top 100 students when they were younger.

"The other three students in the team are in similar positions. One of them is Elder Zheng Yuming's student while the other two are respectively the students of Elder Yu and Elder Li."

When Wu Jia heard that, she asked, "Isn't that cheating?"

Su Yu sighed before saying with a smile, "Senior Sister, they are the organizers of this tournament. It isn't surprising for them to pull something like this. It is pointless to say all this."

But Wu Jia was still unhappy. That was too shameless.

Xia Huyou said, "That's a very strong team. All five of them are former top 100 students. They have reached the very peak in their cultivation of martial techniques, cultivation methods, physical body, willpower, and Divine Characters. In truth, they are probably strong enough to face a Skysoar when working together."

That was actually true. A team of five like that would definitely be strong enough to fight even a Skysoar.

Of course, good teamwork was necessary or the Skysoar opponent would be able to separate them and defeat them one at a time.

"How about the other teams?"

"There are also Zhan Hai's team and Jiang Mu's team. Basically, the teams of the top 10 students are all very strong. There are also several strong teams among the old students."

Su Yu nodded and asked, "How about Di Feng and his people? Are they in the tournament?"

"Nope." Xia Huyou shook his head and said, "They aren't even in the academy anymore. I suspect they are out hunting the Myriad Race Cult. They are probably trying to offset their punishment with their contribution and remove the ban placed on them. They will probably return after destroying a cult stronghold or two."

Su Yu frowned and asked, "So have the single character faction been cooperating with the cult before this? This seems too convenient."

"I doubt so." Xia Huyou explained, "Some strongholds have always been known to us. We have only been leaving these strongholds alone to wait for a bigger fish. We have never stopped monitoring these strongholds. The single character faction has a lot of members so they definitely know a few of such strongholds as well. Thus, it isn't surprising that they can find some strongholds when they need to. If they had really been cooperating with the cult, they wouldn't have dared to send their own students out to destroy these strongholds."

Bigger fish!

True. Great Xia was probably aware of the locations of many cult strongholds. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been able to easily wipe out several cult strongholds each time they needed a scapegoat.

In fact, they had done that not long ago to cover up the conflict between the single and multiple character factions!

First, they blamed the master of the First Divine Sect. Then, they killed the master of the Blood Fire Sect. Finally, the Martial Dragon Guards were deployed to wipe out several cult strongholds. They seemed very well-practiced when doing all that.

"What a pity."

Su Yu sighed. He was quite sad to find out that those fellows wouldn't be in the tournament. He would feel much better if he could meet them in the tournament and give them a beating. While they were speaking, the draw was coming to an end.

Liu Hong said, "You will be given half an hour to group up with your team members. There are 1,666 teams in total. Make your choice after seeing your team members. If you believe you stand no chance, feel free to give up. Or you can approach the tournament with the mentality of learning something new through spars. Just be smart about how you use your time and energy. You will be fighting multiple matches over the course of the tournament. If you go all out and use everything you have during the first match, you won't be able to fight in the subsequent matches. Make smart choices and don't do anything pointless."

With their numbers, one would need to fight in at least 10 matches to get first place. Fighting that many matches in a row would be a great challenge for any team.

Su Yu smiled without worry and yelled, "Number 600, let's gather up!"

He was quite loud. A lot of people heard him. And the faces of several people in the crowd changed. With the plate in his hand, Liu He cursed.

Fuck!

Why was he assigned to this fellow's team?

Not far away, Yang Sha blanked out. Su Yu? He was actually in the same team as Su Yu?

He looked at Lin Yao in shock. Lin Yao, on the other hand, did not look surprised. He softly said, "Senior Brother, this is our chance! He's very strong!"

"I"

Yang Sha felt like shouting at someone. Of course he knew Su Yu was strong. But Su Yu was weaker than Di Feng. More importantly, Su Yu was their enemy! Was his junior brother not aware of that?

Relying on Su Yu to get first place? Was this a joke? Were they supposed to work alongside Su Yu and fight those from their own faction? If they did that, how could they face their teacher after the tournament?

Not far away, Zhou Hao grinned. Instead of walking up to Su Yu, he remained where he was. He scanned his surroundings and started looking at the stronger students such as Zhan Hai and Jiang Mu. Were these his coming opponents? He was starting to get excited. As for the fact that he had to carry three deadweights with him, he didn't seem to care. As long as Su Yu was strong enough, everything would be fine.

He was never one to rely on others, so he wasn't bothered by the fact that he would have some useless teammates. As for his cooperation with Su Yu, it had been proposed by Su Yu, not him. He personally didn't care who his teammates would be.

Liu He might be a top 100 student with a decent ranking, but not even someone like him could catch Zhou Hao's attention. Zhou Hao might only be a ninth-stage Great Strength cultivator, but he was completely uninterested in someone with zero bloodlust like Liu He.

The students started gathering with their team members.

"Number 888..."

Someone shouted.

Wu Jia ran over when she heard the call. When Su Yu looked over, he was surprised to see that it was actually a decent team. There were even a few top 100 students in it. Shortly after, a few students arrived around Su Yu.

Liu He had an unfriendly look in his eyes, Yang Sha looked unwilling to be there, and Lin Yao pretended to be furious.

Su Yu showed a complete disregard for them and said, "During the fights, just stand aside and don't get in my way."

"You..."

Liu He was furious. No matter what, he was a top 100 student. How could Su Yu insult him like that? Su Yu ignored them. All around him, numerous gazes landed on him. When they saw his team members, they nearly roared with laughter.

Liu He, Lin Yao, Yang Sha...and a new student, Xia Huyou.

Was this Su Yu's team? How was he supposed to compete with such teammates?

Xia Huyou did not seem to mind that so many eyes were on him. He was only there to take a look. He wasn't even participating in the tournament. Why were these people looking at him? Then again, he had to admit that this was quite a...shitty team.

The single character faction was truly creative. Sure, Liu He had decent strength, but would he even try his best? In the spectating zone, Elder Sun and the other elders were smiling happily. They all looked at Liu Hong approvingly. Nicely done!

If Su Yu really managed to get the slots offered, that would be an insult for them. But with a team like this, could he still get a slot for himself?

Dream on!

Chapter 437: The Reliable Liu Hong (1)

It was obvious that something was fishy about Su Yu's team allocation.

But none of the students said anything.

At this time, someone from the Discipline Hall asked, "Do any students have any issues with their team allocations?"

A lot of people looked at Su Yu. The Discipline Hall had clearly noticed that something was wrong.

With a big smile on his face, Su Yu said, "Nope. Since the team assignment is done and the tournament is going to start soon, I won't waste anyone's time. I can't give those shameless people an excuse to cancel the tournament, right? That would only ruin the day of many seniors here."

Su Yu spoke in a calm and straightforward manner.

He was basically saying that he was letting this slide because he didn't want to give the shameless single character faction the chance to cancel the tournament and ruin the plan of the many students here.

A lot of people exhaled in relief upon hearing that. That would be for the best. After all, some of them were actually quite happy with their teammates. It was clear that something was fishy about Su Yu's teammates. If the Discipline Hall was really allowed to start an investigation, nobody knew if the tournament would end up canceled.

Clearly, all this was actually a part of Liu Hong's plan. If the Discipline Hall insisted on carrying out an investigation, they could simply cancel the tournament and shift the blame to Su Yu. Since Su Yu had refused to question the team allocation, the person from the Discipline Hall said nothing else. And apart from Su Yu, no other students responded to the Discipline Hall's question.

At this point, it no longer mattered if they were happy with their team or not. Su Yu was right. If they questioned the team allocation and caused the cancellation of the tournament, they would ruin everyone's plan and offend the entire academy.

On the stage, Liu Hong smiled and said, "Since there are no issues, take this time to communicate with your team members. This would also be your first priority on the battlefield. You need to first know what each other is good at, make a clear plan detailing each person's responsibilities, and elect a team leader. These are all the things you need to do yourself."

...

Su Yu completely ignored Liu Hong.

Liu He and the others continued staring at him coldly. After a while, Liu He coldly said, "Su Yu, I'm afraid we won't be getting any slots. But with our strength, we can at least get into the top 10."

Su Yu looked at Liu He and said, "Senior Brother Liu, are you offering your help?"

Liu He frowned and looked at Liu Hong as he sank into an internal struggle. Should he help? His big brother and the single character faction had clearly assigned him to Su Yu's team to drag Su Yu down. If he helped Su Yu, what would his big brother think?

After a short silence, he said, "I believe that as a genius, I should properly display my strength and grace in battle. I need to show that we of the single character faction are also people with honor. Lin Yao and Yang Sha are weak, but I'm not weak."

Su Yu asked, "So do you mean that you're willing to fight?"

With a toying tone, Su Yu said, "None of you are stupid. I believe you are already aware of what you're supposed to be doing in this team."

Liu He felt even more gloomy. He coldly said, "We are fighting for ourselves, not anyone else. Once we step on the stage, only enemies and allies are left. Nothing else matters."

"I hope you're telling the truth." Su Yu said, "In that case, we'll work together."

Liu He said, "You're the strongest among us. Are you not making a plan or any other preparation?"

He wanted to give it a try. Even if they couldn't get first place, he believed that their team was good enough to survive a few rounds. Su Yu had the strength of a top 20 student. He had the strength of a top 70 student. Yang Sha was only slightly weaker than a top 100 student. Lin Yao was truly weak. As for Xia Huyou, his true strength was still unknown.

Their team was definitely strong enough to defeat some of the weaker teams.

Of the new students, only the top 100 students could pose a threat to them. As for the old students, sure, many of them were strong. But the truly talented ones would have broken through long ago. Thus, there were only around 100 peak Mental Tempering Stage cultivators among the old students.

Additionally, the myriad race students would also be participating in the tournament. According to Liu He's calculation, their team was probably good enough to enter the top 50 in the tournament. After all, they also had several top 100 students in their team.

"Plan?" Su Yu smiled, "Sure. Since you want a plan, I'll make a plan. The three of you only need to do one thing. Target the weakest member of our opposing team. It doesn't matter if you can defeat that person or not. Just keep that person busy."

Liu He was furious after hearing that.

Yang Sha was also angered. He said, "Liu He is a true top 100 student while I am also someone who has challenged the top 100 before. And you're asking us to join hands against students who have yet to even enter the top 100?"

Su Yu indifferently asked, "What else can we do, Senior Brother Yang? Will the single character faction allow me to reach the finals?"

They sank into silence. freeweb . com

After a long while, Lin Yao said, "How about this? We will do our best against those not from the single character faction. As for the single character faction students..."

Liu He snorted and said, "We will do our best against everyone. Su Yu, don't make the mistake of thinking that everyone in the single character faction is targeting you. We don't have the time to waste on something this meaningless. Apart from the main line of the faction, the rest of us don't really care much about you."

The so-called main line was basically Zhou Mingren's line.

Su Yu did not care. He merely smiled and said, "Sure. You guys can fight if you're willing. If you're unwilling, it doesn't matter. I won't force you to do anything. After all, I don't want to take the blame if you guys end up offending your own faction. It will probably be fine if we end up losing. But if I end up winning and you guys have been fighting hard...hehe. I reckon you would start having a hard time in the single character faction."

Su Yu had an amused expression on his face. Liu He completely dismissed those words. Bullshit. There was no way they could win. Whatever. It was understandable for Su Yu to not trust them. He had nothing else to say. He would decide what to do later.

After a short while, Liu Hong announced, "It's time. Since we have a lot of participants, try to end the matches as quickly as possible. A total of 20 rings have been prepared for the tournament. 40 teams will fight concurrently. The winners will remain while the losers will leave."

A single match would last around three or four minutes. Thus, the first round would last around two hours. Nobody had any issues with that. It was good that the first round wouldn't end that fast. That would only give them more time to recuperate after their match.

"As for the opponent allocation, it is very simple. Team one will fight team two, team three will fight team four, and so on. The first 40 teams may get into the rings now."

One team after another started entering the rings assigned to them. The referees also started entering the rings. Su Yu noticed several strong teams among the first 40 teams. Basically, any team with a top 100 student or a peak Mental Tempering Stage student could be considered a strong team. Beside him, Xia Huyou was feeling very curious about the final member of Su Yu's team.

Everyone thought that he was the final member, but he couldn't even be bothered to explain himself. He didn't care what those people thought. But Su Yu was definitely aware that he wasn't the final member. Had this fellow figured out who the last member was?

Instead of asking, Xia Huyou looked at the first 40 teams and said, "Team 16 is probably the strongest among them. They have three strong members, with two of them being top 100 students and one of them being a former top 100 student over 30."

That was a team with three top 100 students. That could indeed be considered a strong team.

Just like that, the tournament started. It was very straightforward. The moment the referees called for the matches to start, booming sounds reverberated throughout the arena.

The gap between the top 100 students and those outside the top 100 was clear for all to see. And the team 16 mentioned by Xia Huyou was able to obtain an instant victory. Their three top 100 students had fought a different opponent each. And they had all defeated their respective opponents instantly.

Some of the Mental Tempering Stage students were actually quite weak. After all, cultural researchers were different from warriors. Warriors would be decently strong even at the Great Strength Realm. But cultural researchers could be very weak even at the Mental Tempering Stage as some of them might not even have a single Divine Character yet at that level of cultivation. And such cultural researchers would basically be completely helpless in this tournament.

Boom!

With a rumble, the match between team 15 and team 16 on ring 8 ended. The members of team 15 were thrown off the ring one after another.

"Team 16 is victorious."

The referee announced the victor, putting an end to that match. At the same time, the referee of ring 1 also declared, "Team 1 is victorious."

Only then did Su Yu notice the first ring. He was quite surprised. That was fast!

Xia Huyou was also surprised. He said, "That's a student specializing in sealing. He's quite strong. All his opponents were instantly sealed at the start of the match. Su Yu, you need to keep an eye out for this team."

Su Yu said nothing. At that time, yet another match came to an end. With a loud roar, a massive beast had appeared in ring 6.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The leopard-like beast moved rapidly and instantly sent all five students of the opposing team out of the ring.

"A student from the beast taming faction. And he is even someone who has formed a beast space within his body. This is not someone to be underestimated as well."

Su Yu suddenly asked, "Are the beast taming faction students allowed to fight with Skysoar beasts?"

Xia Huyou rolled his eyes and said, "What are you thinking about? They can only fight with the beasts they tamed themselves. And only actual students of the beast taming faction can fight with tamed beasts. These so-called tamed beasts refer to the beasts they can take into their beast space. Do you think these students can take overly powerful beasts into their beast spaces?"

"Only students with beast spaces will be considered true members of the beast taming faction. The others can only be considered students-in-waiting. Do you understand now?"

Su Yu nodded as he looked at the team with the beast tamer. A student of the beast taming faction.

This was Su Yu's first time witnessing the fight of a student from the beast taming faction. He knew what race the leopard belonged to. It was the wind leopard race. This wasn't a particularly powerful race, but the wind leopards were known for their speed. Thus, this was a rather popular beast to tame.

The leopard was at around the fifth or sixth stage of the Infinite Strength Realm. It was actually quite strong.

Chapter 438: The Reliable Liu Hong (2)

Through the matches, Su Yu was exposed to all sorts of students. He could feel his horizons expanding just by watching these matches.

He saw a talisman faction student toss out some talismans to create a swamp in the ring, trapping his opponents and defeating them easily with the help of his team members.

He saw a pillmaking faction student toss a poisonous pill out, instantly knocking both his opponents and his team members out.

"Fatty-cough, cough. Huyou, how about the pillmaking faction? If they get some poisonous pills capable of killing Mountaineas from their elders, won't they dominate the tournament?"

Xia Huyou asked doubtfully, "Don't you know the academy rules very well? How do you not know this?"

"The rules for the top 100 challenges are already fixed. But the rules for this tournament are brand new. Who knows what the rules are?"

Su Yu rolled his eyes. How was he supposed to know that? He reckoned that Xia Huyou didn't have the answer to that question as well. Sure enough, Xia Huyou merely shrugged. He had no idea as well.

Fortunately, the Discipline Hall soon made an announcement, "The students of the beast taming faction are only allowed to fight with their own tamed beasts. The students of the pillmaking faction are only allowed to utilize the pills they have refined themselves. The same applies to the students of the talisman faction..."

Su Yu had nothing to say about that. That was actually good for him. Otherwise, the other students would stand no chance against the students fighting with pills, talismans, or beasts at the Mountainsea Realm. Someone capable of producing talismans, pills, or beasts at that level would no longer be a mere student.

"The moment a match concludes, the following teams can get into the ring immediately. Don't stand around waiting to be called."

Since so many matches were being held concurrently, it would be a waste of time to sit around waiting for all the matches to conclude before proceeding with the subsequent matches.

...

Out of the first 40 teams to fight, a few of them were strong teams.

Since it was so early in the tournament, the gap between the teams could actually be quite big. Most of the strong teams had been able to easily defeat their opponents when encountering the weak teams. As for the matches that had appeared quite even, they usually involved two similarly weak teams.

One team after another stepped into a ring to fight. The winners advanced while the losers dropped out of the tournament. The gap between the strong and the weak was really too big.

All the teams with at least one top 100 student had been able to win. After all, one of these top 100 students was already strong enough to face several of the weaker students. There was really no suspense to these matches.

In the blink of an eye, half an hour passed.

The tournament was progressing rapidly. At this point, it was team 590's turn to fight. In only half an hour, a total of 295 teams had emerged victorious. If things continued at this pace, the first round would end in around two and a half hours. The turn of Su Yu's team was also fast approaching.

At this time, the referee announced, "Ring 8, team 593 and team 594."

When both teams stepped into the ring, a large number of students cheered. A truly strong student had appeared.

Jiang Mu!

Ranked third on the top 100!

He was also the first top 100 student Su Yu had seen after entering the academy. He still remembered clearly how all the guards had hastily moved aside to make way for Jiang Mu when he was passing by. That was quite an impressive sight to behold.

With Jiang Mu around, there was no suspense to the match. Su Yu had only blinked once, and all of Jiang Mu's opponents had already been sent out of the ring. Jiang Mu had moved so fast that several afterimages were left in the ring.

His opponents didn't even have the chance to make any moves before they were defeated. After the match, Jiang Mu stepped out of the ring with an indifferent expression. It almost felt like he was only there to take a stroll.

...

"Team 599 and team 600, get into the ring."

When team 600 was called up, it attracted a lot of attention as well. The students had heard that Su Yu was in team 600.

Su Yu said nothing and went straight into the ring.

Lin Yao and the rest followed behind him. Suddenly, Lin Yao turned around to look at Xia Huyou who was happily eating some snacks. He asked, "What are you doing? Get moving."

"..."

Xia Huyou looked at Lin Yao like he was looking at a fool.

Nonsense. He wasn't a part of their team. Why should he enter the ring with them?

"You..."

Before Lin Yao could finish his words, a different person entered the ring.

Zhou Hao!

A lot of people were surprised to see him in the ring. Although he had only fought once after joining the academy, everyone knew that he was a strong combatant. Was this fellow a member of team 599?

But when the members of team 599 entered the ring, the crowd looked even more astonished. So this Zhou Hao was in Su Yu's team?

What the fuck? What about Xia Huyou, then?

Numerous gazes landed on Xia Huyou. Meanwhile, Xia Huyou ignored the gazes and continued snacking. Why were they looking at him? It wasn't like he had actually said that he was a member of team 600.

...

Spectating zone.

Elder Sun looked somewhat surprised. He transmitted his voice to Liu Hong, "Why did you assign this person to Su Yu's team?"

Zhou Hao was very strong!

More importantly, he wasn't from the single character faction.

Liu Hong explained, "Xia Yuwen's people are trying to get more slots as well. If we assign Zhou Hao to any other team, he might really be able to get a slot. Considering he doesn't get along well with Su Yu, I decided to put the two of them together and kill two birds with one stone. This way, we can stop both of them from getting any slots."

Elder Sun frowned, "This Zhou Hao isn't weak. If he decides to work with Su Yu..."

"He was nearly killed by Su Yu previously."

Liu Hong said, "Elder Sun, even if the two decide to work together, they won't be able to win. Also, he is Xia Yuwen's student. And Xia Yuwen has just been crippled by Bai Feng. With the kind of person Xia Yuwen is, he will definitely not spare his student for working with Bai Feng's student so soon after that incident. Also, the multiple character faction has the habit of treating any helper as one of their own. If Zhou Hao really decides to work with Su Yu, that puts them on the same side as Xia Yuwen. Hehehe, they might end up forced to help Xia Yuwen as well. That will only drag them into more conflicts."

Elder Sun's eyes flickered.

Liu Hong continued his voice transmission, "Elder Sun, to be honest, I don't really agree with Faculty Head Zhou's decision to work with Xia Yuwen. Don't forget that the prefect has his own son. At the end of the day, he will still be closer to his own son than a distant relative like Xia Yuwen. And the prefect has full freedom in deciding the date of his abdication. He can very well give his own son enough time to grow. It is simply too dangerous for us to get involved in that conflict. Taking Xia Chan into our faction does not change anything. It would be much better to drag the multiple character faction into that conflict instead."

Elder Sun nodded in agreement.

He was about to say something when he turned to look at the stage in astonishment.

Bang!

Su Yu did not waste any time. The moment the match started, he moved rapidly, creating dozens of afterimages all over the ring. Even though his opponents had promptly scattered, he had still been able to instantly kick all of them out of the ring.

With a frown, Elder Sun said, "This fellow has grown even stronger. The multiple character faction...is indeed a faction of geniuses."

After some thought, he said, "For the following rounds, send some strong teams after them. Don't make it too obvious, but try to tire him out. When he runs out of energy, send Little Zhou's student in and cripple him."

Liu Hong answered with a nod.

It wasn't surprising that Elder Sun wanted to cripple Su Yu as well. Of course, he wasn't angry at Su Yu. Rather, he was angry at Bai Feng for killing a Cloudbreach student of his. And he was now venting that anger on Su Yu.

...

In the ring.

Su Yu had decided to end the match promptly. This was only the first match and his opponents were only some weak students. Was he supposed to hide his strength to make him look somewhat equal to these weak students? If he did that, he might really end up ruining his own reputation.

After easily defeating his five opponents, he cupped his hands at them before leaving the ring. The team followed behind him. Instead of separating from them, Zhou Hao was finally standing with them.

Lin Yao and the rest were still slightly dazed. They weren't surprised by the victory. They were only surprised by the fact that Zhou Hao was their teammate. That bastard Xia Huyou had spent such a long time with them earlier. Why had that bastard not said anything to them? They had even wasted quite a lot of time talking to Xia Huyou in an attempt to establish a rapport before the match.

Looking at Zhou Hao, Liu He frowned. Meanwhile, Zhou Hao did not even spare Liu He a glance. All his attention was on the strong students.

...

Apart from one exception, no strong teams had encountered each other so far.

The single exception was the match involving the teams of two top 100 students. The fight between the two top 100 students was intense. A winner was only decided after about seven to eight minutes.

A few students clad in cloaks and masks had also participated in the matches, but Su Yu had not paid much attention to them. Those were probably the myriad race students. They had all been masked and fighting without using any special techniques or abilities, so there really wasn't anything one could discover from their matches anyway.

Before long, it was team 888's turn to fight.

That was the team Wu Jia was in.

With one glance, Su Yu lost interest in the match. Wu Jia had been lucky to be assigned to Li Minyu's team. Li Minyu was the fifth ranked student in the top 100. This was a very strong team.

That was especially true considering the fact that Wu Jia herself was also a top 100 student. She was definitely not a pushover.

It would seem like Liu Hong had not bothered targeting Wu Jia. Her team was actually strong enough to perhaps even enter the top five in the tournament. It was unclear if Liu Hong was fearful of Chen Yong or if there was a different reason. In any case, he had left Wu Jia alone.

With a fifth ranked student in their team, they were able to easily defeat their opponents. These matches had thoroughly exposed the gap between the different students of the academy.

Chapter 439: The Reliable Liu Hong (3)

While the matches were progressing.

Beyond the stage.

Five students were huddled together.

Jia Mingzhen had a wide smile on his face as he spoke with voice transmission, "Guys, do we snatch the first place for ourselves? Old Wan told us to give these students some motivation, but it doesn't feel like these students need any further motivation. Each of them is as eager as a mad dog. Do we still need to do anything?"

All five of them were elders.

And all of them had been assigned to the same team. This wasn't due to luck. Nor was it a coincidence. They had simply cheated.

"Old Jia, stop messing around."

The sole female elder in the group said, "We are not pretending to be new students for fun. Don't waste our time on needless endeavors. What is the update on your side?"

Jia Mingzhen said, "There's no rush. I think we have gone about this the wrong way. We shouldn't have pretended to be the students of elders. Because of this, some people are afraid of approaching us. But that doesn't matter. I have been selling the personal items of some elders in the black market to earn a large sum of money for myself. Before long, someone will notice what I'm doing. As long as I give them enough blackmail material, they will definitely contact me."

"That's a good idea. Keep at it, then. There is also some progress on our side..."

The female elder said, "There is actually a bounty for Su Yu in the cult. And the reward is quite high. Why don't we kidnap him and use him as bait?"

Jia Mingzhen said, "Wow. You guys sure are ruthless. That would be boring. How about forcing Su Yu to join the cult instead? With his talent, he will definitely become an important member of the cult. Maybe he can even attract the attention of some Mountainseas and Sunmoons."

"You..."

They were speechless. Was he not ashamed of calling them ruthless?

Jia Mingzhen said, "I'm serious! Of course, there are too many eyes on Su Yu. So I believe people like Huang Qifeng would be a better option instead. What do you think? Or maybe we can use a heavyweight for this plan. What do you guys think about Zhou Pingsheng?"

"..."

They looked at him and frowned.

Jia Mingzhen explained, "The names I mentioned are the people currently filled with resentment. And the cult is definitely aware of that. In fact, I suspect that the cult has already contacted some of them."

"Old Jia, that doesn't matter. We should never force one of us to join the cult. You are harboring a very dangerous thought."

Jia Mingzhen disagreed. He said, "The hearts of some people in the academy have changed long ago. Forget it. Since you guys disagree, there is no need to move forward with this plan. But I believe that if things continue as they are, either the single or the multiple character faction would start losing some members to the cult."

Jia Mingzhen did not say anything else. The conflict between the two factions was starting to get out of hand. And it was very likely that the losing side would start consorting with the cult.

After all, the cult had always paid close attention to the major academies.

...

While the elders were chatting among themselves, the matches continued.

Nothing surprising had happened during the first round. Nothing dramatic, like a dark horse, had appeared.

After about two and a half hours, the first round came to an end.

Out of the 1,666 teams, 833 teams remained.

Once again, Liu Hong stepped onto the stage. With a smile, he said, "The first round is over. There are 833 teams remaining. The academy is proud of all of you. Congratulations. But this is merely the start of the tournament. The following matches will only be more and more intense. Remember. If you encounter an opponent you clearly can't defeat, stubbornly fighting that opponent to death is a foolish choice. Naturally, the following round will also be harder than the previous round."

A wide smile bloomed on his face as he announced, "For the second round, we will be using a variation of the king of the hill format. 20 rings will be provided, and 20 teams will be allowed to defend the rings."

The other teams will be allowed to challenge the defenders. The teams with three victories will advance to the next round. Feel free to get in a ring if you're confident. Just remember that a single defeat is enough to eliminate you from the tournament.

"This format will allow the truly strong students to properly showcase their abilities. A single-elimination format like the previous round is honestly too boring."

He had just finished making his announcement when someone from the Discipline Hall protested, "Teaching Assistant Liu, this won't be a fair format. There is too much room for manipulation."

Liu Hong asked, "How is it unfair? We are here to pick the strongest team. The losers will be eliminated. What is unfair about this?"

"What if three strong teams decide to challenge a single team consecutively?"

Liu Hong smiled and said, "Is that the fault of the three challengers? The defending team can only blame themselves for being too weak. If they are strong enough, they will win. This is still a valid format to pick the strongest students out of all the participants. As long as this does not change, what is the issue? As for the choices of the students, that has nothing to do with us. As cultural researchers, the ability to actually use their brains is also important.

"For example, if someone is actually capable of making three strong teams challenge and tire out Zhan Hai's team, isn't that also proof of their ability? That does not break the rules. We are cultural researchers, not warriors. Are we supposed to stubbornly fight round after round with the traditional format?"

"I am doing this for everyone's benefit. This way, we will save a lot of time. With this format, a single winning team will be able to eliminate three other teams. After this round, no more than 200 teams will remain. Including the teams that end up defeated in their third match, more teams will be eliminated. The weaker students will stop wasting everyone's time while the stronger students can advance to the final round earlier.

"Having said that, this is also a good opportunity for the weaker students. Think about it. Maybe there are some stubborn strong teams that insist on challenging the other strong teams? That will be your opportunity. The strong teams will end up exhausting each other, giving you an opening to defeat them.

And they can only blame their foolishness for their defeat. It is perfectly normal for those with actual brains to survive until the very end. That's life.

"Strength, luck, and intelligence. All three factors are extremely important for a cultivator. As long as you know to grab the chance when it appears and use your brain well, you might even be able to face only weak teams and advance safely to the next round. This is your chance. Think about it. Will you stand a chance in a traditional format? What's the point of participating in this tournament if you have no chance of winning? Are you merely here to receive a beating and help the strong students showcase their talent?"

"If we let strength decide everything, can any of these students defeat people like Zhan Hai? We might as well cancel the tournament and just assign the slots to them."

"..."

Nobody said anything.

Liu Hong smiled and asked, "Any objections? If not, I will assume that everyone agrees to this format. And a format everyone agrees to is a fair format. Something won't be fair or unfair just because you claim so."

The person from the Discipline Hall looked at Old Huang. With a frown, Old Huang looked at Su Yu. There was clearly a reason behind this sudden change in format.

He had thought that these people would try to rig the matches, but instead, there was no need to do so. Liu Hong was basically setting up a format where the matchups could be openly manipulated without breaking any rules.

And the students would probably not object to this format. The stronger students would be more than happy to waste less time. As for the weaker students, this format would present them with an opportunity they didn't have before.

And this format would also prevent the clash of the stronger teams too early in the tournament. Old Huang stared at Liu Hong, who merely smiled calmly.

"Liu Hong..." Old Huang frowned and said, "Although this is a tournament organized by the single character faction, I hope you don't keep changing the rules."

Liu Hong smiled, "Hall Master Huang, I am merely learning from experience in real time. And look at how satisfied all the students are with this new format. The rules that everyone is happy with are the most suitable rules to have. This is only a tournament. What is the point of holding a tournament with rules that nobody is satisfied with?"

Old Huang sank into silence. Liu Hong was too unpredictable and annoying. And this fellow had not broken any academy rules, leaving him helpless. After a short silence, Old Huang nodded and said nothing else.

Liu Hong smiled and said, "In that case, the format of the second round is decided. As cultural researchers, we should use our brain more. Observe your opponents and make sure that you are the one countering your opponent instead of the one being countered."

At this time, Su Yu asked, "Teacher, for this format, would the winner be forced to stay in the ring to face the next challenger, or would they be allowed to leave the ring and pick their next fight? Also, what if no new challenger appears for a team with two victories?"

Liu Hong explained, "You are not allowed to leave the ring after winning a match. You have to stay there until you obtain three victories. As for the situation where nobody is willing to challenge a team that has won two matches, the solution is simple. That team will be allowed to pick one of the remaining teams as the challenger. If they win, they would get their third victory and advance to the next round."

A different person asked, "If that's the case, even winning three matches won't guarantee you an advancement. Even a team that has won three victories can be picked as the challenger in this situation. Am I understanding this right?"

Liu Hong answered, "Simply put, if there are two teams with two victories with no other opponents, the two of them can simply fight each other. Toward the end, there will definitely be a team with only one or two victories and no challengers left. That team will naturally be allowed to challenge any of the remaining teams. They might end up eliminating themselves or eliminating one or two teams with three victories. It's very simple. Don't say that this isn't fair. If you're capable enough, you can still win."

"In that case, won't some of the teams be forced to fight more matches than others?" someone questioned.

Liu Hong said, "Yes, but that isn't necessarily a good thing for the team that has waited until the very end to challenge the teams that have already won three matches. In fact, that is a stupid choice. They have avoided the weaker teams in the beginning and have instead waited until the very end where only the stronger teams are left. So it will be hard to say who are the actual ones benefiting from this."

Nobody else had any questions.

Liu Hong was right. If one didn't get their three victories earlier, one would only be left with the choice to challenge the stronger teams. After all, no weak team would be able to snatch three victories.

"If there are no other issues, let us begin. Remember, it's not necessarily a bad thing to fight first. Some people enjoy showing up late because they are strong, but the longer you wait, the stronger your opponents will be."

With that final reminder, Liu Hong announced, "The second round starts now."

The students started looking at each other. Should they go first, or should they wait? As for Su Yu, he couldn't even be bothered to say anything. He started walking toward a ring with no hesitation.

It would be better to finish his matches earlier so that he would have enough time to rest. His enemies would definitely target him, so he might as well get it over with. The expressions of Liu He and the others changed.

This fellow was indeed behaving in an unpredictable manner. It did not make sense that a strong team would be the first to go up. Just look at Zhan Hai and the others. All of them were still waiting and observing.

The first teams to fight could easily end up being targeted by the other teams. Was Su Yu confident, or was he simply stupid? Shouldn't he make his decision after people like Zhan Hai fought? That way, he could at least avoid fighting the stronger teams.

In fact, a lot of people were thinking the same thing. As a result, Su Yu became the first person to step into a ring.

Ignoring his teammates, he looked down from the ring and said with a smile, "Let us set an example for everyone. Any challengers? Feel free to get into the ring. If you're here for a proper fight, we won't have any problems. But if you're deliberately targeting me, well, I can't promise what will happen to you in the ring."

After saying that, he looked toward a certain team in the crowd. That was the strongest team of the single character faction. Two of Zhou Pingsheng's students were in that group. Zheng Yuming's student was also there.

Silence descended.

Many gazes landed on the single character faction's team. Would they rise to the challenge now? Or would they wait until Su Yu's team was done with their second match before issuing a challenge?

But the other teams weren't stupid. Nobody was willing to waste their strength and test the strength of Su Yu's team for the single character faction. It was more likely that all three challenges to Su Yu's team would come from the single character faction.

In the spectating zone, Elder Sun's lips moved as he transmitted his voice to someone. This was the perfect opportunity. What were they still waiting for? The time to deal with Su Yu had finally arrived.

Liu Hong was indeed reliable. He had actually created such an excellent opportunity for them to openly take their revenge on Su Yu.

Chapter 440: The Crazy Su Yu (1)

Su Yu was standing in the ring.

His loud voice rang out, "The quarrel between the single and multiple character factions has persisted for many years, throwing the academy into disorder. The people of the academy have also strayed from

their paths because of this conflict. They no longer focus on research and cultivation. Everyone is busy scrambling for power and wealth. Everyone is fighting each other over our existing resources instead of developing new resources.

"This is not the Great Xia Cultural Research Academy I had imagined before joining. Here, people are busy fighting and scheming against each other. If it is something as simple as competition, it will naturally not be an issue. But even a simple tournament like this has turned into a big conspiracy. If the single character faction is really unwilling to let go of those slots, why bother holding this tournament?"

"Since you have decided to hold the tournament, at least make an effort to follow some rules. Are you not embarrassed of having your reputation plummet even further?"

Su Yu had a look of contempt as he glanced at Liu Hong, Elder Sun, and the other single character faction students. Liu Hong said nothing. Elder Sun frowned.

Su Yu smiled, "Since you have schemed and plotted, why bother trying to cover up your dirty deeds? Just be honest about it. I'm your target. Well, here I am. I don't care about the slot. But I have still decided to come.

"Since you have decided to be a snake, embrace it. Don't learn from Teacher Liu and turn into a hypocrite instead of a proper snake. What's the point of keeping up the act if everyone already knows you're a hypocrite?"

Liu Hong's voice rang out, "Su Yu, watch your words. You know the punishment for slandering a teacher. Just a few days ago, some students have been punished for the same offense."

"The punishment is for the offense of slander." Su Yu smiled, "But that's not what I'm doing. I'm telling the truth. Who doesn't know about the conflict between the single and multiple character factions? You're already dirty. Why pretend to be clean? Teacher Liu, let me ask you something. Will the single character faction not target me if I hadn't said all these words?"

Looking down at the crowd from the ring, Su Yu raised his voice, "Since you're here for me, stop pretending. I'm here. You have managed to stuff even some of your people into my team. What are you still waiting for? What are you afraid of?"

"Has the single character faction fallen so far? Is it so difficult for you to deal with a mere new student? If you are capable, I welcome the challenge. If you are incapable, learn to shut up and mind your own business. You won't get far playing around with petty tricks every single day. Produce a few Sunmoons or cultivators unrivaled within the same cultivation level first before talking about replacing us."

"..."

Su Yu's words were deafening. A clamor slowly erupted from the crowd. In the ring, Liu He and the others had their heads lowered.

Su Yu had a look of disdain as he asked, "So after all this, none of you dares to meet me in a ring? Also, stop wasting time with a simple spar. Since you want to target me, let's make things simple. Let's fight to the death. This is what you want, right?"

Among the spectators, Chen Yong's expression changed.

He stood up and called out with a frown, "Su Yu!"

Su Yu looked over and smiled, "It's fine, Martial Uncle. These people are not enough to deal with me. If they have the guts to do so, I am willing to fight any single character faction in the same cultivation level to the death. If they can kill me, so be it. If they end up killed instead, they can only blame their lack of skill. If you keep creating trouble even when you don't have the ability to back your own actions, you deserve death."

Elder Sun stood up and coldly said, "Su Yu, you intend to fight to the death?"

Su Yu calmly asked, "Why not?"

Elder Sun looked at the single character faction students. But many of them avoided his gaze and looked down. When he saw that, his face fell.

Su Yu smiled, "Anyone with the courage is free to step into the ring. This is the only reason I've decided to leave my seclusion. You guys need to learn that as pieces of trash, you should shut your mouth and stop making so much noise.

"This tournament is a great chance for us to solve things. I will give you a chance. I doubt you dare to face me one on one. But we're now fighting in teams of five. As long as my teammates stay still and not stab me in the back, I will accept their inaction in the match and fight five of you alone. The losers will die. Do you dare to accept my challenge?"

Su Yu's voice grew even louder as he said, "Fine. How about this? Even if they decide to stab me in the back, I will still fight all nine of you alone. As long as you have the guts to make a move, I will have the guts to kill you. Do you dare?"

"..."

Silence descended.

After a while, someone snorted coldly, "This is blind arrogance."

"Blind arrogance?" Su Yu looked at that person and sneered, "You! Get in the ring. Sign the waiver and fight me to the death. If you're capable enough, feel free to kill me. Are you pieces of trash really so scared? You don't even have the courage to face me? What a waste of academy resources. Yes, as a member of the multiple character faction, I have used way more resources than any of you in cultivation. I have spent tens of thousands of merit points for my cultivation. So what? So what if you can use the same amount of resources to produce 10 single character faction students of the same cultivation level? Get in the ring and I'll show you that those 10 students are the same as lambs I can slaughter as I please."

"Bastard!"

"He has only been in the academy for a few months! How dare he be so arrogant!"

"Does he really believe that nobody can defeat him?"

"..."

One single character faction student after another shouted in anger. But the other students remained silent. None of them said anything.

They couldn't understand why Su Yu had decided to pick this moment to challenge the single character faction. This didn't seem like the smart thing to do. Was he not afraid of death?

The answer was yes. He was afraid of death. But at this very moment, he wanted nothing more than to fight to his heart's content. To fight without holding anything back.

Thus, he continued challenging the single character faction, "The single character faction, or to be precise, the Character Faculty, has changed long ago. Members of the single character faction will be given preferential treatments and good teachers. I have nothing to say about their prejudice toward me since I am a member of an opposing faction. But how about the other students? Those with slightly lacking talent or background will be sidelined. And after suffering such prejudice for a few years, these students will reach 30 years old. The academy will then consider them hopeless and give up on them.

"Because of the single character faction's prejudice, these people have missed out on the chance to properly cultivate during their prime. They are left wasting their lives away. And after reaching an old age, they will be forced to join a tournament like this and compete against people young enough to be their grandchildren just for an opportunity.

"To these people, I have something to say. I hate to be honest, but this tournament is being held for my sake. Without me, there would be no meaning to this tournament. Those important individuals will merely watch with amusement while all of you are out here fighting with everything you have.

"Is this what you want? Is this what you pursue? Is this the great cultural research academy of your dreams? How ridiculous. The academy has indeed grown after Principal Wan became the principal. But only a bunch of selfish individuals have benefited from the growth. The influential families rose in power and numerous factions formed. Any dissident or outlier will be suppressed. The blooming of a hundred schools of thought? Numerous teachings prospering together? That is nothing but a joke. In the current academy, the various factions such as the beast taming faction, the pillmaking faction, and the talisman faction are all left playing second fiddle to the single character faction."

Standing before thousands of people, Su Yu preached on and on.

There were a few times when Elder Sun wanted to stop Su Yu, but he was kept still by a certain powerful pressure.

Su Yu continued, "The academy has long declined. It looks strong, but it no longer has stable foundations. I am a weakling. I do not know the thoughts of our principal and elders. I only know that if I have to go to the battlefield with these people, I would probably spend more time worrying about being stabbed in the back than the enemies. Rather than putting so much effort to guard against backstabs, I might as well take this chance to take them out. That way, I will be able to give my all in fighting the actual enemies when the time comes for me to enter the battlefield as well."

At this point, someone interjected. The cold voice said, "Su Yu, there is no need to sing yourself praises while stepping on your rivals. The conflict between the single and multiple character factions has nothing to do with us. We are only here for the slots. Why waste our time with this speech?"

Su Yu looked over and said, "You're right. Sure enough, nobody cares about things that do not directly concern them. Zhan Hai, this matter might not concern you. But let me ask you a question. If you are sent to the battlefield with the single character faction members, would you dare to leave your back to them?"

Zhan Hai indifferently replied, "There is no need for me to do that as I will never fight alongside them."
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"Hahaha!" Su Yu roared with laughter, "Look at how great the single character faction is! Fifty years ago, did the people dare to leave their backs to the predecessors of the multiple character faction?"

Su Yu looked at the elders and said, "Do you understand now? The conflict between the single and multiple character factions is no longer a personal grudge. It has long since escalated to a level where the entire academy, the entire Great Xia, or even the entire Human Realm is affected."

A lot of people frowned and sank into thought.

Su Yu said, "I guess it's pointless to keep preaching. Someone once said that everyone is a bystander when it is someone else facing the blade. When it is their turn to face the blade, the others will be the bystander as well, leaving them to fight alone. Thus, even if these people end up suffering from their inaction, they deserve it."

At this time, Liu Hong asked, "Are you done with your speech? If you are, let's continue with the tournament. A mere student like you is still incapable of changing the state of affairs in the Human Realm, in Great Xia, and in the academy. The higher you stand, the more you see. Su Yu, what you see might not be the same as what we see."

"Are you standing very high?" Su Yu smiled, "As a cultivator, if I lack the courage to even voice my thoughts, what's the point of my cultivation? I say what I have in my mind. I don't follow the trends and echo popular sentiment just so that I can feel good about myself."

He then looked at the students again. "What are you waiting for? Are all of you afraid? You don't have the courage to fight me to the death? I was worried that you guys would be too scared to fight me alone. But even when I'm offering to face five of you alone, you're still scared?"

"Su Yu, do you really think that you're very strong?" Zhan Hai frowned and said, "Like I said, we are only here for the slots. Stop wasting our time. This is not your lecture hall. If you enjoy lecturing so much, hold a public lecture after the tournament. You are free to talk as long as you want then."

"You are a callous man." Su Yu raised his voice, "Even if you manage to grow into a powerful cultivator in the future, you will only be a selfish expert who does not care even if all your comrades die."

Zhan Hai coldly said, "Don't waste your time throwing accusations at everyone who disagrees with you. Su Yu, don't make the mistake of believing that you are the smartest person in the world."

He knew very well what Su Yu was trying to do here. But that did not concern him. What could Su Yu change? Nothing!

Apart from swaying the minds of some fools who would join him in his resistance, he wouldn't be able to accomplish anything. And those hot-blooded fools would only end up dying miserable deaths because of him. They would be nothing but cannon fodder.

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