

## Stranger 431

Chapter 431: Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art

“Qingge, watch out!” The Harmony cried out suddenly and drew everyone’s attention. When they looked, they saw Ye Qing piercing through a river of yellow sand with a single punch.

Like a lone cavalry, Ye Qing continued forward despite the ungodly amount of sand crashing down on him. Why would he fear some sand when he didn’t fear even an army of thousands?

*“Break Through”*

The technique pierced through layer after layer of sand and brought Ye Qing to Chu Qingge as swift as the wind. Chu Qingge couldn’t help but frown a little when she saw this. Her senses were telling her that Ye Qing’s energies were weak, and his essence was inconspicuous. If not for the fact that he was piercing through her sand like it was paper, she could’ve mistaken him for an ordinary person.

“Rise!” Chu Qingge commanded and raised her arms. The ground shook, and the yellow sand churned like a drake rolling on his back.

The shaking ground did nothing to stop Ye Qing’s rush, however. He continued to race forward like he was treading on flat land. That was because the rolling sand would calm down right before his foot would hit the ground. It was as if he had cast some sort of suppression magic on his feet.

When he was about twenty meters away from Chu Qingge, Ye Qing abruptly leaned forward and kicked off the ground with both feet. His jump was so powerful that the sand within three meters of him deflated and inflated like it was a cushion.

Chu Qingge flinched when Ye Qing took his leap. It was because she couldn’t see Ye Qing anywhere.

Chu Qingge instinctively wanted to put some distance between herself and Ye Qing, but she had just taken a step backward when suddenly, she froze and zoned out like her consciousness just suddenly decided to take a break. At the sametime, Ye Qing reappeared in front of Chu Qingge and threw a powerful punch that broke down the Black Tortoise Force surrounding her like paper.

“Break Through” was the best technique he possessed when going up against a powerful defense. Ye Qing had already been caught off guard by the “Black Tortoise Force” once. He wasn’t the type of person to make the same mistake a second time.

The punch was infused with his qi, essence and spirit, and they were all focused on a single point. A set of metal armor could block a sword strike with ease, but not a bullet. The “Black Tortoise Force’s” ability to switch states made it incredibly difficult to overcome, but not even it could defend against a full-powered attack that was focused on a single point.

After the punch pierced through Chu Qingge’s “Black Tortoise Force”, Ye Qing suddenly withdrew most of his strength. His full-powered punch could potentially overwhelm even an ordinary Spirit Master, much less a late-stage Spirit Purifier. Chu Qingge was strong, but she wasn’t a body-tempering warrior. Her physical strength was average at best. If she took a full-powered punch from him, she would be lucky to escape with her life.

They were colleagues working for the same department, and they had fought together at the Demon's Tomb before. Of course she didn't want to kill her or put her in a bad spot. That was why he withdrew most of his strength and left just enough to scatter the energies in her body and incapacitate her.

He flinched when his fist finally touched Chu Qingge's body, however. An invisible ripple suddenly washed out of the warrioress, and the next thing he knew, his force had been reflected right back at him!

A muffled grunt escaped Ye Qing's lips as he staggered away from Chu Qingge. Every time he took a step, the sand beneath his foot would shudder a little.

As if on cue, Chu Qingge's eyes regained their focus as she said, "Thank you for showing mercy, Brother Ye."

She didn't press the attack, and she wore a meaningful smirk on her face as she briefly glanced at the ground.

"Heh. You too," Ye Qing replied just as meaningfully while hanging his arms close to his body.

Chu Qingge was talking about the fact that he had withdrawn his strength at the last minute, and Ye Qing was talking about the fact that Chu Qingge hadn't pressed the attack while he was recovering. That was just the surface-level subtexts, however, and both participants knew about it.

Chu Qingge must have broken out of the "Heavenly Demon Captures The Soul" since nearly the beginning, but she pretended that she hadn't to bait him into attacking her with all his might. If he hadn't pulled his punch, he would probably be rolling back and forth on the ground and screaming in pain right now.

Unfortunately, Ye Qing withdrew his strength at the last moment and unintentionally saved himself from much self-inflicted pain. Otherwise, it would've been very bad for him.

Chu Qingge wasn't the only one who had set up a trap for their opponent, however. After Ye Qing was pushed back by his own force, he neutralized the reflected attack by redirecting it toward the underground using the "Nine Impetus of Tai Chi". While doing so, he put on a convincing act of weakness to bait Chu Qingge into pressing the attack. Had she fallen for his ruse, Ye Qing would've dealt her a huge blow and potentially won the fight there and then.

"You're already an extraordinary warrior, but that Strange Artifact makes you outright invincible." Ye Qing sighed. "It looks like this is where my journey ends."

"No need to test me, Brother Ye," Chu Qingge said with clear eyes that looked like they could see through any deception. "The Strange Artifact I used to reflect your attack is called Reflection. It is a Soulstealer-class Strange Artifact that can reflect any attack below the Spirit Master stage back to my enemies."

"However, I can only use it once every half a teatime, so you don't need to worry about it, at least not now."

“Ahem... Is that so?” Ye Qing coughed. He was trying to sound out Chu Qingge earlier, but he hadn’t expected her to just divulge her secret so easily. In fact, he had heard of Reflection before and suspected that that was the Strange Artifact she used to reflect his attack back to him, so he knew for certain that she hadn’t lied. “I suppose I can struggle a little longer then.”

Chu Qingge bloomed into a bright, dazzling smile when she heard his reply. “Good, because I’m going to turn serious now, Brother Ye. Don’t hold back.”

As soon as she finished, Chu Qingge stomped the ground. The force Ye Qing had redirected underground immediately exploded into a shower of sand.

At the same time, Chu Qingge and Ye Qing charged into the sand. The sand that just fell to the ground were blown up so high that it blotted out the sun.

The silhouette of a majestic-looking man wearing a tall crown and a dragon robe appeared into view. It was the silhouette of the Son of Heaven himself.

As soon as it appeared, a vast, majestic aura encompassed both heaven and earth.

When the emperor descends, the four seas shall bow to his might.

Bang!

The silhouette made a fist and threw a punch. The sand scattered like panicking civilians hurrying away from the Son of Heaven’s wrath and revealed Ye Qing.

Ye Qing’s energies were being suppressed by the terrifying silhouette. His mind was quaking against his will as well. Having no time to come up with a plan, he had no choice but to force himself to unleash “Break Through”.

As soon as their forces met, Ye Qing’s fist force crumbled like an egg against a rock. The powerful punch sent him flying to the distance.

“The ‘Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art’?!”

“She’s a woman, and yet she managed to master the ‘Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art’ to this extent? Unbelievable!”

“Indeed. She’s a true genius!”

Outside the platform, everyone who saw the silhouette of the Son of Heaven—so solid that it might as well be real—was stunned. Some people had even risen to their feet before they knew it.

They weren’t overreacting. If the “Four Symbols of Supremacy” was a secret art that only members of the imperial family could learn, then the “Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art” was a forbidden art that only a handful of imperial members were allowed to learn. Specifically, only those who shared blood with the emperor were allowed to learn it.

The reason wasn’t just political but also practical. Only those who shared blood with the emperor were blessed with a rich amount of the Will of the Dragon and protected by the Will of the Empire. They were also the only ones who could withstand the cost of executing the “Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art” and unleash its full power.

For obvious reasons, the large majority of people who managed to grasp the “Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art” were male. But not only did Chu Qingge manage to learn the martial art, she could even manifest the Son of Heaven’s silhouette.

Forget the others, even Fang Muyun and Chu Wangsun were astonished by Chu Qingge’s accomplishment. Although Chu Wangsun was also a member of the imperial family, he was born under a collateral family and one of the disciples of the Chief Libationist, head of the Jixia Academy. Therefore, even he didn’t qualify to learn the martial art.

“When the Son of Heaven observes qi, it is like he is there in person. The four seas are calm, and the world is at peace.” Fang Muyun glanced at the Harmony King and sighed. “Miss Chu truly is one of a kind. Congratulations, Your Highness.”

“Congratulations, Your Highness.”

“Congratulations, Your Highness.”

Everyone else was congratulating the Harmony King with mixed expressions as well.

Although the Harmony King was a marquis and the current emperor’s uncle, he was considered incompetent and powerless. His only son was also ignorant, incompetent, slothful, and generally unbecoming of a marquis’ son. That was why a lot of people looked down on him in secret.

Chu Qingge’s performance was starting to change minds, however. It was rare for a woman to grasp the “Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art” to this extent. Barring exceptional circumstances, Emperor Jin Run was bound to regard her highly. To say that her future was bright would be an understatement. So long as Chu Qingge was still present, the court of the Harmony King would remain strong for at least a century.

“Thank you, thank you!”

The Harmony King was all smiles. He had no idea what the people were thinking, of course. He was just happy that his colleagues were complimenting his daughter.

Suddenly, someone exclaimed in surprise, “Huh? The Qing Emperor Junior is charging Chu Qingge. That’s not very smart, is it?”

On the screen, Ye Qing kicked off the ground and charged even faster toward the Son of Heaven’s silhouette as soon as he landed on his feet. Such was his strength that a pit appeared where he was standing.

The “Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art” was a grand, orthodox martial art belonging to the imperial family. Anyone within its influence would be severely weakened because the emperor stood above all strata. The last thing it feared was a head-on battle, which was why the best way to deal with the “Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art” was usually avoiding it.

Instead, Ye Qing was rushing forward to meet Chu Qingge at the center. It confused the spectators to say the least.

On the way, Ye Qing kept growing bigger and bigger while large patches of black fur grew out of his face, his arms and other parts of his body. At the same time, a violent, bloodthirsty, and maverick aura washed out and pushed back against the Son of Heaven’s majestic aura.

The contrast was stark. If the Son of Heaven's silhouette bespoke of greatness and majesty, wisdom and courage, then Ye Qing's aura was one thousand percent that of a lawless, unfettered rebel.

Chu Qingge sensed Ye Qing's aura, of course. She clenched her fists and threw a straight punch in his direction. In the sky, the Son of Heaven's silhouette did the same thing, except that there were dragons swimming around his body, and a terrible pressure encompassed both heaven and earth. Anyone and anything within its range wished to submit to the emperor.

Chu Qingge was executing the Stunning Dragon Fist, but the difference before and after she manifested the Son of Heaven's silhouette was like night and day. This punch felt like it could stun the nine heavens and suppress the four seas.

Ye Qing wasn't afraid, however. As he responded to the attack with his own punch, a demonic ape appeared behind him, let out a thunderous roar, and threw a punch as well.

BOOM!!!

Wind and thunder erupted from the point of impact. The ground where they were standing collapsed, and astral qi spun the surrounding sand into a yellow cyclone that was at least sixty meters tall. The world shook like it would fall apart at any moment.

The first clash went to Chu Qingge. She didn't move an inch, but Ye Qing was pushed back a few steps.

Ye Qing was relentless, however. He let out another full-throated roar, bent his knees slightly, and leaped into the air with his fists clasped together and raised over his head. He brought down his hand as if he would flatten Chu Qingge like a pancake.

The Son of Heaven raised with his right hand and gathered the surrounding energies. He was able to catch Ye Qing's wrists at the last second.

Then, the silhouette exerted its strength and smashed Ye Qing into the ground instead.

Before the Son of Heaven could withdraw his arm, Ye Qing abruptly leaped out of the deep pit he had created and caught the arm. Then, he pulled the silhouette toward him before smashing his shoulder into his chest.

#### Chapter 432: The Demonic Ape VS The Son of Heaven

The demonic apes footsteps shook the nine provinces, and the shoulder charge felt like it could topple the heavens themselves. The Son of Heavens silhouette staggered back as purple qi leaked out of his body, and he grew a little more transparent than before.

Chu Qingges face turned white, and a trail of blood flowed down her cheeks. Despite this, her eyes were filled with fighting spirit. She made a hand seal before bringing her hands down in one smooth motion.

An imperial seal appeared in the heavens. It was square-shaped and facing toward the four directions. The heavens and the earth formed its surfaces, and nine dragons were swimming around them. The words inscribed on the seal was, The sea is calm, all is peaceful under the heavens.

#### *Peace Under Heaven Seal*

The nine dragons acted as guards as the seal descended. The image of a peaceful world where the people lived in peace appeared.

Wind ceased, clouds paused, and qi stopped. The chaotic energies in the air, the rampaging gale, and the dancing sand all came to a halt at the same time.

For a time, the only thing that was moving was the seal, and it was brimming with the might of the world itself.

Under the seal, Ye Qing felt his energies dissipating, and his mind quaking like an earthquake. Before he could react, the seal slammed into him and sent him flying for a good distance.

He immediately climbed back to his feet and charged toward Chu Qingge again, however. It was as if the seal dealt no damage to him whatsoever.

Not one to shy away from battle, Chu Qingge too clenched her fists and charged forward. The duo was quickly locked in an epic battle.

Chu Qingges Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art was powerful, orthodox, and grand. It was like she had become the avatar of an Emperor of the Ages[1]

On the other hand, Ye Qing was a Chaos Demon Ape that heralded chaos and rebellion. Haughty and unruly, brutal and chaotic, his existence was meant to spread chaos and turn the world upside down. He was the rebel who would change the face of humanity forever; give the sun and the moon a new make-up.

For a time, the duo were locked in a stalemate.

What

Outside the platform, the Harmony King was utterly flabbergasted by this. He didnt think that Chu Qingge would fail to defeat Ye Qing even after she executed the Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art.

Thats the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra, isnt it? Someone exclaimed in astonishment as they watched Ye Qing wreaking havoc on the platform.

Yep, someone echoed in agreement.

Isnt that the martial art of one of the Thirteen Brigands, Chen Ah Sheng? Where did the Qing Emperor Junior come by this martial art, Lord Hong? Someone asked.

Hong Jianglong had done his homework, so he wasnt perturbed in the slightest. He explained, Joyless is practicing the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra, but it has nothing to do with Chen Ah Sheng.

Chen Ah Sheng hails from the Chaos Demon Tempering Sect of the thirty-six unorthodox sects, and the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutras ultimate martial art is the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra. While Chen Ah Sheng is infamous for it, its hardly a martial art that only he knows.

One of my seniors shares a good relationship with the Chaos Demon Tempering Sect because he once did them a huge favor. As thanks, they decided to give him a copy of the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra. Later, he submitted it to the Tower of Secrets.

Unfortunately, it takes an insane amount of effort and natural treasures to practice the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra, which is why very few people decided to pick it up despite its strengths. It is also why few people know that we own a copy of the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra.

I see! Everyone oohed and aahed at his answer. Lei Xiaodan was the only one who shot him a meaningful look.

Hong Jianglong paid him no attention. So what if Lei Xiaodan knew he was bullshitting out of his mouth? He could never prove it.

He and Ye Qing had come up with this explanation after Ye Qing told him about the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra a few days ago. After all, as a participant of the Hidden Dragon Meet, Ye Qing was going to have to reveal one or more of his trump cards eventually. If they didnt come up with a proper excuse beforehand, it was highly likely that an evildoer would try to make use of this opening. The explanation prevented such a thing from happening and allowed Ye Qing to use the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra as much as he pleased from now on.

That said, not even Hong Jianglong knew that Ye Qing had cultivated the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra to this extent until today. Somehow, the Patrolman somehow created his Chaos Demon Ape Body already.

Ye Qings progres was so unbelievable that Hong Jianglong couldnt help but wonder if he was still dreaming or something. It hadnt even been half a month since Ye Qing came upon the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra. Although the Martial Tower could greatly accelerate a warriors martial progress, it was hardly a miracle worker. There was no way it could enable a warrior to hit the journeyman level of the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra in just a couple of days.

If it could, their grunts would be Grandmasters, and their heads would be Sages already.

On the platform, Ye Qing and Chu Qingges battle had reached the climax. Chu Qingge had sent Ye Qing flying with the Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art dozens of times at this point, and one only needed to look at the blood-soaked Ye Qing to know how much damage she dealt.

However, Ye Qing refused to stay down. His eyes were bloodshot, and his bloodthirst was so strong that it was almost visible. No matter how many times he was blown back and dealt a severe blow, he always climbed back to his feet and charged Chu Qingge again like a fearless berserker.

A shame. It looks like this is Miss Chus defeat Lei Xiaodan sighed.

What nonsense are you talking about? The Harmony King retorted instantly. Qingge has been kicking that brats ass this whole time! Theres no way she would lose! You might want to get your eyes checked out, Xiaodan!

Lei Xiaodan smiled. Would you like to make a bet, Your Highness?

Of course not! Im not falling for this a second time, you cunning man! The Harmony King declared with surprising wisdom before returning his attention back to the platform.

Back in the battlefield, Ye Qing staggered back after receiving a powerful punch from the Son of Heavens silhouette. But instead of worry, his eyes lit up with delight and triumph. This is my chance!

Chu Qingges Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art was scarily powerful. The silhouette she manifested not only possessed a potent aura that weakened him just by existing near him, every technique it unleashed carried an unbelievable amount of power and pressure. It could even suppress his energies and stun the mind.

As if that wasn't enough, the silhouette could see through all deceptions and identify the weak spots in his energies as well, so despite having entered the journeyman level in the Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra, he was unable to gain any advantage whatsoever. His energies were suppressed to the point where he was operating at half of his normal strength, and every technique he executed be it a physical technique such as Divide and Break Through, or a mental technique like Heavenly Demon Captures The Soul, was predicted and dismantled by Chu Qingge in the best way possible. It was easily one of the most passive and frustrating battles he had ever fought.

However, the Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art had one major weakness. It ate away at the warriors stamina like a gluttonous demon. On the other hand, the Chaos Demon Ape Body was strong, tenacious, and capable of rapid regeneration. The last thing it was afraid of was energy cost.

In Ye Qings opinion, the only way to defeat Chu Qingge while the Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art was active was to deplete her stamina. That was why he transformed into the Chaos Demon Ape and attacked her with wild abandon. This way, she would be forced to use up her astral qi and spirit whether she liked it or not.

As expected, he got his ass kicked by Chu Qingge at the beginning. After that one successful counterattack at the beginning, he was unable to get a single attack in for the longest time. However, the Son of Heavens silhouette grew weaker and weaker over time. For example, the punch just now was at least several times weaker than what it was at the beginning. He knew this because it only pushed him back a few steps instead of sending him flying through the air like before. Besides that, his demonic thought told him that Chu Qingge looked a little dazed. It was an expression he would never see on the womans face unless she was so exhausted she couldn't even maintain her focus.

Some opportunities only knock once. Sucking in a deep breath, Ye Qing grew another meter in height and pushed away the surrounding sand with a burst of vigor. Then, he raised his fists into the sky and hammered the ground with all his might. Like a calm lake that was suddenly struck by a giant rock, the ground shook violently and caused Chu Qingge to stagger on her feet.

At the same time, Ye Qing appeared in front of the Son of Heavens silhouette in the blink of an eye using Earth Contraction Magic, grabbing his head with one hand and his fist with the other. Then, he squeezed and pulled with all his might.

RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!

A terrible bellow escaped Ye Qings lungs as multiple veins popped on his muscles, and blood oozed out of his pores. The Son of Heavens head was crushed, and his right arm was ripped off his sockets just like that.

Pwack!

The second the silhouettes head was crushed, the blood abruptly drained away from Chu Qingges face. A mouthful of blood burst out of her lips as she wobbled unsteadily on her feet.

Ye Qings bones and muscles cracked like fireworks as he slowly shrank back down to human size. Blood was pouring out of his eyes, ears, nose and mouth, but instead of tending to his own wounds, he ran over to Chu Qingge and fed her a pill.

As soon as the pill entered her mouth, a bit of reddishness returned to Chu Qingges deathly pale face, and her eyes slowly regained their focus as well. She asked weakly, Is this Renewal?



That it is, Miss Qingge. Your mind is as keen as ever. How do you feel? Ye Qing smiled and let go of Chu Qingges head. Then, he let out a sigh of relief.

After he destroyed the Son of Heavens silhouette, Ye Qing immediately sensed disorder and signs of a rebound in Chu Qingges spirit. If he allowed the rebound to occur, he had no doubt that her mind would suffer a tremendous amount of damage. That was why he fed her the Renewal he received from Longing as soon as he returned to normal.

Although Nature's Water was a tad more effective than Renewal, and he didnt mind sharing it with Chu Qingge, it was too valuable to reveal in front of an audience. He already had plenty of powerful enemies. He didnt need to create more for himself.

Im fine now. Thank you, Brother Ye. Chu Qingge thanked him sincerely. My mind wouldve suffered quite the damage if not for your Renewal. Ill be sure to repay your kindness later.

Youre welcome, Miss Qingge, but its just a Renewal. Your safety is far more important, Ye Qing replied before teasing her a little, After all, I doubt Ill be able to walk away from this mountain alive if something bad were to happen to you.

Ye Qings face was covered in blood, but his smile was bright and pure. Infected by his smile, the small sliver of regret gripping Chu Qingges insides for having lost to Ye Qing vanished like smoke. She said smilingly, You exaggerate. This is a no-holds-barred duel where killing your opponents is allowed. Of course one or both of the duelists are going to walk away with some injuries. On that note, congratulations on your victory, Brother Ye.

Ye Qing replied humbly, I was just lucky. You would probably win if you managed to hold out a little longer.

No need to act humble, Brother Ye. A win is a win. Even if I did manage to hold out, youre still a long way from reaching your limits yet, arent you? Chu Qingge replied candidly.

During the battle, she had used the Soulstealer-class Strange Artifact, Reflection, in an attempt to catch Ye Qing off guard, while Ye Qing hadnt used a single Strange Artifact from the start until the end. It was clear that he hadnt gone all out, and that her defeat was well-deserved.

Im going to win our next duel, though. Chu Qingge declared confidently.

Oh yeah? I look forward to it. Ye Qing smiled back.

The sun was setting, and the yellow sand was dancing freely in the wind. It was a beautiful, fantastical moment.

How could this be? Why did Qingge lose?

Outside the arena, the Harmony King was quite panicked when he saw that Chu Qingge was injured. He let out a sigh of relief only after he confirmed that she was fine. However, he still couldnt understand why Qingge had lost.

Shes had the upper hand the entire time after she used the Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art, so how did she lose?

1. The original text is , meaning the One Emperor to be remembered for the ages. In our world, most people agree that the only one who fits the bill is Qin Shi Huang, the man who united the continent and became the first emperor of China.

## Chapter 433: Dream Butterfly

“Miss Chu is extremely gifted, and the ‘Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art’ is a godlike martial art, Your Highness. However, she is ultimately too young. She simply cannot maintain the ‘Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art’ for too long.”

Lei Xiaodan explained, “On the other hand, Young Ye had reached the journeyman level in the ‘Chaos Demon Ape Body Tempering Sutra’ and forged an imperfect Chaos Demon Ape Body. In this form, he possesses an incredible amount of vigor and regeneration. That is why he attacked Miss Chu again and again even though he was no match for her. It is to force her to deplete her stamina until she is too weak to defend against his final counterattack.”

“I see! So that bastard only won because he cheated!” The Harmony King nodded and exclaimed in realization.

“Er... that’s not entirely true, Your Highness. I suppose you can interpret it as cheating, but it’s common sense to strike the enemy’s weak spot with one’s strength, so—”

Lei Xiaodan tried to explain himself, but the Harmony King cut him off before he could continue. “It’s fine. I completely understand what you mean. He’s a man, and he couldn’t even fight a girl without resorting to cheap tactics and cowardly strategy. There is not a shred of manliness in him whatsoever.”

The Harmony King continued with dripping disdain, “As if that’s not enough, he’s a pretentious bastard who’s trying to worm his way into Qingge’s good graces. The nerve of him! I’ve never met a more shameless bastard in my life!”

The sight of Ye Qing and his daughter chatting happily away with each other annoyed the Harmony King. Chu Qingge was born with an apathetic personality, and she rarely interacted with any men. Even as her dad, he rarely saw her opening herself up to someone the way she was currently doing with Ye Qing, much less anyone else. That was why he couldn’t help but feel increasingly jealous and annoyed with Ye Qing.

“I’m warning you now, Jianglong, but you better keep that bastard away from my Qingge,” the Harmony King abruptly looked at Hong Jianglong and uttered.

Personally, Hong Jianglong didn’t think that Ye Qing was a poor match for Qingge though. They were both young geniuses with a bright future ahead of them. However, he could understand why a dad would find it difficult to accept this, much less someone like the Harmony King...

It was at this moment Ye Qing and Chu Qingge teleported out of the platform at the same time.

“Are you okay, Qingge?” The Harmony King immediately went up to his daughter and asked concernedly.

“I’m fine, father. You don’t need to worry about me,” Chu Qingge responded with a smile.

“Good, good.” The Harmony King consoled her. “Losing a duel once in a while is perfectly normal. It’s not like you went all out. Nothing is more important than your health, so don’t be angry, and definitely don’t be sad, alright?”

“Don’t worry, father. I’m not sad or angry. Also, I have no qualms with this defeat. Ye Qing is definitely the better warrior between the two of us,” Chu Qing replied while shooting Ye Qing a glance.

The Harmony King’s wariness shot up to a hundred when he saw this. “Daughter, it’s important to protect oneself when you’re away from the safety of your home. It is especially important to avoid shady people who look like something on the outside, but are really arrogant, boastful, and cheating bastards on the inside...”

“I understand, father.” Chu Qingge smirked a little. Of course she understood what the Harmony King was implying.

When the Harmony King noticed that Ye Qing was standing far too close for his comfort, he immediately shooed him away like a dog, “What are you looking at, boy? I’m talking to my daughter here! Stop eavesdropping and get out of my sight!”

“As you command, Your Highness,” Ye Qing replied while rubbing his nose. He didn’t know why, but it was clear that the Harmony King was hostile toward him. Best not to provoke the man if he could help it.

“I’ll be taking my leave, Miss Qingge.”

“Yeah. See you in a bit.” Chu Qingge nodded.

“Didn’t you hear what I say? Get. Lost!” The Harmony King blocked in front of Chu Qingge and glared at Ye Qing angrily.

Ye Qing wanted to roll his eyes, but he knew better than to indulge the impulse. After looking around for a bit, he went over to Luo Zhan, Gao Ningan and Chu Nianjiu.

Although they had all been disqualified, they were still allowed to observe the matches.

“Congratulations, Joyless!”

“You’re amazing, Joyless. I can’t believe you managed to beat Qingge!”

Both Gao Ningan and Chu Nianjiu congratulated him.

Even Luo Zhan stopped meditating temporarily and opened his eyes. “Congratulations, brother.”

“Thank you,” Ye Qing responded politely before observing Luo Zhan’s pallid complexion and weak energy. “Did you win, Brother Luo?”

“No. I lost to Jian Wusheng,” Luo Zhan answered frankly and without shame. “His ‘No Life, No I’ is incredibly strong. Assuming you’re matched up with him in the future, be sure to keep an eye out for it.”

“Thank you for the advice, Brother Luo. I will.” Ye Qing sat down beside Gao Ningnan and Chu Nianjiu before asking, “So, how are the rest of the matches going? Who won and who lost?”

Zhao Bu’er, Chu Renhe, Xu Rulin and Zhang Tiancheng had finished their matches already. The only matches that were Wen Xiaonuan and Flower Butterfly on the second platform, Qi Xuanyun and Wei Bulao on the third platform, Zhuo Henshui and Chen Shaoyu on the sixth platform, and Zhao Lan and Lin Yuhuai on the seventh platform.

“Zhao Bu’er defeated Chu Renhe, and Xu Rulin defeated Zhang Tiancheng,” Chu Nianjiu replied in a succinct manner.

“Zhao Bu’er won?” Ye Qing lifted an eyebrow. He wasn’t surprised that Xu Rulin could beat Zhang Tiancheng. After all, his cultivation level, combat experience and strength were all superior to his opponent’s. However, the outcome of the match between Chu Renhe and Zhao Bu’er definitely surprised him.

As someone who fought Chu Renhe before, he knew very well that the inspector general was anything but a weakling. He also owned a Strange Artifact that possessed both offensive and defensive capabilities. That was why he wasn’t expecting him to lose to Zhao Bu’er, a peer in terms of cultivation level.

“Oh yes. Not only did he defeat Chu Renhe, he kicked his ass harder than anyone else in this tournament. Just look at Chu Renhe’s head!” Gao Ningnan exclaimed with a good dose of schadenfreude in his voice.

Ye Qing looked. Right now, the inspector general’s head was as bald and shiny as a light bulb. The corners of his lips turned up uncontrollably as he exclaimed, “Holy shit! What the heck happened to him?”

“It’s like this...”

Gao Ningnan proceeded to tell Ye Qing everything about the fight between Zhao Bu’er and Chu Renhe. When he was done, he glanced at Chu Renhe and snickered. “It’s a shame you didn’t end your match sooner. When he left the platform, his head looked like a dog had chewed on it, and his face was so black you would think that his father just died. Ooh, it was a riot!”

Zhao Bu’er was sitting quite far away from them, but he still turned around and shot Ye Qing a pure, honest smile. Ye Qing nodded in acknowledgement but secretly upped his evaluation of Zhao Bu’er by a level. The warrior must possess a lot of spiritual power to sense his gaze from so far away.

“What do you think Zhao Lan is doing, Joyless?” Chu Nianjiu furrowed his brows while looking at the seventh platform. There, Lin Yuhuai and Zhao Lan were still fighting against each other.

Ye Qing narrowed his eyes a little and muttered, “That bastard is toying with Brother Lin.”

“What?” Chu Nianjiu blurted while sipping his wine. To be honest, it didn’t look like Zhao Lan was toying with Lin Yuhuai, but the fact that he, a late-stage Spirit Purifier and a proven candidate of the Hidden Dragon Meet, didn’t immediately crush Lin Yuhuai, an early-stage Spirit Purifier, proved that something was amiss.

If Chu Nianjiu wasn’t sure that Lin Yuhuai didn’t know Zhao Lan at all before the Hidden Dragon Meet, he would have suspected that the man was Lin Yuhuai’s hired actor!

Chu Nianjiu’s martial insight might be too low to discern what was happening, but not Ye Qing. Zhao Lan could’ve defeated Lin Yuhuai at any time, but he purposely restrained his strength and revealed some openings from time to time so that Lin Yuhuai believed that he still had a chance. Like a cat toying with a mouse, he kept feeding the talisman expert false hope for some unknown purpose.

“What on earth is this Zhao Lan plotting?” Chu Nianjiu frowned deeply.

Ye Qing shook his head. “I’m not sure.”

Gao Ningnan waved off their concerns uncaringly. “It’ll be fine. Brother Lin is a member of the Pacification Bureau. Unless the guy is crazy, he wouldn’t hurt Brother Lin too badly.”

Ye Qing frowned but didn’t deny Gao Ningnan’s statement.

“What is your opinion regarding the rest of the matches, Brother Ye? Who do you think would win?” Luo Zhan suddenly joined in on the conversation.

Ye Qing observed the other matches for a bit before answering, “I think that Wen Xiaonuan, Wei Bulao and Zhuo Henshui would win!”

Wen Xiaonuan and Flower Butterfly’s duel was a battle between joy and sorrow, literally. If Wen Xiaonuan was overflowing with negative energies such as listlessness, sorrow and despair, then Flower Butterfly was the opposite. As her moniker might suggest, Flower Butterfly was a beautiful woman surrounded by swarms of colorful butterflies. The woman herself was dancing gracefully in the middle of the horde as if she was participating in a performance and not a duel, her bells ringing melodiously with every twitch of the limb.

The butterflies flew toward Wen Xiaonuan as she danced, but they all died before they got close to her. As soon as the butterflies hit the ground, they abruptly burst into flames and gave off some sort of white smoke.

The butterflies Flower Butterfly commanded were no ordinary butterflies. They were Malice-class Strangers known as the Dream Butterflies. A type of social insect, it was said the Dream Butterflies were created from a person’s most beautiful hopes and dreams. Normally found in places with lots of plants and especially flowers, they possessed the power to draw a living person into a perfect dream where everything they ever dreamed of came true. They would awake when the Dream Butterflies left their side.

If the Dream Butterfly died, then it would transform into a puff of smoke that would turn that wonderful dream into their worst nightmare. They would be subjected to the worst imaginable horrors, fears, and more. The moment they woke up was also the moment they died.

That was why the books describing the Dream Butterfly included a quote like this:

“Life and death in a single dream,

Joy and anger, pleasure and sorrow in a single butterfly.”

To put it simply, a living Dream Butterfly would grant a person the most wonderful dreams without harming a hair on their person, but a dead Dream Butterfly would inflict them with the worst nightmares until they died.

The Dream Butterflies were a potent weapon in the right hands, but for some reason, Wen Xiaonuan was completely unaffected by their effects. They were unable to draw her into a dream at all, much less kill her through said dream.

On the other hand, Flower Butterfly was growing paler and paler over time. Even the melodious ringing of her bells were starting to lose their rhythm. It was clear who held the upper hand in this battle. If she didn't have another trump card, then this battle would end in her defeat for sure.

“Flower Butterfly is probably the disciple of the Butterfly Keeper. It was said that the Butterfly Keeper was descended from the Butterfly Fairy of the Nanjiang Gu King Abode, and the Butterfly Fairy's lineage specializes in raising gu butterflies. Their signature cultivation art, 'Butterfly Fairy Sutra', teaches two martial arts known as the 'Butterfly Fairy Dance' and the 'Bewitching Bell'. The 'Butterfly Fairy Dance' is used to control the gu butterflies, and the 'Bewitching Bell' is used to muddle the mind.”

Luo Zhan gave them a lengthy explanation before concluding, “Neither the 'Butterfly Fairy Dance' nor the 'Bewitching Bell' is working on Wen Xiaonuan. I can see why she is going to lose.”

“I'm not sure about Qi Xuanyun and Wei Bulao though. On one hand, Brother Qi wields a repertoire of powerful lightning spells. On the other hand, Wei Bulao uses an unusual palm art. So far, they're locked in a stalemate, so why are you so certain that Wei Bulao would win, Brother Ye?”

Chapter 434: Blue Dragons In Sleeve

“What he said.” Chu Nianjiu agreed with Luo Zhan's assessment. “In fact, It looks to me that Xuanyun is holding the upper hand. How can he lose?”

“Lightning arts are powerful, but they are lacking in sustainability due to how much energy they consume.” Ye Qing said slowly, “Look carefully. While Wei Bulao was on the defensive this whole time, Wei Bulao managed to minimize the amount of effective damage he took. As a result, Wei Bulao still has a good amount of energy in reserve, but Xuanyun is near exhaustion.”

“Xuanyun is dancing to Wei Bulao's rhythm right now. The moment he runs out of strength is the moment Wei Bulao launches his counterattack.”

“So, you're saying that this battle is going to end up like your match with Qingge?” Gao Ninggan asked.

“Ahem... I guess so.” Ye Qing rubbed his nose.

A lot of people were paying attention to Qi Xuanyun and Wei Bulao's match. Visually speaking, it was definitely more exciting and attractive than the battle between Wen Xiaonuan and Flower Butterfly, Xu Rulin and Zhang Tiancheng.

Qi Xuanyun was an expert in lightning arts and talismanic arts, and he could summon lightning with the flick of a wrist like a lightning god who governed all thunder and lightning in the world. It was awe-inspiring to put it mildly.

However, Wei Bulao's palm art was nothing to scoff at either. His techniques looked bland and basic, but assuming the lightning didn't slip past his guard, he could always defend against Qi Xuanyun's attacks perfectly.

Not only that, Wei Bulao's movement art was quite the strange one as well. He hobbled and staggered around like an old man with one foot in the grave, and yet he always managed to avoid Qi Xuanyun's lightning at the last possible moment. Few warriors could've dodged the young Taoist's lightning as easily as he did.

Worse still, Qi Xuanyun's face was turning wrinkly and haggard. It was like he was aging as he fought Wei Bulao.

"Wind, fire, thunder, lightning!"

Knowing that he was in trouble, Qi Xuanyun abruptly growled out a short mantra and performed a number of hand seals in rapid succession. Four talismans appeared in front of him immediately.

A green talisman with the word "Wind" written on it summoned a powerful gust of wind.

A red talisman with the word "Fire" written on it conjured a blazing inferno.

A purple talisman with the word "Thunder" written on it let loose a series of deafening thunderclaps.

And a blue talisman with the word "Lightning" written on it crackled with deadly lightning.

As soon as the four talismans appeared, Qi Xuanyun pointed at Wei Bulao and barked, "Go!"

The four talismans flew forward and filled the world with wind, fire, thunder and lightning. The wind strengthened the fire, the fire empowered the thunder, and the lightning engulfed everything with enough power to destroy it all.

The four talismans engulfed everything within a hundred meter radius, leaving Wei Bulao with nowhere to run. The warrior vanished under the elements in just the blink of an eye.

"Awesome!"

"Well done!"

Chu Nianjiu and Gao Ningang paid a compliment after witnessing the impressive attack. There were many spectators who were oohing and aahing in amazement as well.

Luo Zhan shared a different opinion, however. He shook his head and said, "Qi Xuanyun lost his cool."

"No, he just wanted to make one final gambit," Ye Qing said softly.

At the center of the raging elements, Wei Bulao sucked in a deep breath and manifested a pair of oil lamps on his shoulders. Wisps of dark yellow wind spun within the lamp before transforming into a long robe. It was surrounded by even more dark yellow wind, and it gave off an air of ancientness and impermanence.

As soon as Qi Xuanyun's ultimate attack made contact with the dark yellow wind, its power abruptly took a nosedive. It was a powerful defense that warded off Qi Xuanyun's final gambit perfectly.

"The Divine Astral Robe of the Aging Wind...? Is Wei Bulao that old monster's disciple?" Hong Jianglong slapped his thigh and exclaimed in shock.

Lei Xiaodan said, "The Divine Astral Robe of the Aging Wind is an ultimate art that only he knows. There is also a marked resemblance between his martial arts and that senior's, so I definitely think that he is his disciple."

"Old monster? Senior? What are you talking about?" The Harmony King asked curiously. Hong Jianglong and Lei Xiaodan hadn't lowered their voices, so their conversation was overheard by the Harmony King.

"You tell him." Hong Jianglong glanced at Lei Xiaodan.

Lei Xiaodan smiled and launched into an explanation, "Your Highness, the senior we were talking about is an old warrior who supposedly lived for a very, very long time. They call him the Undying Celestial."

"The Undying Celestial...?" Varying expressions of shock and realization rippled through the crowd. The Harmony King remained confused, however. "Who is the Undying Celestial? Is he strong?"

Lei Xiaodan explained, "I wouldn't say he's too strong. He is just a Trueman. However, if the rumors were to be believed, the Undying Celestial is over four hundred years old right now; a feat that should be impossible. That is why they call him the Undying Celestial."

"He's... over four hundred years old?!" The Harmony King's eyes widened like saucers. Although he was a lousy warrior at best, that didn't mean that he was wholly ignorant. He knew that a warrior would gain sixty years of lifespan when they reached the Grandmaster stage, and another one hundred years after they reached the Sage stage. There was also the Immortal stage that only existed in myths, but that was a different story.

Assuming that a human could live to a hundred years old, a Grandmaster would meet their end at a hundred and sixty, and a Sage at two hundred and sixty. Even if they devoted most of their time and energy into recuperating and extending their lifespan, the most they could add to their lifespan was thirty to fifty years. Therefore, the maximum expected lifespan of a Grandmaster was two hundred years old, and a little over three hundred years for a Sage.



The Undying Celestial was a Trueman, the equivalent of a Grandmaster. However, Lei Xiaodan was claiming that he was over four hundred years old, meaning that he was older than even the oldest Sage. It was shocking to say the least.

“How... How did he do it?”

Lei Xiaodan shook his head. “That is a secret only he knows. Some people believed that he stole another person’s body using a demonic art, some people believed that he transferred his soul into a suitable object or body using a Taoist art, some people believed that he was the reincarnation of a Buddha, some people believed that it was the wisdom of Confucianism, some people believed that he consumed a priceless treasure that gave him eternal life, some people thought he knew the secret arts to extend one’s life and more. But in the end, they are all guesses.”

“For obvious reasons, countless people wished to learn the secrets behind the Undying Celestial’s immortality. However, no one had ever found it because the man couldn’t be found. Literally, no one had ever found the Undying Celestial unless he wanted to be found. Every once in a while, he would resurface and prove that he is still alive.”

“A shame. I was hoping to discuss the various ways of maintaining good health with the Undying Celestial. It looks like it will remain a pipe dream.”

The Harmony King sighed, but he wasn’t obsessed with immortality. He easily moved onto the next subject and asked, “So, how do you know that Wei Bulao is the Undying Celestial’s disciple?”

Lei Xiaodan answered, “There are three characteristics about the Undying Celestial that the people loved to talk about. The first is his immortality, the second is his fondness for helping others, and the third is his unusual martial arts.”

“The third characteristic is how we arrive at this conclusion. It is said that those who fought against the Undying Celestial would often age for seemingly no reason whatsoever, and the Divine Astral Robe of the Aging Wind in particular was his signature martial art. Capable of both offense and defense, it is a powerful robe created from the Divine Astral Qi of Aging Wind.”

“This is why Jianglong and I think that Wei Bulao might be the Undying Celestial’s disciple.”

“I see!” The Harmony King exclaimed in realization before returning his full attention back to the battle between Qi Xuanyun and Wei Bulao.

“Wei Bulao is the Undying Celestial’s disciple? I can hardly believe it...” Gao Ningnan clicked his tongue in amazement. “It’s kinda interesting that the Undying Celestial is immortal, but Wei Bulao looks like he might keel over at the young age of twenty. By the way, do you know what the Divine Astral Qi of Aging Wind is, Joyless?”

Ye Qing explained, “As the name implies, the Divine Astral Qi of Aging Wind is a type of astral qi possessing the power of time. If it touches a flower, the flower would wilt. If it touches the grass,

the grass would wither. If it touches a puddle, the water would dry. If it touches a stone, the stone would crack. If it touches a human, the human would age... I don't need to tell you how deadly it is."

"I see. No wonder Qi Xuanyun's lightning couldn't reach Wei Bulao." Gao Ning'an frowned. "Does this mean that nothing can overcome Wei Bulao's defense?"

Ye Qing didn't give him an answer. He simply returned his attention to the platform.

On the platform, Wei Bulao was strolling through the raging elements of wind, fire, thunder and lightning like they were nothing more but a light breeze. Anything that got within a few meters of him would be blown apart by the Divine Astral Qi of Aging Wind.

It looked like Wei Bulao was wasting his time and relishing in his superiority, but in reality he was gathering his strength and getting closer and closer to Qi Xuanyun.

Just several breaths later, Qi Xuanyun could no longer maintain his ultimate attack. He barely had enough energy left to keep fighting. Without a source to feed it energy, the rampaging elements slowly began to weaken.

It was at this moment Wei Bulao charged forward and unleashed a series of palm strikes that surrounded Qi Xuanyun from all sides, sealing off all avenues of escape. A look of delight flickered across Wei Bulao's face. He had been waiting for this moment for a long time.

However, he quickly noticed that he wasn't the only one who was smiling. His opponent, sickly pale as he was, was smiling brightly as well. A bad feeling immediately came over him.

"Blue Dragons... In Sleeve...!"

Qi Xuanyun grinned so widely that his shiny white teeth were bare for all to see. At the same time, a pair of Blue Dragons flew out of his sleeves and let out a mighty roar that deafened the ears and shook the sky itself.

The ball of lightning surrounding the two dragons rapidly grew in size in almost no time at all. Caught completely off guard, Wei Bulao could only watch as the blue dragons and the ball of lightning engulfed him and everything within thirty meters of Qi Xuanyun, deadly power churning violently like the raging sea.

Right here and now, Qi Xuanyun looked more like the god of lightning and thunder than ever.

"Heavens! Qi Xuanyun had one last move to make?" Chu Nianjiu gulped as he exclaimed in shock.

The exhaustion that came over Qi Xuanyun after he unleashed his ultimate attack was very real. It was why no one thought that he had one last surprise for Wei Bulao.

"Looks like you got it wrong, Joyless. Qi Xuanyun won after all." Gao Ning'an snickered while making faces at Ye Qing.

"He used his weakness to draw Wei Bulao in and attacked him when his guard was at its lowest. I must admit that Xuanyun has grown a lot since we first met him." Ye Qing nodded. "Unfortunately, it's still not enough."

“What are you talking about? He’s already won!” Gao Ningnan exclaimed in confusion.

As soon as he said, a powerful palm strike abruptly split the pool of lightning in half and revealed Wei Bulao. Right now, his Divine Astral Robe of the Aging Wind was in tatters, and he was completely covered in soot. Not only that, he looked like he had aged a decade in a matter of minutes. His face was covered in wrinkles, and he looked like an old man with one foot in the grave.

“I underestimated you, Reverend,” Wei Bulao said slowly and indifferently. It would seem that his aging wasn’t just physical because only an old man who had experienced all there was to experience in the world could speak in such a tone.

“You flatter me.” Qi Xuanyun’s cheeks were unnaturally red as he bowed to Wei Bulao. “I couldn’t have withstood my Blue Dragons In Sleeve at melee range and remained standing, and for that, you have my deepest respect, Benefactor Wei.”

“Thank you. Shall we resume our match?”

Wei Bulao threw his shoulders back slightly, and the depleted oil lamps on his shoulders ignited once more. The wisps of Aging Wind they gave off joined together to form yet another Divine Astral Robe of the Aging Wind around his body.

When Qi Xuanyun saw this, he smiled and clasped his fists. “You are the better warrior, Benefactor Wei. I surrender.”

“... Thank you. You fought well.” Wei Bulao wasn’t expecting Qi Xuanyun to throw in the towel so easily, so his response was a tad delayed. Both men were teleported out of the platform after that.

After Qi Xuanyun went over to Ye Qing and the others, he bowed his head and said dejectedly, “Sorry, Brother Ye. I lost.”

“It’s fine. You did the best you could, and you were incredible.” Ye Qing rose to his feet and gave him a consoling pat on the shoulder. “You might have lost the fight, but you also dealt Wei Bulao a severe blow. Your final attack especially was most impressive, so stand tall.”

Chu Nianjiu chimed in, “Ye Qing’s right. Who would’ve thought that Wei Bulao could survive a point-blank hit like that even after you caught him with his pants down? If it was your Brother Gao on the stage just now, he would be a pile of ash already. So be proud, my friend.”

Qi Xuanyun beamed. “Yeah. Thank you, Brother Ye, Brother Chu.”

“Now sit down and recover your strength already. You don’t want to catch a hidden injury, do you?” Ye Qing instructed.

“Will do, Brother Ye.” Qi Xuanyun did as he said and entered into a meditative state quickly.

Chapter 435: I’ll Kill You First And Your Clan Later

While Qi Xuanyun was meditating, Luo Zhan said suddenly, "Chen Shaoyu is about to lose."

Ye Qing turned around just in time to see Zhuo Henshui sending Chen Shaoyu flying with a punch.

Chen Shaoyu was still in the air when Zhuo Henshui took one step forward and appeared beside him like a phantom. Then, she threw another punch.

In the air, there was nothing Chen Shaoyu could possibly do to dodge the attack. He had no choice but to cross his arms in front of his chest.

*Crack!*

The punch broke his arms and caused a jet of blood to spill through his lips. He then crashed into a nearby hill even faster than before. The hill collapsed, and Chen Shaoyu was buried under it.

"You've lost," Zhuo Henshui remarked indifferently while looking down on her opponent.

"Ptooey!" Chen Shaoyu spat out a mouthful of fresh blood. He was lying spread eagle on the ground, and even the slightest movement triggered a terrible pain that encompassed his whole body. He wouldn't be surprised if someone told him that he had broken bones everywhere.

A savage grin spread across his face, however. "I lost? Do you know who I am, girl? I'm the heir of the Flying Dragon Stronghold, the one they call the Jade-faced Dragon. Who do you think you are to call for my surrender?"

As he spoke, he stared at Zhuo Henshui with cold eyes that resembled a man-devouring viper.

The Flying Dragon Stronghold was a Lulin[1] faction, and at the beginning, they claimed that they were a faction who meted out justice on behalf of the heavens. In reality, they were just brigands and murderers who would do anything to further their self-interests. Later, General Heng Shan of Tian Yong convinced them into submitting to Chu, and they were officially recognized as a sect of Chu.

Joining the empire didn't change their nature, however. They were still crazy brigands and murderers who would annihilate entire sects and exterminate clans to the nine generations at the slightest provocations. To say that they had a poor reputation would be an understatement.

But of course, they weren't stupid enough to commit their crimes overtly. Add to the fact that they were backed by General Heng Shan, and the government more or less turned a blind eye to their activities.

Chen Shaoyu was the heir of the Flying Dragon Stronghold, so of course he had plenty of blood on his hands as well. He was used to getting his way all the time, and he had already looked into Zhuo Henshui's background. Although she hailed from the capital, her clan was small, insignificant, and backed by no one. It was absolutely incomparable to the Flying Dragon Stronghold, which was why he didn't care about Zhuo Henshui at all.

"If you don't surrender, then you will die," Zhuo Henshui declared with cold indifference.

“Die? Hahahaha! You’re certainly welcome to try, girl!” Chen Shaoyu laughed uncontrollably despite his horrible condition. “But are you sure you want to kill me? If you kill me, then your family, relatives and friends will all go to the grave with me. Are you sure you can bear the consequences?”

Zhuo Henshui didn’t say anything. Her face was calm, but a black current was churning behind her eyes.

Chen Shaoyu didn’t notice this, not that he would care even if he did. Taking Zhuo Henshui’s silence as an admission of weakness, he became even more arrogant. “Heh! Have you realized your mistake? It’s already too late though. After all, you’ve caught my attention. When I return home, I’ll make sure to give you and your family my warmest regards.”

“How dare he, an official of Chu, threaten innocent lives in broad daylight! Who does he think he is?”

Chen Shaoyu’s behavior didn’t escape the spectators’ notice, of course. One official was so angry that he shot to his feet.

“I’d heard that Flying Dragon Stronghold blatantly disregards the law and does whatever they please, but I thought it was just an exaggeration. It would seem it was real after all,” another official echoed the sentiment.

“An audacious bastard who cares nothing for the lives of people like him does not deserve to live in this world.” Jing Huang looked extremely displeased as well. “It’s not just him. Everyone in the Flying Dragon Stronghold is just as corrupt and bloodthirsty as he is. The sooner we are rid of their loathsome existence, the better!”

Almost everyone present was wearing looks of displeasure on their face as well.

“Hmph. This is a no-holds-barred tournament where killing your opponent is allowed. Whoever says that Chen Shaoyu cannot attack his opponent psychologically and force them into submission? Also, are you suggesting that we kill someone just because they say they’re going to commit a crime? Who are the audacious bastards who’re trying to harm an innocent person here?”

It was at this moment a brawny, fearsome-looking man said disdainfully, “Also, you claim that Flying Dragon Stronghold is corrupt and disregards the law, but where is your evidence? If you have none, then stop bitching like a woman and shut your traps!”

“Sophistry, Yu Yuanshan. Everyone knows how the Flying Dragon Stronghold is.” Jing Huang declared in a righteous voice. “Not only that, we all know that you’re their lord’s son-in-law. You’re a nest of rats and snakes colluding with each other!”

“Shut your filthy mouth, Jing Huang!” Yu Yuanshan looked like he might spit fire out of his eyes. “You think you’re immune just because you’re the Aide of the Regional

Inspection Office? Just try pissing me off! I promise your office won't live to see another day!"

"Control yourself, Commandant Yu!"

"Did you just say you would destroy the Administrator's Office? Have you lost your mind, Commandant Yu?"

"I smell a rebel in our midst. Not even General Hengshan would dare to openly threaten a fellow imperial, and you're just a puny commandant! Who do you think you are?"

The civil officials belonging to the Regional Inspection Office immediately retorted with baleful glares.

"So what if I'm threatening you? Do you think you scare me? You so-called scholars know nothing except pinning bullshit on those you consider barbaric and illiterate. Someone needs to remind you that the world doesn't revolve around you!"

Some of Yu Yuanshan's took that as a cue and rose to their feet. Some even rolled up their sleeves and began walking in Jing Huang's direction. "Pooh! I never liked these fuckers. You think you can walk all over us? Today's the day we remind them 'trouble comes from a loose tongue' means, brothers!"

"Ooh, is this an extra fight?! I sure hope it is!" Gao Ning'an's eyes lit up with clear anticipation.

Ye Qing knew it wouldn't happen, however. Jing Huang was the Aide of the Regional Inspection Office of Tian Yong. He was a civil official.

Yu Yuanshan was the Commandant of the Hengshan Army serving under General Hengshan. He was a military officer.

Tian Yong was a resourceful place located in the hinterland of Chu. That was why it was overflowing with all sorts of factions. It was also where the central headquarters of Purity Sword, one of the Five Profound Sects, was based. To say the faction relations here were complex would be a massive understatement.

Tian Yong was governed by three great powers: the Regional Inspection Office, the Pacification Bureau, and the Intelligence Department. The Intelligence Department was a deposed department possessing the power to take arbitrary actions without consulting the imperial court, and the Hengshan Army was the military force to suppress or annihilate rebels or dissidents. Sometimes, a civil official would be implicated as well. Naturally, this pissed off the civil officials and drove them into taking retaliatory measures. One thing led to another, and the two factions came to hate each other's guts.

Of course, the faction the Regional Inspection Office really hated was the Intelligence Department, but the Intelligence Department represented the face of the emperor. They could hardly slap the emperor in the face, could they? So, they vented their anger and frustrations on the Hengshan Army instead.

It was cats versus dogs every time the two factions ran into each other. They would argue and even fight over the smallest matter.

If this was any other occasion, Hong Jianglong would be all too happy to let them beat the shit out of each other. However, the Pacification Bureau was the host of this year's Hidden Dragon Meet. If this argument devolved into a full on brawl, then the Pacification Bureau's reputation would suffer.

"Enough!"

As expected, Hong Jianglong rose to his feet and interrupted the quarrel with a booming roar. "This is the Flying Dragon Mount, not a market! I don't care if you bash each other's heads in, but if you disrupt the Hidden Dragon Meet, then the consequences will be severe!"

Both sides fell silent, but they were still glaring at each other.

"Lord Hong is right. The Hidden Dragon Meet must proceed smoothly. Please restrain yourselves, my lords," Fang Muyun added.

Even Lei Xiaodan stepped in to mediate things. "Yes, yes, what they said. You're all imperial officials, aren't you? Don't you think it's embarrassing arguing in front of a bunch of juniors? Sit down, please."

Fang Muyun might not be an imperial official, but he was a scholar with an impressive reputation. As they were scholars themselves, Jing Huang and the others couldn't ignore his words.

Lei Xiaodan was Yu Yuanshan's boss. One word from the man was all it took to shut him up and return him to his seat.

"Aw man. I was hoping to see some action," Gao Ningnan said with a regretful shrug after Hong Jianglong quelled the argument.

"Watch the matches," Luo Zhan said with a cold glance that caused Gao Ningnan to flinch. The guy was quite afraid of Luo Zhan for some reason.

On the platform, Chen Shaoyu stared at Zhuo Henshui for a moment before breaking into a lustful grin. "Now that I got a good look at you, you don't look half bad. It just so happens that I lack a bed warmer right now. If your service is satisfactory, I promise to forgive your family. What do you say?"

Zhuo Henshui wasn't the prettiest woman in the world, but she was tall, strong and attractive. Her cold nature only added to her charm. Chen Shaoyu couldn't help a surge of lust when he imagined her writhing under him in pleasure.

"Heavens above! What a scumbag!" Gao Ningnan spat when he heard this. "People like him don't deserve to live in this world."

Ye Qing was hiding a hint of killing intent behind his frown as well.

"You're the heir of the Flying Dragon Stronghold of Pan Long[2]?" Zhuo Henshui asked.

“Yeah? Why are you asking? Are you so eager to deepen our bond that you’re asking about my family already?” Chen Shaoyu chuckled at his tasteless joke.

Zhuo Henshui remained expressionless. “And your father is the ‘Divine Sky Dragon’ Chen Wuchou?”

“Yep? Are you scared?” Chen Shaoyu grinned evilly. “Don’t worry. If you obey me, then nothing bad will happen to you.”

“I got the right person then.” Zhuo Henshui nodded before saying seriously, “After I kill you, I’m going to kill your father. Then, I’m going to wipe out the Flying Dragon Stronghold.”

“Excuse me?” Chen Shaoyu’s smile faltered for a second. “Did you just say you want to kill me, my dad, and the Flying Dragon Stronghold?”

“You heard me right,” Zhuo Henshui said calmly. “You want to kill my family, so I’m going to kill yours.”

“You think you can kill my family? You? Haha! Hahahaha!” Chen Shaoyu laughed uncontrollably like he just heard the funniest joke in the world. However, his laughter abruptly ceased when the ground shook, and Zhuo Henshui appeared in front of him. She then grabbed his face.

“W-What are you doing?” Zhuo Henshui’s grip tightened, and for the first time, Chen Shaoyu realized that Zhuo Henshui might not be joking. She might actually kill him.

“I’m killing you,” Zhuo Henshui said indifferently before increasing her strength. There was a disturbing crunching noise, and Chen Shaoyu’s head exploded like an overripe apple. Not done yet, she brought her foot down and crushed both body and mind.

“I never tell a lie.”

“She... actually did it?” Gao Ning’an’s eyes widened like saucers when he saw this. Everyone else couldn’t believe that Zhuo Henshui actually killed Chen Shaoyu as well. The large majority of people on the peak strongly believed that the world was better off without Chen Shaoyu, but none of them would dare to put their thoughts into action, at least not in public. The Flying Dragon Stronghold was hardly a weak faction after all.

This was doubly true for the current lord of the Flying Dragon Stronghold, the “Divine Sky Dragon” Chen Wuchou. He was a Half-Step Grandmaster who was as petty, narrow-minded and vengeful as he was strong. Once, he had annihilated a person’s family, relatives and friends to the last just because they called him cruel and black-hearted behind his back.



As if that wasn't enough, Chen Shaoyu was Chen Wuchou's only son, and he had high hopes for him. If he learned that Zhou Henshui had killed his son, he was going to fly off the handle one hundred percent.

Chapter 436: Ghost Clap

"How dare you kill Shaoyu! I'll kill you!"

When the moment of shock finally passed, Yu Yuanshan suddenly bellowed a furious roar and swung his saber at Zhuo Henshui. The young woman was unprepared to defend against such an attack as she had just teleported out of the platform, not that she could've done anything to defend herself against a Half-Step Grandmaster.

The attack was bloodthirsty, efficient, and ruthless exactly like a military officer who had seen countless battles. It betrayed just how angry he was at Zhuo Henshui.

Yu Yuanshan had married Chen Wuchou's younger sister. He wasn't just Chen Wuchou's relative, their interests were closely aligned to each other. One of the biggest reasons Chen Wuchou and the Flying Dragon Stronghold dared to act as they pleased was because of him.

The reason Chen Wuchou sent his son to attend the Hidden Dragon Meet was to grow his son's fame and improve his prospects when he entered the Hengshan Army in the future. He believed it would greatly benefit Flying Dragon Stronghold, his son, and his own standings.

Besides that, Chen Wuchou wished to whitewash Flying Dragon Stronghold completely through Chen Shaoyu. It was why he had very high hopes for him.

But now, Chen Shaoyu was dead. How on earth was he going to justify this to Chen Wuchou? He could only pray that killing his son's murderer, Zhuo Henshui would be enough to placate the man.

"You dare!"

Suddenly, a furious roar that sounded like it came from a dragon itself shattered the saber force and bloodthirst. Yu Yuanshan himself was struck by a powerful wave of dizziness.

"Does my warning mean nothing to you?!"

A cold, furious voice rang beside Yu Yuanshan's ear and snapped out of his daze. Blanching, he was just about to defend himself when a massive palm hit him so hard that he collapsed on the floor, and a leg stepped on his back so hard that he couldn't push free.

"Lord Hong, what are you doing?! Let Commandant Yu go!"

Some of Yu Yuanshan's subordinates raced forward to save their superior, but a golden dragon flew out of Hong Jianglong's body, roared, and swung its tail at the incoming group. They were immediately sent flying through the air.

"Pwack!"

Bright red blood burst out of their throats as soon as they hit the floor. They couldn't help but stare at Hong Jianglong with shock and fear in their eyes.

“Did I not just mention that I wouldn’t forgive anyone who disrupts the Hidden Dragon Meet again?” Hong Jianglong uttered icily while injecting more strength into his foot. Yu Yuanshan immediately spat out a mouthful of blood.

“You... You did...” Yu Yuanshan forced through the pain and answered.

Hong Jianglong looked down on Yu Yuanshan. “Then why did you ignore my words?”

“I...” Yu Yuanshan tried to push himself to his feet, but Hong Jianglong’s strength proved to be indomitable. “She... She killed Shaoyu!”

“This is a no-holds-barred tournament where killing your opponent is allowed. It’s his fault for being too weak to protect his own life,” Hong Jianglong uttered coldly. “If you wanted him to live, then you shouldn’t send him to this tournament in the first place.”

“But... Zhuo Henshui killed him even though Shaoyu was already out of the fight. This is murder!” Yu Yuanshan argued through gritted teeth.

Hong Jianglong snorted. “That is the consequences of his own actions. Did Zhuo Henshui not offer him surrender at the beginning? Did he not spurn her goodwill and even threatened to kill her whole family? I would’ve killed him if I was her.”

“You...” Yu Yuanshan couldn’t say anything for a while. “Our general was going to promote Chen Shaoyu after this Hidden Dragon Meet. How are we going to justify this to him when he learns about this?”

Zhou Hengshan was the general of the Hengshan Army. People called him General Hengshan.

“Now roll.”

Hong Jianglong meant it literally. He kicked Yu Yuanshan in the ribs and caused him to roll all the way to a staircase leading up to a kiosk. A jet of blood escaped the military officer’s throat before his eyes rolled to the back of his head, and he fell unconscious.

One of Yu Yuanshan’s subordinates stammered out, “Lord Hong! Commandant Yu is an imperial official! Do you think that the imperial court when they learn that you’ve beaten up a valued member of Chu?”

The rest of Yu Yuanshan’s cohort was glaring at Hong Jianglong as well. They didn’t think that Hong Jianglong would dare to deal Yu Yuanshan a serious blow.

“Oh, I get it. You think I didn’t punish him hard enough, is it? You want me to kill him and you lot so that justice can be fully restored, right? If that is what you wish...”

Yu Yuanshan’s subordinates could hardly believe what they were hearing, but no one dared to say another word. They could tell from Hong Jianglong’s aura that he wasn’t just making empty threats. He would actually kill them if they dared to prod him again.

“Before I forget, tell Zhou Hengshan that Zhuo Henshui is a member of the Pacification Bureau. If something happens to her in the future, I will personally pay

him a visit and hang him for it. Understand?" A pair of golden dragons swam behind Hong Jianglong's eyes. "Now get lost!"

"... We will bring your message to the general word for word, Lord Hong."

Yu Yuanshan's cohort gritted their teeth in anger, but they ultimately didn't dare to challenge Hong Jianglong. They quickly lifted the unconscious Yu Yuanshan over their shoulders before leaving the peak.

When they were gone, Hong Jianglong looked at Zhuo Henshui and declared, "Don't worry. So long as I'm still around, no one would dare to lay a hand on you. Just continue your journey in the Hidden Dragon Meet as you do."

"Thank you, Lord Hong," Zhuo Henshui said with a salute, though her face remained as impassive as ever.

Hong Jianglong nodded and raised his voice, "It looks like some of you people are deaf, so I'm going to repeat myself one more time. Disrupt the Hidden Dragon Meet, and you will be treated as an enemy of the imperial court and the Pacification Bureau. I shouldn't need to tell you what the consequences were, should I?"

The silence stretched for a few seconds, and Hong Jianglong finally turned at Fang Muyun and Chu Wangsun and apologized, "My apologies for the unsightly behavior, Mister Farseeing, Mister Nine."

Fang Muyun smiled. "It's fine. Your impartiality and decisiveness are most impressive."

Chu Wangsun didn't say anything. He hadn't even raised his head.

Hong Jianglong saluted them again before returning to his kiosk. As he passed by Lei Xiaodan, he shot the man a strange look. The Hengshan Army was subordinate to the Intelligence Department, so he was surprised that Lei Xiaodan hadn't tried to defend them.

His look didn't escape the Judicial Commissioner's notice, of course. He returned a smile and said, "Why are you looking at me like that? They made a mistake, so they should pay for it."

"Right..." Hong Jianglong replied in a clearly unconvinced tone but didn't say anything else.

"Lord Hong is a tyrant alright." Ye Qing sighed. He could see why he and Gu Suitang were friends. He could even believe that they were blood brothers if they shared the same surname.

Gao Ning'an said wistfully, "Haha. It's not like he wants to be a tyrant, you know? It's just that some bastards would happily piss on your head if you give them an inch. Such is life."

While they were conversing with each other, Wen Xiaonuan and Flower Butterfly's battle had finally come to an end. As expected, Wen Xiaonuan was the victor.

Now, there was only one match left. It was the match between Zhao Lan and Lin Yuhuai.

“Say Joyless, what the fuck is that Zhao Lan doing? Is he really dragging this out just to toy with Yuhuai?” Chu Nianjiu asked with a deep frown.

Ye Qing shook his head. “I’m not sure either.”

He was certain that Zhao Lan wasn’t just toying with Yuhuai, however.

“It looks like your friend is in big trouble.” They were still trying to figure out the truth when Zhao Bu’er’s voice suddenly entered their ears. They turned and saw the warrior walking up to them and greeting them with a wave of his hand.

“Hello, Brother Zhao.” Ye Qing returned the greeting before asking, “What do you mean by that?”

Zhao Bu’er replied frankly, “Did you notice? Every once in a while, Zhao Lan would clap Lin Yuhuai here and there.”

“Sure, but so what?” Gao Ningnan interrupted. “It’s so weak it can’t even kill a mosquito.”

“Stop interrupting and listen to what Brother Zhao has to say,” Ye Qing chided him.

Zhao Bu’er explained, “It looks like it couldn’t kill a mosquito, sure, but it’s actually an extremely insidious martial art. It is called the Ghost Clap.”

“Is that the signature move of the fiftieth warrior on the Black List, Lingling the Invisible Killer?” Luo Zhan asked.

“You’ve heard of it? Then I guess my warning is unnecessary after all,” Zhao Bu’er replied with a friendly smile.

“Tell me more about this Ghost Clap,” Ye Qing urged.

He was aware of the Black List. Just like the Heaven, Earth and Human Champions Ranking, the Black List was also a ranking list announced by the White Jade Capital. But while the former rankings ranked the warriors by their strength, the Black List listed only heretics, notorious villains and the like. The people on the list might not necessarily be bad people per se, but they definitely were not good people either.

On a related note, the counterpart of the Black List was the White List. It listed righteous and heroic warriors who were famous for their good deeds or subjugated a lot of demons, heretics and the like. When mentioned in the same line, people usually called the two lists the Black and White Lists.

As the Black and White Lists didn’t necessarily rank their candidates based on strength and so was not as reliable as the Heaven, Earth and Human Champions Ranking in that regard, they were still something to watch out for. It was generally believed that those in the top fifty of the Black and White Lists were, at the minimum, a Grandmaster and a named warrior on the Earth Champions Ranking.

For example, Lingling the Invisible Killer was the fiftieth warrior on the Black List and the ninety-eighth warrior on the Earth Champions Ranking. He might be the third last warrior on the ranking, but a Grandmaster was a Grandmaster.

Ye Qing had heard of the Lingling the Invisible Killer, a Grandmaster who was famous for his invisible killing methods. However, Ye Qing had never heard of the Ghost Clap.

The ‘Ghost Clap’ is Shi Lingling’s signature martial art. It earned its name for being so light, soundless and undetectable it was as if the clap was done by a ghost.”

Zhao Bu’er explained, “The ‘Ghost Clap’ looks useless on the surface, but in reality it allows the practitioner to secretly inject their force into a victim’s body without being detected. When the amount of accrued force exceeds a certain threshold, it would detonate and destroy the victim’s internal organs and blood vessels, killing them.”

“On the surface, it looks like the victim is completely fine. In reality, their insides are completely ruined. That is why he is called the Invisible Killer.”

“You are sure that Zhao Lan is using the Ghost Clap?” Ye Qing asked with a deep frown on his face.

“I’m certain. I’ve met Shi Lingling in person when I was adventuring with my master in the past,” Zhao Bu’er confirmed.

On a related note, Shi Lingling was a man even though his name sounded like a woman’s.

“Zhao Lan isn’t plotting to kill Yuhuai, is he?” Chu Nianjiu blanched. “They don’t even know each other until recently! Why on earth would Zhao Lan do such a thing?!”

Ye Qing uttered with an ugly expression, “It’s probably because of me.”

“What do you—” The answer came to Chu Nianjiu before he could finish. “You’re saying it’s because you wounded Zhao Lu earlier?”

“I think so,” Ye Qing answered. He could see no other reason why Zhao Lan would want to target Lin Yuhuai.

“What a repulsive bastard!” Chu Nianjiu swore. “What do we do?”

“Nothing. It’s not like we can interfere with the match. There is a silver lining though. Zhao Lan wouldn’t dare to kill Brother Lin,” Ye Qing declared.

That didn’t mean he could make Lin Yuhuai’s life hell, however.

On the platform, Lin Yuhuai still had no idea what Zhao Lan had done to him, but he realized that something was amiss as well. Lin Yuhuai was a smart and decisive man, and he was satisfied with being able to make it to the Top 16. So, he surrendered immediately.

Chapter 437: I Will Kill You

Lin Yuhuai was teleported out of the platform as soon as he surrendered the battle. At the same time, Ye Qing pushed “Illusionist’s Grace” to its limits and appeared beside the talisman expert in an instant.

“Joyless, what—” Lin Yuhuai didn’t understand what was going on, of course. He was just about to ask a question when suddenly, the blood drained away from his face, and a strange energy exploded inside his body. His internal organs were damaged immediately.

“Pwack!”

Lin Yuhuai fell limp as blood spilled out of his lips.

*Dammit. I’m too late.*

Ye Qing was hoping to neutralize Ghost Clap before it detonated, but in the end, he just wasn’t fast enough. The good news was that the foreign force damaged Lin Yuhuai’s internal organs, blood vessels and more, but not so much that it would threaten his life. As he predicted, Zhao Lan didn’t have the guts to kill Lin Yuhuai.

This didn’t mean that Lin Yuhuai’s injuries were light, however. His muscles were ripped into shreds, his bones were broken, his internal organs were bruised, and his blood vessels were damaged. Normally, it would take him months to recover from a severe injury like this. Worst case scenario, it could even damage his martial foundation.

“Relax. He won’t die from this.”

After Zhao Lan was teleported out of the platform, he walked up to Ye Qing with an odd smile of ridicule and cruelty. “So? How does it feel to watch your friend getting hurt?”

“Why?” Ye Qing asked in a cold voice.

“Hahaha! Why? You ask why?” Zhao Lan’s eyes flashed cruelly. “Because of you, my brother is going to spend the next few months in bed. That’s why.”

“That’s all?” Ye Qing’s eyes grew colder and colder.

“Do I need another reason?” Zhao Lan’s eyes turned red like an animal’s. “Zhao Lu isn’t just my younger brother. He is the only family I have. When he was freezing in the cold, I was freezing with him. When I was starving, he was starving right beside him. And when someone attacks us, they attack us both. Once, my brother nearly died to protect me. After I began learning martial arts, I swore I would never allow him to get hurt again.”

“But you didn’t just hurt my brother. You damaged his martial foundation as well.”

“Did you know how much my heart ached when I saw his injuries? Know that his future might never be as bright as it could be because of one sonuvabitch?”

"I'm the one who hurt your brother, so why are you attacking innocents instead of me?" Ye Qing asked coldly.

"Oh no no no," Zhao Lan shook his head while wearing a demented grin on his face, "that's not how it works. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. I'll have you taste the exact same pain and misery I felt."

"So? How does it feel? It tastes bitter, doesn't it?"

"It is pretty bitter." Ye Qing nodded in agreement.

Zhao Lan suddenly moved closer and lowered his voice to a whisper. "You should be thankful that you and your friends are members of the Pacification Bureau. Otherwise, I would have killed every friend and family you ever have. All of them."

"Only then can you truly understand my pain."

"Ah, I'm glad." Ye Qing suddenly broke into a wide smile. "I hope I'll run into you during my next match."

"What?" Zhao Lan was puzzled.

Ye Qing grinned. "I want to kill you with my own hands."

"You want to kill me?" Zhao Lan paused for a full second before the corners of his lips turned up uncontrollably. In the end, he couldn't control himself and let loose a maniacal laugh. "What a coincidence! I could say the exact same thing! Ahahahahahaha!"

Zhao Lan walked away after that. Ye Qing's gaze was cold and indifferent as he stared at the warrior's back.

He had no qualms with Zhao Lan targeting him because of Zhao Lu. It was a sentiment that he agreed wholeheartedly.

However, Zhao Lan should never, ever have vented his anger on Lin Yuhuai. If his friend didn't so happen to be a member of the Pacification Bureau, he would be dead already.

To say he was angry would be an understatement.

Even if he let this go, he didn't think that Zhao Lan would stop things here. So be it. He would grant Zhao Lan the death he so desired.

After Zhao Lan left, Ye Qing produced Resurrection from Nine Heavens and fed it to Lin Yuhuai. The talisman expert's aura quickly stabilized thanks to it.

"How's Yuhuai, Joyless?" Chu Nianjiu and Gao Ning'an caught up to them and asked urgently. Both men were looking at the unconscious Lin Yuhuai with clear worry in their eyes.

"Don't worry. When he wakes up, he'll feel as good as new," Ye Qing assured them.

Resurrection could restore anyone to full health so long as they were still breathing. Therefore, Ye Qing wasn't worried for Lin Yuhuai. Not only that, the talisman expert would return stronger than ever before due to the nurturing effects of the medicine, so this incident, while extremely unfortunate, was really a boon for him.

"What were you and Zhao Lan talking about just now?" Gao Ningnan asked.

"It's nothing. Just a casual chat." Ye Qing waved off his curiosity.

"Yeah, right. Like anyone would believe that." Gao Ningnan pouted.

Ye Qing ignored him and nodded in Chu Nianjiu's direction. "Today's matches are over, so please take Brother Lin back to his room, Brother Chu."

"Got it."

Chu Nianjiu shot Ye Qing a long look but said nothing. He knew Ye Qing would never leave it at this, but he didn't ask any questions. He simply nodded, carried Lin Yuhuai to his shoulder, and left the scene.

"The next round is going to be interesting." Lei Xiaodan withdrew his gaze and shot Hong Jianglong a smile.

"Hmph! The fool's already dead, he just doesn't know it yet." Hong Jianglong snorted. He too recognized Ghost Clap and knew what Zhao Lan was plotting, though he couldn't interfere because he was the host of the Hidden Dragon Meet. Of course, he was also sure that Zhao Lan wouldn't dare to kill Lin Yuhuai, and he was right.

After all the matches were over, Hong Jianglong rose to his feet and declared, "Today's matches have ended, and the nine people who will be entering the quarterfinals are Xu Rulin, Zhao Lan, Wen Xiaonuan, Wei Bulao, Jian Wusheng, Zhao Bu'er, Zhuo Henshui, Ye Qing, and Yang Zhao!"

"Congratulations to all quarterfinalists. You will be awarded the title 'Hidden Dragon' and receive a reward for your achievements."

"Thank you, my lord!" Ye Qing, Yang Zhao, Xu Rulin, Jian Wusheng and more replied in unison. Ye Qing and Zhuo Henshui were silent, but everyone else could hardly suppress their delight.

The reason they took part in the Hidden Dragon Meet in the first place was to gain fame and profit.

Hong Jianglong continued, "The quarter finals will take place three days later. We will still be drawing lots to determine your opponents. Anyone who arrives late or is absent for whatever reason will be disqualified, so please remember to arrive on time. Understand?"

"Yes, my lord," Everyone replied.

"Good. I hope you will perform even better during the next round. Be the Hidden Dragon we believe you can be!" Hong Jianglong declared.

"Yes, my lord!" Everyone replied louder and in unison.



“Roar!”

A golden dragon flew away from the peak and into the clouds. Once again, golden light descended like a waterfall and illuminated the world.

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Three days came and went in the blink of an eye. Having learned his lesson from last time, Ye Qing spent all three days inside the Tian Yong Pacification Bureau. He didn't go anywhere besides eating, training, and sleeping. The last thing he wanted was giving his would-be murderers another chance to kill him.

The three days came and went peacefully. Absolutely nothing had happened within the confines of the Pacification Bureau. The same couldn't be said for the city, however.

First, Zhao Bu'er had suffered multiple assassination attempts. His assassins claimed that they were attacking him to take revenge against his master, the Barber, though only they knew if that was the truth or not.

Second, the head of the Little Fist Sect and a late-stage Spirit Master, Lu Youwang gathered a troop of elites and attacked Zhuo Henshui by the Yong River. This was because Zhuo Henshui had killed Fu Chaogang, Lu Youwang's direct disciple and the future Little Fist Sect.

The outcome defied all expectations, however. Despite being outnumbered and outclassed, Zhuo Henshui, a late-stage Spirit Purifier, grievously injured Lu Youwang and killed the dozens of elites he brought with him. It was said that the blood she drew dyed five kilometers of lake water red that day[1].

No one was surprised by Lu Youwang's actions. It was perfectly understandable that the head of the Little Fist Sect would want to take revenge for his disciple. What was curious was how they managed to learn about the news and even make it to Tian Yong within three days even though they were situated at He Dong, a faraway prefecture.

That evening, Hong Jianglong personally paid General Hengshan a visit. It was said that the residence was filled with draconic roars and tiger howls for an entire hour. Obviously, a certain Pacification Commissioner had decided to make good his threat after hearing what had happened to Zhuo Henshui.

None of these two incidents could compare to the third incident, however. It was impossible to say who leaked the news that Wei Bulao was the disciple of the Undying Celestial, but the wave it caused was like chucking a massive rock into a pond. As a result, many warriors who were nearing the end of their lifespan slipped into Tian Yong with the intention of kidnapping Wei Bulao. They all wanted to interrogate the location of the Undying Celestial from his mouth and the secrets to immortality.

Among them were some old monsters who were thought to be dead such as the seventy-third warrior on the Black List, Wu Xingyun the Rainwalker; the eighty-fifth warrior on the White List 'Create Something From Nothing' Wu Bushuo, and more.

These two warriors in particular weren't just named on the Black and White List, but also the Human Champions Ranking. Long story short, countless people beat the crap out of each other to

steal Wei Bulao for their own benefit, and Wei Bulao suffered terrible injuries as a result of that conflict.

Long story short, nearly no one had benefited from this conflict, and the biggest winner was, of course, the Intelligence Department.

Gossip was everyone's favorite pastime. When the participants and imperial officials returned to the peak of the Flying Dragon Mount once more, they still couldn't stop talking about Zhao Bu'er, Zhuo Henshui and Wei Bulao. They stopped only when Hong Jianglong, Fang Muyun and Chu Wangsun arrived.

It was 6 am sharp when Hong Jianglong announced the start of the quarter finals, also known as the Battle of the Eight Hidden Dragons.

The participants would be competing with each other to decide the winners and losers bracket, and just like before, multiple matches were held at the same time. The losers of the winners bracket would enter the losers bracket, draw lots, and fight against the winners of the losers bracket.

When the champion of the winners bracket and the losers bracket had been decided, the two champions would engage each other in one last match. That was how the Hidden Dragon Meet decided the final ranking.

Chapter 438: Sword Qi Rains From The Nine Heavens

"Hmm? Where is Wei Bulao?"

After declaring the start of the quarter finals, the participants stepped forward to draw lots. However, Wei Bulao was nowhere to be seen. His absence was noticed and discussed immediately.

"Where's Wei Bulao?" Hong Jianglong asked while sweeping his gaze across his fellow colleagues. It looked like he was asking them where Wei Bulao was, but his question was specifically directed at Lei Xiaodan.

The Intelligence Department was the one who wrapped up the matter regarding the assault on Wei Bulao. In fact, Lei Xiaodan had personally taken Wei Bulao back to the Intelligence Department. Naturally, he had to know how the warrior was doing.

"Young Wei's mind took some damage during yesterday's incident, and he still hadn't recovered from his injuries. Unfortunately, he won't be able to participate in today's match," Lei Xiaodan answered with a genial smile on his face.

"Very well. As per the rules of the Hidden Dragon Meet, Wei Bulao has forfeited this tournament."

Hong Jianglong slapped the brazier beside him, and beams of light flew into the eight participants' hands.

"Please enter the platform as shown by the number on your token..."

Ye Qing glanced at his token before turning to look at Zhao Lan. It so happened that the warrior was looking at him as well.

Zhao Lan cracked a demented grin before swiping a finger across his neck.

Ye Qing merely smiled and headed toward the second platform.

His surroundings warped after he entered the second platform. A moment later, Ye Qing found himself standing on a bamboo raft that was flowing downstream.

Another bamboo raft flowed out of the mist from the opposite side, and standing on top of it was a silhouette who stood as straight as a sword. His face wasn't visible yet, but the sky of sword qi above him already revealed who he was.

"A shame..."

Ye Qing was a little disappointed. He was hoping to fight Zhao Lan, but alas, his opponent was Jian Wusheng.

The bamboo raft stopped about thirty meters away from Ye Qing's. His blade pointed toward the bottom, Jian Wusheng clasped his fist and greeted him cordially, "Hail, Brother Ye."

"Well met, Brother Wusheng." Ye Qing returned the salute. He didn't address Jian Wusheng as Brother Jian because the word Jian (Sword) could be read as Jian (Scum). He could be overthinking this, but he would rather not offend Jian Wusheng if he could.

"I've heard a lot about you, Brother Wusheng, and I can tell that you more than deserve your reputation. Please go easy on me."

Jian Wusheng replied calmly, "You flatter me, Brother Ye. I have heard a lot about you as well. It is my honor to be able to fight against you."

"I look forward to your instructions."

"And I you."

After the two men were done paying each other their respect, the rafts abruptly sped toward each other. Every time they traveled a third of a meter, Ye Qing's energies would thicken, and Jian Wusheng's sword qi would grow a little sharper.

When the two rafts were ten meters away from each other, Jian Wusheng thrust his sword in Ye Qing's direction and summoned seventy-two sword qi from the river. Each sword qi looked sharp enough to cut through flesh and blood like nothing.

Ye Qing stomped his bamboo raft and caused it to sink a little. A wall of water flew into the air and slammed into the seventy two sword qi.

The seventy two sword qi sliced and diced the wall of water into droplets, but the wall of water also crushed many of their numbers.

Before the water droplets could fall back into the river, Jian Wusheng crouched a little and leaned forward. A fearless, unyielding, lifeless, deathless, egoless and invincible sword intent immediately permeated the air.

The next moment, Jian Wusheng's sword sliced through the air.

The water in the sky was split into two. The bamboo raft Ye Qing was standing on was split into two. Even the river itself was split into two.

Jian Wusheng frowned, however. It was because his attack had missed.

The reason he used “I Do Not Stand In A Sea Of Death” right from the get go was because he wanted to end the match as quickly as possible. Ye Qing deeply worried him even though he was inferior to him in both cultivation level and reputation.

He had watched Ye Qing and Chu Qingge’s match from the start until the end, and while he was confident in his strength, he didn’t think he would’ve been able to defeat Chu Qingge’s “Son of Heaven Qi Observing Art”. But not only did Ye Qing do what he believed to be impossible, his Chaos Demon Ape Body had left a deep impression on him.

The Chaos Demon Ape Body was famed for its enormous strength and ridiculous resilience. Although “No Life, No I” was a hyper-offensive martial art, he wasn’t confident that he could beat Ye Qing immediately if the young man managed to close the distance. He might even lose if Ye Qing managed to drag out the fight like he did with Chu Qingge.

That was why he kicked off the match with one of his strongest moves, “I Do Not Stand In A Sea Of Death” immediately. Best case scenario, he could end the match immediately.

Unfortunately, he missed. Not only that, Ye Qing had somehow disappeared from his senses.

Jian Wusheng remained as cool as a golem, however. He tightened his grip and executed a horizontal sweep that summoned a ball of sword qi to rise from the river like the moon. The water surface was alight with sword qi as well.

“The Moon Illuminates The Western River” wasn’t a technique in “No Light, No I”, but that didn’t mean that it was inferior. On the contrary, it was a powerful attack that, as its name implied, covered an insane range rivaling that of moonlight.

Since Ye Qing was nowhere to be seen, he must be hiding somewhere in the shadows and waiting for an opportunity to act. Jian Wusheng decided not to give him the chance and used “The Moon Illuminates The Western River” to force him out into the open.

However, his ploy failed. The sword qi swept every inch of the river surface and dispelled the surrounding mist completely, but Ye Qing was still nowhere to be seen.

“He’s underneath the river!”

Realization struck Jian Wusheng then. If Ye Qing was on the river surface, then “The Moon Illuminates The Western River” would’ve hit him. Since it hadn’t, the young man could only be hiding under the water!

Ye Qing wasn’t one to let such an opportunity slip through his grasp. By the time Jian Wusheng recognized the danger, Ye Qing had soundlessly poked his fist out of the water until it touched the sole of Jian Wusheng’s right foot.

The gesture looked completely harmless, but everything within ten meters of Jian Wusheng abruptly exploded like a bomb. The protective sword qi Jian Wusheng wrapped himself in ripped into shreds, and his bones and muscles popped ominously as he was thrown into the sky.

At the same time, Ye Qing burst out of the water and charged toward Jian Wusheng.

Jian Wusheng was wary of Ye Qing, but Ye Qing was just as wary of him. After all, he was a named warrior on the Human Champions Ranking and the man who defeated Luo Zhan. He would have to be crazy to underestimate one such as him.

That was why Ye Qing had long since researched Jian Wusheng's techniques and imagined what he would do if Jian Wusheng was his opponent. He was sure that Jian Wusheng had researched him as well.

He tried placing himself in Jian Wusheng's position. What would he do if he was Jian Wusheng? He concluded that he would try to end the fight as quickly as possible and avoid being pulled into a war of attrition. He also concluded that he would probably use "I Do Not Stand In A Sea Of Death" to achieve this goal.

Thanks to his preparations, Ye Qing was able to avoid the killer move. Despite this, he failed to get away unscathed, Jian Wusheng's sword qi and sword intent dealing some damage to his mind. He was lucky that his spirit was as strong as it was, or the consequences would be unimaginable.

After dodging the surprise attack, Ye Qing decided to hide inside the water and wait for an opportunity to give Jian Wusheng a taste of his own medicine. He succeeded. Since his force was carefully contained within his fist, his attack seemed perfectly harmless until the moment he made contact with Jian Wusheng's sole. Not even the swordsman could walk away from this without suffering some injuries!

The best time to press the advantage was after the enemy was caught by surprise, so Ye Qing didn't hesitate to go after Jian Wusheng. However, he had just crossed ten meters of distance when Jian Wusheng raised his scabbard high with his left hand, spun sideways, and discharged a blast of force upward.

His force surged, and the air vibrated like thunder. Jian Wusheng was able to correct his posture with his efforts and face toward Ye Qing. Gripping his sword with both hands, he slowly thrust his sword at him.

Sword qi washed out of Jian Wusheng and sealed the space surrounding him and his target. Every time his sword traveled an inch, the surrounding sword qi would solidify a little more. By the time his sword had traveled a meter, it was like the sky itself was pressing down on Ye Qing.

His energies suppressed, Ye Qing was pushed back where he came from. Even before he hit the river, the patch of water directly below Ye Qing depressed bit by bit as if a gigantic, invisible hand was pressing down on it.

"What a 'Sword Qi Rains From The Nine Heavens'! It's not a sword technique in 'No Life, No I', but it still embodies its force and intent! In fact, it's no weaker than any existing technique in 'No Life, No I'!"

Lei Xiaodan couldn't help but voice a compliment when he saw Jian Wusheng's sword qi raining ceaselessly from above like the judgment of heavens. "His talent in the way of the sword is truly outstanding!"

“Sometimes, the student surpasses the master. It certainly looks like Jian Wusheng’s achievements is going to surpass Gentleman Wusheng’s.” Hong Jianglong nodded in agreement before looking in Song Xilai’s direction. “Are you interested, Brother Song?”

Song Xilai hailed from Purity Sword, and Purity Sword was famous for their sword arts. They also had extremely strict requirements—so strict, in fact, that they only recruited those who were exceptionally gifted or talented with the sword only. Hong Jianglong was sure that Song Xilai would be interested in Jian Wusheng.

Song Xilai replied calmly, “One of my elders has already taken Jian Wusheng as a family disciple[2].”

“Damn! You guys sure work fast!” Hong Jianglong teased with a sliver of regret.

Purity Sword had three elders named “Cleansed Sword”, “Tempered Sword”, and “Sword Executor”. They were the highest authority in the sect besides the head himself. Song Xilai was the Sword Executor, and Jian Wusheng was taken in by the Cleansed Sword. It showed just how much they valued the young warrior.

“The early bird gets the worm.” Song Xilai shot Hong Jianglong and Lei Xiaodan a glance before cracking a rare joke. “The rest of you should make your move as quickly as possible as well. With Brother Hong and Brother Lei around, it’s only a matter of time all the talents worth recruiting are taken.”

“Hahahaha...” Everyone laughed when they heard that.

“Brother Song, I can see that Purity Sword values Jian Wusheng highly. Do you think he can become the champion of this Hidden Dragon Meet?” Someone asked.

Song Xilai thought for a moment before answering seriously, “That depends on whether he can defeat Qing Emperor Junior.”

“In that case, Jian Wusheng is definitely going to be the champion.” Someone laughed. “Jian Wusheng has already seized the upper hand. It won’t be long before he takes the match.”

“How can you say that? Qing Emperor Junior may have fallen into a disadvantage, but he’s still full of energy. The match can still go either way,” someone retorted.

“You’re wrong. Qing Emperor Junior is definitely a formidable warrior, but Jian Wusheng is a named warrior on the Human Champions Ranking, and his cultivation level is higher. It’s one thing if Qing Emperor Junior still holds the advantage, but now that the tables have turned, it would be very difficult for him to turn things around.”

“Indeed. Not only that, they’re fighting on a river right now. Qing Emperor Junior’s Chaos Demon Ape Body wouldn’t be able to unleash its full power on such a terrain. I just can’t see how he might win against Jian Wusheng.”

“No, I disagree. A battle between warriors can swing in any direction in an instant. It might look like Jian Wusheng is holding the advantage right now, but that can easily change in the next moment. That is why it’s so hard to predict the outcome of a battle!”

The bigshots in the kiosks weren’t the only ones who were talking about the match. The spectators standing beneath the platform were in deep discussion as well.

Xu Rulin and Yang Zhao were fighting on the first platform, Ye Qing and Jian Wusheng were fighting on the second platform, Zhuo Henshui and Wen Xiaonuan were fighting on the third platform, and Zhao Lan and Zhao Bu’er were fighting on the fourth platform.

Although each and every participant on the platform was a genius in their own right, and the fact that they were evenly-matched made the battles even more interesting than usual, most of them were still sounding out their opponents and holding back their strength. On the other hand, Ye Qing and Jian Wusheng had jumped straight to the climax since the match kicked off, and it didn’t look like it was going to end anytime soon. Naturally, everyone’s eyes were set on their battle.

#### Chapter 439: A Dance That Breaks The Soul

Who do you think would win, Xiaodan?

The Harmony King was too poor a warrior to determine who between the two would win, but why rely on his wits when he could just ask the answer from someone?

Lei Xiaodan replied smilingly, Its too hard to say right now, but I believe its going to be a pyrrhic victory.

The Harmony King frowned. Say it in a way that I can understand.

Sitting next to him, Chu Qingge explained, Lord Lei means that Joyless and Jian Wusheng are evenly-matched. Whoever wins must pay a hefty price to do so.

Lei Xiaodan nodded approvingly. A fine explanation, Miss Chu.

Joyless? The Harmony Kings attention was no longer on the outcome of the battle, however. Since when are you and that brat so close?

Chu Qingge replied calmly, We both serve the Pacification Bureau. Of course were close.

Hmph! The Harmony King didnt believe her words. That brat is losing for sure.

Chu Qingge merely smiled and kept her silence.

Back on the platform, The circular recess caused by Jian Wushengs sword qi in the middle of the river was now tens of meters deep. At the center of it was Ye Qing.

As soon as Ye Qings feet made contact with the waters, the entire river shook violently like a living creature. Then, the waves crashed down with a vengeance and wiped him from the surface of the river.

While this was happening, Jian Wusheng was still standing in the sky and swinging his sword repeatedly. He looked like a sword celestial practicing his sword in the heavens, his sword qi illuminated the false world like a second sun.

When Jian Wusheng held his sword, he was one with his weapon. When his sword qi entered the river, he was one with the river as well. The river began churning and bubbling like boiling oil.

This is bad.

Outside the platform, Luo Zhan muttered with a severe expression on his face.

What do you mean? Gao Ning'an asked. Chu Nianjiu and Lin Yuhuai were looking at him with concern as well.

What? Are you suggesting that Joyless would lose? Gao Ning'an's eyes bugged out. I bet one thousand silvers on him earlier! It's literally everything I have! If Joyless loses, then I won't have any money left to marry a wife!

I too placed a five hundred silvers bet on him. I should've bet on Jian Wusheng instead. Chu Nianjiu also sighed deeply.

I know right? The regret, the regret! Gao Ning'an scratched his head with both hands.

Luo Zhan: ...

Lin Yuhuai: ...

*Brothers-on-the-surface, indeed.*

Hahaha! What did I say? I knew that boy would lose! The Harmony King cackled while glancing at his daughter.

In response, Chu Qingge smiled and said simply, I trust Joyless.

As if on cue, a new reaction overtook the river. The waters slowly but surely bulged as if a giant was lifting pushing it from the bottom.

In the sky, Jian Wusheng frowned a little and held his sword horizontally in front of his chest. While gripping the handle with one hand and pinching the tip with the other, he slowly pushed his sword downward and smoothened the bulge on the river.

It didn't work, at least not for long. Just a few breaths later, the bulge returned and became bigger than ever before. Jian Wusheng's whole body shook like he was straining against some sort of unimaginable pressure, and his sword slowly bent upward until it looked like a crescent. Then

*Boom!*

The bulge exploded and created a massive tidal wave headed straight for Jian Wusheng. As he glided away from it, the swordsman released the tip of his sword and flicked the blade with a finger.

As if struck by some sort of massive, invisible force, the tidal wave abruptly scattered into a million bits and fell back into the river like the rain.

The fine rain looked beautiful and dreamlike, but Jian Wusheng flinched like someone had punched him in the face. Ripples kept appearing on the layer of sword qi surrounding his body almost as if each and every droplet contained a wisp of saber force.

At the same time, a crimson flash appeared before his eyes. It was as enchanting as it was deadly.

Sudden fear gripped Jian Wusheng's limbs and froze his thoughts. He knew he had to get a grip as soon as possible unless he wanted to die right here and now.



## *No I, No Limit*

Jian Wusheng pointed his blade toward the ground as fabrics of light folded around his body like an extra cloak. It instantly dispelled the fear that was paralyzing him.

No Sword, No I was a hyper-offensive martial art where 99% of its moves were offensive. No I, No Limit was one of the very few defensive techniques it featured; one that guarded both the body and the mind. Not only that, it automatically fired sword beams at the attacker if the practitioner received a hit, which made perfect sense considering the theme of No Sword, No I.

As soon as the cloak of sword qi took form, Jian Wusheng suddenly felt a stabbing pain in his chest. When he looked down, he saw a bloody hole in his right chest deep enough to expose the bones.

Fast! Jian Wusheng knitted his brows tightly. He had reacted instantly, and still the saber force hit him before No I, No Limit could fully take form.

I had no idea that your saber mastery is on par with your fist mastery, Brother Ye! Jian Wusheng remarked.

You flatter me, Brother Wusheng. Im just paying back what you did unto me. Ye Qing appeared behind Jian Wusheng while holding a long saber in his hand.

The saber was as slender and enchanting as a beauty, but the wielder himself cut quite the sorry figure. Ye Qings clothes were shredded and covered in blood. There were also cuts all over his body like he was tortured. Wisps of sword qi could be seen lurking within each wound.

Just now, Jian Wusheng had exploited his moment of carelessness and pushed him into the river. Then, the swordsman injected his sword qi into the river and used it to trap him like a cage. The river was his sword, and the sword was the river. There was literally nowhere he could run even if he tried.

Left with no choice, Ye Qing pushed his way out of Jian Wushengs cage of sword qi via brute force. He succeeded, but it came at a hefty cost. The swordsmans sword qi had inflicted countless wounds on his body before seeping deeper into his flesh. Even with his physique, he was unable to expel them immediately. That was why he was still bleeding profusely.

Ye Qing knew then that it was unlikely he would be able to defeat Jian Wusheng with his fist art and the Chaos Demon Ape Body alone. He would have to unveil some of his trump cards.

His Chaos Demon Ape Body couldnt unleash its full potential in this terrain because strength comes from the ground, and they were fighting on a river where there was little to no land at all. That was why he chose to use Red Sleeve and the Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain.

If nothing else, it would be poetic to defeat a sword with a saber.

After he made up his mind, Ye Qing decided to deliver Jian Wusheng a meeting gift. The swordsman was kind enough to give him a river of sword qi and an innumerable number of wounds. It would only be right to reciprocate the favor.

That was why he used Soulchasing as soon as he broke out of the cage of sword qi, one of the finishers in the Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain.

Soulchasing was a speedy technique. In fact, it was faster than even Jian Wushengs I Do Not Stand In A Sea Of Death. Combined with the element of surprise, Ye Qing was able to land an effective blow on Jian Wusheng.

Unfortunately, Jian Wushengs reaction speed was top notch. Soulchasing ultimately failed to steal his soul like it was meant to.

That said, Soulchasing was just the meeting the gift. The real gift was what comes next.

Careful now, Brother Wusheng.

Ye Qings warning was still reverberating in the air when he sped toward Jian Wusheng using Illusionists Grace. Before he and his illusions even got close, the sky was already filled with spring wind and the radiance of saber.

In response, Jian Wusheng unleashed a series of rapid thrusts and sword beams. They were as biting and frigid as the cold.

Jian Wushengs sword was fast, unfettered by forms, and everchanging. However, Ye Qings saber was equally fast and free.

The wind had no form, and the cloud was everchanging. That was the best way to describe their duel. Their techniques werent just sly and multifaceted, they sprung forth into existence directly from the art itself. If the world was a paper, and their hearts the brush, then they were master artists who weaved the wind and rain, ghosts and gods, heaven and hell into existence as they pleased.

For a time, the sky was filled with sword and saber qi. Literally, it was impossible to see the sun itself.

But of course, the two warriors style wasnt entirely the same. Jian Wushengs No Life, No I was a direct, bloodthirsty, and hyper-offensive sword art that strived to kill its enemies before they killed its practitioner. One might compare it to an iron-willed hero who would rather break than bend.

On the other hand, Ye Qings Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain concealed its killing intent within a blanket of love and tenderness. Its brilliant, dazzling red resembled a red-robed beauty dancing in the middle of a spring rain, and it was as deadly as it was enchanting.

Its killing intent couldnt be seen, but it was also everywhere.

In the middle of a spring rain, a red beauty danced a dance that could break the soul.

What a beautiful saber! What a beautiful woman!

Outside the platform, the large majority of spectators watching the duel between Ye Qing and Jian Wusheng were completely entranced by Ye Qings Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain.

... Gasp! What an unnatural saber art!

Inside a kiosk, Yang Shixiu snapped back into reality after a burst of sword energy flashed in his eyes. Beside him, Zhao Huaian also broke out of the spell at the same time.

The two men exchanged a shocked, wary look with each other. They were both patriarchs of a reputable clan in Tian Yong. Although their clans were no martial clans, they were still Half-Step Grandmasters.

Despite this, they had temporarily lost themselves in Ye Qings saber art. It was just a breath, but a breath could mean everything in a battle between warriors.

The fact that Ye Qings saber art could affect them showed just how scary it was.

It is quite unnatural, Zhang Huaian echoed in agreement. Ye Qings techniques looked tender and loving like a womans dance, but its really brimming with killing intent. Not only that, it can bewitch the mind and cause its victims to lose sight of themselves. One misstep, and its exquisite redness will fade into the darkness of death.

Have you figured out what that saber art is, Brother Yang?

Yang Shixiu shook his head. I only know that its a Spirit Purification stage saber art. I have never seen it before.

Zhang Huaian shook his head wryly. The young will always replace the old, but even so, youngsters these days are quite something, arent they?

Indeed. Yang Shixiu chuckled.

Wake up!

Suddenly, a loud, draconic roar erupted from somewhere. It hurt the eardrums, but everyone who was bewitched by the Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain immediately jolted back to reality.

Hong Jianglong then swept his gaze across the area and warned simply, Guard your mind.

Unbelievable! What on earth is that saber art?

Yeah, I cant believe it actually bewitched me!

Do you think it might be the Mind Stealing Saber of the All Sky Alliance?

You must be joking! Its true that the Mind Stealing Saber is famous for its evil, mind-bending qualities, but those who were bewitched by it would also turn into walking corpses! Were obviously still alive, and the saber art the Qing Emperor Junior is using is anything but evil! It cant be the Mind Stealing Saber!

I think its because of his weapon.

What a coincidence! I think so too.

For a time, the peak of Flying Dragon Mount was buried under an excited murmur.

Chapter 440: Spring Wind and Fine Rain

Young Ye is an expert in saber arts too? He sure knows how to keep his skills hidden.

Lei Xiaodan looked in Hong Jianglongs direction. Thats Red Sleeve and the Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain, isnt it?

Er I think so? Hong Jianglong rubbed his nose.

Lei Xiaodan noticed Hong Jianglongs strange expression and exclaimed in surprise, You didnt know, Brother Hong?

Ahem of course I know! I just didnt recall it until just now. Hong Jianglong coughed.

It technically wasn't a lie. Ye Qing did mention to him that he had dabbled in the way of the saber before. He took it as the whole truth and didn't prod deeper.

Is the Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain very famous or something, Xiaodan? The Harmony King asked curiously.

Lei Xiaodan noticed that Hong Jianglong was lying through his teeth but didn't expose him. Instead, he focused on answering the Harmony King's question, The Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain is a Spirit Purification stage saber art that was supposedly invented by a warriorress. Loving and tender like a woman's touch, it is a superior grade martial art with exquisite techniques.

But of course, it is incomparable to Jian Wusheng's No Life, No I.

Huh? The Harmony King looked confused. If that's true, then how is Ye Qing going even against Jian Wusheng?

That's because Young Ye had improved it considerably.

Lei Xiaodan explained, Young Ye is using a modified version of Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain that is infused with his own understanding and insights. While retaining the original's style and concept, he cut away what he considered unnecessary and made it faster, more accurate, more exquisite, and more powerful than what it was before.

More importantly, Young Ye's Spirit Purification stage cultivation art seems quite unusual. This is just an observation, but it looks like his spirit could induce hallucinations and captivate the mind. Combined with the Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain and Red Sleeve, he can mentally attack his opponents with every swing of the blade.

You could say that Young Ye's Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain is very different from the original. It is now as strong as Jian Wusheng's No Life, No I.

On a related note, Young Ye's Spirit Purification stage cultivation art really is quite something. It is stranger than the Six Desires Demon Sutra of the Demonic Abode of Six Desires, greater than the Boundless Heart Demon Art of West Kulun, and more profound than the Canon of the Manifestation of Red Dust of Red Dust Tribulation. When the mind moves, it leaves no traces behind. When the thought stirs, it cannot be perceived. It is bewitching, enchanting, and seemingly the perfect union between profoundness, anomaly, spirit, surreality, anomaly and deception. It is incredible.

Lei Xiaodan looked at Hong Jianglong again and asked, Do you know what Spirit Purification stage Young Ye is using, Brother Hong?

Hong Jianglong shot him a baleful look. No.

Is it because you don't know the answer? Lei Xiaodan teased.

Oh! Sorry, sorry. My curiosity blinded me for a moment there. I hope you won't take offense. Lei Xiaodan apologized in a hurry. In any case, it looks like congratulations are in order, Brother Hong. Young Ye should win this match.

Hong Jianglong shot Lei Xiaodan another look but didn't say anything.

What? The brat is going to win? That's impossible! The Harmony King exclaimed in shock when he heard Lei Xiaodan's final statement. That brat can't be that strong! Xilai, what do you think?

Song Xilai replied expressionlessly, Hes right. Wusheng will lose very soon.

How is that possible? Jian Wusheng is a named warrior on the Human Champions Ranking! He was even kicking that brats ass earlier! I dont believe this! The Harmony King raged.

No Life, No I is a sword art that demands its practitioner to abandon their ego and fear. Only a swordsman with a pure sword heart can become unrivaled in sword intent. However, you can see from the way Wusheng fights that he is no longer free from fear and hesitation as he once was, Song Xilai explained. I would give him a teatime at most before he loses this fight.

Are you sure about this? The Harmony King still looked doubtful.

Then, someone no one expected to say anything spoke up, No, it will take half a teatime at most!

Everyone turned to look at Chu Wangsun in surprise. Last time, the scholar was silent the entire round. What possessed him to speak up this time?

Of course, just because Chu Wangsun said something didnt mean that he had suddenly turned into a chatterbox. The scholar fell silent without explaining anything.

Everyone understood his meaning though. Chu Wangsun was saying that Joyless would defeat Jian Wusheng in half a teatime.

Im glad you think so highly of Joyless, Mister Nine, but Jian Wusheng is an accomplished swordsman. Can you explain why youre so certain the Joyless will defeat him in half a teatime? Hong Jianglong asked with a wide smile on his face.

Unnecessary. You will see very soon, Chu Wangsun answered without even looking up from his book.

Hong Jianglong narrowed his eyes a little. He couldnt understand what Chu Wangsun was thinking. Was he actually praising Ye Qing from the bottom of his heart, or was he trying to paint a bigger target on his back? His efforts didnt seem nearly enough if it was the latter though.

Hong Jianglong tried to prod Chu Wangsun into speaking his thoughts, but the scholar refused to cooperate with him. Now, he was saddled with a heavy mind and even heavier heart.

*Why must I duel wits with Chu Wangsun? Joyless, that heavens damned troublemaker. Im sending him home as soon as this tournament is over.*

Back on the platform, Jian Wusheng was feeling just as heavy as Hong Jianglong was, if not heavier. Since the day he grasped No Life, No I, he had never encountered a peer whose tempo was faster than his until now.

Ye Qings saber art might look slow on the outside due to its tender, pampering outlook, but in reality it was a tad faster than even No Life, No I. Not only that, Ye Qings saber insight was surprisingly deep, and his techniques didnt conform to what he learned from the manual. He fought as if he was the embodiment of the saber art itself, natural and perfect. As a result, he was unable to find a way to pierce it.

He could still handle it if this was all the saber art was. The problem was that every move, every gesture Ye Qing performed disrupted his concentration and bewitched the mind as well. Even with his willpower, he didnt doubt he would be ensnared if he let his guard down for even an instant.

If No Life, No I was a hot-blooded, iron-willed hero, then the Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain was a seductress who could tempt a realm into damnation. It was often said that a hero was rarely immune to the charms of a woman, and right here and now, it certainly looked like No Life, No I was outmatched by the Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain.

Over time, Jian Wusheng was pushed harder and harder until all he could do was defend himself. More and more chinks appeared in his once flawless swordwork, and so did the number of wounds on his body.

*No, no! Im a named warrior on the Human Champions Ranking, while he is just a nobody! Am I actually going to lose to him?*

Slowly but surely, Jian Wusheng was succumbing to his own anxiety, anger, and frustration, which in turn impacted his sword art even more. The deeper he plunged into the well of emotions, the more his sword art deteriorated, and the worse his situation became.

No! I wont lose!

Jian Wusheng suddenly growled and drove back the meandering red light with a burst of sword qi. During the respite, he achieved unity in body and sword and charged toward Ye Qing. Sword qi filled the air, and a blinding white light split the river in half.

*I Do Not Stand In A Sea Of Death*

Its slow.

Outside the platform, Luo Zhan commented with frown after witnessing Jian Wushengs finisher.

What do you mean? Gao Ning'an and the others didnt understand his meaning.

Jian Wushengs I Do Not Stand In A Sea Of Death is slower than normal. Luo Zhan explained, The move looks like its as strong as ever, but his sword heart is clouded, and his sword intent is in shambles. Its much slower than the I Do Not Stand In A Sea Of Death he executed at the start of this match.

While Luo Zhan was talking, Jian Wusheng and Ye Qing had already clashed blades with each other. The impact was such that the waters directly underneath them pushed outward and formed massive tsunamis that were almost a hundred meters tall.

The waves didnt fall back into the river and reveal the duo until a dozen or so breaths later. The tip of Jian Wushengs sword was a mere inch away from Ye Qings forehead, and the latters skin was broken and bleeding a little.

That single inch might as well be an eternity, however. Why? Because Ye Qing was grabbing the blade with his left hand and holding it in place, and his right hand was pressing a saber against Jian Wushengs neck.

The swordsman looked shocked and as white as a ghost. He couldnt bring himself to believe that his strongest, swiftest attack had been dismantled in this manner.

He knew that I Do Not Stand In A Sea Of Death wasnt invincible. He had met warriors who dodged it using a movement art, clashed against it with their own finisher, or neutralized it through cunning. But to grab it with his bare hand?!

I lost, he whispered like he had lost his soul.

Only because you let me[1]. Ye Qing let go of Jian Wushengs sword and removed Red Sleeve from his neck. Please do not be too concerned about this, Brother Wusheng. The glove Im wearing is called the Blue Demon Hand, and its a powerful Soulstealer-class Strange Artifact. Without it, I would never dare to catch your sword with my bare hands.

You dont need to console me, Brother Ye. A loss is a loss. It has nothing to do with the Strange Artifacts we use, Jian Wusheng said dejectedly before saluting Ye Qing and teleporting out of the battlefield.

The Paranirmitavaavartin Heavenly Demon Sutra fed on a persons negative emotions to grow its strength, and the demonic thought it created could mess with a persons heart and disturb their mind. It could easily lead someone astray or put a chink in their mental armor without leaving a trace. At the adept level, it could assault the mind in a million ways with a single thought.

Of course, he was a far cry from reaching that level. The reason Jian Wushengs final I Do Not Stand In A Sea Of Death had become so weak was because he had destabilized Jian Wushengs mind using the demonic thought imbued in the Saber of Spring Wind and Fine Rain and the Heavenly Demon Captures The Soul. Of course the swordsman wasnt able to bring out the full strength of his finisher with a clouded sword heart and an impure sword intent.

Unfortunately, it looked like the defeat had also left a debilitating, potentially lasting impression in Jian Wusheng. If he couldnt recover from this

After Jian Wusheng left the platform, he walked up to Song Xilai and whispered dejectedly, I lost, senior uncle.

Dont bow. Raise your head, Song Xilai ordered coolly.

Jian Wusheng subconsciously obeyed the order. As soon as he met Song Xilais eyes, he blinked like someone had stabbed him in the eyes. Song Xilai wasnt doing anything, but his sword intent was so sharp that it pierced the heavens without him trying to. As for his sword heart, well, Jian Wusheng thought he was looking at a sword for a second there.

Mind shaken and eyes blinking away tears, Jian Wusheng bowed his head yet again.

Are you bowing your head, or your heart? Song Xilai asked.

I dont understand? Jian Wusheng sounded confused.

If youre just bowing your head, then youre still a disciple of Purity Sword.

Song Xilai said coldly, But if youre bowing your heart as well, then you may leave this mountain this instant.

Jian Wusheng shuddered as fear and panic gripped him.