

Tang Sect 271

[Chapter 271.1: Sword Fanatics Sword](#)

Ji Juechen didn't stand down. He wielded the Judgment Sword and followed Feng Ling towards the rest of the Heaven's Gate disciples. Since when were Ji Juechen and Jing Ziyang afraid of anything? They loved trouble! Ji Juechen's competitiveness came to the surface as he was provoked. Initiating an attack was in line with his personality.

Jing Ziyang didn't follow him. She had been greatly agitated by Huo Yuhao earlier, and hadn't recovered yet. Furthermore, she also felt something from the immense spiritual pressure that Huo Yuhao had brought upon her. She needed some time to digest everything.

Feng Ling quickly rushed back to his own territory. Everyone from Heaven's Gate naturally heard his confrontation with the Tang Sect. The entire sect, including the two middle-aged men, gathered immediately.

Ji Juechen lifted his sword and walked over. Bei Bei wanted to follow him, but he was stopped by Jing Ziyang.

"Let him have his fill. Otherwise, he'll vent it all on us."

Bei Bei immediately sat down. He sighed slightly, and his eyes were filled with empathy for those from Heaven's Gate.

Jing Ziyang's lips moved slightly. "What kind of person are you?"

Bei Bei smiled and revealed his set of white teeth, "I'm a good guy."

Jing Ziyang looked over and shrugged her shoulders. Ever since she came to Tang Sect, she had smiled far more often.

"Who are you? What do you want?" one of the middle-aged men shouted at Ji Juechen as he walked over.

Ji Juechen was holding the Judgment Sword. As he moved forward, his aura was changing tremendously. It was as if he and his surrounding environment had assimilated. However, the environment didn't assimilate with him. On the contrary, he assimilated with the environment. Everything surrounding him became extremely quiet. Even the birdsong that could be heard earlier disappeared. The colorful and radiant world turned dim and grey.

The two middle-aged men started to turn serious.

Ji Juechen finally stopped. "Either you beat me or I'll beat you." As he spoke, he lifted his Judgment Sword and grabbed it with both hands. He lifted it high above his head.

A weird glow extended from the sword hilt. Two yellow, two purple, and two black soul rings quickly rose from Ji Juechen's feet. However, these soul rings turned grey in the next moment. His entire body turned grey too.

Solitary Sword Domain.

The layer of grey started to expand at a frightening speed. The surroundings were dyed grey all around him.

Huo Yuhao finally opened his eyes. He was impressed. "Brother Ji's domain is getting more and more complete."

Those from the Heavenly Armor Sect naturally noticed the confrontation that was going on. Han Zhanhu stood up and watched what was happening.

When he saw Ji Juechen walk towards the Heaven's Gate disciples and unleash six soul rings, his expression changed. Although Ji Juechen looked older than twenty, he was definitely not older than thirty! For him to become a Soul Emperor at that age meant that he was the best among everyone of the same age. When Ji Juechen lifted his Judgment Sword and his soul rings turned grey, Han Zhanhu's expression also turned serious.

He must possess great abilities given these strange things I'm seeing. This young man is extraordinary!

The Heaven's Gate disciples wouldn't allow Ji Juechen to bully them, either. They quickly spread out. The two middle-aged men also unleashed their soul rings. Just like Ji Juechen, they were six-ringed Soul Emperors. However, the color of their soul rings was slightly different.

One of them had three yellow and three purple soul rings, while the other had three yellow, two purple and one black soul ring. Evidently, it wasn't their first time teaming up with together. The Soul Emperor with the three yellow and three purple soul rings retreated quickly. At the same time, he lifted a soul cannon to his shoulder. The soul rings on his body flashed, and his soul power undulations increased significantly. He was an orthodox soul engineer.

The other middle-aged man stood in place without moving. As a clanging sound rang out, a thick suit of armor appeared on his body. The pitch-black armor carried a little silver light. Evidently, it was created using some form of special metal. This armor, including a helmet, covered his body from head to toe. Not only that, but this close-combat soul engineer even had a shield in his hand.

The Heaven's Gate Sect was a soul engineering sect. Besides these two middle-aged men, the rest also unleashed their soul tools. Feng Ling also wore a suit of armor and carried a shield. Furthermore, his armor seemed stronger than the middle-aged man's. However, he only had four soul rings. Bearing his shield, he protected himself like a turtle in its shell. It seemed as if he was afraid that no one would know he was fearful of death.

Boom!—

An intense ball of white light was unleashed from the middle-aged man's soul cannon. The aggressor always possessed the advantage. Ji Juechen appeared in front of them, and his soul rings were the best combination a Soul Emperor could possibly have. These two middle-aged men from the Heaven's Gate acted very cautiously. They had unleashed the cannon strike to test Ji Juechen's abilities. The rest of the Heaven's Gate disciples were spread around them. Although they retrieved their soul tools, they didn't attack.

Ji Juechen was alone! He had many compatriots who were resting. When the Heaven's Gate disciples saw his six rings, they were dumbfounded. Most of the people they interacted with only had four rings.

There were even those who only had three rings! Just having the soul tools they did was considered quite decent already.

Ji Juechen stood in place and slashed his Judgment Sword forward. His actions were simple and direct. The Judgment Sword turned black and accurately struck the soul cannon shell.

The middle-aged man who had fired the cannon was stunned. Not only did Ji Juechen not avoid the cannon shell, he even struck it directly. What was going on? This was a Class 5 soul tool! Its explosive strength was tremendous!

However, he was stunned in the next moment.

The pitch-black sword and burning white cannon shell contrasted each other. However, the cannon shell seemed to stall slightly as it made contact. It seemed to be on the verge of blowing apart, but it was swallowed by the black that came from the sword in the next instant. None of its energy was released.

Ji Juechen was very confident. As he stepped forward with his left leg, he continued to slash with his sword.

The previous black turned into a blinding brightness. In that instant, his entire person seemed to have turned into a silver sun. The intense brightness blinded the Heaven's Gate disciples temporarily.

The silver light retracted amidst their groans. The close-combat soul engineer holding the shield had already shifted from his position, retreating three meters.

Ji Juechen stood where he was quietly. His Judgment Sword had lost its glow by now.

A crisp clang resonated from the soul engineer that retreated. Following this, an astonishing scene appeared.

A streak of silver light was released from his shield. It expanded like the patterns on a turtle shell. A crackling sound followed as the shield was turned into a pile of debris on the ground. Not only this, but the expanding silver light even appeared on his armor. It started from his helmet all the way down his body. His entire suit of armor cracked and fell off. The weird thing, however, was that he wasn't hurt at all.

There were nearly forty people on this empty patch of land. However, the entire patch turned eerily silent at this instant. Even the sounds of birds chirping couldn't be heard in this domain. The greyness seemed to be spreading ceaselessly. Everyone from the Heaven's Gate was engulfed.

Ji Juechen's gaze was as cold as ever. However, he appeared much more disappointed this time. He gently shook his head and turned around. He placed the Judgment Sword on his shoulder and walked back towards the Tang Sect. The grey domain followed him back. He was already very handsome, but in this brief fight, his suaveness had shocked everyone.

He was a sword fanatic, and only lived for fighting and swords. He wasn't an executioner. Moreover, that instantaneous control was something that he pursued. In his eyes, the Heaven's Gate disciples weren't fit enough for him to truly unleash his sword.

Han Zhanhu was astonished. There was only one thought in his mind – if I were the one standing in front of him, what would I do against his sword?

Ji Juechen's fighting method was one of a kind. He was neither a soul master, nor a soul engineer. However, he was very strong, especially in control. If he could tear his opponent's shield and armor apart, he could definitely tear his opponent's body apart as well.

However, he didn't harm the man. He only threatened him with his sword, and caused everyone from the Heaven's Gate to freeze in place.

Feng Ling was shivering and something wet could be felt at his crotch. Who did I just offend?

The middle-aged man who unleashed the long-range strike took two steps forward and came up beside his partner. He asked softly, "Senior, are you okay?"

He only saw his senior's pale face.

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His body shuddered, and he twisted his head to look at his compatriot. He whispered, "Let's leave." He quickly removed the remaining parts of his helmet and gestured towards the Heaven's Gate disciples.

At this point, everyone from the Heaven's Gate moved away in a disciplined fashion. They were extremely quick, as if they were scurrying off. The fastest to flee was Feng Ling. His fat seemed to be filled with new strength now.

Ji Juechen had already returned to Huo Yuhao's side. He turned to look at Huo Yuhao as if he were asking him something.

Huo Yuhao smiled and replied, "Obliteration of darkness, instant brightness. You are really impressive. You've merged with your sword!"

A smile was revealed on Ji Juechen's cold face. It was a rare smile. "If you could move at all, I wouldn't be able to beat you."

Huo Yuhao chortled, "That's hard to say. I'm only stronger than you in terms of my spiritual power. However, the sword intent formed from the combination of your spiritual and soul power is becoming more and more sturdy as you slowly grow. If this continues, you'll be stronger than me, at least in that aspect."

Ji Juechen's eyes brightened. He seemed to understand something, and nodded towards Huo Yuhao.

"Let me sleep awhile." Huo Yuhao was still laying on Wang Dong'er's lap.

"Okay." Ji Juechen acknowledged his words and returned to his original position.

After those from the Heaven's Gate left, the Heavenly Armor Sect also started to move off. Before they left, Han Zhanhu went over to speak to Bei Bei again. However, his tone of voice was rather different from before. He didn't dare to underestimate the Tang Sect anymore.

Those from the Tang Sect also didn't stay much longer. After Huo Yuhao woke up from his nap, they embarked on their journey again, proceeding towards Radiant City. At the same time, Wang Dong'er

dressed like a guy again for safety precautions. As Huo Yuhao was in a wheelchair, they were moving much slower than before. It was already sunset by the time they arrived at Radiant City.

Among all of them, Huo Yuhao, He Caitou, Wang Dong'er, Na Na, Ji Juechen, and Jing Ziyang had been to Radiant City before. They weren't unfamiliar with this place. However, the rest of Shrek's Seven Monsters were all astonished. Radiant City was the largest city on the continent! When they saw the tall buildings, they were even more shocked. Their expressions also turned more serious.

All of them came from the three empires of the continent. As the biggest threat on the continent, a thriving Sun Moon Empire put great pressure on the other empires. Even Huo Yuhao didn't know how strong the Sun Moon Empire was. They hadn't seen the truly great soul engineers from the empire yet.

According to the information they were given, they had to complete their registration when they reached Radiant City. Although the previous registration had been completed, they still had to go through this round of registration to verify their arrival. The empire would then arrange for their temporary residence, as well as provide them with the tournament schedule.

As they had competed in the last edition of the tournament, Shrek's Seven Monsters were all profoundly moved as they arrived at the city. Compared to the congested streets of Star Luo City, Radiant City looked much more orderly. Although the crowds on the streets had increased, it didn't feel packed. This was the benefit of a huge city. Soldiers in iron armor patrolled the streets occasionally. Every squad was made up of twelve soldiers, all extremely disciplined.

Although Huo Yuhao had stayed in Radiant City for quite some time, he wasn't very familiar with the buildings here. He had been extremely invested in soul tools every day, and didn't have time to stroll around. However, there was someone else who was familiar with the area. Na Na had grown up in this city, and was quite familiar with things around here. She was easily able to lead everyone to the registration area.

It was a huge eight-story hotel. It was in the city center, and was called the Ming Yue Hotel. It was entirely silvery-white, and could be seen from a good distance away. Every story was quite high. Even though there were only eight stories, it was still considered an extremely tall building in Radiant City.

The lobby of the hotel gave off a metallic feel. Its internal decoration was identical to its external decoration, completely silvery-white. Various streamlined decorations resembled exquisite soul tools and gave one the urge to touch them. The first feeling the hotel gave those entering was that it was simple, yet grand.

At this moment, there were many people gathered in the lobby. When Huo Yuhao and the others entered, they were immediately greeted by a young lady in a long silver dress.

"Greetings. Are all of you here for the Continental Elite Youth Soul Master Tournament?" The young lady was tall and slender, and also very beautiful. Her long silver dress fit her body to a tee, and extended all the way to her calves, looking quite elegant. She wore a light smile on her face and seemed very amiable.

"Yes! Yes!" Xu Sanshi was walking in front, and he hurriedly acknowledged her words.

The young lady smiled at him and said, "I'll need all of you to wait because many teams have also just arrived. Follow me."

As she spoke, she led everyone into the lobby. Before they moved off, she subconsciously glanced at Huo Yuhao. This is weird. They are here for the tournament! Why did they bring someone in a wheelchair?

Huo Yuhao appeared to be very calm. He wasn't affected by the young lady's gaze. After everything that he had been through, he was more mature than most adults.

However, he easily attracted attention as he sat in the wheelchair. As they proceeded to the bar in the lobby, many people appeared stunned when they saw him.

The other members of the Tang Sect subconsciously surrounded Huo Yuhao, trying to block him from the limelight.

The bar was at the east side of the hotel and covered a thousand square meters. The bar was filled with white sofas made from genuine leather. They were led to one sofa, and the young lady left after greeting them. Immediately, a waitress in a short white dress walked over and served them some snacks and drinks. The service was exceptional.

After the waitress left, Xu Sanshi said to Bei Bei, "Little Bei, don't you find this an eye opener?"

Bei Bei snapped, "Call me eldest senior. What eye opener? Look at you. You are turning lecherous again."

Xu Sanshi immediately sat up straight and said, "Don't spout nonsense. Who doesn't know that I'm the most honest and reliable person? There's only Nannan in my heart. Besides her, I won't even take a look at any other girls. Of course, that's excluding Dong'er, Xiao Xiao, Nan Na, and Sister Ziyang!"

Everyone grinned when they saw his honest expression. Huo Yuhao also laughed. "Third senior, are you really sure you are talking about yourself? Are you certain about that?"

Xu Sanshi was embarrassed. "Yuhao, don't embarrass me! I'm working in that direction. This is all because of Nannan! Although I attracted many girls with my charm in the past because I was too flirtatious, all I can do now is appear less lecherous."

Bei Bei shook his head and sighed, "How dare you call yourself charming in front of Brother Ji? Brother Ji! I'm not one who picks on others, but I think that Sanshi has made new discoveries in terms of his soul skills, seeing how brazen his words are. When we settle down later, you must really spar with him to improve your cultivation."

Xu Sanshi was furious. "Bei Bei, you! Brother Ji, don't listen to his nonsense. I heard from him yesterday that his Holy Light Dragon has awakened, and he has learned a new move. You should spar with him instead!"

Ji Juechen's expression didn't change. He only nodded at Bei Bei and said calmly, "Alright." After that, he turned to Xu Sanshi and also nodded at him before saying agreeably, "Alright."

Both Bei Bei and Xu Sanshi were stunned. Bei Bei said helplessly, "Harming others without helping yourself. Is there any point in that?"

Xu Sanshi laughed coldly, “What do you think? You were the one who started everything.”

He Caitou was watching the two of them from one side, and was amused. He didn’t make a sound, though. The ladies behind him were also smiling. When Bei Bei and Xu Sanshi were together, they always mocked each other less than three sentences after their conversation began.

Huo Yuhao shut his eyes as he heard his seniors bickering. It seemed like he was about to sleep again. However, Bei Bei and Xu Sanshi quieted down when they saw him shutting his eyes. They knew it represented something.

Indeed, a weird scene was presented in everyone’s mind at this moment.

The image that surfaced in their minds was from a high point of view looking down at the hotel lobby. Everyone could be seen. They were presented in colors this time, but the colors were only limited to black, purple, yellow and white. The number of people was also gradually decreasing.

Huo Yuhao’s thoughts rang out in everyone’s minds, “I’ve excluded those without any soul power undulations.”

[Chapter 271.3: Sword Fanatics Sword](#)

Everyone was shocked as they studied everything with the help of Huo Yuhao’s Spiritual Detection. With Huo Yuhao around, they didn’t need to use their eyes to see. They could just sense all the information!

There were many teams competing in this tournament, and these people weren’t all of them. However, there were more than thirty Soul Sages among those who were registering right now. Undoubtedly, they were the teachers and leaders of teams that were here to compete in the tournament. It also proved that many sects and academies treated this tournament very seriously. It was important to know that Soul Sages were a big deal everywhere on the continent!

For this tournament, at least one-fifth of all the outstanding soul masters on the continent would be gathered in Radiant City!

After briefly observing everyone in the lobby, Huo Yuhao’s Spiritual Detection started to change perspective. It was moved upwards, and quickly saw through the main structure of the hotel.

The Ming Yue Hotel was made using a mixture of reinforced steel and concrete. Some of the more important areas were constructed using extra-high tensile steel.

There were rooms of varying sizes. The higher up they went, the larger the rooms were. Huo Yuhao estimated that there were close to two thousand rooms in this hotel, which itself covered more than fifteen hectares. There were close to two hundred rooms on each story, and more than ten corridors. It was only such a huge hotel that could accommodate the number of people attending such a large-scale tournament. All the competing team’s members were staying in this hotel. Although it seemed a little packed, the hotel could accommodate everyone as long as two people shared one room. If it were any other empire, at least three to five hotels would be needed. This fact alone demonstrated how big and powerful the Sun Moon Empire was.

After ten minutes, Huo Yuhao re-opened his eyes. In these ten minutes, he had used his Spiritual Detection to show his teammates the ranks of the soul masters registering in the lobby, the structure of

the hotel, and the condition of the rooms. His Spiritual Detection managed to reach five hundred meters in radius, with him as the center.

“Oh, a familiar face.” Huo Yuhao looked slightly stunned.

Everyone looked over as they were guided by Huo Yuhao’s Spiritual Detection. There was a group approaching them, and all of them recognized their leader. She was the Star Luo Empire’s princess, Her Imperial Highness Xu Jiujiu, who had given them a lot of trouble in the last tournament.

They didn’t recognize the others behind her. After all, those who had competed in the last tournament were more than twenty now, and had to be replaced for this tournament. Xu Jiujiu’s personal visit was shocking enough. However, the bunch of youths following her were evidently top opponents too. They were selected by the Star Luo National Academy, and thus they were naturally the best of the best. The Star Luo National Academy had been one of the top four academies in the last tournament.

Xu Jiujiu was astonished right now. She was only looking at one person – Huo Yuhao.

Yes, she only walked over because she saw him. She didn’t expect him to be in such a state.

“Huo Yuhao?” Xu Jiujiu walked in front of everyone. All of them stood up to greet her, with the exception of Huo Yuhao.

Huo Yuhao smiled as he faced Xu Jiujiu. He said, “Your Highness, it’s been a long time.”

Xu Jiujiu was shocked, “I was curious when I saw the wheelchair. I was wondering which team brought along a disabled person. After that, I realized it was you. What happened to you?”

Xu Jiujiu respected Huo Yuhao immensely. In the last tournament, Huo Yuhao had led Shrek Academy to the end even though his cultivation was weak. In the final duel, he had defeated the strongest pairing from the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy, the Hongchen siblings, and won the championship.

At that point in time, the Emperor of the Star Luo Empire had appraised Huo Yuhao highly. After the tournament ended, he even sent someone to investigate Huo Yuhao’s background. He even knew that Huo Yuhao entered the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy as an exchange student. The imperial family of the Star Luo Empire had also monitored Huo Yuhao closely, as he developed quickly.

When they realized Huo Yuhao had entered the Sea God’s Pavilion, they placed more attention on him than ever.

The Emperor of the Star Luo Empire, Xu Jiayin, had once told Xu Jiujiu that Huo Yuhao was Shrek Academy’s future.

However, he was sitting in a wheelchair now. Was he really the one-of-a-kind talent who possessed twin martial souls, an Ultimate Martial Soul, great fighting abilities, and almost limitless potential?

Xu Jiujiu’s investigations had revealed that Huo Yuhao was from the Star Luo Empire. Although his background was unclear, it was a fact that he was from the Star Luo Empire. While Shrek Academy was huge, it was only an academy. Even if Huo Yuhao took on an extremely important role in the academy in the future, he wouldn’t be at the academy forever, and would have to venture out occasionally. That would be the Star Luo Empire’s chance.

Xu Jiayin had personally instructed her that Huo Yuhao had to be pulled over to the empire once he ventured out from the academy. If he could serve the empire, he would become a pillar of the empire in the future! Every one of them knew that Huo Yuhao could become a Transcendent Douluo in the future with his potential.

Furthermore, he could even reach the level of an Ultimate Douluo.

What did an Ultimate Douluo represent? A strategic existence!

Shrek Academy only became an existence that no empire dared to trifle with because of Elder Mu. If a Titled Douluo could obliterate a city, an Ultimate Douluo could change the outcome of a war.

Although there was an unspoken rule that a soul master of a certain level couldn't attack ordinary people, the threat that a strong soul master brought to his enemies was already quite terrifying.

Over the past few years, the Sun Moon Empire's military had been very active. The Star Luo and Heavenly Soul Empires were under great pressure. This was especially true for the Star Luo Empire, the second strongest empire on the continent.

If they could pull Huo Yuhao, and even Shrek Academy, over to their side, the Star Luo Empire would become strong enough to challenge the Sun Moon Empire.

After the last tournament ended, why did the Ice Jade Empress Scorpion's Left Arm Bone end up in Huo Yuhao's hands as if it were a gift? It was bait by the Emperor of the Star Luo Empire. It was just that they didn't have a chance to interact after that.

Today, Xu Jiujiu was shocked to find out that Huo Yuhao was seated in a wheelchair. His face was pale, which revealed that he was suffering from some kind of sickness. As she had been monitoring Huo Yuhao, she was clear on how important he was to Shrek Academy. He had ended up in such a state even though he was protected by Shrek Academy's Titled Douluo. What exactly had happened?

Xu Jiujiu was sharp enough. She could tell that there were indeed problems with Huo Yuhao's legs. Furthermore, his left arm also seemed very stiff. They were drooping and not in line with his body. He didn't seem to be acting.

"Thanks for your concern, Your Highness. I only ran into some problems." Huo Yuhao answered her calmly. Huo Yuhao was impressed by how the Emperor had tried to pull him over to his side. He also had a deep impression of Xu Jiujiu.

It was a pity that Xu Jiayin and Xu Jiujiu didn't know that Huo Yuhao had a close relationship with the White Tiger Duke. It was also precisely because of the White Tiger Duke that Huo Yuhao had his own plans. He couldn't be pulled over to their side.

It couldn't be any small problem since he was in a wheelchair. Xu Jiujiu furrowed her brow, but she couldn't possibly point this out. She hesitated for a moment. She greeted the rest of his team politely before asking Huo Yuhao, "Since you are already in this state, can you still compete? Furthermore, all of you are the reigning champions. Why are all of you waiting to register? According to the rules, the top eight from the previous tournament have registration priority. We just completed our registration."

Huo Yuhao replied, "We are not representing Shrek Academy this time."

As he said this, Xu Jiujiu's expression changed again in astonishment.

They aren't representing Shrek Academy? She scanned everyone, and saw the complete lineup from the last tournament! None of them were missing. Why aren't they representing Shrek Academy? As the princess and leader of the intelligence department, Xu Jiujiu started to overthink things. When she took into account Huo Yuhao's body condition, she immediately believed that Shrek Academy was in huge trouble.

Bei Bei could tell that she was thinking too much from her expression. He hurriedly said, "Your Highness, you are overthinking. We aren't representing the academy because of the new rules. However, we are still a part of the academy. The academy sent another team over."

Xu Jiujiu was stunned for a moment. Her expression was then restored, and she said in shock, "If all of you aren't representing the academy, then..."

Bei Bei smiled and replied, "We are representing the Tang Sect."

"Tang Sect?" Xu Jiujiu didn't have a deep memory of this ancient sect that had disappeared for years. However, the Tang Sect had once been famous on the continent. That was why she quickly reacted.

"All of you have joined the Tang Sect?" Xu Jiujiu asked.

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Bei Bei nodded and replied, "Yes, we are from the Tang Sect. The Tang Sect was down once before, but our goal is to make it great again."

Xu Jiujiu took a deep look at him before studying the rest of them. She nodded and said, "All of you can do it." She wasn't being merely polite. These people in front of her had managed to become champions during the tournament even though they were only Soul Ancestors and below! Each of them possessed great potential, and they were all top students from Shrek Academy!

A sect was quite powerful if they had a Titled Douluo holding the reins. While the few of them weren't very old, they all had the potential to become Titled Douluo in the future!

After pondering for a moment, Xu Jiujiu immediately said, "The history of the Tang Sect goes back a long way. The first generation Tang Sect leader also contributed greatly to the world of soul masters. If your sect needs the help of the empire in the future, we'll do anything to help."

As she spoke, she retrieved a pure gold token and gave it to Bei Bei.

"If the Tang Sect requires any help from the Star Luo Empire in the future, any one of you can use this token and find me at Star Luo City. I'll do my best to help, if it's within my means."

The token was heavy, and was carved with hollow tulip patterns on the front. On the back, there was an image of a tiger's head. It represented the imperial family's remembrance of the White Tiger Dynasty.

This token had great significance. Bei Bei immediately turned serious and said, "Thank you for this gift, Your Highness. The Tang Sect will always remember our friendship with the Star Luo Empire. I believe we'll have a chance to work together in the future."

If the Tang Sect's development only relied on Shrek Academy, it would mean that they were content to only exercise their influence over a certain region. However, this wasn't what Bei Bei wanted to see. He had promised Tang Ya that they would become the top sect on the continent! Right now, he was also working hard in this direction. Collaborating with the Star Luo Empire was very important to Bei Bei's plans. He didn't reject Xu Jiujiu's offer.

Xu Jiujiu revealed a smile on her face as Bei Bei accepted the token. "I hope that the day we work together will come soon."

After she said that, she turned her attention to Huo Yuhao, "Huo Yuhao, are you planning to compete in this state?"

Huo Yuhao laughed bitterly, "Disabled people also have their rights. Your Highness, you can't judge people based on their looks!"

Xu Jiujiu's gaze changed slightly, and she smiled, "I can't sense any bitterness from your voice. It seems like I worried too much."

Huo Yuhao was a little stunned as he looked at her. Acute observation! Indeed, he felt very blissful, as he was immersed in Wang Dong'er's care every day even though he couldn't move his arms and legs. Naturally, he wasn't bitter at all.

"Your Highness, don't poke fun at a disabled person!" Huo Yuhao said helplessly.

Princess Jiujiu smiled and said, "We'll wait and see whether I'm really mocking you. If we meet in the tournament, you must show some mercy. Although I never thought that the Star Luo National Academy would become champions, we can't be eliminated too soon, either! I'll make a move first!"

After she finished her piece, she left with the bunch of youths behind her.

As she slowly walked away, Huo Yuhao appeared a little pensive. Bei Bei whispered as he asked, "What did you see?"

Huo Yuhao gently shook his head, "I only feel that I shouldn't be troubling this famous princess, since I'm not even a competitor."

It wasn't too exaggerated to use the word 'famous' to describe Xu Jiujiu. In the Star Luo Empire, she was an authoritative figure that everyone knew. She was also very beautiful, and everyone in the empire loved her.

Bei Bei nodded slightly and said, "Let's counter changes with no changes. No matter what goal she has, she won't be targeting us."

Huo Yuhao said, "Eldest senior, do you remember that I mentioned that the Illustrious Virtue Hall was ambushed by the Body Sect?"

Bei Bei was stunned, "What do you mean? She's involved?"

Huo Yuhao squinted and said, "I'm not sure. However, the hundred-thousand year soul beast embryo was auctioned off at the Star Luo City. After that, there was a rumor that someone offered a hundred million gold soul coins to obtain the embryo. Who's wealthy enough to offer such an astronomical

figure? I believe the Sun Moon Empire would have noticed this, too. Whether it's direct or indirect, the Body Sect's ambush on the Illustrious Virtue Hall must somehow be related to the Star Luo Empire."

Bei Bei said softly, "I wonder if the Body Sect will be here for the tournament. They have always been very mysterious. Surely the Sun Moon Empire isn't targeting the Body Sect by allowing sects to take part in the tournament?"

Xu Sanshi groaned and said, "Don't underestimate the Sun Moon Empire. This is a renowned tournament that involves the entire continent. The Sun Moon Empire can't possibly use the tournament to target the Body Sect. Their goal isn't that simple. However, there must still be a degree of targeting involved. If the Body Sect doesn't come, it shows that they are scared of the empire. I believe it's still possible that they'll come."

Xiao Xiao's expression changed, and she said, "If the Body Sect comes, they'll be a threat to us."

Jiang Nannan said, "It's not just the Body Sect. There are many strong sects on the continent. We'll have to take this tournament step by step. Let's be steadier."

Bei Bei commented, "Indeed. Yuhao, don't compete unless it's necessary."

Huo Yuhao furrowed his brow and said, "Eldest senior, I have the exact opposite thinking as you. I hope to be the first to compete in every round of the tournament."

"What?" Everyone was shocked when he said this. Wang Dong'er also exclaimed like a lady, even though she was dressed in a man's attire.

Bei Bei creased his brow, "Yuhao, you..."

Huo Yuhao smiled and said, "Don't panic, listen to me first! The greater the pressure, the more likely my potential can be inspired to fuse with the origin energy of Ultimate Ice in my body. Just by cultivating as a means to fuse this energy, I'll take years. However, I believe it'll be faster if I'm constantly fighting. Don't worry, I'll concede defeat if I can't take it. With my current cultivation, it shouldn't be difficult to win one round."

Xu Sanshi smiled and said, "Yuhao, you can't say that. You are our secret weapon. We shouldn't use our secret weapon first. Isn't it good to hide it first?"

Huo Yuhao chuckled, "I'll hide some of my abilities. It's not easy to see through the soul skills that my Spirit Eyes possess."

Wang Dong'er said, "No, you can't compete. You can't be the first to compete, either. No matter how strong your Spirit Eyes are, you can't move or dodge because of your body. If someone unleashes a long-range strike at you, what can you do? You already lack the ability to attack from long-range. Without your entire body to coordinate, you'll be unable to unleash your potential even with soul tools. It's too dangerous." No one knew Huo Yuhao better than her.

Huo Yuhao said, "This isn't a problem. I have my own ways. Let me compete first in the first elimination round. If I can't make it, I won't make such a request again. Furthermore, I guarantee that I'll only fight three single rounds. Yes?"

Bei Bei looked at Wang Dong'er. In such matters, he needed to seek Wang Dong'er's approval first.

After pondering for awhile, Wang Dong'er nodded lightly and said, "Alright, I'll let you try in the first round. However, your safety takes priority. This is for everyone, and for me!"

Huo Yuhao held her hands and smiled, "Don't worry, I can't bear to die. With my current state, it might not be a bad thing."

Xu Sanshi coughed twice. "The two of you can't always be so immersed in yourselves. It's too provocative. Furthermore, Wang Dong'er is now Wang Dong. Aren't you afraid that others will misunderstand you?"

Wang Dong'er and Huo Yuhao were stunned. Indeed, a few resting teams shot them weird glances.

Wang Dong'er pulled her hands from Huo Yuhao's grasp and said as she glanced left and right, "Eh, why aren't they letting us register yet? Their efficiency is really low."

Compared to five years ago, all of them had changed greatly. It was very difficult for anyone to recognize them even though they had competed in the last tournament. After all, the changes from puberty were substantial.

This was especially true for Huo Yuhao, Wang Dong'er, and Xiao Xiao. They weren't even thirteen when they competed last time, but they were seventeen now. Xiao Xiao was already a ravishing beauty. While Huo Yuhao was seated in a wheelchair, he was still a tall and large youth. He was two heads taller than he was five years ago. If Princess Jiujiu hadn't been monitoring him, she wouldn't have recognized him. That was why no one came to greet them even though they had been waiting for quite some time. Huo Yuhao noticed a few familiar teams. Of course, he only recognized their leaders. Although these teams had had preparatory squad members during the last tournament, he hadn't really noticed them too much. Over the past five years, he wasn't the only one who had changed. They had all been youths. Everyone else had changed greatly too!

[Chapter 272.2: Tang Ya](#)

After waiting for an hour, they were finally led to the registration area.

The registration area was at the center of the lobby. There was a long table that faced the doors, and there were ten people in charge of registration.

There was also a neat row of empty tables to one side. They were instructed to fill in a form.

Bei Bei was in charge of filling out this form.

Once he received the form, Bei Bei understood why they had had to wait so long. There were many things that he had to fill out. Detailed information on every official and preparatory squad member had to be written down – their name, age, sect, etc. It took ten minutes just to fill out the form.

After filling out the form, everyone had to take a photograph at the registration table.

The camera was a special, auxiliary-type soul tool. It captured everyone's appearance. After the photographs were taken, they were directly printed on the registration form. This also demonstrated the leading position the Sun Moon Empire possessed in terms of technology.

After the photography segment was over, they still had to undergo body and physical tests. This was to ensure that every competing member was twenty years old or younger.

They were then led into a huge room in the hotel. There was already a queue in this room, but it was much simpler for the Tang Sect there. After all, Na Na was their only preparatory squad member. As they were overage, Ji Juechen and Jing Ziyang couldn't compete as preparatory squad members.

Huo Yuhao wasn't a stranger to the equipment used to measure his body. It was just that he was wondering what kind of result would be produced as he was measured in his current state?

It was their turn soon. Suddenly, Huo Yuhao felt petrified. A weird feeling caused him to turn to a corner of the measuring room. When his gaze landed on someone, he couldn't shift his eyes anymore.

Huo Yuhao's voice cracked as he shouted, "Teacher Xiao Ya!" This attracted the attention of everyone in the measuring room.

After hearing Huo Yuhao's exclamation, Bei Bei's body trembled violently. After that, he also turned in the same direction.

There was a young lady in the corner of the room. She still possessed a slender figure, and was as ravishing as ever. She looked taller than she had been a few years back, but there was an unhealthy paleness to her face. Her sharp eyes seemed to have changed color. There was a hint of dark blue in her beautiful eyes. As she stood in the corner, she seemed to have assimilated with the shadows. If not for Huo Yuhao's acute senses, no one would have noticed her.

Yes. She was Tang Ya. Compared to a few years ago before, when she had disappeared, her appearance hadn't changed much.

Bei Bei's body stiffened when he saw her. After that, he started to tremble violently. He even had to grab hold of Huo Yuhao's wheelchair to stabilize himself.

"Xiao Ya, Xiao Ya..." Only those who were familiar with him knew that Bei Bei had had a hard time not finding Tang Ya over these past few years. They hadn't expected to see her here.

Huo Yuhao wasn't any less agitated than Bei Bei. To him, Tang Ya and Bei Bei were his benefactors! Furthermore, Tang Ya was the true sect leader of the Tang Sect. After the Tang Sect was re-established, Bei Bei had mentioned that he was only a temporary substitute for her. When she returned, she would be reinstated as the sect leader. Everyone agreed with his proposition too.

He actually met Tang Ya here. He was extremely emotional right now.

Tang Ya also looked over. She first saw Huo Yuhao in his wheelchair before she saw Bei Bei. She seemed a little lost, and didn't move from her position. She gave off the feeling that she had lost her soul.

Bei Bei moved at this point. He was like a gust of wind right now as he burst towards Tang Ya. How long had it been? Tang Ya had gone missing just after the previous tournament had ended. It was close to five years now! They had turned from teenagers into youths. As he saw Tang Ya again, Bei Bei felt that his heart was about to jump out of his chest. His heart was only filled with his boundless love for her. Right now, he wasn't as calm as before. There was only Tang Ya in his heart right now.

He came in front of Tang Ya instantly and grabbed her shoulders forcefully. His voice was trembling as he said, "Xiao Ya, where, where have you been all these years? Did you know how hard a time I've had searching for you?"

She was still in a daze even though he had grabbed her. She let him shake her body.

At this point, Huo Yuhao sensed something amiss. He shouted, "Eldest senior, be careful!"

After hearing Huo Yuhao's words, he would have been cautious and wary of his surroundings if he were acting normally. However, he was too emotional now. Five years of yearning! His lover who had occupied his entire heart had finally appeared. He couldn't be bothered with anything else.

At this point, Tang Ya finally moved. She lifted her hands and pressed them against Bei Bei's chest. It was as if she was resisting him. However, her dark-blue eyes started to light up as she lifted her head in the next moment.

Bei Bei was stunned. He only felt that he had seen two deep valleys, and he was sucked into these valleys. In the next moment, a huge force struck his chest. He flew backward like a broken kite.

Fresh blood sprayed from his mouth. His entire body was engulfed by a dark-blue glow, which was swallowing his life power maniacally.

After Huo Yuhao told Bei Bei to be cautious, the rest of Shrek's Seven Monsters acted too. Xu Sanshi was the first to burst out. While he had always bickered with Bei Bei, they actually shared a close relationship. He unleashed his martial soul as he stepped out.

It was a pity that Tang Ya's action was too sudden. Who would have expected her to make a move on Bei Bei? Xu Sanshi's Mysterious Underworld Displacement was too late. He leapt up as he saw Bei Bei in the air and cushioned his fall. At the same time, a pitch-black light engulfed Bei Bei's body and resisted the violation of the dark-blue glow.

Xu Sanshi's expression changed the moment their soul power met. It was very strong. The soul power that Tang Ya had left on Bei Bei's body was too dense and consolidated, and it even possessed an extremely dominant, corrosive force. Xu Sanshi couldn't gain an advantage over it even with his cultivation. Fortunately, Bei Bei's cultivation wasn't weak. He unleashed his own soul power and strongly resisted the invasive soul power. Tang Ya had only pushed him, she hadn't unleashed an attack. She had unleashed the soul power that poured into his body, but didn't directly attack his chest. As a result, Bei Bei's bones were fine even though he was slightly injured.

"Xiao Ya, are you crazy?" Xu Sanshi shouted at Tang Ya as he tried to resist her soul power.

At this point, a few men in black stepped in front of Tang Ya. One of the elders looked in the direction of group representing the Tang Sect. Huo Yuhao's body shuddered as he saw this elder. His expression also turned dismal.

He recognized him. That was because he was one of the assassins who had intercepted Huo Yuhao's return to Shrek Academy a few months ago.

Zhang Peng; Scorpion Tiger Douluo, and half evil soul master. He was a Rank 96 Transcendent Douluo. He wasn't inferior to Dean Yan Shaozhe in a fight!

Now he had appeared here, and in front of Tang Ya. What did it mean?

Furthermore, Tang Ya's soul power evidently contained the aura of an evil soul master!

Na Na was very pale right now. There were only three words going through her mind right now – Holy Ghost Church. It was the Holy Ghost Church!

The rest of the Tang Sect also came up beside Bei Bei. Wang Dong'er pressed her hands on Bei Bei's shoulders and poured in her pure power of light. Along with Xu Sanshi's Xuanwu soul power, the dark-blue aura was expelled from his body.

Bei Bei's expression was extremely pale, and there was fresh blood flowing from his nose. Tang Ya's strike didn't just hurt his body; it also broke his heart!

He didn't expect Tang Ya to give him such a huge 'gift' after five years without seeing her!

Zhang Peng wore a cold look as he looked towards everyone from the Tang Sect. He was stunned when he saw Huo Yuhao in his wheelchair. He squinted his eyes and appeared pensive.

Tang Ya acted like she didn't see all of them. After hitting Bei Bei, she turned around and left. A few other men in black followed beside her. Even Zhang Peng did the same thing.

Bei Bei struggled, but he couldn't get up! There was also blood in his mouth. His voice was hoarse as he said, "Xiao Ya..."

Tang Ya didn't stop. She quickly left, as if she hadn't seen anything. However, there was a slight quiver of emotion in her eyes.

Huo Yuhao arrived beside Bei Bei in his wheelchair, with Ji Juechen's help. He grabbed onto Bei Bei's wrist and softly said, "Eldest senior, calm down." His gaze was gentle, and a slight wave of spiritual power engulfed Bei Bei's head. Yuhao used the gentle and spiritual aura to soothe Bei Bei's turmoil.

[Chapter 272.3: Tang Ya](#)

Wang Dong'er continued to pour her soul power into Bei Bei's body and helped him expel Tang Ya's soul power from his body. However, it wasn't to great effect. Tang Ya's soul power was too domineering, and continued to run riot in Bei Bei's body, whereas Bei Bei wasn't able to control his own soul power to resist Tang Ya's soul power. Just Wang Dong'er's strength alone didn't seem to be enough.

Tears started to stream down Bei Bei's face. He was normally very tough, but his tough exterior was torn down after he saw Tang Ya again.

Huo Yuhao said softly, "Eldest senior, don't be sad. That wasn't Teacher Xiao Ya's intention. She's with a bunch of evil soul masters. If I'm not wrong, she must have been abducted by evil soul masters. Do you remember the Holy Ghost Church that I mentioned before? It must be them. She must be under their control. Eldest senior, you are our pillar. You must remain strong. It's only in this way that we can think of a way to save Teacher Xiao Yan from those devils!"

After hearing Huo Yuhao's words, Bei Bei calmed down a little. He was a little lost as he looked at Huo Yuhao.

Huo Yuhao nodded his head heartily at him, "If Teacher Xiao Ya were clear-headed, she wouldn't have done that to you! Eldest senior, you are confused because you are too concerned about her! No matter what it is, we've seen Teacher Xiao Ya. It's better than not knowing where she is. Don't worry, we'll do our best to save her."

Bei Bei was in a daze. As the eldest senior of the sect and one of the most outstanding young talents from Shrek Academy, he managed to regain his focus with Huo Yuhao's help after momentarily losing control.

He shut his eyes, and a blue glow was released from his body. Fine scales also started to surface on his skin. The strong side of the Blue Lightning Tyrant Dragon was revealed. He expelled the violent soul power with Wang Dong'er's help.

The room also descended into chaos from what had happened. Very soon, soul masters from the Sun Moon Empire entered the room to maintain order and interrogate the Tang Sect.

Xu Sanshi represented the Tang Sect and answered their questions. He only said that there was a misunderstanding which led to a conflict. Whether it was because of Tang Ya or Bei Bei, he didn't wish to escalate this matter.

They performed their body measurements after this. Although Bei Bei underwent the measurements, his injuries were still quite bad. After he finished his measurements, Xu Sanshi carried him to his room to rest.

The rest also went through their measurements smoothly. After all, it was just to verify their age. To keep the abilities of the competing teams a secret, there weren't any measurements to test their soul power and cultivation. It was different from the tests that Huo Yuhao went through when he first entered the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy.

Huo Yuhao was the last to take his measurements. He was lifted onto the scale by Wang Dong'er. When she did that, everyone's expression turned weird, including those who were from the Sun Moon Empire. Is this disabled man here to compete too?

"Is there a mistake?" The staff in charge of the measurement scale asked Wang Dong'er.

Wang Dong'er raised her brows. She couldn't stand it when others looked down on Huo Yuhao. However, Huo Yuhao interrupted just before she flared up, "There shouldn't be a rule that restricts a disabled person from competing, am I right?"

"There isn't... it's just that there's a limited quota!" The staff answered subconsciously.

Huo Yuhao said, "There are only eight members from our sect, and only one preparatory squad member. There isn't any wastage. Just take it that I'm here to make up the numbers."

Since they didn't violate any rules, the staff didn't stop them. He activated the measurement scale and helped Huo Yuhao with the test.

A streak of dim blue light rose from the scale and scanned Huo Yuhao's calves. It was using his bone age to calculate his actual age. It was one of the most efficient methods.

However, he was soon stunned. That was because there wasn't any response from the scale. There wasn't any feedback after the scan.

What was going on? After so many tests, this was the first time something like this had happened.

The output was increased, and the blue light became stronger. Huo Yuhao's legs were scanned once again.

Huo Yuhao was a little annoyed as he said, "Brother, I'm a cripple. My legs are different. You should scan my right hand. My right hand is the only limb that's fine." As he spoke, he bent his body forward and extended his right arm beside his leg.

Indeed, the measuring scale responded to this. It evidently showed that Huo Yuhao's bone age was seventeen.

Huo Yuhao completed the measurements as the staff watched with weird looks in their eyes. Wang Dong'er lifted him back into his wheelchair before pushing him towards the exit.

After they left, there was a huge commotion in the room.

"What sect is he from? Why did the sect send a cripple?"

"I think that it's called the Tang Sect. What kind of sect is the Tang Sect? Has anyone heard of it before?"

"No. It must be a small sect. Otherwise, it wouldn't be so pathetic. He's really pitiful – losing the use of his legs and left arm even though he's only seventeen."

"Because of this, we should respect his courage for choosing to compete in this tournament!"

"Hai, can he really compete in that condition? Is he going to sit in a wheelchair to compete?"

All types of discussions were going on right now. Wang Dong'er clenched her lips tightly as she pushed Huo Yuhao's wheelchair. Her eyes were already tearing up.

Although Huo Yuhao couldn't see behind him, he could sense Wang Dong'er's emotional turmoil. He gently tapped her hand and smiled, "Don't you think this is interesting? If I become the eventual champion, won't their eyes drop out?"

Wang Dong'er held onto his hand tightly. Huo Yuhao sighed as he felt her icy cold hand. "Dong'er, do you want me to be happy, blissful and always wearing a smile on my face?"

Wang Dong'er was stunned for a moment. She replied, "Of course."

Huo Yuhao replied, "In that case, you must be happy so that I can sense your smile every minute and second. You must smile in the face of everything."

Wang Dong'er's figure shuddered a little, and her face turned red. Her voice was trembling slightly, "Yuhao, I..."

Huo Yuhao tapped her hands again, "Let's go. We should return to our rooms to rest too. I wonder how eldest senior is. Teacher Xiao Ya has finally appeared, which is a good thing. We should also quickly discuss how we should deal with this matter."

“Okay.” Wang Dong’er calmed herself down and pushed Huo Yuhao out of the measurement room.

According to the arrangements made by the Sun Moon Empire tournament committee, the competing sects and academies were segregated. For example, Shrek Academy’s team was ranked at the top, and stayed in the best rooms and received the best treatment. This was also the same for all the sects. The more reputable a sect was, the better the treatment they received.

As for the Tang Sect, those in charge of registration didn’t know that they were the members of the team that won the tournament the last time around. They only knew that the Tang Sect wasn’t reputable, and their members were given the most ordinary rooms. The Tang Sect was at the bottom of the hierarchy.

The inferior rooms were located at the lower stories of the hotel. The first story consisted of the lobby, the wellness center and a few restaurants etc. The Tang Sect team was assigned rooms on the second story.

The Ming Yue Hotel was the largest hotel in the Sun Moon Empire. Even their most ordinary rooms were not bad. They were just a little small. Each room was around twenty square meters in size, but there was a toilet in each room. The internal decorations were simple, and there were two single beds in each room.

Although twenty square meters wasn’t considered very spacious for two people, it wasn’t cramped either. However, all ten contestants from the Tang Sect were squeezed into one room right now. There wasn’t even space for them to walk.

Bei Bei was lying on the bed. His face was pale, but he was clear-headed. Furthermore, it seemed like he had regained his composure.

Wang Dong’er pushed Huo Yuhao in his wheelchair as they were the last two to enter the room. The rest looked very serious as they surrounded Bei Bei.

After Huo Yuhao entered, Xiao Xiao and He Caitou moved away, and let Wang Dong’er push Huo Yuhao in front of the bed.

“Eldest senior, are you feeling better?” Huo Yuhao asked concernedly, and extended his right hand to take Bei Bei’s pulse.

Bei Bei’s injury was quite serious. Tang Ya’s soul power had shaken his internal organs. Although his organs were put back into their original position when they did emergency treatment on him, his vital energy was still greatly affected. But Bei Bei had a strong foundation, and thus he wasn’t seriously ill. Even so, he would have to lie in bed for eight to ten days.

However, the tournament wouldn’t wait for him to recover. In another three days, the tournament would begin. Before it even started, Huo Yuhao was already crippled, and Bei Bei was already seriously injured. The entire team was in a bad shape right now.

If Huo Yuhao was the soul and brains of this team, Bei Bei was the backbone. Now, neither of them were in their best state, which affected everyone else.

[Chapter 273: Shadows of the Holy Ghost Church](#)

Huo Yuhao released Bei Bei's hand after a while. He looked up at the rest of his companions and smiled as he said, "What's happening, everyone? Even though we are in dire straits right now, are we worse off compared to the last big competition? Eldest senior brother is quite heavily injured, but fortunately, his origin energy is still intact."

"What happened during the last big competition? What were our cultivations five years ago? I only had two rings, while eldest senior brother, second senior brother, and third senior brother had but four soul rings, even though they were the strongest amongst us. We still made it through, didn't we? Are we in a better situation now, or were we in a better situation back then? We should return with a landslide victory to welcome Bei Bei's return. According to the competition's proceedings, we only have to win five rounds in a row until Bei Bei's injuries recover. We only have to win two more before he can return to top condition."

Everyone looked a little better after they listened to Huo Yuhao's words. Bei Bei was lying on the bed as he heaved a sigh and said, "I'm sorry, everyone. It's my fault for being too careless. I'm not worthy of being your eldest senior brother! From now on, Huo Yuhao will be assuming command, and he will be the one arranging our battle strategies and tactics."

The company nodded their heads, and nobody had any objections to this arrangement at all. Huo Yuhao was held in high regard within the Tang Sect, as everyone had seen what he had given for the sect.

Bei Bei lowered his voice and said, "What I'm worried about is the Holy Ghost Church. They are an organization of evil soul masters, yet they can come to this place as if it's their right to do so, and they can even participate in the big competition. What does this mean?"

A pained look overcame his face after this statement, and his breathing became a little short and rapid. Wang Dong'er hurriedly came forward and released her light-type soul power to stabilize his condition. Bei Bei's Blue Lightning Tyrant Dragon could evolve into the Radiant Holy Dragon, and that meant he was relatively more compatible with light-type soul power.

Bei Bei's condition stabilized a little with Wang Dong'er's help. He nodded in her direction as a sign of gratitude before he continued. "This means that Yuhao's speculation is right – the Sun Moon Empire are in cahoots with that organization of evil soul masters. Their alliance is simply too terrifying."

Nobody here was stupid, and everyone grew a little solemn as they listened to Bei Bei speak.

The Holy Ghost Church had been full of secrets and mystery ever since they appeared until now, and nobody knew how much depth or background they had. The strength that they had placed on public display was enough to prove how frightening this sect was – it was possible that they were even stronger than the Body Sect.

The Dragon Emperor Douluo, Long Xiaoyao, was an Ultimate Douluo, and also possessed the Darkness Holy Dragon martial soul. This person had once shared the same reputation as Elder Mu, and this meant a lot of things – the Holy Ghost Sect became a lot more frightening with Long Xiaoyao holding down the fort. Furthermore, the Scorpion Tiger Douluo, Zhang Peng, had also appeared before. He was a half-evil soul master, and he was also a Rank 96 Transcendent Douluo. He could hold his own against Yan Shaozhe.

This was all that had been placed on display for the public to see. Then, how much more did they have hidden from sight and knowledge?

The Sun Moon Empire's most prominent strength was their rapid development in soul tools, and this gave them an astronomical technological advantage against other countries. The Sun Moon Empire's advantage in this respect had become increasingly obvious over time, and the greatest weapon the native three countries had against the Sun Moon Empire were soul masters.

Every country had several Titled Douluo anchoring things down, and these Titled Douluo were bred for battle. If any one of them could break through into an army's inner circle that was equipped with soul tools, the destructiveness and bloodshed that these Titled Douluo could cause would be incredibly horrifying.

According to the soul masters' unspoken rules, high-level soul masters were not allowed to attack normal citizens, while those that could use soul tools were also soul masters in some sense. Furthermore, if push came to shove, those unspoken rules would mean nothing, as what was more important than a country's survival?

This was the main reason why the Sun Moon Empire hadn't been doing much over the years. They had lost their Sun Moon Continent title ever since the Holy War, and they didn't dare to lose a second time – if they did, the Douluo Continent's three native countries that had been threatened by the Sun Moon Empire would never let them go. They would definitely give everything they had to invade the Sun Moon Empire, so that the Sun Moon Empire wouldn't have the breathing space they had all those years ago.

The impasse between soul masters and soul engineers had led to the current equilibrium. The Douluo Continent's three native countries were collectively stronger than the Sun Moon Empire, as they were three countries against one, after all. On the other hand, the first nation to move against the Sun Moon Empire would undoubtedly sustain the greatest losses, and this was the reason why nobody had done anything. This equilibrium had been maintained throughout the years.

However, this equilibrium was becoming increasingly unstable over time. The Sun Moon Empire had enjoyed rapid development and expansion in recent years, while evidence of their shady alliance with the Holy Ghost Church had also surfaced.

The Holy Ghost Church had dared to come out in broad daylight – what did this mean? This meant that they were unafraid of being discovered. They were not afraid of being discovered by the Douluo Continent's three native countries or by Shrek Academy, as these entities no longer meant anything to them. This probably also meant that the Sun Moon Empire was about to make a move, and they couldn't control themselves anymore.

The Holy Ghost Church was composed entirely of formidable evil soul masters, and these evil soul masters had formed a symbiotic relationship with the Sun Moon Empire, who were adept with soul tools. If a war broke out, how could the Douluo Continent's three native countries defend themselves?

Ever since the Dragon Emperor Douluo had appeared, the Sea God's Pavilion had decided that Shrek Guardians would devote all their energy and attention towards the Holy Ghost Church's movements, as they couldn't just let their students and teachers give up their lives for nothing. The Sea God's Pavilion

had already hosted multiple meetings and conferences to discuss the Holy Ghost Church – what did the appearance of an Ultimate Douluo represent? No matter how much the Tang Sect’s members didn’t want to admit it, they were all extremely clear that the Dragon Emperor Douluo himself could suppress the entire Shrek Academy.

Elder Xuan was cultivating twice as often as he used to. Huo Yuhao even heard from Xiao Xiao that Elder Xuan almost went insane because he was too hasty. The current Master of the Sea God’s Pavilion wanted to break through and become an Ultimate Douluo as fast as he could, so that he could match up to Long Xiaoyao.

However, could he really challenge the Dragon God Douluo? Even if Elder Xuan did become an Ultimate Douluo, the Dragon God Douluo had been at this level for much longer, and it would be an incredibly challenging task for Elder Xuan to defeat him. Elder Xuan had once said that Long Xiaoyao was possibly stronger than the Body Sect’s sect leader, Du Busi. Nobody would dare to argue if someone claimed that Long Xiaoyao was the number one individual on the entire continent.

The atmosphere in the room felt a little stifled. The Holy Ghost Church’s appearance was no longer just a problem for the Continental Elite Youth Soul Master Tournament – their appearance had affected the entire continent’s political balance. Shrek Academy was located in the center of the Douluo Continent’s three native countries, and the Great Star Dou Forest was behind them. However, could Shrek Academy avoid participation if war eventually broke out? That didn’t seem very likely at all.

Xu Sanshi lowered his voice and said, “If only we had been born twenty years earlier.”

Everybody concurred with his statement. Even though they were all exceedingly outstanding members of the younger generation, they were still too young after all, and that meant their cultivations were still limited. They were still a far, far cry from the powerful individuals that could actually affect the direction of a war.

Color returned to Bei Bei’s face with Wang Dong’er’s help. He struggled to lift his hand and took out the golden medallion that Princess Jiu Jiu had given him, which he passed to Huo Yuhao.

“Yuhao – go and look for Princess Jiu Jiu, and tell her what we think. I trust that she is smart enough to understand the gravity of the situation, and then we will continue with our original plan. Time is of the essence, so it can’t be helped if we have to be a little hasty.”

They were here to represent the Tang Sect in this season’s competition, but they had other intentions besides simply promoting the sect. A sect’s development was tied to two things: how strong the sect was, and the sect’s finances.

The Tang Sect couldn’t be considered powerful at all, but Shrek Academy was behind them, and they were located in Shrek City, so they didn’t have to worry about their sect’s safety. That also meant that the most crucial thing they needed so that their sect could develop stably and quickly for a long time to come was money.

Xuan Ziwen’s soul tool research and purchasing of all sorts of exotic metals required money, and that meant the Tang Sect would need more friends and allies under such circumstances. Shrek City was powerful, but they were very deep inside the Continent, and that meant it was unlikely that they would participate in a war. Shrek Academy was helping the Tang Sect develop as much as they could, but they

couldn't purchase too many soul tools in the end. However, while Shrek Academy might not need much, other people needed them.

The company was here to participate in this competition to find people to work with, besides promoting their sect's name, so that they could sell their products. The Star Luo Empire and the Heavenly Soul Empire were the Tang Sect's optimal targets. They had already met Princess Jiu Jiu as soon as they arrived today, and gotten off to a great start. This was originally a fantastic beginning for the Tang Sect, and Bei Bei had originally wanted to find Princess Jiu Jiu for another round of detailed negotiations after they had obtained a decent result in the competition. However, the Holy Ghost Church's appearance interrupted their initial plans. On the other hand, and from another perspective, the Holy Ghost Church's existence was beneficial for their efforts to promote the Tang Sect's products.

Bei Bei hadn't been in the right state of mind ever since Tang Ya appeared, but he was still the Tang Sect's eldest senior brother in the end. He immediately decided which path led to the greatest profit and benefit, and relaying information about the Holy Ghost Church to the Star Luo Empire would undoubtedly buy them a better friendship and camaraderie with Princess Jiu Jiu. This also meant that pushing out the Tang Sect's products afterwards would be a lot easier than before. A deeper cooperation wouldn't be easy, but a good start for their first encounter would be enough.

Huo Yuhao took the golden medallion and nodded. "Alright, I'll head over right now. Get some rest, eldest senior brother."

Xu Sanshi said, "Don't worry, I'll take care of him."

Bei Bei snapped, "I'll be happy if you don't piss me off."

Strangely, Xu Sanshi didn't bicker with him and said, "Alright, that's enough – get some sleep. Everyone should return to their rooms to take a break. This room is so small and there's so many people gathered here, to the point where the air isn't so good anymore."

Everyone left Bei Bei and Xu Sanshi's room one after another. Bei Bei watched everyone leave before he shut his eyes tiredly, and images of Tang Ya's blank eyes surfaced over and over again in his mind.

Xiao Ya...

A faint smile appeared on Bei Bei's pale face, but nobody knew what he was thinking about at this moment.

It wasn't difficult to find the rooms where the Star Luo National Academy were staying. With Princess Jiu Jiu's status, and in addition to the Star Luo National Academy's exemplary results in the previous competition, they were arranged in the relatively higher levels. However, they weren't at the highest level.

Huo Yuhao held onto the golden medallion, and the Star Luo National Academy's team members escorted him to Princess Jiu Jiu. The princess was looking a little upset, and she was sitting on the sofa. Her expression returned to normal only when she saw Wang Dong'er push Huo Yuhao's wheelchair into the room.

“Why are you here?” Xu Jiujiu nodded at Huo Yuhao as a greeting, but her eyes were a little doubtful.

Huo Yuhao didn’t answer her question. Instead, he changed the topic and said, “The Star Luo National Academy can only stay in the second-tier rooms. I wonder who’s staying in the first-tier rooms?”

Xu Jiujiu’s face turned black as she said, “Huo Yuhao, are you here to piss me off?”

Huo Yuhao smiled and said, “Why should I? Compared to you and your company, the Tang Sect and I are a lot worse off – we are staying in the worst rooms, and we have received the worst hospitality. I’m here today to tell you something important.”

“Eh?” Xu Jiujiu was a little surprised, but she had great temperament and composure, and regained her calmness in no time. The truth was that she was just upset about being assigned to second-tier rooms – she was the princess of the Continent’s second-biggest country, and it wouldn’t have been right if she didn’t feel upset about it. The only difference was that she didn’t express her feelings outwardly.

Huo Yuhao said, “Even though I’m not sure which sects reside in the top-tier rooms, I have seen one of them – this sect is intimately connected to the Star Luo Empire. Even though I’m at Shrek Academy, I’m from the Star Luo Empire after all. This is the reason why I’m here to tell you this piece of information.”

Xu Jiujiu said, “And you’ve discovered what this sect is? Are they the Body Sect?”

Huo Yuhao shook his head and said, “Of course not – I haven’t seen anyone from the Body Sect. I’m not sure if you’ve heard of the Holy Ghost Church.”

“The Holy Ghost Church?”

Huo Yuhao reacted in surprise, as all he could see in Xu Jiujiu’s eyes was blankness and cluelessness. According to the intelligence that Shrek Academy had accumulated, this princess was in charge of the Star Luo Empire’s intelligence works, yet they knew nothing about the Holy Ghost Church. This meant that the Holy Ghost Church were hidden deep, and it was likely that they had only been moving around inside the Sun Moon Empire.

Huo Yuhao tilted his head and said, “I didn’t expect you not to know anything about the Holy Ghost Church. That means I haven’t come here for nothing,” he paused, and his tone became a little solemn, “The Holy Ghost Church have the Sun Moon Empire behind them, and they are a powerful sect that consists of evil soul masters. They possess a Transcendent Douluo, and an Ultimate Douluo as well.”

Huo Yuhao’s statement wasn’t long, but every word crackled in Xu Jiujiu’s ears like fireworks. This calm and casual princess could no longer maintain her composure, and she sprung up from the sofa as if something sharp was poking her buttocks. She exclaimed in fright, “What did you say?!”

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Princess Jiu Jiu bounced off the sofa after listening to Huo Yuhao’s statement, and she stared at him with eyes overcome with fear.

The news that Huo Yuhao had just relayed to Princess Jiu Jiu was simply too astounding, and this was the same for the Star Luo Empire, A sect formed by evil soul masters, a sect that possessed an Ultimate Douluo, and a Transcendent Douluo, and a sect that was under the protection of another nation hostile

to them. Xu Jiujiu's typical stability and composure began to waver as she panicked after listening to this piece of incredibly bad news.

"Are you for real?" Princess Jiu Jiu stared at Huo Yuhao as she subconsciously clenched her fists.

Huo Yuhao heaved a faint sigh and said, "How can I lie about something like this, and how can I even succeed in doing so? You can observe when the competition begins, and you will see things for yourself."

Princess Jiu Jiu's face changed as she stumbled backwards, and her calves pressed against the sofa. She lost her center of gravity and collapsed back onto it.

"That's impossible, just impossible. How can evil soul masters possess a Transcendent Douluo, and even an Ultimate Douluo? That's absolutely impossible. Have you seen it with your own eyes?"

Huo Yuhao knew that this piece of news was hard to believe. Furthermore, he was practically telling the Star Luo Empire that disaster had befallen them.

Huo Yuhao lowered his voice and asked, "Have you ever heard of the Scorpion Tiger Douluo, Zhang Peng?"

"Scorpion Tiger Douluo? Are you talking about the half-evil soul master, that Scorpion Tiger Douluo? He... hasn't he been missing for many years?" Princess Jiu Jiu had already reconciled with this piece of news, but she would rather be in denial of what she believed to be true.

Huo Yuhao answered, "The Scorpion Tiger Douluo has already appeared in Radiant City, and we just met him in the measurement room. Furthermore, eldest senior brother has been hurt by people from the Holy Ghost Church, and he's barely hanging on. I hope that you can calm down, princess, and that you can treat this substantial problem seriously. You have to relay this information back to the Star Luo Empire as quickly as possible, so that the Star Luo Empire can be prepared to respond."

Xu Jiujiu was a lady, but the fact that she had such a status within the Star Luo Empire meant she had to have some outstanding qualities. She tried her best to control her emotions after hearing Huo Yuhao's reminder, and she nodded her head. "Alright, please go on."

Huo Yuhao said, "The Sun Moon Empire can be considered our mutual enemy. The war hasn't begun, but anyone can see that the day will come when the Sun Moon Empire cannot hold themselves back anymore. Furthermore, the Holy Ghost Church is made up of evil soul masters and can be treated as the collective enemy of all other soul masters in the world. The Scorpion Tiger Douluo, Zhang Peng, is the Transcendent Douluo that I have seen. I obliterated one of the Holy Ghost Church's branches when I was on exchange at the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy, and that episode gave me proof that this sect exists.

"We were ambushed by the Scorpion Tiger Douluo on our way back to Shrek. I wouldn't be here today if there hadn't been powerful individuals from Shrek Academy there with me during that episode. The Scorpion Tiger Douluo wasn't the strongest one in the force that came to ambush me, however. There was another name that I'm sure you've heard before, princess: the Dragon Emperor Douluo, Long Xiaoyao."

Xu Jiujiu's eyes became a little slack after she heard that name. She had barely managed to calm herself down before this, and her expression drastically changed once more in the next moment. "The one who possesses the Darkness Holy Dragon, and the one who was once known as one of the Twin Holy Dragons of Black and White; the Dragon Emperor Douluo, Long Xiaoyao? But isn't he more than two hundred years old if he's still alive? He hasn't appeared on the Continent in the past hundred years. This... how is this possible?"

Huo Yuhao forced a laugh and said, "I wish that this was all impossible, and that nothing like this had ever happened. However, the truth is right in front of us, and we cannot force ourselves not to believe it. Our academy's Elder Xuan was there that day, but even Elder Xuan was one generation beneath Long Xiaoyao. I trust that you know that my teacher was the Radiant Holy Dragon of the Twin Holy Dragons of Black and White, and he was the Dragon God Douluo. Long Xiaoyao shared a reputation with my teacher when he was still alive, and now that my teacher has passed, nobody in Shrek Academy has the ability to single-handedly hold back the Darkness Holy Dragon. Even though the Dragon Emperor Douluo isn't an evil soul master, he's still part of the Holy Ghost Church. Furthermore, he's not the sect leader, he's only one of the sect's elders. There's someone out there who can command people like the Dragon Emperor Douluo and the Scorpion Tiger Douluo; it's not hard to imagine how powerful the Holy Ghost Church is."

Xu Jiujiu's face was a little pale. This piece of news was just too important, yet she had had no idea about it before today. This was far too important for the Star Luo Empire.

"Thank you, Yuhao. Thank you for telling me everything. This is just too important, and I will immediately send someone to verify these things. The empire will not forget this contribution and favor if we find this information to be true, and we will definitely reward you accordingly." Xu Jiujiu's thoughts were a little messed up and she wasn't in her right state of mind, but she didn't forget about her promise. Even though Huo Yuhao was far less valuable in his current crippled state than he had been back then, she could guess that Huo Yuhao wouldn't remain like this from the look on his face.

Huo Yuhao lowered his voice and said, "This isn't that much of a contribution. From our perspective, the Sun Moon Empire and the Holy Ghost Church can possibly become an enemy that we have to face together. Perhaps, that day is inevitable. You should be able to tell from my description, princess, that nobody has the ability to challenge them alone. We can only forge as many alliances as we can in order to have the strength to challenge them."

Xu Jiujiu nodded her head silently. If the Sun Moon Empire possessed an Ultimate Douluo that had been around for two hundred years, that person alone could be apocalyptic for the Star Luo Empire. An Ultimate Douluo had enough power to take down more than ten Titled Douluo at a whim, and once the Star Luo Empire's top-level individuals had fallen, there would no longer be anything they could do against the Sun Moon Empire, and they would be rolled over.

Xu Jiujiu asked, "Do you have other information, Yuhao? If you have other important intel, I can purchase it directly from you. You can ask for any price you want." Her impression of Huo Yuhao was a lot better than before. Just as Bei Bei had said, it would be a lot easier for them to obtain the princess' trust with the information about the Holy Ghost Church as their main game.

Xu Jiujiu didn't even consider whether Huo Yuhao was deceiving her. First, he hailed from Shrek Academy. Secondly, this piece of news was simply too astounding. Furthermore, Huo Yuhao mentioned

that the Holy Ghost Church had sent people to participate in the competition, and it would be too easy to expose a lie. Therefore, she completely believed him. She would immediately send people to obtain evidence once Huo Yuhao left, and then she would relay this information back to her empire.

Huo Yuhao said, "I don't have other intel. We've only developed these speculations after we just realized that the Holy Ghost Church is also participating in the competition. We're here to find you because we can't afford to delay any longer. The Holy Ghost Church dares to parade around in broad daylight, and that goes to show that they're unafraid of threats from any other force. That also means that the Sun Moon Empire won't be holding back for much longer."

Xu Jiujiu nodded and said, "You're right, this is too important. Let's do it this way, Yuhao. You guys can return for now, and I will immediately settle this and pass this information back to the empire so that my brother can make a decision. If this is true, I'm afraid we'll have to pay a personal visit to Shrek Academy."

Huo Yuhao said, "Don't be hasty, princess. I have something else for you. If you're interested, our cooperation can begin right away."

Huo Yuhao gestured to Wang Dong'er behind him as he spoke.

Wang Dong'er raised her left hand. The Starlight Sapphire ring that Huo Yuhao typically wore was now on her left hand, and six streaks of starlight glowed on the ring's surface.

Xu Jiujiu was momentarily stunned, and a tinge of vigilance immediately appeared in her eyes.

Right at this moment, a human figure appeared soundlessly behind Xu Jiujiu. Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong'er only discovered her existence when she appeared, and Huo Yuhao had completely failed to sense her appearance before this, even with his current spiritual power.

"A Titled Douluo?" Huo Yuhao asked in surprise.

An old woman had appeared behind Xu Jiujiu. She looked like she was at least eighty years old, and her hair was all white. She was clad in a flowing red dress that radiated in tandem with her snowy-white hair, but her eyes appeared exceptionally dark and sinister. Greenish-blue light burst from her eyes in all directions, and she unleashed a forceful and stifling aura from the moment she appeared. This aura wasn't targeted at Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong'er. Instead, it filled up the entire room.

Huo Yuhao's expression didn't change at all in the face of such immense pressure. Faint purple light sparkled in his eyes as gentle spiritual undulations flowed outward and enveloped both him and Wang Dong'er inside.

"Eh?" The old woman gasped in surprise, and there was now a hint of astonishment in her eyes as she stared at Huo Yuhao. She could tell from his soul power undulations that this youth had but five soul rings, give or take, yet he could defend himself against her stifling aura. He didn't cower away or back off at all, and she couldn't even lock onto him. How could this be something that a five-ringed Soul King could achieve?

The old lady increased the pressure in the air after her initial flash of astonishment, and this pressure poured towards Huo Yuhao from all directions.

Huo Yuhao didn't show any weakness at all, nor did he say a single word. Purple light circulated, and a diamond-like radiance gradually began to sparkle in his eyes. The purple light layer that was protecting them immediately became like the night sky, while stars dotted its surface. This Titled Douluo didn't stifle Huo Yuhao's formidable spiritual power at all. Instead, it seemed as if Huo Yuhao was pushing back against her!

Huo Yuhao's fighting strength paled in comparison to when he wasn't injured. However, his aura hadn't been weakened at all. Even Elder Xuan had been astounded by his spiritual power, while the old woman was still quite a distance from Elder Xuan's abilities.

A virtual golden projection began to glimmer into view behind Huo Yuhao's back. It was Wang Dong'er's look in girl's clothes, and the Goddess of Light immediately caused Huo Yuhao's eyes to grow gentle and tender as they were filled with overwhelming love. His Goddess of Light's power was boosted by thirty percent as long as Wang Dong'er was beside him.

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"That's enough, senior," Huo Yuhao sighed calmly.

The old woman grunted coldly as she took a step forward, and she was just about to attack when Xu Jiujiu reached up to hold her back.

"Don't be like this, Grandma Yi Man. Yuhao is our guest."

The old woman squinted as she said, "This fellow is a little abnormal, his spiritual power is far stronger than it should be. It's at a level that a Soul King shouldn't possess. Let me take him down, Jiujiu, and then you can interrogate him."

Xu Jiujiu said hurriedly, "Grandma Yi Man, he really is our guest, we can't treat our guests like that! I'm sorry, Yuhao. Grandma Yi Man has been protecting me since I was a child, and she must have felt something dangerous from your storage-type soul tool, and that's the reason why she..."

Huo Yuhao smiled faintly and said, "It's alright. Since you have no interest in seeing what we have to offer, then we will take our leave so that we can prevent any misunderstandings. Let's go, Dong... ahem, Wang Dong."

Huo Yuhao nearly forgot that Wang Dong'er was currently dressed in a guy's clothes, and calling her "Dong'er" now would sound extremely weird.

Wang Dong'er glanced coldly at Xu Jiujiu before she began to push Huo Yuhao away in his wheelchair.

Xu Jiujiu's expression changed, and a hesitant and unsure look flashed across her face. The old woman in the red dress gave Xu Jiujiu an inquisitive look.

Xu Jiujiu didn't hesitate for too long. She walked forward briskly and said, "I'm sorry, Yuhao. I was being too suspicious and oversensitive. I am deeply apologetic about what just happened, and I hope that the two of you can stay."

Xu Jiujiu had felt an acutely dangerous aura when Wang Dong'er flashed the Starlight Sapphire ring, and the aura did come from that ring. That meant that even the Starlight Sapphire's quality couldn't mask the dangerous aura contained within, and the aura immediately flowed out the moment Wang Dong'er

infused some soul power inside. That was the reason why both she and the old lady in red had immediately reacted like they had.

Thoughts ran through her head, and Xu Jiujiu figured that Huo Yuhao had no reason to harm her. It was just as he had said: everyone was standing on the same line, they shared the same enemy, and the enemy of her enemy was her friend. What Huo Yuhao wanted to show her was possibly dangerous, but it was unlikely that it was targeted towards her. Furthermore, Huo Yuhao had just given them such important intel, she couldn't just turn him away just like that. The entire Shrek Academy was behind Huo Yuhao, after all!

Huo Yuhao gestured to Wang Dong'er to tell her to stop, and turned his head around to look back at Xu Jiujiu. "I just want to remind you, princess, that all kinds of collaboration and teamwork has to be built on both parties trusting each other. If you don't trust me, then there's no need for any further cooperation, don't you think?"

Xu Jiujiu stared at this youth who could only move one hand, and she felt as if she were staring at a sly and cunning negotiator. Why is he so difficult to deal with? His words were neither hot nor cold, and neither was he too gentle or too pushy. Huo Yuhao's controlled and moderated rhythm made her feel as if she were being drawn in. It's no wonder that Shrek Academy has placed so much emphasis on him! Indeed, it's not just because of his fighting abilities...

Xu Jiujiu's thoughts stopped there, and she immediately readjusted herself. A sincere smile appeared on her face as she said, "I'm sorry, Yuhao. I'll apologize to you one more time... we were wrong about what happened just now. Please come back, and we can discuss our cooperation in further detail. What do you think? You're right to say that cooperation means we have to trust each other. I can tell from the important information that you've just relayed to me that you trust us. Don't worry, we will reciprocate no matter how we decide to cooperate in the future."

How beautiful was that speech? Huo Yuhao heaved a sigh of admiration inside as he gestured towards Wang Dong'er, and only then did Wang Dong'er turn his wheelchair back around.

Huo Yuhao said, "Show it to her. Don't worry, princess. We are also here, and you have this Titled Douluo to protect you. If something that can threaten your life shows up, won't we be burying ourselves, too? I may be in a bad state, but I'm not ready to leave this world yet." A teasing smile appeared on his face as he said that.

Xu Jiujiu blushed as she made a gesture to Wang Dong'er. She stole a few more glances at her at the same time.

Wang Dong'er was still Wang Dong five years ago. Even though she had been extremely stunning back then, she was still a child. Five years later, she had grown into an extremely "handsome" youth with a long and slender figure. Flowing pinkish-blue hair draped behind her back, and she was so "handsome" that she didn't have any imperfections at all. Princess Jiujiu was still full of awe even though she had seen uncountable good-looking men before throughout her entire life. Wang Dong has a face that is so attractive that even girls will be envious of him, and Huo Yuhao just gave him a strange look. Can they be...?

The look in Princess Jiujiu's eyes became a little strange, and she cursed inside. What a waste! If such a handsome boy swings that way...

Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong'er didn't know that the princess was silently criticizing them. Wang Dong'er took two steps forward, and she reached out with her left hand toward a relatively spacious spot inside the room.

This was only a second-tier room, but it was a lot better than the rooms Huo Yuhao and others were staying in. The spacious living room was several hundred square meters in surface area, and there were bedrooms inside that weren't much smaller. This room was better in terms of both decorations and amenities than their room, and the place that Huo Yuhao and the others were living in weren't even on the same scale.

Brilliant blue light flickered, and a large item appeared before Xu Jiujiu. Even though she sounded very trusting, she still took a few steps back subconsciously so that she could keep her distance from it, while the red-dressed Titled Douluo stood in front of her, prepared to react against anything.

They quickly saw what the item was. It was a strangely-shaped metal item, and Xu Jiujiu could feel that this was a soul tool. Even though the Star Luo Empire's soul tool research paled in comparison to the Sun Moon Empire, the Star Luo Empire had been placing a lot of effort on soul tool research over the years after they realized the gap between them. The only difference was that they lacked top-tier soul engineers, and their research standards were also greatly inferior, so there was no way they could catch up to the Sun Moon Empire. Even so, Xu Jiujiu had seen quite a few soul tools, yet she had never seen nor heard about the thing before her.

The entire soul tool took up about ten square meters of space. There was a square metal base beneath it, and this base was the thing that took up ten square meters. There was a belt beneath the metal base, and it seemed as if this soul tool could be pushed around. One could tell that it was quite heavy just by looking at it.

There was a thick cylinder on top of the metal base, located in the center. This cylinder connected the base to another rectangular metal piece above it, and this rectangular metal component was about two and a half meters long, about one and a half meters wide, and quite flat, with eighteen black holes on one side. It seemed like an enormous metal box, and gave people an extremely peculiar feeling. The metal box's dark body was nowhere close to being visually appealing.

"This is...?" Xu Jiujiu glanced at Huo Yuhao with inquisitive eyes.

Huo Yuhao answered, "This is a weapon that the Tang Sect produces. We have named it the Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon."

"Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon? Is it a soul tool?" Princess Jiujiu was clearly unfamiliar with this name.

Huo Yuhao nodded and said, "More accurately put, it's a stationary soul tool. It can only be considered a Class 4 soul tool, but the effects that it can achieve on the battlefield cannot be matched by normal Class 4 soul tools, the reason being that it's a stationary soul tool. You should know something about stationary soul tools, don't you?"

Princess Jiu Jiu nodded and said, “The force of stationary soul tools mainly comes from their shells. The cannon itself can only determine the firing distance and accuracy. Does your soul tool fire eighteen shells at the same time?”

Huo Yuhao said, “There are different settings. You can fire everything at once, or you can them fire one by one. Our Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon has several salient features, please allow me to introduce them to you. Firstly, even though it’s just a Class 4 stationary soul tool, it can reach a distance comparable to a Class 6 soul tool, because it contains some of the Tang Sect’s secret techniques. You can carry out your own field tests after this.”

Princess Jiujiu’s eyes sparkled. A Class 4 soul tool that had the same propulsion force as a Class 6 soul tool! This was quite an impressive invention. It also meant that this soul tool only required a Class 4 soul engineer to operate it, and Class 4 soul engineers were on a completely different levels than Class 6 soul engineers. It was comparable to the gap between a Soul Ancestor and a Soul Emperor. A thousand Soul Ancestors were probably still weaker than a hundred Soul Emperors, and this point alone had already attracted the princess.

Huo Yuhao continued, “Our Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon can carry forty-eight shells, and they’re all under the base. It can automatically chamber shells during the firing process, and you will only need to reload the weapon after all forty-eight shells have been fired. Reloading is simple. Wang Dong, please demonstrate for the princess.”

“Alright.” Wang Dong’er pressed on the cannon’s side with her right hand, and a capo-like holder sprang out. She shook the holder rapidly, and a magazine gradually slid out from beneath the holder’s base. The magazine opened up from behind, and everyone could see the forty-eight soul cannon shells chambered inside.

Every cannon shell was about a meter long, and every shell was about twenty centimeters in diameter. The entire magazine was withdrawn from the holder, using the four wheels beneath the magazine, so one didn’t need to use too much force to push the magazine around. She quickly pushed the magazine back to its original position, before she closed it and returned the holder to where she took it from and concluded the reloading process. The entire effort took about two minutes.

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Xu Jiujiu calculated mentally, A stationary soul cannon that can fire forty-eight rounds before reloading, and a Class 4 soul tool with a Class 6 soul tool’s firing range. Forty-eight continuous rounds packs quite a punch! Just as Huo Yuhao said, this soul tool is definitely a powerful weapon on the battlefield! The Sun Moon Empire’s army is only equipped with Class 5 stationary soul cannons...

The biggest difference between a stationary soul cannon and a normal soul cannon was firing range. Normal soul cannons had extremely limited firing range, because the soul cannons were powered purely by soul power, which was converted into force to launch the cannon shells. However, stationary soul cannons were different. They relied on the stationary soul tool to launch their shells.

A Class 4 soul tool was worth about a hundredth of a Class 6 soul tool.

Xu Jiujiu calculated continuously in her head, and her eyes began to glow brighter and brighter, beginning to understand more about this metal object’s practical uses and effects.

Huo Yuhao continued, "The Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon that we have devised as of now is more suitable for installation upon city walls to defend the city, or it can be installed to defend fortresses; both uses will be extremely effective. If you wish to equip your army with this item, we will come up with a mobile version."

Princess Jiujiu immediately proposed the question that she was most concerned about. "So, what about the price? How much is it?"

Huo Yuhao smiled and said, "This has power comparable to a Class 6 soul tool's power, so it should be valued like a Class 6 soul tool. Truthfully, it can be considered a Class 6 soul tool, except it doesn't take as much to use it."

Xu Jiujiu smiled and said, "I'm sure that's not it. I believe it doesn't take that many resources to craft it, either. Furthermore, stationary soul tools have always been known to burn holes through our wallets. This cannon can fire forty-eight stationary cannon shells, so every round will bring me a lot of heartache. Yuhao, your Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon is a little too expensive. You guys are also from the Star Luo Empire; are you trying to reap profits from war? That means this will no longer be a cooperation."

Huo Yuhao smiled and shook his head. "No, princess. We are already very sincere. Stationary soul tools are indeed expensive, but they are also most important in the wars that we will have to face in the future. The Tang Sect has always been fair, so this price will never change. The price will be the same even if we are selling to Shrek City. Our sincerity lies in the supply priority we give our clients. If you're willing to complete the deal, you will become our first client outside Shrek City, and you will receive supply priority from us for one year."

Xu Jiujiu was momentarily stunned. She couldn't help but laugh as she said, "I didn't expect you to be such a good businessman, and you even know about supply priority. Do you really believe that this soul tool will receive excessive demand? There must be a limit to the number of soul tools like this we can purchase, because we have to ensure that we have enough cannon shells to make sure that these expensive soul tools can unleash their full potential. Furthermore, we need to have enough soul masters. The truth is that the Star Luo Empire doesn't lack soul masters. Since this soul tool is also considered a Class 6 soul tool, we might as well directly purchase Class 6 stationary soul tools. There are quite a few Soul Emperors within the Star Luo Empire."

The smile on Huo Yuhao's face didn't change. He wasn't worried at all. If the princess wasn't interested in his Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon at all, she wouldn't be negotiating with him. The harder she haggled, the more interested she was in the soul tool.

"But can you find a Class 6 stationary soul cannon that can fire forty-eight times continuously? I'm afraid it's difficult to find one that can fire even three in a row. Both our magazines and our firing mechanisms are exclusive to us, and this soul tool comes with a self-destruct mechanism as well, so it can't be replicated. One Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon can rival the firing efficiency of four Class 6 stationary soul cannons. Of course, we have to admit that this cannon can only be considered a Class 4 soul cannon in terms of material quality, and thus its durability cannot compare to that of a Class 6 stationary soul cannon."

Xu Jiujiu stared at Huo Yuhao in astonishment. This was the first time she had seen a seller openly discussing the product's weaknesses and shortcomings.

Huo Yuhao said, "Integrity always comes first for the Tang Sect, no matter who we're dealing with, and we will never hide any weaknesses or cons that our products have. Furthermore, you could be considered one of our biggest clients."

Xu Jiujiu smiled and said, "Then aren't you afraid that I'll lowball you? The price you have quoted isn't considered low at all. Furthermore, from a business perspective, there has never been a rule where the seller will always get the first price that he or she quotes."

Huo Yuhao replied, "I'm not sure how other people do their business, but upholding our integrity and providing top-quality products has always been of the utmost importance to the Tang Sect."

Xu Jiujiu stared deeply into his eyes. There was a look on regret on her face as she said, "That's a pity. We can only think about this a little more."

Huo Yuhao wasn't worried at all. He smiled and said, "Of course. I believe this deal will be a big one if it comes through, so it's natural for you to put in a little more thought, princess. We'll take our leave, then. We will give this Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon to you, and you will understand after field-testing it that I haven't exaggerated anything at all. However, if you miss this opportunity today, and if other clients step into the picture, I'm afraid we cannot reserve purchase priority for you anymore. I need to make this clear so that I can absolve myself and so that you won't hold that against me when it happens."

Xu Jiujiu was very familiar with the art of negotiation. She thought to herself, "Do you think I'll fall for your tricks?" She stood up and placed her palms on top of one another on her abdomen. She tilted her head towards Huo Yuhao, and there was no denying her nobility and elegance as a princess. "That's alright. If we decide that this soul tool is something we need, we will contact the Tang Sect as soon as possible."

Huo Yuhao replied, "Okay! There are two things that I wish to remind you about. You can attach Milk Bottles to this soul tool when you want to use it, and you can use it directly. Class 4 Milk Bottles are enough. Otherwise, a soul engineer can use it by infusing soul power from the left side of its base, where the two palm grooves are located. The second thing I wish to remind you about is that I have installed a self-destruct mechanism into this Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon so that we can protect our technology. If anybody attempts to take it apart, then there will be a formidable explosion. Please watch out for that, princess."

Xu Jiujiu took exception to his words and said, "Seems like your sect has placed a lot of emphasis on this soul tool. If you're worried, you can take it back, and you can send someone into the Star Luo Empire to carry out experiments and field-tests for us. Don't you think it's a bit too excessive to use Milk Bottles to operate a Class 4 soul tool like this?" Milk Bottles were considered one of the most valuable and expensive soul tools amongst those of the same level, and this was the same for all soul tools beneath Class 7.

Huo Yuhao smiled and said, "Perhaps. I have already given this soul tool to you, so how can I take it back? Dong'er, take back our Milk Bottle, and we can bid our farewell to the princess."

“Alright.” Wang Dong’er took a few steps towards the Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon’s base and pressed on a spot. A metal box sprang out, and Wang Dong’er retrieved a peculiarly-shaped Milk Bottle that resembled a cannon shell and stored it inside her Starlight Sapphire storage ring.

Wang Dong’er wasn’t doing everything very quickly, so Xu Jiujiu could clearly see that she had never seen a Milk Bottle like that before. She could tell from its size that it wasn’t as simple as a typical Class 4 Milk Bottle. This was a soul tool that came attached with a mechanism specifically meant to attach Milk Bottles, and the Milk Bottle had also been specially crafted for this purpose. Was there a need for this? There must be something wrong if things weren’t normal or typical.

Xu Jiujiu was still escorting them out when she asked subconsciously, “Will the Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon have any special effects if it’s is used with a Milk Bottle?”

Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong were already at the door, and Princess Jiujiu’s servant opened it for them. Huo Yuhao said plainly, “There won’t be any special effects, except you don’t need soul masters to operate the soul tool.”

“Oh. Goodbye, then,” Xu Jiujiu answered and sent Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong’er out of the room. She definitely wouldn’t go any further to send them off with her status, and her servant closed the door behind them.

Huo Yuhao’s words echoed in Xu Jiujiu’s mind as she muttered under her breath, “You don’t need soul masters to operate the soul tool? What does that mean? You don’t need soul masters to...” The princess’ body suddenly froze as if a thought burst into her head, and an astonished look came over her face while her face lost all color.

“That’s... not possible...”

Wang Dong’er wasn’t pushing Huo Yuhao very quickly outside, and Huo Yuhao was slowly withdrawing his extended fingers as if he were counting down.

“Five...”

“Four...”

“Three...”

“Wait!” A high-pitched exclamation echoed through the corridor, and Princess Jiujiu suddenly raced out from her room and blocked their path in a few brisk steps.

Wang Dong’er stared at the concerned look on her face with amusement and thought to herself, Huo Yuhao is so cunning...

Xu Jiujiu’s breathing was clearly a little rushed as she stared at Huo Yuhao with her charming blue eyes. “You...you said that you don’t need soul masters to operate this soul tool! What does that mean?”

Huo Yuhao seemed a little blank as he replied, “That’s... what it means.”

Xu Jiujiu took a deep breath. “Are you saying that...?” For some reason, her heartbeat began to race, and an indescribable premonition coursed through her mind. However, this premonition was just so immense, to the point where she could barely control herself anymore.

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“Wait.” Huo Yuhao raised his hand to interrupt any further questions from Xu Jiujiu and asked quietly, “Princess, do you think it’s appropriate that we are negotiating this out here?”

Xu Jiujiu bit down on her lower lip as she stared at this innocent and harmless-looking fellow with a faint smile at the corner of his mouth. She really wanted to pounce on him and strangle him. This bastard brought up what is perhaps the most important point at the last moment to wake me up. Seriously...

Many large sects and reputable academies currently resided in this building, so it was true that this place wasn’t suitable or appropriate for discussing such top-secret things.

Those thoughts did run through her head, but it was clear that there was no way she could put them into practice. She calmed herself down and regained her elegant posture and composure as she said apologetically, “It’s my fault for overlooking that. I invite the two of you to come back, so that we can discuss this deal in further detail. What do you think?”

Huo Yuhao smiled and said, “Of course. It would be even better if you could give us a cup of tea.”

Damn it! She felt resentment bursting in her mind, but she didn’t dare to reveal even a single ounce of it on her face. Her heart was still beating very quickly, and the possibility that had just occurred to her was far too important for the Star Luo Empire.

“I’m sorry, I was being discourteous before. I was too pleasantly surprised to see the two of you – please come back, and I will personally make some tea for you two of you.” She made a gesture for them to kindly proceed back into her room as she spoke.

“Alright, we’ll have to trouble you, then.” Huo Yuhao didn’t push around too much. He had to play this just right, as going too far was as bad as not doing enough. He was dealing with a big customer, after all!

They returned to the princess’ room, and Xu Jiujiu personally brought them two fragrant cups of tea as she invited Wang Dong’er to sit down on the sofa before turning towards Huo Yuhao with an eager look on her face.

One had to admit that the princess was extremely pretty, and she could be ranked along with Jiang Nannan and Wang Dong’er as a top-tier beauty. If the princess had been staring at someone else with the same look on her face, they might possibly stop at nothing to give the princess whatever she wanted.

It was a pity then that Wang Dong’er was the only person in Huo Yuhao’s heart. Furthermore, Huo Yuhao had seen quite a few top-class beauties. He possessed immense spiritual power, and his mind was steadfast and unwavering. He was naturally unaffected by Xu Jiujiu’s small psychological move.

“Do you have any questions or doubts, princess? Please ask, and I will tell you everything I can.” Huo Yuhao’s face was cool and collected, and the sincerity in his eyes was no less than the look in Xu Jiujiu’s eyes.

The red-dressed old woman felt a twitch at the corner of her mouth as she stood to one side. She thought to herself, The new generation is taking over from the older generation after all, and everyone seems to be as sly as a fox. Jiujiu has met her match today.

Xu Jiujiu's graceful and charming look finally froze momentarily, and she suppressed the impulsive desire in her heart to strangle this fellow before her as she replied, "I wish to ask about something you said before this. What did you mean when you said that soul masters aren't needed to operate this soul tool? Are you trying to say that if these Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannons have Milk Bottles, normal people can also operate them?"

Huo Yuhao shook his head and said, "Normal people definitely can't."

Huo Yuhao's simple statement immediately caused Xu Jiujiu's eyes to fill with disappointment. Her eyes quickly turned unfriendly. Is this fellow deliberately trying to mess around with me?

Xu Jiujiu was on the brink of erupting, and she grit her teeth as she said, "Then what do you mean when soul masters aren't needed to operate this soul tool?"

Huo Yuhao didn't seem ruffled at all. "That just means soul masters aren't needed to operate this soul tool!"

Xu Jiujiu planted her hands on the desk in front of her and took a deep breath. She didn't mince her words, pausing slightly as she enunciated each one. "Will you die if you make yourself clearer?"

Huo Yuhao had a forced smile on his face and an innocent look as he said, "My words are very clear! It means the Tang Sect's Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon no longer requires a soul master to operate it after attaching a Milk Bottle to it. Normal people definitely don't meet the requirements, as they are not strong enough, and they will struggle with reloading and switching magazines. Only soldiers that are relatively stronger can operate this soul tool, and it's even better if they've been trained before. Can you understand my explanation now, princess?"

The redness that was on Xu Jiujiu's face due to her fury immediately vanished, and she said eagerly, "Are you for real? Even soldiers that are not soul masters can operate a Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon?"

Huo Yuhao nodded and said, "Of course! Otherwise, how could I claim that our Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon has excellent value for the money? If not, how could I sell you a Class 4 soul tool for the price of a Class 6 soul tool? Wouldn't that just be a rip-off?"

Xu Jiujiu leaned against the sofa, and her eyes changed continuously as her brain began to spin with ideas and thoughts. Her fists were clenched slightly from all her intense and riled-up emotions.

Huo Yuhao picked up his cup of tea and finished it with a gulp. This was good tea, indeed... it was aromatic, and its fragrance lingered in his mouth, while it was fresh and quenched his thirst at the same time.

Five minutes passed before Xu Jiujiu suddenly stared at Huo Yuhao and asked, "Can you give us a promotional price if we order in bulk?" She was extremely clear about the value of Class 6 soul tools.

Huo Yuhao shook his head and said, "No can do. I've said it already, that our product is excellent value for the price, and the price will not change. The price will remain the same whether we're selling the cannons to you or to other clients, and we will be fair to everyone. The only benefit I can give you, princess, is purchase priority. There's an upper limit to our production speed, after all."

Xu Jiujiu took a deep breath and said, "But we can only validate your words after field-testing this soul tool and experimenting with it. Can you reserve purchase priority for us?"

Huo Yuhao contemplated momentarily, then said, "You have three days. I hope you can give us a decisive response before the competition starts."

Xu Jiujiu said angrily, "We're inside the Sun Moon Empire, not the Star Luo empire. Where do I find a place to test it?"

Huo Yuhao glanced at the red-dressed old woman beside them and said, "Technology is advanced today, and we can use flying-type soul tools now. It doesn't seem difficult to return to the Star Luo Empire within a day. Princess, if I wasn't from the Star Luo Empire myself, I wouldn't have pleaded with my eldest senior brother time and time again, and perhaps you wouldn't have been our first big customer. Three days is already the maximum allowance that our sect can give. I hope you can understand. How about this... we will give the Milk Bottles that are specially crafted for our Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannons to you as an expression of sincerity."

Huo Yuhao gave Wang Dong'er a look as he spoke.

Wang Dong'er nodded and passed the Milk Bottle that she had taken back before this to Xu Jiujiu.

Xu Jiujiu felt a little strange as she held onto the strangely-shaped Milk Bottle that was at least twice as heavy as a normal Class 6 Milk Bottle. The materials used to craft this Milk Bottle didn't seem ordinary or typical.

Huo Yuhao said, "Princess, I'll pass another piece of secret intel to you for free."

"Speak."

Huo Yuhao said, "You're in charge of intelligence. Are you aware that the Illustrious Virtue Hall has devised technology to seal Milk Bottles? That means, the soul power contained within Milk Bottles will no longer leak outside."

Xu Jiujiu felt her heart skip a beat. "Are you sure?"

Huo Yuhao nodded and said, "The Tang Sect has also mastered this technology. The Milk Bottle you're holding in your hands is sealed, which you will know once you give it a try. The truth is that the cost of crafting one of these Milk Bottles is equivalent to purchasing five Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannons. With this sealed Milk Bottle, you can reload a Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon ten times without switching Milk Bottles. Ten magazines mean you can fire four-hundred and eighty stationary cannon shells in one go. I'm sure you understand what this means."

Xu Jiujiu was left sitting motionless on the sofa even after Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong'er left her room. Her enchanting eyes sparkled with sophisticated light, and "Tang Sect" had been deeply imprinted on her.

All her complicated emotions and thoughts gradually became disappointment and a sense of loss. Bitterness began to surface at the corner of her lips as she said, "We are still so slow, Grandma Yi Man. We are trailing the Sun Moon Empire in soul tool research, and we are even lagging behind Shrek

Academy. The Tang Sect is undoubtedly representing Shrek Academy. Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon, sealed Milk Bottles... impressive indeed!"

The old woman sat down beside her and gently caressed Xu Jiujiu's flowing hair. "Don't put too much pressure on yourself, child. You're just a girl, and you have enough burdens on your shoulders. That boy is extraordinary. I studied him closely, and I've never seen spiritual power like his in my entire life. His spiritual power is both unique and powerful at the same time, and it's on an entirely different scale from his soul power. Furthermore, his eyes were calm and collected from beginning to end, no matter what expression he was wearing. Even you are a little inferior to him in this respect. If you can't have a person like that as a friend, then..." The old lady squinted a little as a look of hostility and murder flashed across her eyes.

Xu Jiujiu's expression changed as she exclaimed, "No, Grandma Yi Man!"

Grandma Yi Man stared at her amusingly and said, "What? You can't bear to see anything happen to him? He seems a lot younger than you are."

Xu Jiujiu blushed and leaned into Grandma Yi Man's embrace disapprovingly. "What are you talking about, Grandma Yi Man? There's nothing between the two of us. That guy is one of the most outstanding individuals of Shrek Academy's younger generation, and the academy places great emphasis on him. My elder brother has already prepared a plan to pull him close, and this guy is likely to become the link between us and Shrek Academy. Therefore, we can't touch him, and we have to protect him.

"Grandma Yi Man, what do you think about the Holy Ghost Church that he spoke of?"

Yi Man's face turned black as she said, "That's a tough one. If he's right about the Dragon Emperor Douluo being used by the Holy Ghost Church, then the Star Luo Empire will be in some real trouble. We need to act, and we need to do it now."

Xu Jiujiu tilted her head and glanced at the massive Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon resting on the floor. "Time is of the essence, Grandma Yi Man. I'm afraid I'll have to trouble you this time."

Yi Man heaved a faint sigh and replied, "What trouble is there? I should do more for the empire while I can still move. I'll take this back to the empire for field-testing and experiments right away."

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"Yes. I trust you the most, and I won't be able to be at ease unless you're the one doing it. I can tell from Huo Yuhao representing the Tang Sect to promote their soul tools that Shrek Academy's inner circle seems to have changed. We have to buck up on our intelligence work."

Xu Jiujiu had believed from beginning to end that the Tang Sect was chosen by Shrek Academy as their spokesperson, and it was because of this misconstrued understanding that she placed a lot more emphasis on the Tang Sect.

Wang Dong'er pushed Huo Yuhao back into his room, and it was only at this moment that an exhausted look came over Huo Yuhao's face.

Wang Dong'er lowered her voice and said, "Yuhao, why did you keep beating around the bush with Princess Jiujiu?"

Huo Yuhao answered, "That's so I can give her a stronger impression, and it's also because I wanted to catalyze this deal and agreement with the Star Luo Empire and finalize it as fast as possible. If the Sun Moon Empire launches an invasion, the Star Luo Empire cannot avoid being the vanguard and bearing the brunt of their attack. Therefore, they feel the most urgency, and I believe they will come to a decision fairly quickly."

Wang Dong'er asked, "How about the Heavenly Soul Empire and the Dou Ling Empire?"

Huo Yuhao said, "We can take it a little slower with them. One reason is because we don't know anybody in these empires' higher levels with a status like Princess Jiujiu. The second reason is because these empires may not send one of their high-ranking officials to us. Furthermore, our production speed is limited, and we may be hit with overwhelming demand if the Star Luo Empire chooses to take us up on this deal."

Wang Dong'er supported him and laid him down on the bed. She smiled as she said, "I think you're becoming more and more like a businessman."

Huo Yuhao forced a laugh and said, "It's not my wish for that to happen. However, the Holy Ghost Church's appearance has given us too much threat and danger."

Wang Dong'er gently combed and tidied the hair on his forehead and said, "You can rest for a little while. I'll buy dinner for you, and we should rest early after eating. Are you tired from hustling around all day?"

Huo Yuhao said nothing as he stared at her.

Wang Dong'er blushed as she felt his piercing gaze. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Huo Yuhao smiled faintly and said, "Ever since I returned after sustaining these injuries, I've become the luckiest and most fortunate person in the world."

Wang Dong'er grunted and said, "Are you trying to say that I wasn't nice enough to you before this?"

"Uh... of course not. The truth is that I've always been a little lost ever since we established our relationship during the Sea God's Fate, as you've always been my brother in my heart. I only suddenly discovered how important you were in my heart when I read the letter in the pouch that uncle Niu Tian gave me. I felt a little attracted to you even when you were dressed like a guy, except I wasn't so sure why I felt that way. I only realized afterwards that your eyes would always be the same no matter what you wear. There's a big difference between a guy and a girl's eyes after all. Don't worry, Dong'er – I will recover very soon."

"Alright," Wang Dong'er nodded her head lightly and said, "You should rest while I grab dinner."

"Okay."

Wang Dong'er left the room, and Huo Yuhao was the only person that remained. He didn't close his eyes to rest, instead silently pondering things in his mind. He was repeatedly consolidating everything that he had seen and heard ever since they had arrived in Radiant City.

The Sun Moon Empire seems like they really are going to make a move. However, are the Heavenly Soul Empire and Star Luo Empire prepared for that? It's hard to say, and even if they've made their

preparations, the Holy Ghost Church entering the fray will undoubtedly cause disarray and mess up their plans. The Sun Moon Empire must have ulterior motives for hosting this competition. How can we delay as much as possible before the Sun Moon Empire takes action?

The Tang Sect has just begun our multifaceted expansion. The Tang Sect needs time to expand, and I also need time to recover. Once the war begins, we will need sufficient time to prepare if the Tang Sect wants to make a difference in the war and take this opportunity to expand and become stronger, and if the Tang Sect wishes to help the three native empires of the Douluo Continent against the Sun Moon Empire.

Yes! We have to devise a plan to slow the Sun Moon Empire down and delay their plans for war as much as possible during this competition. But how do we go about accomplishing that?

The goal had changed, but he couldn't really think of a proper plan, so he could only play things by ear and wait and see. The Sun Moon Empire wasn't just targeting the Star Luo Empire and Shrek Academy, and the other big sects, the Heavenly Soul Empire, and the Dou Ling Empire could form an alliance.

Dinner wasn't very sumptuous, but Wang Dong'er had returned quickly, and it was clear that she was worried about Huo Yuhao. No matter what he ate, everything that entered Huo Yuhao's mouth was as delicious as ever with Wang Dong'er beside him.

The night was upon them. Huo Yuhao didn't dare to lie in bed and indulge himself in the warmth of Dong'er's companionship like before, and he immediately started to meditate.

Wang Dong'er sat beside him and also began to meditate.

It had been a long time since they had cultivated together with the Haodong power. Huo Yuhao's body was filled with the origin energy of Ultimate Ice, and that meant his soul power became extremely cold and icy. This also meant that Wang Dong'er would be adversely affected if they connected through the Haodong power. Furthermore, Huo Yuhao's legs and his left arm's blood circulation were blocked, so he couldn't complete a major circulation. He would drag Wang Dong'er down with him, so he might as well cultivate by himself.

Huo Yuhao had strong foundations in his Mysterious Heaven Technique, and his Mysterious Heaven Technique was also filled with vitality. Huo Yuhao's spiritual power was in the Mustard Seed Domain, and he could use his intricate and fine spiritual power with this technique. He released a thread of the origin energy of Ultimate Ice from his left arm and absorbed it with every circulation.

The reason why he chose his left arm and not his legs was because the origin energy stored inside his left arm was comparatively thinner, and thus easier to extract. He had already managed to absorb some of the origin energy of Ultimate Ice from all the work and effort that he had put in over the past few days. Huo Yuhao couldn't finish a major circulation, but his soul power wasn't increasing any slower at all. The origin energy of heaven and earth had given him a lot of trouble, but it was still pure ice-type energy in the end.

Huo Yuhao had already made accurate predictions about the state of his body. If he followed his current cultivation method, he would need at least three years before he could absorb every ounce of origin energy of Ultimate Ice in his body, and this was a conservative estimate where he assumed nothing went wrong. He would undoubtedly break through to become a Soul Emperor once he finished

absorbing everything, and if he had enough soul rings, he had the possibility to break through to become a Soul Sage. Three years of being crippled in exchange for speedy improvement – this deal wasn't that bad or disadvantageous for him in the end.

After all, neither Bei Bei, Xu Sanshi, nor Wang Dong'er could possibly become Soul Sages within three years even if they wanted to.

Therefore, Huo Yuhao wasn't that worried about his cultivation. He could only avoid mistakes and problems if he maintained a calm mind during his cultivation. Otherwise, if he went down the wrong path and went insane in his current state, he would face mortal danger.

The night went by peacefully, and Wang Dong'er pushed Huo Yuhao into Bei Bei's room when dawn arrived after they finished breakfast.

Bei Bei was strong, and his injuries had stabilized. The only thing was that his wounds were far too severe, so he still had to rest in bed.

Huo Yuhao recounted the negotiation he had conducted with Xu Jiujiu on the previous day. Bei Bei told him delightedly after listening to his description that Huo Yuhao could decide on other similar issues in the future.

Bei Bei and Xu Sanshi were the only ones who were truly in charge of things. The other members still prioritized their studies within Shrek Academy. He Caitou participated in the Tang Sect's soul tool production and design, but the others spent most of their time on Sea God's Island.

Huo Yuhao and He Caitou had taken quite a burden off Bei Bei and Xu Sanshi's shoulders ever since they had returned from their exchange program. This was especially so because Huo Yuhao had returned with voluminous blueprints, and even brought back a soul tool expert in Xuan Ziwen. This immediately brought the Tang Sect to another level, and their most important Soul Tool Hall was subsequently perfected. The Tang Sect's expansion was finally on the right track, and Bei Bei could finally heave a sigh of relief. He had completely no worries at all about Huo Yuhao – Huo Yuhao was their designer, and he was extremely familiar with all the Tang Sect's soul tools. Furthermore, Huo Yuhao was meticulous and careful, and rarely made mistakes.

Xu Sanshi was an all-rounded individual, but he didn't understand enough about soul tools, while he was too playful at the same time. Bei Bei didn't feel assured at all about him, so he passed command to Huo Yuhao after he was wounded. Xu Sanshi didn't have any objections to this at all, and he was even elated about the decision, as he didn't want even a little bit of this added trouble and responsibility.

"Eldest senior brother, I predict that we will have a response from Princess Jiujiu by tomorrow night at the latest. With her knowledge and her experience, I trust that she won't pass up this wonderful opportunity. It seems like we will be busy very soon."

Bei Bei was lying down on the bed. He smiled and said, "Teacher Xuan will be busy, you mean. Your Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon managed to tame Teacher Xuan back then, so how can Princess Jiujiu not bend to your will? We can actually lower the price, as the cost of our production is..."

Huo Yuhao shook his head, and a mysterious smile broke out across his face. “Eldest senior brother, we don’t place excessive emphasis on money, but we can’t afford not to charge a high price for the Tang Sect’s development.”

Bei Bei’s eyes sparkled. He immediately understood what Huo Yuhao was trying to say, and said, “You’re thinking about...”

“Yes.” Huo Yuhao could tell that his eldest senior brother understood him, and he immediately nodded.

A knock sounded at this moment. Huo Yuhao, Wang Dong’er, Bei Bei, and Xu Sanshi were the only people in the room, and everyone thought the Tang Sect’s other members had arrived. Xu Sanshi walked over and pushed open the door, but he was momentarily stunned once he opened the door.

“Why are you here, eldest senior sister?” The eldest senior sister of Shrek Academy’s inner courtyard, Zhang Lexuan, was standing outside the room. Wang Qiu’er was also with her.

Zhang Lexuan shot a glare at him and said, “Why can’t I be here? I’m the academy’s team leader. Why have you guys been put in a place like this? Is the Sun Moon Empire unaware that you guys are the champions from the previous tournament?”

Xu Sanshi invited them in as he said angrily, “It doesn’t matter if they know that or not. Even if they know, what can we do if they pretend that they don’t?”

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The room wasn’t that big, so Zhang Lexuan immediately saw Bei Bei lying on the bed when she walked in, as well as Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong’er beside him.

She was aware of Huo Yuhao’s circumstances, but her face immediately changed when she saw Bei Bei lying down on the bed. She walked up concernedly and said, “What happened to you, Bei Bei?”

Huo Yuhao, Xu Sanshi, and Wang Dong’er were slightly taken aback as they watched the worry and anxiety in their eldest senior sister’s eyes. Huo Yuhao and Xu Sanshi exchanged a look, and they immediately felt the peculiarity in each other’s eyes. The concern that their eldest senior sister displayed towards their eldest senior brother seemed a little out of the ordinary.

Bei Bei forced a smile and said, “Calm down, eldest senior sister. I’m alright.”

Zhang Lexuan seemed to realize that she had lost her composure. She withdrew her emotions a little as she pinched Bei Bei’s wrist to check his injuries.

Wang Qiu’er walked in together with Zhang Lexuan. However, she walked up next to Huo Yuhao, and glanced down at him before her eyes turned away very naturally, as if she were looking at a stranger.

Wang Dong’er looked on steadily, and sighed to herself. The colder Wang Qiu’er was to Huo Yuhao, the more Wang Dong’er could tell that Huo Yuhao was still very important to Wang Qiu’er. Qiu’er, Qiu’er... why do you do this to yourself?

Wang Dong’er had thought long and hard when Huo Yuhao disappeared without a trace back then. She was ready and willing to share Huo Yuhao’s love with Wang Qiu’er if she had to, and it was because of this thought that she was a lot less hostile towards her now. This was especially so after she felt the

entirety of Huo Yuhao's love for her. All she felt toward Wang Qiu'er now was sympathy, and not a single hint of envy or jealousy. At this moment, she was being very generous by standing on Huo Yuhao's other side.

"How have you been, Qiu'er?" Wang Qiu'er didn't bother greeting him, but Huo Yuhao had to greet her, as she had saved his life more than once. Furthermore, he had long sensed the feelings that she had for him, and he couldn't help but feel a little guilty about them, as he couldn't help but feel as if he owed her something.

"I've been very well," Wang Qiu'er answered coldly. It didn't seem like she had been "very well" from the way she responded...

"Oh." Huo Yuhao didn't know what else to say, and he gave her a simple response.

Zhang Lexuan concluded her scrutiny of Bei Bei's body with a solemn look on her face.

"Your organs are almost in different positions, and you've been hit with an intense and strange soul power. It's dark, evil, and eerie. Did you encounter evil soul masters?"

Everyone couldn't help but be impressed as they listened to her words. Zhang Lexuan's analysis was concise, accurate, and to the point. She lived up to her name as the inner courtyard's eldest senior sister.

Bei Bei nodded as he lowered his voice and said, "I was just about to look for you guys. This matter has to be reported to the academy as quickly as possible, so that the academy can make the necessary preparations. That Holy Ghost Church has appeared..." He recounted the events from the previous day in detail, and he pointed out the Scorpion Tiger Douluo's existence. However, the Tang Sect members were a little surprised that Bei Bei didn't mention Tang Ya, and he only talked about how he sensed something was wrong about a soul master that he had run into, and how the other person had managed to ambush and catch him off guard, and how he had thus been injured.

"This is very important. We have to report it to the academy immediately. You are severely injured, should I send you back to the academy?" Zhang Lexuan spoke with a very concerned look on her face.

Bei Bei forced a laugh and shook his head. "You're the academy's representative team leader, so how can you walk away? Furthermore, my condition has stabilized, so I might as well rest and recover here. Don't worry, there's no way I can participate in the competition. I've passed command over to Huo Yuhao."

Zhang Lexuan stared at Bei Bei before she glanced at Huo Yuhao on his wheelchair. She couldn't help but feel a little helpless and exasperated. "You guys! What can I say about the two of you? Bei Bei, you're not a typically careless person, why did you...?"

Bei Bei gave her a look, and Zhang Lexuan was momentarily stunned before she recognized that she seemed to have said too much this time. She stood up and said, "Please rest well. I will report this matter back to the academy at once. Let's go, Qiu'er."

Wang Qiu'er said nothing, and she didn't even greet the other Tang Sect members as she followed behind Zhang Lexuan and departed the room.

The room descended into silence once Zhang Lexuan and Wang Qiu'er left, while Xu Sanshi, Huo Yuhao, and Wang Dong'er all stared at Bei Bei.

Bei Bei felt goosebumps break out over his body from their stares. He cleared his throat and said, "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Xu Sanshi looked up at the ceiling and heaved a long sigh. "I initially believed that girls would only crush on a person like me – incredibly handsome, romantic and elegant, natural and unrestrained. I never thought that you, Bei Bei, you who has a small nose and tiny eyes, had a secret like this. If you hadn't been injured such that our eldest senior sister revealed her true feelings as a result, I wouldn't have been able to tell. I didn't know that you and our eldest senior sister had a complicated relationship."

An awkward look flashed across Bei Bei's face. "Bullshit. Don't spout nonsense and taint eldest senior sister's clean name and reputation."

Xu Sanshi laughed coldly and said, "Do you think I'm as clueless as the others who don't know you as well as I do? It's obvious that the look in her eyes wasn't right the instant she walked in and realized that you had been injured. When has eldest senior sister ever looked at someone else from the inner courtyard like that? The look in your eyes in that moment seemed like everything that was happening was right and within expectations. This proves that you had already predicted this response from the moment you saw her. Is that not enough to prove the secret relationship between the two of you? Wow, Bei Bei, you've hidden something like this from your best brothers! Even I had no clue about this, that you've done something to even our eldest senior sister. Tell us everything, right now! If not, I won't show you any mercy even though you're hurt."

Bei Bei stared at the falsely indignant look on Xu Sanshi's face, and turned towards Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong'er, who were also staring at him with a strange looks in their eyes. "Oh, my reputation! Eldest senior sister messed up because she's too concerned."

Xu Sanshi leaned in by the bedside with a gossipy look on his face. "Quick, tell us. What's going on between you and our eldest senior sister? You have always been so dejected and concerned about Xiao Ya, so when did eldest senior sister enter the picture?"

Bei Bei could tell that he couldn't hide this secret any longer. He adjusted the expression on his face and said, "I'll tell you since you guys have already realized something is going on. However, you guys have to keep my secret, as this concerns our eldest senior sister's name and reputation. Whoever leaks this out will no longer be my brother."

"Okay." Wang Dong'er was the first to agree, and without any hesitation at all.

The corner of Bei Bei's mouth twitched as he said, "It's the same even for my sisters!"

Wang Dong'er giggled and said, "Eldest senior brother, we should always enjoy blessings and endure misfortunes together. Why don't I call everyone here? Do you think third senior brother can hide something like this from fourth senior sister?"

"I... I have chosen terrible friends!" Bei Bei exclaimed in defeat.

He Caitou, Jiang Nanna, and Xiao Xiao were quickly gathered. Na Na, Ji Juechen, and Jing Ziyang were ultimately not as close to them.

Jiang Nannan and Xiao Xiao's beautiful eyes sparkled when they heard that there was some secret between Bei Bei and their eldest senior sister that they had to know about. This was the classic gossipy and nosy look, and even the typically simple and straightforward He Caitou was full of surprise.

"You can't tell anyone else!" Bei Bei exclaimed painfully.

"Really, nobody else can know about this."

"Why don't we just let this go? You guys can just pretend you don't know anything at all."

"....."

"Alright, alright. I'll say it." Everyone's eyes seemed like they were about to erupt with fire. Bei Bei felt all the pressure, and he had no choice but to tell them about his story with Zhang Lexuan.

"Actually, eldest senior sister was arranged to marry me..." The six other pairs of eyes in the room widened with this one sentence. The apple that Xu Sanshi was holding in his hands dropped and hit He Caitou, who was beside him, on the face. He Caitou clenched his fingers in shock, and his enormous strength left a row of grooves on the bedframe.

Huo Yuhao felt his body quiver, and he almost slid out of his wheelchair. Wang Dong'er covered her mouth with her hands to keep from exclaiming out loud.

Jiang Nannan screamed and gasped in astonishment, while Xiao Xiao grabbed He Caitou's arm as tightly as she could. It was clear that she was as astounded as everybody else.

"Arranged marriage?!" Xu Sanshi's mouth was open so wide that a goose egg could be stuffed into it.

Who dared to think that the Shrek Academy's inner courtyard's chief disciple, the person that everyone referred to respectfully as "eldest senior sister", the person that joined the Sea God's Pavilion at the age of thirty to become one of the council members, Zhang Le Xuan, was actually arranged to marry Bei Bei. This could no longer be described as unbelievable, this was simply something that could only exist in fantasies!

Bei Bei pulled a long face. "Yes, all of you heard that right, and I didn't say anything wrong. Eldest senior sister was arranged to marry me. It's a long story, and I'll have to start from twenty years ago."

Xu Sanshi pulled over a chair and sat down beside his bed. "That's alright, we're not rushing things. You can take your time."

Huo Yuhao stared at Bei Bei with his eyes wide open and his jaw hanging slack. What he was feeling inside was similar to the awe and astonishment that Princess Jiujiu felt when she discovered that his Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon could be operated by normal soldiers.

Bei Bei shot a glare at Xu Sanshi and said, "My mother passed away on the day I was born due to a difficult birth. My father was too depressed, and he took a nearly impossible task from the Shrek Guardians against Ancestor Xuan's wishes and departed. He hasn't returned since, and I became an orphan.

“My family only had a single son, and my ancestors have ruled that all sons will follow their mother’s surname. My parents’ death adversely affected Ancestor Xuan, and he treated me like his own son during that period of time, as if I were the most important thing in the world.

“Eldest senior sister was actually brought back by one of the academy’s teachers, and Ancestor Xuan ran into them by accident. Eldest senior sister had a blank look in her eyes back then, as if she had lost her soul and her spirit. She is from one of the Heavenly Soul Empire’s aristocratic families, but they were ambushed and attacked by another aristocratic family, and her entire family was annihilated. She had been underneath her bed, as she was playing hide-and-seek with her mother when disaster struck, so she managed to avoid certain death. Her mother crashed onto the ground beside the bed, and even used her own body to cover the bed as she was drawing her last breaths, even placing her hand behind her to cover her daughter’s mouth.

“Ancestor Xuan checked her body after hearing about her circumstances, and he discovered that eldest senior sister had great talent in terms of her martial soul. She had congenitally full soul power, something that was rarely seen, and she also possessed a hundred year soul ring, while she had already broken through to Rank 20. He guessed that our eldest senior sister was the future of her family, and the person that her family wanted to do everything they could to nurture.”

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“Eldest senior sister was only about eleven or twelve years old, but she knew about Shrek Academy. She knelt down before Ancestor Xuan and begged him to avenge her. Ancestor Xuan was still reeling from my parents’ deaths, so he agreed to her request, and he told her that Shrek Academy would nurture her and unleash her potential. He had one condition, and that was she had to guard Shrek Academy for the rest of her life, and she had to become my bride. Eldest senior sister made the vow without hesitating at all.”

Bei Bei paused for a moment and said, “I think you guys can guess what happened afterwards. Ancestor Xuan avenged her, and eldest senior sister remained at the academy to cultivate as hard as she could, and managed to get where she is today. As I grew up afterwards, Ancestor Xuan began to calm down, and he regretted forcing eldest senior sister to make that vow. He mentioned more than once that eldest senior sister didn’t have to uphold her vow. After all, she’s more than ten years older than I am, and waiting for me isn’t practical or realistic at all.

“However, eldest senior sister insisted on keeping her vow. She told Ancestor Xuan that she would still be my bride no matter what choice I might make in the future. If I didn’t like her, then she would be single for life, and she would commit her entire life to Shrek Academy so that she could repay Ancestor Xuan’s benevolence.”

Jiang Nannan’s face seemed a little unfriendly as she said, “You’ve already had a bride since you were a child, and you still went for Xiao Ya...”

Bei Bei forced a laugh and said, “But I didn’t know about all that! Ancestor Xuan only told me about this vow after I got together with Xiao Ya. I felt everything was just unbelievable. I was only fourteen or fifteen back then, and eldest senior sister was already twenty-seven or twenty-eight, so our ages made us entirely unsuitable for each other. Furthermore, I’m sure you guys are aware of the feelings I have for Xiao Ya. All I could do was argue with Ancestor Xuan, and it was then that I decided to move out of the

inner courtyard. Afterwards, Ancestor Xuan implicitly gave me the green light with Xiao Ya because the academy owed the Tang Sect. Ancestor Xuan talked to me about this one more time before he passed away, and he asked me to be nicer to eldest senior sister if I could help it, and he said that he had let her down.

“I once sought her out so that we could set things straight. There were many talented suitors within the academy who had a crush on her, and I would hate to see her remain single for the rest of her life because of some outrageous vow that she made all those years ago. But eldest senior sister was extremely stubborn, and she said that I didn’t have to take her, but she would never go back on her vow. She waved her sleeve and walked off after that.

“The truth is that even though I don’t think I’ve done anything wrong, I still feel a little apologetic towards her. However, I have no clue what to do so that she will forgo that vow. Over the years, even though Xiao Ya has never been by my side, there’s no space left in my heart to accommodate anyone else.”

Bei Bei’s expression was a little awkward, filled with conflict and difficulty.

Wang Dong’er asked, “Eldest senior brother, do you not feel anything at all for eldest senior sister?”

Bei Bei answered without hesitation. “Of course I do. She was the one who took care of me as I grew up, and I’ve never had a mother. Eldest senior sister is like a mother or like an elder sister to me, and she’s the second-most important woman to me in my heart after Xiao Ya. The only problem is that this feeling that I have isn’t a romantic one, and there’s only kinship between eldest senior sister and I. You guys have to help me figure this out! What exactly can I do so that I won’t hurt her, yet still give her the great future that she deserves?”

Bei Bei looked around at everyone, eager and hopeful. Everyone’s eyes became a little strange. How could this conundrum be solved?

Huo Yuhao cleared his throat and noted, “The competition is coming up in two days. What suggestions do you have, eldest senior brother?”

The corners of Bei Bei’s mouth contorted, and he surveyed the rest, and realized that their eyes were drifting around at everywhere, but him. He snapped, “The lot of you have no loyalty at all!”

He Caitou chortled and said, “It’s not for outsiders to resolve family issues. How are we supposed to help you with this, eldest senior brother?”

Bei Bei was exasperated. “Alright, alright. Let’s not talk about that anymore. But you guys can’t speak a word about this to anyone, as it concerns our eldest senior sister’s reputation. Tell me, Yuhao, what plans do you have for the competition?”

Huo Yuhao answered, “I don’t have an actual plan yet, but I have some ideas. This competition will have one hundred and sixty-seven participating teams because sects are allowed to participate, and the first few rounds will be elimination rounds, all the way up till the last thirty-two before the group stage begins. The organization committee hasn’t declared how the elimination rounds will be carried out for now. Compared to the group stages that come afterwards, we have to clear the elimination rounds before anything else.

“We are representing the Tang Sect, so we aren’t a seeded team. That also means the competition’s rules won’t be in our favor. We aren’t sure what teams we’ll run into at this point. If we encounter any formidable sects, we will be faced with quite a challenge. Therefore, we have to hide our abilities as much as possible during the elimination rounds.”

“Hide our abilities?” Bei Bei was slightly taken aback. “Aren’t you contradicting yourself, Yuhao? You just talked about how important the elimination rounds are. So why should we hide our abilities?”

Huo Yuhao replied, “It’s not contradictory, eldest senior brother. What I’m trying to say is, we have to hide our abilities as much as possible provided we can emerge victorious in the same round. Our appearances are quite different compared to five years ago, and there are so many more sects in this competition, so there won’t be many who still recognize and know about us. We can put on some makeup or something to change our appearances a little, so that the people who might recognize us from the previous tournament will no longer recognize us. At least, they won’t be sure that we are who they think we are. If we don’t get too unlucky, and as long as we don’t meet the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy in the first rounds, it’s unlikely that we’ll be recognized.”

Bei Bei’s eyes sparkled and said, “That’s a great idea. The people that will have an impression of us from the previous tournament will have been the reserve team members, who have become the main team members in this season. Everyone’s become quite different after five years, and after we make some adjustments, and the fact that we are representing the Tang Sect, will be quite effective in hiding our abilities and identities.”

Xu Sanshi frowned and said, “We can change our appearances, but we can’t change our martial souls! How can they not recognize us once we unleash our martial souls?”

Huo Yuhao smiled mysteriously and said, “That’s what I mean when I said that we have to do all we can to hide our abilities and identities so that they can’t recognize us. We can do it this way...”

Their discussion on battle tactics continued for a little more than two hours, and was concluded so that Bei Bei could get some rest.

Huo Yuhao and his companions conducted a few more discussions and drills the following day, and confirmed how the starting rounds were going to be carried out.

At the highest level of the Brilliant Delight Hotel...

Wang Qiu’er stood quietly on a spacious semicircular balcony and gazed into the distance. The view was enchanting from this spot, she could see almost half of Radiant City.

There were only eight similar rooms on the Brilliant Delight Hotel’s highest level. They were known as the Villas in the Sky, and they were exceedingly extravagant and luxurious. It was claimed that one night cost three thousand golden soul coins, an exorbitant price. This place could be said to be the most expensive hotel on the Continent.

Every Villa had an arched door, as if the room were a castle. There was a hall for hosting guests, a living room, a large conference room, and twenty rooms of different sizes that consisted of bedrooms, gyms, and tearooms. There was a garden in the sky that was more than two hundred square feet in surface

area, and there was a swimming pool that was twenty meters on each side at the center of the villa. There was a curved dome above the greenish-blue water, and one would be able to see gentle and faint blue sparkles around the swimming pool at night. Looking up at the dome at night felt as if one were staring at the boundless starry sky, and that beauty was truly enchanting.

There was even a miniature sparring arena in the villa, which was built with special materials and defense-type soul tools. It could sustain most soul skills beneath a Soul Sage's rank.

Shrek Academy's team had all been astounded when they first entered this villa. Dai Huabin was the Duke's son, but this was even his first time staying in a hotel as luxurious as this one. Twenty rooms was more than enough for a team that consisted of a little more than a dozen, and it allowed everyone to have their own room. They could order anything they wanted to eat, and everything would be free of charge, courtesy of the hotel.

This was the best possible arrangement and service for the participating teams, and only eight teams could have this luxury. Shrek Academy's team stayed in the first Villa in the Sky. The Sun Moon Empire was clearly extremely generous about this, as the first villa wasn't just the most extravagant one, it also represented the fact that they were the champions from the previous season.

Wang Qiu'er turned around and stared at the luxurious and spacious villa. There was a blank look in her eyes as she muttered under her breath, "Is this the gift for Shrek's glory? Is this what they achieved from the previous season?"

"Yes, that's true. We wouldn't be staying here if not for their perfect performance last season! The truth is that they are the ones that are worthy of staying in this place, and not those cramped and narrow rooms in the lower levels." Zhang Lexuan walked over from not far away. She was holding a delicate wine glass in her hands, and there was some amber-colored aged white wine inside. A faint aroma floated around the glass' opening but didn't drift out. The glass was specially crafted by the Sun Moon Empire's chamber of commerce, and was considered a top-tier wine instrument.

"Do you want one?" Zhang Lexuan asked plainly.

Wang Qiu'er shook her head and said, "I don't wish for such things to affect my mind."

Zhang Lexuan sipped on the white wine in her glass. The wine was filled with a thick and rich fruity aroma that was tinged with a little sourness, and the faint taste of pickled plums lingered in her mouth.

"Sometimes you have to learn how to relax, you're wound up too tightly. I was like you before, but I realized afterwards that it isn't the way to go, and it would negatively affect my cultivation. You are a lot worse than I was all those years ago; your emotions are tightly wound, and extremely tense. Something is bound to go wrong if you continue like this."

"I'm not!" Wang Qiu'er's denial was cold and crisp.

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Zhang Lexuan stared at her, amused, and said, "You're not? I've been there and done that, and I'm all too familiar with how you are right now. You're just like me all those years ago. Ever since you returned with Huo Yuhao, I haven't seen a smile appear on your face. You're always daydreaming when you're not pushing everyone during training. It must be because of Huo Yuhao, am I right?"

Wang Qiu'er froze a little, but remained silent. She didn't attempt to argue the point.

Zhang Lexuan said plainly, "Do you think you stand a chance?"

Wang Qiu'er still said nothing, but unwittingly clenched her fists.

"You have no chance, eh? I didn't expect you to be so much like me. Heh!" Zhang Lexuan laughed. She seemed to be laughing happily, but tears appeared deep within her beautiful eyes.

"Like you?" Wang Qiu'er stared at her with a doubtful look.

Zhang Lexuan smiled and said, "That's right! That's because we both love someone that we can't possibly be together with. Perhaps you still have some hope, as you are quite a match for him, after all. But me... heh." She finished the wine in her glass one gulp and began to walk back into the villa.

Wang Qiu'er watched her subtly trembling and dejected figure and began to follow her subconsciously.

Zhang Lexuan suddenly paused in her tracks. Her back was still facing Wang Qiu'er as she asked, "Tell me, Qiu'er, do women have to rely on men for life?"

Wang Qiu'er answered without hesitation, "Of course not!"

Zhang Lexuan turned around, and her eyes became as sharp as ever. "Then you have to show him that you are stronger than he is. Even if you can't obtain his love, you can't let him see how fragile you are, and you can't let him see your weak side. This is the last dignity that we can have."

Wang Qiu'er focused, and could see Zhang Lexuan's stubbornness, and even a little craziness in the middle of everything. She nodded her head forcefully and replied, "Yes!"

The competition's rules were finally announced the following day, and every participating team received some instructions from the organization committee.

Huo Yuhao couldn't help but frown when he received the instructions. The rules were indeed different, just like Elder Xuan had said.

According to the competition's rules, the entire competition would be split into a preliminary segment and a final segment. Teams representing sects and academies would be competing in the same pools.

The preliminary segment would consist of elimination rounds, but these elimination rounds seemed a little different. The arena was designated in a spot outside Radiant City, and not right in the city center like they were originally supposed to be. There was a clause that caught Huo Yuhao's attention. Both the preliminary rounds and the final rounds placed a limit on the arena's diameter, but a maximum height wasn't specified.

This was a very simple instruction sheet, but Huo Yuhao began to feel a lot more alarmed than before. What did not setting a maximum height imply? Could there be Soul Sages among the participating students? That was quite impossible, as becoming a Soul Emperor was the limit for people at twenty years of age. This also meant that the lack of a maximum height meant nothing at all to soul masters, as

most of them couldn't fly, except for some soul masters that possessed martial souls that could. However, this would be drastically different when soul engineers came into the picture.

Even four-ringed Soul Ancestors soul engineers could soar through the skies as long as they had flying-type soul tools, and they could launch attacks on the ground from the sky. There was no doubt that this clause was extremely beneficial for soul engineers.

The Douluo Continent was divided into four nations: the Sun Moon Empire, the Star Luo Empire, the Heavenly Soul Empire, and the Dou Ling Empire. The only nation that possessed masses of soul engineers was the Sun Moon Empire, and this competition rule practically meant they were being openly biased. The Sun Moon Empire was being excessively dominant.

Of course, the Sun Moon Empire didn't dare to be too outrageous. There were other changes to how the elimination rounds' results would be calculated. Among them, the points would be allocated according to the number of people left in the team. That implied that if one party could defeat all seven members from another party with just one of their own in the single elimination match, then they would be allocated seven points, as their party would have seven people left, and they wouldn't even have to go through the group battle afterward. The reason was because the group battle only gave five points, and there was no way the other party could turn the tables around. Of course, it was nigh impossible for one person to defeat seven opponents in a row in a competition like this.

Therefore, if the team that emerged victorious during the single elimination matches didn't obtain more than five points, they would have to go through the group battle, and the other side would have a chance to turn it around. Of course, minor scores were also important, and every round's accumulated points would be recorded. These minor scores would be decisive if a unique and unforeseen circumstance cropped up.

For example, if there were one hundred and sixty-seven teams participating in the competition, and there were only twenty teams who made it through the single elimination rounds during the round of thirty-two, the remaining teams that were needed to fill the slots would be chosen with their minor scores, and these accumulated scores would become even more important once they entered the round robins. The teams would be ranked according to their accumulated points during the group stage. The quarter-finals would revert to an elimination format, while these minor scores would determine the loser's rankings.

This change in how the points were calculated was a good thing, and it made the entire competition system more complete and organized.

The change in competition rules would definitely change how the competition would unfurl. Knocking sounds could be heard just as Huo Yuhao closed his eyes to ponder.

Boom, boom, boom! The hurried and forceful knocking clearly announced how frustrated and anxious the arriving party was.

Wang Dong'er was still washing clothes for Huo Yuhao in the bathroom, and she hurriedly came forward and asked, "Who's there?"

"It's me, Jiujiu!" the Star Luo Empire's princess, Xu Jiujiu, could be heard from outside.

Wang Dong'er turned around and glanced at Huo Yuhao. Their gazes met, and their eyes flowed with faint amusement. The princess hadn't taken too long to give them a response, in the end!

Wang Dong'er opened the door and invited Princess Jiujiu inside.

Xu Jiujiu was wearing a flowing pale-gold dress today, and had tied her hair into a bun that brought out her noble and graceful qualities. However, her face seemed a little flushed. Even though she was trying her best to hold it down, there was no way she could hide the dash of excitement in her eyes.

The red-dressed old woman followed closely behind Xu Jiujiu. Huo Yuhao had sought out Zhang Lexuan to find out more about this old woman. It turned out that she had made a name for herself a long time ago, and people only knew that she was called Yi Man, but nobody knew her surname. Her martial soul was the Cloud Fan, and she was also the Titled Douluo Starcloud! According to Zhang Lexuan's information, the Starcloud Douluo hadn't reached Rank 95, so she wasn't a Transcendent Douluo yet. Rank 95 wasn't that easy to breach, and going beyond Rank 95 was a level that was far superior to the one that normal Titled Douluo reached.

"Greetings, princess. Please, have a seat." Huo Yuhao was sitting on his wheelchair, and he tilted his head towards Xu Jiujiu courteously.

Xu Jiujiu knew that she had to be as calm as she could be in a time like this, but there was no way she could calm herself down, no matter how hard she tried. The Starcloud Douluo had returned in the morning, and Xu Jiujiu thought she might go crazy when the field-test results were reported to her. What she was feeling inside could no longer be described as astonishment, and she eagerly headed to Huo Yuhao's room immediately afterwards.

Xu Jiujiu took a deep breath and forcefully suppressed the emotions that were roiling in her heart, and she looked at the youth before her that could only move one arm.

Huo Yuhao was all smiles, and he seemed as harmless as ever, as if he had no idea what the princess was doing here.

"Huo Yuhao, I'm sure you know why I'm here." Princess Jiujiu had seen and experienced many different situations after all, and she ultimately managed to force her emotions back even though she was stirred up inside.

Huo Yuhao nodded, and he swiftly withdrew the smile on his face. He said angrily, "You must be here because of the competition's new rules. The Sun Moon Empire is too outrageous, they didn't set a height limit for the competition! This is a rule that's almost specially created to benefit the Sun Moon Empire's soul engineers!"

Xu Jiujiu was slightly taken aback. "What did you say?"

Huo Yuhao handed the instructions in his hands to her. Even though Xu Jiujiu was thinking about something else, the big competition was still extremely important, and she still had to pay attention to it.

Xu Jiujiu briefly scanned the instructions and immediately understood what Huo Yuhao was trying to say. Her eyebrows locked together as she said, "What do you think we should do?"

Composure took over the indignant look on Huo Yuhao's face. "We should collectively protest against it."

Xu Jiujiu grunted and said, "And you think that will work?"

Huo Yuhao smiled and said, "We still have to try. At least, we have to give them some pressure, so that they won't add anything else afterwards."

Xu Jiujiu tilted her head and said, "We'll discuss this later. We've experimented and field-tested your Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon and the Milk Bottle that you've given us."

Huo Yuhao's expression remained unchanged. "How did it go?"

Xu Jiujiu stared at the casual smile on his face... she really wanted to pinch him as hard as she could! She muttered coldly, "Are you very proud?"

Huo Yuhao reacted in shock. "Am I?"

"Then what are you smiling about?" Xu Jiujiu answered angrily.

Huo Yuhao didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. "Isn't smiling a form of respect for you, princess? If you're not willing to see my smile, then I won't." He withdrew his smile as he spoke, and he put on an upright and solemn look and posture.

"....." Xu Jiujiu looked on as this guy in front of her put on a serious and professional look, and she didn't know whether to laugh or cry. The awkward indignation in her heart dissipated a little.

"We've experimented with and field-tested your Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon, and that sealed Milk Bottles of yours. They're very good. Do you think you can give us a discount if we purchase them in bulk?" Princess Jiujiu regained her composure in an instant, and she leaned back on the sofa gracefully as she spoke.

Huo Yuhao shook his head and said, "I'm afraid that's not possible."

"Not possible? Do you know how many of these we're going to purchase?" Princess Jiujiu sounded a little more high-pitched than before.

Huo Yuhao shook his head and said, "I don't know how many you wish to purchase, but I imagine it must be quite an amount. All I know is how much the Tang Sect can produce. As of now, our soul tool manufacturing department is undergoing a second expansion, and much of our labor has gone toward that endeavor. Therefore, we are very limited in the amount that we can currently produce. Furthermore, even though I feel a little embarrassed to say this, I have another piece of news for you – I've just received news from the Tang Sect that the price of our products might be inflated by about thirty percent due to resource scarcity and a lack of materials. Please forgive me, princess."

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"What? Huo Yuhao!" Xu Jiujiu was immediately riled up, and she leapt to her feet as her perky chest pumped up and down. She gritted her teeth and said, "It hasn't even been two days, and you're playing me already?"

Huo Yuhao shivered all over and said, "I wouldn't dare to think of it. You can't say things like this, princess! I still have to find a wife."

"You..." Xu Jiujiu felt as if she were going insane – this guy was just too hateful.

Wang Dong'er was behind Huo Yuhao, and she discreetly pinched him in the back. This bastard – he's twisting her words, and yet he's making himself sound so logical, as if he's right. She was also a girl, and Wang Dong'er was starting to sympathize with Princess Jiujiu. Of course, she was dressed like a guy at the moment, so she couldn't express anything that resembled a girl's emotions, so she could only lower her head and force back her amusement.

The Starcloud Douluo immediately became a little unfriendly. She lowered her voice and said, "Do you know what you're doing? Karma will find you if you go back on your word." It was obvious that her words were hostile and threatening.

Huo Yuhao heaved a faint sigh. He forced a laugh and said, "I'm so sorry – I don't wish for this to happen either. But you guys also know the Sun Moon Empire has monopolized seventy percent of the Continent's rare metals, and they've prohibited exports. The Tang Sect has just been reestablished, so how can we have any channels or avenues to purchase resources and materials in bulk? Thankfully, Shrek City is developed and wealthy enough. Otherwise, we might not even be able to guarantee delivery and supply of our goods. The lack of resources and materials will undoubtedly lead to a rise in price. There's nothing I can do about that."

Xu Jiujiu said angrily, "Enough with that nonsense. The few of you make the decisions within the Tang Sect anyway. Furthermore, do you dare to claim that the Tang Sect is not related to Shrek Academy in any way? How can you guys lack materials and resources with Shrek Academy redirecting resources from Shrek City? Furthermore, all you need to craft your Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon is some relatively high-density steel."

Xu Jiujiu was responsible for the Star Luo Empire's intelligence, so she wasn't that easy to deceive.

Huo Yuhao sighed and said, "Since that's the case, then you can find out how many customers we have at the moment. Both the Heavenly Soul Empire and the Dou Ling Empire are both important business partners for us. You're right – our Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon's outer body only requires tough steel. But what about its formation arrays? Can we actually craft these formation arrays without rare metals?"

Xu Jiujiu laughed coldly and said, "We can't take apart its formation arrays anyway. It will explode if we do that, so you can say whatever you want about it."

Huo Yuhao frowned and said, "Princess, if you keep negotiating with me with such a rejecting attitude, I believe there's no need for us to continue this negotiation. If we want to be partners, we have to build this partnership on mutual trust and benefit as the foundations. I'm really sorry about the rise in price, but there's really nothing we can do about that. How about this – you can go back and cool off, and you can calculate how much our Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannons and our sealed Milk Bottles are worth after the inflation before we continue any further negotiations."

"Hmph!" Xu Jiujiu grunted furiously before she started walking out of the room. She seemed enraged, but she was extremely calm inside – she was clear that she had been completely defeated by Huo Yuhao

in this negotiation, and there was no other possible outcome than accommodating his demands if they continued with the negotiation. But she was absolutely unwilling to do that! She believed that Huo Yuhao and the Tang Sect would never give up a customer as big as the Star Luo Empire.

Right at this moment, knocking sounds could be heard once more, and Princess Jiujiu halted in her tracks as she was walking to the door.

Wang Dong'er walked over to open the door, and there were two pretty girls and a middle-aged man standing outside.

The person standing in front of the group was a young girl in a long white dress. She had a certain cold and crisp quality about her, and her features were very attractive. This girl was also mildly surprised when Wang Dong'er opened the door, and her eyes seemed to be searching her memory as she mumbled, "You... Who are you?"

Wang Dong'er smiled and said, "What? Don't you recognize me, Mu Xue? I'm Wang Dong. We've been acquainted for some time."

Dong'er dressed like a guy was something that most girls couldn't resist. Even though Wang Dong used to have short hair, her unrivaled good looks were enough to enchant every single girl.

Mu Xue cleared her throat, and the iciness on her face melted a little. "Oh, it's you. When I last met Huo Yuhao, the girl beside him looked a lot like you."

Wang Dong'er answered plainly, "Her name is Wang Qiu'er, and she's part of the team representing Shrek Academy. I believe you will meet her soon during the competition."

"She's your sister?" It was clear that Mu Xue's eyes sparkled with curiosity and the desire for gossip.

Wang Dong'er smiled. "Are you here today to ask me about such things?"

Mu Xue froze, and she shot a faintly resentful look at her as she said, "Can we go inside now? Is Huo Yuhao around? We've already conducted experiments and field-tests with the item that he's given us. We're here today to talk about becoming business partners."

Wang Dong'er opened the door and made a gesture to invite them inside.

The three of them entered the room, and they ran straight into Princess Jiujiu, who was just standing there. Xu Jiujiu's eyes didn't pause on Mu Xue, and she looked beyond her at the second girl behind her.

This girl was wearing a long yellow dress, and she seemed extremely gentle. Water seemed to meander within her beautiful eyes, and Xu Jiujiu could still feel that subtle tenderness even though she was looking her from afar. This girl was even prettier than Mu Xue.

"Wei Na?" Xu Jiujiu exclaimed.

The young girl looked at her and said, "Why are you here, Jiujiu?" The yellow-dressed girl's pleasant voice could be heard as she took a few steps forward. She had a look of pleasant surprise on her face.

Wei Na and Mu Xue were part of the company from the Heavenly Soul Empire that Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong'er had run into when they were inside the Great Star Dou Forest. The middle-aged man that had accompanied them here today was Mo Feiyun, the same man that led the group back then.

Huo Yuhao turned his wheelchair with one hand, and he smiled at Mo Feiyun. "Greetings, Uncle Mo. It's been a while."

Mo Feiyun was astonished when he saw the state that Huo Yuhao was in. "Yuhao, you..."

Huo Yuhao forced a laugh and said, "I was in an accident. I can only move this arm at the moment." He moved his right arm as he spoke.

Mu Xue and Wei Na looked over when they overheard Huo Yuhao and Mo Feiyun's conversation. Mu Xue was also momentarily stunned when she saw Huo Yuhao sitting in a wheelchair.

"You... what happened to you? Why are you like that?" It wasn't too long ago that she had met Huo Yuhao and Wang Qiu'er. She had never expected that this energetic and fearsome youth from before would be a cripple when they met again.

Huo Yuhao laughed mockingly at himself. "Perhaps this is my punishment for trespassing over the airspace of the Heavenly Soul Empire's capital city. Greetings, Mu Xue. Hello, Wei Na."

"Hello." Wei Na stared at Huo Yuhao, and it was clear that her eyes flowed with faint pity and sympathy. It was a terrible thing for a soul master to be able to move only one arm, but he seemed very open-minded about it.

The organizing committee had allocated the lowest-tier room to the team from the Tang Sect, and there were now so many people standing around inside that it felt a little packed.

Huo Yuhao looked at Xu Jiujiu and said, "Aren't you going back to think about this, princess? I won't escort you out, then."

Xu Jiujiu stared deeply into his eyes. She grunted coldly and said, "I haven't seen Wei Na in a long time. I'm going to accompany her for a little while more." Her eyes gradually became aglare as she spoke. There was no question that Huo Yuhao had planned this seemingly coincidental encounter.

Huo Yuhao naturally understood what she was trying to say. He laughed bitterly and said, "Would you believe me if I said this was all a coincidence?"

"What do you think?" Xu Jiujiu raised her chin.

"Alright. Then think of it as if I've planned it, then," Huo Yuhao said exasperatedly, "My place is a little small, everyone. Please have a seat however you like."

Huo Yuhao was a little surprised as the person that spoke to him amongst the three of them wasn't Mu Xue or Mo Feiyun – it was Wei Na, the seemingly fragile and gentle girl.

She stepped forward with a smile on her face and arrived before Huo Yuhao. "Hello, Yuhao. Can we discuss this in private?"

Huo Yuhao sounded a little helpless. “Look, the room is only so big. I’m afraid that speaking in private will be quite difficult.”

Wei Na said, “If you don’t mind, I can push you into my room. I’ll send you back once we finish our negotiations.”

“No!” Two different female voices could be heard exclaiming at the same time.

Wang Dong’er wasn’t one of them – the voices belonged to Mu Xue and Princess Jiujiu. Urgency and hastiness returned to Xu Jiujiu’s eyes, while Mu Xue’s eyes flowed with vigilance and wariness. Wang Dong’er was smiling to one side, and her smile was a little strange and sinister. However, nobody else but Huo Yuhao paid any attention to her.

Huo Yuhao said exasperatedly, “Please, everyone. I’m just a cripple.”

Mu Xue grunted and said, “It doesn’t matter – I have to be present. I’ll accompany Wei Na for the negotiations, and then I’ll send you back.”

Xu Jiujiu’s face turned black as she said, “No way. Can’t you see that we’re discussing official business? I should have priority since I came here first.”

Mu Xue glanced at her and said, “You must be the Star Luo Empire’s Princess Jiujiu. If I’m not wrong, you were just about to leave when we arrived. This means that your negotiations are over, and it’s our turn now.”

The two girls stared into each other’s eyes, and intense sparks seemed to fly. Wei Na glanced at Huo Yuhao rather apologetically, and then she turned towards Xu Jiujiu.

Did Huo Yuhao deliberately plan this meeting? Actually, he didn’t. Huo Yuhao had guessed Mu Xue’s status, and he had tried to find out more about the Heavenly Soul Empire when he was still at the Tang Sect. The Heavenly Soul Empire also shared a border with the Sun Moon Empire, and their situation wasn’t that much better than the Star Luo Empire, while their national strength was actually far inferior. It was likely that the Heavenly Soul Empire would be in much more danger.

Huo Yuhao had been investigating further through Shrek City’s intelligence agency when he realized to his surprise that the gentle and beautiful girl, Wei Na, was the Heavenly Soul Empire’s princess. Even though her status still couldn’t compare to Xu Jiujiu’s status in the Star Luo Empire, she was still a princess.

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Huo Yuhao let Na Na observe everyone in the lobby who came to register. She realized there wasn’t anything difficult about Mu Xue and Wei Na. As a result, she sent a letter that came from the Tang Sect, along with a storage-type soul tool containing a Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon and Sealed Milk Bottle over.

No matter how intelligent Huo Yuhao was, he couldn’t possibly manipulate time so well that both parties would meet. It might even not be a good thing for them to meet. That was why he was also very helpless.

Xiu Jiujiu suddenly turned her gaze to Huo Yuhao, “Tell me, what do we do?”

Huo Yuhao looked at both parties, and everyone's attention was drawn to him. After thinking for a moment, he said, "I'll need everyone to suffer here in my humble abode for a while. I'm clear on your goals. Let's do it this way. Since both parties representing the Star Luo Empire and Heavenly Soul Empire are here, we'll carry out an open discussion. Both of you are Tang Sect clients, and we'll do our best to be fair. What do the two of you think?"

"Wait a minute." Xu Jiujiu interrupted Huo Yuhao suddenly. At such a timing, she revealed her strong character. "Huo Yuhao, let's follow the price that we agreed on earlier. However, we'll need to take priority. I won't bargain with you either, but this sum of money is too astronomical. If you need it, we can make an exchange with some rare metals totaling to the same value."

Huo Yuhao's eyes brightened. To him, rare metals were better than gold soul coins. What he said before wasn't a lie. More than seventy percent of the rare metals in the continent had been taken by the Sun Moon Empire and stored for potential use in a war. Even the Illustrious Virtue Hall had to seek approval from the imperial family and military if they wanted to use some for research.

If the Star Luo Empire could retrieve some rare metals to exchange for the cannons, it would undoubtedly be great for the future development of the Tang Sect's Soul Tool Hall.

However, Huo Yuhao didn't rush to agree at this moment. After everything that he had been through, his mindset had transformed greatly. He was calmer in dealing with things.

"Priority? Sister Jiujiu." Wei Na called softly.

Xu Jiujiu twisted her head to look at her and revealed an apologetic look. She said, "Wei Na, I won't hide it from you since we are all here for a reason. We are under great pressure from the Sun Moon Empire. It concerns the survival of the empire. While we are good sisters, there are some things that I can't give in to you on."

Wei Na nodded gently and said, "I understand. Huo Yuhao, the Heavenly Soul Empire is willing to increase our bid by ten percent. We want priority."

Huo Yuhao was in a momentary daze. He didn't expect her to be so decisive. Furthermore, the purchasing price of the Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon and Sealed Milk Bottle wasn't small. She actually initiated an increase in her bid. This wasn't just about how bold she was. It also signified her position in the Heavenly Soul Empire.

Xu Jiujiu was also stunned for a moment. After that, she looked dismal as she said. "Wei Na, you are very good at concealing yourself!"

Wei Na smiled and appeared as gentle as before, "Sister Jiujiu, you are right. There are some things that I can't help if I'm representing my empire. I just hope this doesn't affect our relationship."

Xu Jiujiu gritted her teeth. In terms of wealth, the Star Luo Empire wasn't inferior to the Heavenly Soul Empire. However, would the increase in bids stop if they continued like this? After the experiments, she was determined to get these two soul tools that could greatly increase the fighting strength of the empire's military. What should she do? This was a question that popped up in Xu Jiujiu's head.

"Hmph!" A cold snort caused the temperature in the room to dip. A strong aura spread from the Starcloud Douluo Yi Man and suppressed the people from the Heavenly Soul Empire. Mo Feiyun, who

was standing at the front, subconsciously retreated and unleashed his soul rings as he was pressured. Even though Mo Feiyun was already an eight-ringed Soul Douluo, his face still turned serious against a Titled Douluo.

Princess Jiujiu was shocked too. Just as she was about to stop the Starcloud Douluo, a cold aura spread from Wei Na's body. The temperature in the entire room dipped significantly, and a majestic aura surged. The Starcloud Douluo's expression changed, and she quickly blocked Princess Jiujiu.

There was one more person beside Wei Na. This person's body was engulfed by a deep blue cloak, and thus it was difficult to see what she looked like. However, it was possible to tell that she was a lady.

The aura came from her body. It swallowed the aura that the Starcloud Douluo unleashed. How strong was it?

"Transcendent Douluo?" Man Yi's expression turned dismal. Even she didn't realize when this person had entered the room. This showed that there was a gap in their cultivations. This gap also signified that she couldn't challenge this person. There was only one possibility – that person was a Transcendent Douluo. As Wei Na lifted her right hand, the aura retracted, and she sighed. "Sister Jiujiu, do we have to do this? We shouldn't be opponents."

Xu Jiujiu also sighed and said, "We were reckless. I apologize. Alright, I'll follow your raise. We'll add ten percent to our bid too."

"Ladies, please don't do this." Huo Yuhao suddenly made his move.

The two ladies looked at him at the same time. They didn't appear very friendly as they looked at him. Adding another ten percent to their bids made the price of the soul tools even more costly! Whichever empire purchased the soul tools would experience a fall in their wealth.

"Ladies, please hear me out." Huo Yuhao said.

"I don't need either of you to raise the price." Huo Yuhao's words dissolved some of the enmity between the two ladies.

"The Tang Sect requires money and resources to grow. We don't belong to any empire, but we don't want lives to be lost because of a war. We are also part of the continent, and we have a common enemy. I hope that our appearance can help the Star Luo, Heavenly Soul and Dou Ling empires, and not cause a rift. That's why we won't raise the price of the soul tools to increase the burden on any empire."

As he spoke until here, he turned his attention to Xu Jiujiu and said, "Princess Jiujiu, I'm very sorry that the two of you met. I really didn't know Princess Wei Na was coming. It's really just a coincidence. Since both of you are here, however, allow me to say that competing will only lead to greater problems and allow our common enemy to succeed. Let's do it this way. You can use whatever gold soul coins and alloys you have to exchange for the Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannon. With sufficient resources, our production can increase. I promise to supply ten sets of Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannons and Sealed Milk Bottles every month. This number will increase once every month to meet your demands. I'll give both empires priority. I'll supply both of your empires before I supply any other partners in the future. That's because both your empires are our first line of defense against the Sun Moon Empire. I think this is the best way to settle the problem."

This fellow! The unfriendly look in Xu Jiujiu's eyes disappeared. Although she wasn't pleased with this, she appreciated Huo Yuhao's rejection of a price increase and attempt to resolve their conflict. At least he understood what was important.

Mu Xue furrowed her brow, "Ten sets, isn't that too little? Why don't you set an asking price, and we'll buy the blueprints for these two soul tools? We'll try to satisfy your asking price for these two soul tools."

She was very bold! It seemed like Mu Xue wasn't ordinary either. Huo Yuhao thought for a moment, but then immediately shook his head and said, "Apologies, it involves secrets of the Tang Sect. We definitely can't sell our techniques. Ten sets is a conservative estimate. From what I know, each of the Sun Moon Empire's Soul Engineering Divisions is equipped with around a hundred long-range cannons. They are around the standard of Class 4 soul cannons. There are less than ten cannons that are of a Class 6 standard. Although I'm not really sure, I believe there are no more than ten such divisions. This also means that it will only take one year for your empires to build up pretty strong defenses given our current rate of supply."

Xu Jiujiu snorted and said, "How is it so simple? The Sun Moon Empire isn't just about those few soul engineering divisions."

Huo Yuhao replied, "Alright, I am really not sure how strong they are. However, what do the two of you think about my proposition? This is the best resolution I can find for now."

Xu Jiujiu looked at Wei Na, and discovered that Wei Na was looking back at her. After pondering for a while, both princesses nodded their heads without hesitation.

"It's a deal."

"It's a deal." Huo Yuhao also revealed a smile on his face. Of course, he was clear that this matter wasn't just so simple. These two princesses weren't ordinary people!

"Let's sign a contract then." Xu Jiujiu knew exactly not to take things as they were. Wei Na's actions earlier had already put her on alert.

They took some time to discuss the details of the contract before they finished, which took around two hours.

One of the most important clauses was that the Star Luo and Heavenly Soul Empires couldn't contact the Tang Sect privately and go against the contract. Whenever either party purchased soul tools from Tang Sect, they had to inform the other party. The Tang Sect also had to prioritize both empires whenever they were selling new types of soul tools. If the Tang Sect could produce a sufficient number of Zhuge Divine Crossbow Cannons and Sealed Milk Bottles, they had to supply both empires as best they could.

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When the room was finally quiet again, Huo Yuhao's eyes were already filled with fatigue.

Wang Dong'er carried him to his bed and gave him a simple massage.

“I’d rather compete and face a strong opponent than negotiate with them,” Wang Dong’er sighed. “You must be very tired, Yuhao.”

Huo Yuhao nodded lightly and said, “This is what the Tang Sect has to go through in order to develop. Not only have we received our most important order, but we have also developed a greater understanding of the management of both empires at the highest level.”

Wang Dong’er lowered her voice and said, “Do you know what Princess Jiujiu referred to when she mentioned the strength of the Sun Moon Empire?”

Huo Yuhao lowered slightly and said, “I can roughly guess. It should be the advanced-level soul engineers and soul tools. Truly strong soul tools will not be given to the soul engineering teams. Although Xu Jiujiu didn’t mention it, I can tell from her expression that it’s something scary.”

Wang Dong’er nodded and revealed a lost look. She said, “Yuhao, do you think a war is really coming? What should we do then?”

Huo Yuhao squinted and said, “We can’t avoid a war. I only want to protect the people around me. If my body has recovered by the time the war starts, then I will...”

To every empire, the tournament was very prestigious. It was held once every five years, and the host would alternate between the four empires. It wasn’t easy to host the tournament.

Although the Sun Moon Empire’s proposed change to the tournament regulations received resistance from many sects and academies on the continent, it eventually still passed. There was a simple reason why the Sun Moon Empire didn’t restrict the difficulty of the tournament.

As soul tools continued to develop, future battles would be a challenge of soul masters and soul engineers’ control of soul tools. If one couldn’t excel in this area, how could he be called an elite?

Although this was an advantage for the Sun Moon Empire, every rational person had to admit it was true. The Sun Moon Empire wasn’t wrong.

Finally, the tournament was about to begin.

No matter what games were played between the Sun Moon Empire and the various parties involved in the tournament, the empire decided to hold the tournament in a vast plain at the outskirts. This was a good thing for the empire. They could accommodate more spectators in this way.

The lot-drawing ceremony was held on the eve of the tournament. Xu Sanshi was the one who represented the Tang Sect for the lot-drawing ceremony. There were a total of one hundred and sixty-seven competing teams. The fortunate team that drew an empty lot didn’t have to compete in the first round of the tournament. Xu Sanshi’s luck wasn’t so good, and thus Tang Sect still had to compete in the first round. The empire decided to give the empty lot to Shrek Academy, and thus Wang Qiu’er’s team managed to proceed to the next round. They were awarded twelve full points.

No one raised any objections to this preferential treatment. After all, Shrek Academy was an established academy in this tournament. This was what they deserved.

Morning...

As the first ray of sunlight shone from the east, the streets of Radiant City were already greeted with a weird scene.

Soldiers clad in silver armor stood in two long parallel rows. They extended from the doors of the Ming Yue Hotel all the way to an unknown destination. The path they formed was also restricted from public access, and everyone was asked to stay thirty meters away from this path.

Radiant City could hold more people than Star Luo City, so the empire had activated a large portion of its military to maintain order. This arrangement alone required more than twenty thousand soldiers! There was a very austere aura in the air of the streets.

Everyone from the Tang Sect had already prepared in the morning. Bei Bei was in better shape, but he still couldn't walk. He didn't have too many instructions regarding today's competition. However, Huo Yuhao still went to his room in the early morning.

"Eldest senior, are you feeling better?" Huo Yuhao asked the pale-looking Bei Bei.

"Oh, I'm much better. With my healing speed, I should be able to compete in ten days." Bei Bei smiled as he spoke. He had already regained his elegant composure.

Huo Yuhao said, "We are going to compete. Eldest senior, do you have any instructions for us?"

Bei Bei shook his head and said, "What's there to instruct? I believe in all of you. Go! This time, we are fighting for the Tang Sect's glory and ourselves! While we are still young, it's time for us to shine. I'm waiting for all of you to return victorious!"

"Definitely!" Huo Yuhao nodded forcefully.

With Wang Dong'er's help, everyone from Tang Sect put on some light makeup. This didn't change their appearance too much. However, there were slight changes to everyone's facial features, even on closer observation. Along with their own development, it was difficult for others to tell that they were the Shrek's Seven Monsters that had once created miracles in the last tournament. Of course, this would only last until they demonstrated their powers in this tournament. After all, they couldn't conceal their martial souls.

Huo Yuhao still wanted Ji Juechen, Jing Ziyan, and Na Na to stay and take care of Bei Bei. However, Bei Bei didn't let him do so. No one wanted to miss such a great event!

As Ji Juechen and Jing Ziyan were already more than twenty, they could only tag along as 'teachers'. Everyone from the Tang Sect changed into the same warrior robes.

Their warrior robes were specially designed. There were silver embroidered lines on their white warrior robes, and these lines eventually gathered at the back, forming the words Tang Sect.

Although there was a thirty meters restriction on the public, there were still many people who gathered to watch the competing teams as they exited the hotel.

When the Tang Sect team appeared, they immediately caused a huge uproar.

“Eh, look at this. This team is so weird! Why is there someone in a wheelchair? Is he allowed to compete in a wheelchair?”

“Tang Sect? It seems like a sect. Has anyone heard of them before?”

“They seem to be an ancient sect. However, I heard that they’ve already collapsed. They’ve even sent a team with a cripple. Haha, this is funny! Can a cripple also be considered an elite?”

No one from the Tang Sect bothered with the commotion. Since Huo Yuhao dared to come in a wheelchair, he of course expected all this to happen. His abilities were the best way he could shut their mouths.

Huo Yuhao shut his eyes as he sat in the wheelchair. However, his spiritual power followed the path and extended forward into the distance. He was sensing the conditions of all the teams that had come to compete in this tournament, and sent this information to his teammates.

Huo Yuhao was already getting used to his disability. He had also discovered that this wasn’t really a bad thing for him. While his abilities were restricted, being disabled also made him more reliant on his spiritual power. Over this short period of time, Huo Yuhao had already begun to grasp many concepts that helped him to evolve his Purple Demon Eyes and the spiritual level of his concrete-immaterial realm. He was starting to use his spiritual-type abilities more and more efficiently.

There were more than two thousand people from the one hundred and sixty-seven teams. All of them left Radiant City.

The tournament venue was on the outskirts of the city. Once they passed the buildings in the city, they could see it from afar.

Right now, the area was crowded with people, with more than thirty thousand soldiers maintaining order. The crowd was divided into different regions, segregated from the grandeur of the main arena. To the north, there was a high platform made that looked like it could accommodate a thousand people.

The platform was more than ten meters high, and more than a hundred meters across. The wide platform shone with a silvery-white glow, and appeared to be made from metal. Even though it was just a platform, it was an extremely huge one! There weren’t any seams or breaks in it at all.

The weird thing was that there seemed to be a groove around the platform. There was a transparent barrier stained with dim yellow that rose into the sky coming out of that groove. The ends of the barrier couldn’t be seen. How high did one’s soul power have to be to support this barrier!?

Furthermore, it was possible to tell this was different from the last tournament. At least, no one could be struck off the stage and end up as a loser so easily. One had to completely defeat their opponent to win.

Beside the platform, there were huge soul screens extending a hundred meters from the center of the tournament stage. These soul screens were held in the air by tall scaffolding, and every screen was more than twenty square meters in size. Only the Sun Moon Empire possessed such soul tool techniques!

There were more than a hundred such screens set up around the tournament stage!

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The resting area was on the east side of the stage, and was divided into two regions. The region closer to the stage was a pergola, and could hold close to twenty teams. The rest were just chairs that weren't shaded. These chairs were lined up in a row to the sides of the pergola, slightly behind it.

From how the Sun Moon Empire hosted this tournament, their attention to detail reflected their superiority. The resting area with the pergola was undoubtedly left for the more prestigious academies and sects.

After registering at the registration point and providing the administrative details for the tournament, the Tang Sect team was led to a region with all wooden benches. It was even in a dilapidated corner.

Everyone from the Tang Sect looked very gloomy upon being awarded such poor treatment. Xiao Xiao and Jiang Nannan were also furious.

"This is too much!" Xiao Xiao hissed furiously.

He Caitou comforted her by patting her shoulders and smiled, but he didn't say anything.

Huo Yuhao smiled and said, "This is nothing much. I'll use my abilities to tell them that they are wrong. That'll be enough, right?"

The sun had already risen at this point. As rays of sunlight shone on everyone from the east, every competitor seemed to be layered with gold. There were simply too many competing teams, and it took a whole hour for every team to settle down. The rapturous cheers from the public could also be heard in the distance.

Huo Yuhao was jolted suddenly, and turned in a certain direction. It was an extremely mysterious team. Zhang Peng was leading them, and there was a group of people behind him. They were all in black warrior robes, and wore headdresses with veils. These veils concealed their appearances.

There was a lady with an excellent figure behind Zhang Peng. A weird aura was coming from her that seemed as if it were drawing all light towards her. When Huo Yuhao's spiritual power got close to her, it was distorted and unable to get within a foot of her. Naturally, he couldn't use his Spiritual Detection on her.

Tang Ya was following behind this lady. Even though Tang Ya was wearing a veil, Huo Yuhao could still tell that it was her.

The Holy Ghost Church? Huo Yuhao squinted. It was indeed them! The Holy Ghost Church was here to compete!

Teacher Xiao Ya, what should I do if I meet you in the tournament?!

Who was the lady in front of her? Her abilities were very weird. However, Huo Yuhao found the sense of distortion vaguely familiar for some reason.

Zhang Peng stopped in his tracks just as he was about to proceed towards the pergola. He turned around and faced Huo Yuhao. Huo Yuhao quickly retracted his spiritual power. Even though his spiritual cultivation was great, his soul power cultivation was still limited. Since Zhang Peng was a Transcendent Douluo, there were many ways he could deal with Huo Yuhao.

Zhang Peng scanned him with a cold look before he led the men in black towards the pergola.

Huo Yuhao saw a few familiar faces after this. There was the Star Luo National Academy's team led by Princess Jiujiu, as well as the team with Mu Xue and Wei Na. They didn't seem to be from any academy of the Heavenly Soul Empire. From their uniforms, they seemed more likely to have come from a sect. Mo Feiyun was the one leading the team. However, the Transcendent Douluo that had appeared the previous day did not make an appearance.

Apart from these few teams, there were many unfamiliar faces, especially those sects that had rushed out from the various other empires on the continent. Huo Yuhao knew nothing about them. He could only use his Spiritual Detection to observe and ascertain their cultivations.

"Look. What is that?" Jiang Nannan's voice caught Huo Yuhao's attention.

A company of special soldiers were proceeding over quickly from the north of the main stage. These soldiers were wearing golden warrior robes, but they weren't equipped with any weapons. With Huo Yuhao's vision, he could even read their expressions clearly. These golden-clothed guards were all at least thirty years old. They all restrained their expressions, but there were definitely soul power undulations coming from them. There were around five hundred of them, but they didn't make a sound as they proceeded over. As the sun shone down on them, they glittered, and were almost blinding.

These soldiers quickly dispersed as they reached the foot of the main stage, surrounding the entire stage. Around fifty of them stood in position without moving. As metal clanging sounds were heard, they brandished soul cannons and pointed the cannons outward. The rest of the soldiers also unleashed different types of soul tools and entered a weird formation. At least ten of the heavy cannons caught Huo Yuhao's attention. He could tell that they were at least Class 7 soul tools!

He Caitou told everyone, "Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Division. This is one of the true core strengths of the Sun Moon Empire."

"Oh? How many of them are there, second senior?" Huo Yuhao suddenly recalled what his and He Caitou's identities were. He looked over towards He Caitou.

He Caitou was also looking back at him. He didn't seem as simple as before anymore. His eyes were flashing with a radiant glow.

"There are only a thousand people in the division. Half of them are here now. They are all at least Class 5 soul engineers, equipped with the best soul tools. Their leader is a Class 9 soul engineer, and only accepts orders from the Emperor himself. They are the trump card of all trump cards. Their importance to the imperial family is only inferior to the Imperial Shrine."

“Isn’t the Emperor seriously ill? Has he recovered?” Huo Yuhao was stunned.

At this point, a group of people arrived. They were escorted by the Soul Engineering Division on chariots and horses to the main stage. There was a small imperial chariot pulled by thirty-two horses. There were also many guards and officials decked in luxurious court wear behind this chariot.

The chariot stopped in front of the main stage. Two maids pulled open curtains embroidered with silver lotuses, and a wheelchair was pushed out. There was a handsome youth in the wheelchair.

“It’s him!” Huo Yuhao was stunned to see that it wasn’t the Emperor coming out from the chariot. It was the Crown Prince, Xu Tianran!

Only the Emperor could sit in such a chariot! Since Xu Tianran dared to sit in this chariot, everyone knew what it signified.

Following this, Huo Yuhao focused his attention again. He saw that the person pushing the wheelchair was Ju Zi.

Ju Zi was still as beautiful as ever, her complexion even more delicate now. Compared to before, her beautiful eyes had a more dignified look, and she was extremely elegant, like a queen.

There was one person walking beside Ju Zi... Jing Hongchen. He was an extremely powerful Class 9 soul engineer who held a respected status in the Sun Moon Empire.

“Greetings to Prince Regent and Regentess.” Aside from the Soul Engineering Division, all the officials present knelt down and greeted Xu Tianran.

Regent? It seemed like the Sun Moon Empire’s Emperor wasn’t dead yet...

Regentess? Ju Zi, Ju Zi, she actually... Indescribable emotions filled Huo Yuhao’s heart and made him short of breath. She has married him and become his legitimate wife? Ju Zi, why are you doing this just for revenge?

A smooth and delicate hand reached out for Huo Yuhao’s shoulder. Huo Yuhao turned around and saw Wang Dong’s clear, powdery-blue eyes.

“I’m fine.” Huo Yuhao gently shook his head.

Wang Dong’er smiled and said, “It’s great that you are fine.” As she said that, she grabbed Huo Yuhao’s right hand.

Huo Yuhao’s sadness slightly dissipated when he felt Wang Dong’er’s soft palm. Perhaps it wasn’t love between him and Ju Zi, but they were definitely more than ordinary friends. He would definitely be happy for Ju Zi if she could find a good spouse. However, would she be happy with someone like Xu Tianran?

Furthermore, Xu Tianran was an aggressive person. Once he ruled the Sun Moon Empire, the war might really come soon!

Right now, he couldn’t help but think of what Ju Zi said before; if there was a day that they met on the battlefield...

Just as Huo Yuhao was overthinking things, Ju Zi had already pushed Xu Tianran into a soul elevator. Jing Hongchen and four elders followed him into the elevator. As the elevator rose, everyone could see the regent. Their cheers started to ring out. This Crown Prince was actually able to win the hearts of the people!

The officials couldn't follow him up the elevator. They used the stairs to one side of the main stage to ascend.

Xu Tianran's arrival also meant that the tournament was about to begin.

Ju Zi pushed Xu Tianran to the center of the main stage. She didn't sit down, but stood beside him. Since she didn't sit, the officials who were panting after climbing the stairs also didn't dare to sit, and could only remain standing.

Xu Tianran nodded at Ju Zi, who then slowly walked forward to a sound amplifying soul tool. Her moving voice soon rang out to everyone.

"Silence." A low voice sounded, and a strong suppression filled the entire place. After the voice sounded, everyone felt that everything in front of them had turned dark. Even their breathing sped up. Any commotions disappeared after it spoke. The entire tournament venue turned silent instantly, to the point where even a dropped pin would ring out.

What abilities did she have? How was she able to exert such terrifying suppression? She had used her own strength to terrorize more than hundred thousand people! Was this really achievable by a soul master?

Huo Yuhao was horrified, and he blurted out almost instantly, "Darkness Holy Dragon, Dragon Emperor Douluo Long Xiaoyao!"

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Others might be unfamiliar with that voice, but he was extremely familiar with it. It sounded old, yet was filled with might. The owner of this voice was the one who had intercepted him back then and left Elder Xuan terrified.

He was the Dragon Emperor Douluo Long Xiaoyao; a Rank 99 Ultimate Douluo, and the only one left from the Twin Holy Dragons of Black and White.

He was actually here, and had personally paid a visit to boost the Sun Moon Empire's presence. Huo Yuhao was now certain that the Holy Ghost Church and Sun Moon Empire were very close with each other.

Ju Zi cleared her throat at this moment. Her moving voice resonated through the sound-amplifying soul tool, and everyone heard her. If Long Xiaoyao's voice was a demonstration of his strength, Ju Zi's voice was a demonstration of the Sun Moon Empire's cutting-edge technology.

"Citizens of the Sun Moon Empire and distinguished guests from afar, I'm here to welcome all of you on behalf of the Prince Regent! At the same time, I announce on his behalf that the Continental Elite Youth Soul Master Tournament has officially begun!"

Her opening speech was very straightforward. She didn't ramble about superfluous stuff. That was Xu Tianran's style. Everything was about one's abilities. To him, talking more was only a big waste of time.

"Long live the Prince Regent." The citizens of the Sun Moon Empire knelt down towards Xu Tianran, the likely successor of the current Emperor.

Xu Tianran continued to wear a smile on his face as he sat in his wheelchair. He reached out his right hand towards Ju Zi.

Ju Zi placed her right hand on his palm before sitting beside him as she leaned on him. She wore a light smile on her face.

Xu Tianran patted her hand and didn't say anything. He gazed calmly at the tournament stage below.

"My beloved subjects, take a seat," Xu Tianran said calmly. The officials only dared to sit at this point. Every seat was tagged according to their statuses in the empire, so they couldn't sit in the wrong seat.

The person sitting on the other side of Xu Tianran wasn't Jing Hongchen. It was a middle-aged man wearing a long black robe with golden sleeves. This person was expressionless, and had a pale look on his face. The weird thing was that there seemed to be a hazy layer around his face, and it wasn't possible to see his face clearly. Jing Hongchen was sitting on the other side of Ju Zi.

"The tournament rules and regulations will be read out now," a sonorous voice sounded. After this, the tournament's rules and regulations were read out. They were unchanged from the instruction booklets disseminated to every team.

After the reading was done, an elder walked up to the sound-amplifying soul tool and said loudly, "First battle of the preliminary round: Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy against the Dragonslayer Sect. The members of both teams, please proceed to the waiting area."

The waiting area was a special region in front of the pergola. Seven chairs were placed on each side, and the two rows of chairs were separated by a horizontal distance of twenty meters.

Huo Yuhao revealed a smile on his face. No wonder Shrek Academy was given the empty lot. It was on purpose!

According to the tournament rules, the first battle should involve the current title holders. Since Shrek Academy was given the empty lot, the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy would replace their spot, as they were the runners-up of the previous tournament. This was undoubtedly a trick played by the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy.

Very soon, Huo Yuhao saw someone familiar. Xiao Hongchen and Meng Hongchen were in front, and behind them were five young soul masters that he had never seen before. They directly entered the waiting area.

The unfortunate Dragonslayer Sect also sent seven members into the waiting area. However, Huo Yuhao was surprised that the seven members from the Dragonslayer Sect were very confident. They weren't fearful because their opponents were the runners-up in the previous tournament. They were quite imposing!

However, Huo Yuhao didn't know that most sects didn't look up to academies. After all, the instructors and students in academies were limited by time. Apart from some special cases, the students from academies and disciples from sects were vastly different.

A disciple remained in their sect for his entire life. For most sects with rich histories and legacies, they had something special about them.

In the first Continental Elite Youth Soul Master Tournaments, sects had been included. However, they were subsequently removed for some reason. The Dragonslayer Sect was a sect that had a legacy of more than ten thousand years. They came from the Heavenly Soul Empire, and were a traditional soul master sect. They discriminated against soul tools, and were scornful towards the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy's team. They didn't think they were going to lose.

"Referee, please enter the stage. The first competitor for each side, please enter the stage too," the elder who was emceeding instructed them.

Huo Yuhao compared this tournament with the last one. Although he didn't want to admit it, he was certain that he preferred this edition of the tournament more. It was simpler, less flowery, and more practical for fighting. This was the true meaning of a tournament! It was a way to increase the sparring, interaction, and learning between soul masters and soul engineers.

The referee was an elder more than fifty years old. It was impossible to tell his cultivation before he unleashed his martial soul. The first competitor from the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy was Meng Hongchen. She was the only one on the team that was inferior to Jing Hongchen, and was the first to compete. This showed how much the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy wanted to win the first battle. This wasn't just about victory; it concerned the face of the Sun Moon Empire!

A young man from the Dragonslayer Sect was first to compete. He had a somewhat special appearance. His head was a little flat, he wasn't tall, and he looked a little thick. His palms were extremely large. As he opened them wide beside his body, they looked like fans.

At this point, the spectators maintained their silence. They hadn't recovered from the Dragon Emperor Douluo's suppression, as only a short period of time had passed.

"In this individual elimination round, I will decide who's the winner once either of you loses your fighting strength, or concedes defeat. You must not harm your opponent. Understand?" the referee instructed both parties.

"Yes." The youth representing the Dragonslayer Sect appeared full of energy. After acknowledging the referee's words, he turned around and walked towards his own side. He didn't even carry out the formalities. According to the rules, both parties had to be a hundred meters apart from each other before the fight started. This was fairer to some soul masters and soul engineers who were skilled in long-range attacks.

Meng Hongchen had experienced great transformations and become a lady. Her slender figure was proportionate, and she was very charming. Although she wasn't as good-looking as Wang Dong'er or Jiang Nannan, she was still a beauty. However, the other party didn't even glance at her before walking away. Meng Hongchen was greatly displeased by his attitude, and a vicious look flashed across her eyes. She snorted and turned to the other side of the stage.

Very soon, both parties were in position.

The referee lifted his right hand high. When his palm swiped down, the first battle of the tournament began.

Bang!

There was a boom that resonated from the youth's leg just as the referee's right hand swiped down. The tough, metal floor was dented as he leapt out. His short and stocky body burst towards Meng Hongchen like a fired cannon shell.

While he appeared to look down on Meng Hongchen, he didn't truly underestimate her. When a soul master fought against a soul engineer, it was important to close the gap. His soul rings lit up as he burst forward. It was easy to tell that he was an assault-type soul master from the power that he unleashed. The sudden burst of strength allowed his cultivation to temporarily rival that of an agility-type soul master.

Two yellow, two purple and one black soul ring – the best combination – lit up on the youth's body. In this tournament, a five-ringed soul master was considered quite strong. There were only a few six-ringed soul masters and soul engineers from a few outstanding academies.

The Dragonslayer Sect didn't have a high standing, but they sent a five-ringed Soul King right from the start. This showed how solid their foundation was. The expression of many leaders from the various academies changed when they saw this.

Meng Hongchen didn't rush forward, and didn't even retrieve the soul tool that she always used. She walked forward leisurely, and only an icy-blue halo slowly spread from her feet. Two yellow, two purple and two black soul rings slowly rose up, and caused the spectating Dragonslayer Sect team members to change their expressions.

As sects weren't allowed to compete in the last tournament, and each edition was five years apart, the Dragonslayer Sect knew very little about the Sun Moon Soul Engineering Academy's team. They felt that they had bad luck after drawing the previous runners-up, but didn't think they would lose.

However, they felt pressured when they saw Meng Hongchen's soul rings. Six rings of the best combination! Was that even possible for soul engineers? There was an age limit of twenty years!

The youth had already reached Meng Hongchen as they were thinking of all this. He was the second strongest member of the Dragonslayer Sect's team. Furthermore, his fighting style was that he would never retreat! Even when he saw Meng Hongchen's six soul rings, he wasn't afraid. His first and third soul rings lit up as he charged her.

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"Moo——" The youth let out a low-pitched groan, and his stocky body suddenly ballooned in size. His increase in size wasn't proportionate; he only stretched horizontally. A pair of thick, twisted and sharp horns poked out from his shoulders. They were almost two feet long. His muscles were about to tear his shirt and reveal his naked, burly body.

It was his first soul skill, Strength of Barbaric Bull.

The martial soul of this youth was a Charging Bull. It didn't sound very impressive, but it was one of the top-ranked bull-type martial souls. Although the Strength of Barbaric Bull only came from his first soul ring, it was quite dominant. Not only was it extremely strong and impactful, but it also made him temporarily lose any sensation of pain, and increased his defensive strength greatly. Among all the strengthening skills that came from first soul rings, the Strength of Barbaric Bull was one of the top three, and was even stronger than Dai Yueheng's White Tiger's Shield.

His eyes turned blood-red at the same. Two streaks of bloody light shot out from his eyes straight towards Meng Hongchen. Meng Hongchen was given a shock.

Meng Hongchen shuddered in her heart. Not only this, but she also found out that everything around her had seemed to slow down.

There was even a control-type soul skill?

It came from the third soul ring of the Charging Bull, Glare of Barbaric Bull.

He had locked onto his opponent, allowing him to track her while she tried to dodge his attack. At the same time, he slowed her dodging speed.

Compared to academies, sects were much better in some areas. For example, their research in some special martial souls was much better. In every sect, there was a certain martial soul that was passed down from generation to generation. After years of legacy, their research on that specific martial soul would have become very profound. This was something that sects couldn't compare to.

Simply put, the research of academies only scratched the surface, but the research of sects managed to get to the crux. After countless attempts, they found the most suitable martial soul that they could pass down for generations.

This was the case for this youth from the Dragonslayer Sect. His Strength of Barbaric Bull and Glare of Barbaric Bull came from soul rings that were the most suitable for the Charging Bull. They were also soul rings that formed the best combination.

However, he felt a chill as he burst into the icy-blue region. He actually shivered, and slowed slightly.

At this point, he was already very close to Meng Hongchen. There wasn't any time for him to think, and thus he continued his charge towards Meng Hongchen.

Meng Hongchen smiled and blew gently towards his direction. Her first and third soul rings lit up at the same time, causing the smooth, icy surface beneath their feet to extend.

The youth's sharp horns were already in front of Meng Hongchen. It was a coincidence, but his horns were directly in front of Meng Hongchen's chest because he wasn't very tall.

Meng Hongchen looked a little vexed, and in the next instant, she appeared behind the youth.

His body flashed past Meng Hongchen quickly, and he didn't manage to strike her. However, he managed to stop himself from instantly using his Glare of Barbaric Bull before he turned around and burst towards Meng Hongchen again.

However, two Meng Hongchens appeared on the icy surface. His Glare of Barbaric Bull tried to lock onto both figures, but it lost its effect instantly. He was stunned.

This was Meng Hongchen's third soul skill, Ice Reflection. The figure that she reflected looked exactly like her. Through various reflections, she kept on conjuring projections of herself. As a result, she then gave the youth the feeling that three of her had appeared even though his Glare of Barbaric Bull was still locked onto her body, as she kept on changing her position using her soul skill.

Another intense chill engulfed his body. The youth revealed a look of horror, and his fifth soul ring lit up without any hesitation.

It was a pity that it was too late. Compared to five years ago, Meng Hongchen's Ictoad Venom was even stronger now. Furthermore, she wasn't simply at Rank 61 now that she possessed six soul rings!

A layer of blue spread across the youth's face. Before his fifth soul ring even lit up, he groaned and trembled before he collapsed to the floor.

All the other competing members from the Dragonslayer Sect in the waiting area all stood up suddenly. They couldn't believe the scene in front of them. They didn't understand what was going on.

The light from Meng Hongchen's soul rings retracted, and she lifted her chin arrogantly. She turned to the referee and said, "I've won. Next competitor please." After saying this, she retrieved a Milk Bottle to restore her soul power. In this individual elimination round, there weren't any rules that stated she couldn't use soul tools to aid her recovery.

The referee rushed to the youth and checked his condition. He nodded at Meng Hongchen after ascertaining that her opponent had completely lost his fighting strength.

"You've won, but your martial soul is poison-type. Please help him neutralize the poison to prevent endangering his life." The referee said.

Meng Hongchen twisted her lips and said, "Referee, have you forgotten? There's still the team round later." Yes! According to the rules, no substitutions could be made in the team round after the individual elimination round was over. This also meant that the members in the waiting area had to compete in the team round.

The referee furrowed his brow and said, "However, his life will be in danger if this continues."

Meng Hongchen shouted towards the waiting area where the Dragonslayer Sect's team members were, "Promise me that he won't compete in the team battle, and I'll help him neutralize the poison."

Poison!

The rest of the Dragonslayer Sect team only now understood how Meng Hongchen managed to defeat her opponent. They all looked at one another. Eventually, they focused their attention on one person. It was a tall and huge youth, who was also their team leader for this tournament.

"Please neutralize the poison. He won't compete in the team round later." This team leader didn't hesitate at all, and immediately made his decision. Of course, that was because none of them specialized in neutralizing poison or were healing-type soul masters.

Meng Hongchen squatted down without hurry and pressed her hand on the youth's chest. She sucked back her Icetoad Venom.

Wang Dong'er said to Huo Yuhao softly in the resting area, "Meng Hongchen's abilities have increased significantly!"

Huo Yuhao said, "After two years of exchange, they have learned something from Shrek Academy. Did you interact with the two siblings? What standard has Meng Hongchen's abilities reached?"

Wang Dong'er twisted her mouth and said, "I did interact quite a fair bit with Meng Hongchen. However, it's because she harassed me every day. I don't know what rank her soul power is. She conceals her abilities very well. However, I estimate that her cultivation is above mine. The two of them already had five rings five years ago. I'm sure they are above Rank 65 right now."

"Harass you?" Huo Yuhao's expression turned weird, "My Dong'er is a male and a ladykiller! Impressive, impressive. If you meet her, you can trap her with your beauty."

Wang Dong'er blushed. "I didn't..."

Huo Yuhao chortled and changed the topic. He said, "As a soul engineer, Meng Hongchen used the methods of soul masters to win the fight. This shows how confident she is in her own cultivation. Her opponent wasn't weak either. His martial soul and soul skills are quite strong. I used my Spiritual Detection to sense the youth from the Dragonslayer Sect. He has invigorating qi. With strengthening skills, he managed to resist Meng Hongchen's venom for some time. He might have caused some trouble for her if he used his strongest soul skill immediately. These sect teams are indeed quite extraordinary! This edition of the tournament will be quite cracking."

Meng Hongchen's dominance cast a shadow over the Dragonslayer Sect. The second to compete was a thin and tall youth. When he stood in front of Meng Hongchen, he looked at her with a more cautious look.

The referee repeated the rules again. This Dragonslayer Sect competitor took the initiative to say, "Dragonslayer Sect. Feng Shèn."

"Feng Shén?" Meng Hongchen was stunned.

Feng Shen's lips moved slightly, and he replied, "It's Feng Shèn, not Feng Shén."

Meng Hongchen twisted her lips and said, "It'd be best if you were called Feng Shén. It sounds mightier."

ED: This is related to tones in CN. Said in the fourth tone (which is said in a higher pitch that falls sharply), Feng Shèn is just a name. However she misheard it in the second tone (said in a rising tone similar to asking a question) as Feng Shén, which literally means 'Caution'. Hope that this clears up any confusion.

A furious look flashed across Feng Shen's eyes. "Don't be too arrogant. Don't think that you'll win against me just because you won against my vice team-leader."

Meng Hongchen threw him a scornful look, "I'll try. I think he had the same thought as you. He didn't even touch my sleeves before I defeated him." Her self-confidence was one of a kind! She wasn't depleted from the first battle. Furthermore, she took the opportunity to replenish her soul power as the

vice team-leader from the Dragonslayer Sect was poisoned. She was basically still in her peak condition right now. Naturally, she wasn't too bothered by Feng Shen.

Feng Shen nodded at her and walked towards his position expressionlessly.

The two of them quickly drew their distance from each other and went to their respective positions.

Everyone watched as the referee lifted his right hand before swiping it down. The second battle began!

As the referee's hand swiped down, a loud eagle call sounded. Following this, a bolt of dim purplish electricity instantly shot into the sky. It was extremely quick, such that Huo Yuhao's Spiritual Detection couldn't even capture it.

It was Feng Shen who had shot into the sky. He was too quick. Two yellow, two purple and one black soul ring shone on his body. Right now, he had already unleashed his soul rings. A pair of deep blue wings that didn't seem too wide extended from his arms. His entire body released a strong dim purplish glow. In a matter of seconds, he was already thirty meters high in the air, and was far away from Meng Hongchen.

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"It's very targeted!" Huo Yuhao was stunned as he commented. Feng Shen was using speed to curb Meng Hongchen's venom. Undoubtedly, he had to be very explosive in terms of his offensive power.

Meng Hongchen's live experience was rather rich. Seeing that her opponent had burst into the sky, she was also shocked. However, she didn't panic. Her six soul rings lit up. Her Icevenom Ring and Ice Reflection specialty skills were unleashed concurrently.

In mid-air, Feng Shen's wings flapped open to both sides. His dim purplish glow started to turn darker, and his first and third soul rings shone concurrently. When his first soul ring lit up, his wings also increased one foot in size. The dim purplish glow became increasingly darker.

When his third soul ring lit up, the glow from his body became even more intense. Everything within a ten-meter radius turned purple.

Following this, his fifth soul ring lit up, too. The pitch-black soul ring expanded out before converting into rings of light that revolved around his body. His body started to distort, and became a little unclear.

Xu Sanshi, who was sitting beside Huo Yuhao, squinted and said, "He wants to end this battle in one strike!"

Huo Yuhao smiled and asked, "Third senior, what's your take on this guy's attack?"

Xu Sanshi replied without any hesitation, "Very strong! From the looks of it, his martial soul should be the Lightning Falcon. The Lightning Falcon has always been recognized as a predator of eagles. It's an extremely quick martial soul. It's a third the size of other falcons, but is extremely vicious. It feeds on the internal organs of other falcons. Even an eagle ten times its size is scared of it. It's not just quick; it's able to alter its direction at high speed in the air. Among agility-type martial souls, it's one of the best. Of course, its strengths and weaknesses are evident. I don't think I need to explain what it's weakness is with high speed and a quick offense, right?"

Xiao Xiao and Jiang Nannan said at almost the same time, "Defense!"

Xu Sanshi chuckled and said, "If I were his opponent, he'd collide with my shield and die."

Jiang Nannan glared at him and snapped, "Would it kill you not to boast?"

Xu Sanshi's expression turned from arrogant to deep. He was filled with passion as he looked at Jiang Nannan and said, "I won't die from not boasting. However, I'll die without you." As he spoke, he held onto Jiang Nannan's hand and caressed it.

Jiang Nannan's face turned red. She made a spitting sound before turning her attention back to the stage. However, she didn't pull her hand back.

A dim light flashed. Huo Yuhao revealed a pensive look on his face. He was also observing how Meng Hongchen was going to resist the Lightning Falcon's quick offensive strike.

Just like Feng Shen, Meng Hongchen's weaknesses and strengths were also very evident. Without a doubt, her strength lay in her venom. Even opponents with a greater cultivation than her might find it difficult to win against her. This was the case with Dai Yueheng back then. However, her offensive and defensive strengths weren't very impressive even though she was poisonous.

Back when she only had five rings, her only true offensive soul skill was her fifth soul skill, Icefire Venomdragon's Corkscrew, and she had relied on her Ice Reflection as her defensive soul skill. When she faced a domain-type, long-range attack, it was difficult for her to counter.

However, the difference Meng Hongchen had with her opponents was that she wasn't just a soul master, she was also a soul engineer! Huo Yuhao and the few of them could discern her weaknesses, so she naturally knew what her weaknesses were too, and she relied on soul tools to make up for her weakness. As for what she could do, it wasn't something that they knew yet. They could only learn by observation.

Feng Shen took quite a long time to prepare his fifth soul skill. As the glow around his body distorted, it slowly disappeared. The dim purplish glow in mid-air slowly turned dark purple. A purple eagle with three-meter-long wings slowly took form.

This resembled a Martial Soul True Body! Meng Hongchen could sense that she was being locked on to. She had no way of differentiating whether her opponent's attack was domain-type or omnidirectional. Under such an unfavorable circumstance, Meng Hongchen still managed to keep herself poised, and appeared very calm. There were no emotions on her face, and no one knew what she was thinking.

At this point, the purplish figure up in the air finally moved. It formed an arc in the air that came straight towards Meng Hongchen.

He was too quick, and caused a piercing sonic boom as he was halfway there. This only happened because he was traveling almost at the speed of sound!

Meng Hongchen instantly understood that his attack would be omnidirectional. However, he was so quick that it was impossible for her to unleash her Ice Reflection. This terrifying speed was beyond her comprehension. She'd never even seen a seven-ringed Soul Sage reach that speed before.

The purplish glow appeared right in front of her as it was unleashed and the sonic boom sounded.

However, a dim pinkish glow was suddenly released from Meng Hongchen's chest. This glow changed into a barrier that blocked her body.

At the most critical moment, she still relied on a soul tool. It was in her nature.

Boom—!

Meng Hongchen's entire body was swallowed by the frightening purple glow. The tremendous impact caused the metal floor to cave in. Even the icy surface formed by Meng Hongchen's Ice Reflection started to crack. The strike was truly powerful!

All the spectators held their breath. This strike was too terrifying! Although they knew soul masters were strong, it was very rare for them to personally witness the supernatural abilities of a soul master. The frightening strength of impact generated balls of cyclones that caused ripples in the defensive light barriers surrounding the stage.

Everyone's attention was caught by the purplish glow. For a Soul King to unleash such a strike, he was close to the standard of a Soul Emperor! In fact, another soul master wouldn't have given Feng Shen so much time to prepare. He had used too much time to accumulate his power.

Regarding this, the Dragonslayer Sect must have had judged that Meng Hongchen wouldn't take the initiative to close the gap, and so Feng Shen was instructed to use his strongest attack immediately. Events proved that that they had been right. At least, Feng Shen managed to successfully unleash his strongest strike.

However, had he actually won?

The purple slowly faded away, and two figures appeared in front of everyone. Meng Hongchen was still standing in her initial position, completely unmoved. Her entire body was engulfed by the dim pinkish light barrier. Feng Shen was ten meters away from her, one of his knees on the floor. His arms that had changed into wings had drooped down, as if they had lost a bone, and he was panting hard.

Meng Hongchen hadn't unleashed an Invincible Barrier, but it seemed like the protective barrier that she had used was at least Class 7! If it were Class 6, she couldn't possibly remain in her position after suffering such a violent attack.

Plop! Feng Shen collapsed to the ground and went unconscious. After completing his strongest strike, his arms were fractured, and he had also suffered from the Icetoad Venom's poison.

However, Meng Hongchen also looked to be in bad shape. She didn't expect her trump card to be revealed to all her opponents. Feng Shen's attack had been too strong, such that her soul power was depleted by forty percent. She was only able to tap into the backlash of a Class 7 soul tool to gravely hurt her opponent.

This was extremely targeted. If Meng Hongchen only had five rings and didn't have such a strong defensive soul tool, she would have lost.

"We concede defeat. He won't compete later either. Please neutralize his poison," the team leader of the Dragonslayer Sect's team decided immediately.

Cheers also exploded out at this moment. Meng Hongchen wasn't just representing the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy, she was also representing the Sun Moon Empire! Here, she didn't have any lack of fans, and she had won two fights consecutively! They were cheering for her victory!

In the succeeding rounds, the Dragonslayer Sect didn't have anyone that could curb Meng Hongchen. Four people fell to her poison. However, her own soul power was also being increasingly depleted. After all, this was a fight between two teams. Although her cultivation was greater than Rank 65, her soul power was still limited. If not for the fact that her first two opponents were Soul Kings, she wouldn't have been able to survive more than four rounds.

To prevent her from suffering any injuries, Meng Hongchen conceded defeat when the Dragonslayer Sect's team leader stepped up to compete. Eventually, she didn't manage to defeat the entire Dragonslayer Sect's team.

Even so, the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy demonstrated their worth.

Their second competing member was a Soul King and Class 5 soul engineer. As he fought the team leader of the Dragonslayer Sect's team, he eventually managed to eke out a victory.

The Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy thus became the first side to win the first round of the tournament. They didn't even compete in the team round, and managed to advance from the first round with six points.

[Chapter 279.1: A Competing Cripple?](#)

Since the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy eliminated all their opponents in the individual elimination round, they had obtained the points needed for the team round, according to the tournament rules. So, they gained eleven points.

The Tang Sect team members had various feelings after they finished watching this first round of battles.

Xu Sanshi looked at the calm Huo Yuhao and softly asked, "Yuhao, who do you think is the best equipped to deal with Meng Hongchen if we face the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy?"

Huo Yuhao chortled and replied, "Of course it's me."

Xu Sanshi thought for a moment before saying, "It can only be you. However, she's not just about her poison. In my opinion, her improvement in the area of soul tools might even surpass her soul master cultivation."

Huo Yuhao said, "That's for sure. After all, this is only the first round. She has been holding back throughout. Even at the end, she didn't use her sixth soul skill or any offensive soul tools. I estimate her main soul tools are already at Class 7, and she is using a special production method to reduce their usage requirements. She is the granddaughter of Jing Hongchen, after all."

Xu Sanshi said, "If we meet them, what do you think our chances are?"

Huo Yuhao smiled and replied, "Eighty percent chance of winning."

Xu Sanshi was stunned as he asked, "So confident?"

Huo Yuhao chortled, "Of course. We have you. You can defeat half their team on your own."

Xu Sanshi furrowed his brow and said, "No, no. How can I take on half their team?"

Jiang Nannan took a curious look at him and said, "Since when have you learned to be humble?"

Xu Sanshi blinked and said, "What I mean is that I can take on their entire team!"

"Shameless!" Jiang Nannan snapped at him.

"There's a trumpet in the sky. Who blew it?" Xiao Xiao lifted her head to look at the sky.

He Caitou was sniggering to one side.

"If there's a chance, I would like to try." a cold voice sounded from afar. Everyone turned in the direction of this voice.

It was the Sword Fanatic. Ji Juechen's face was very serious, and his gaze was burning. He seemed like he was about to draw his Judgment Sword to challenge Meng Hongchen to a fight right then and there!

The tournament continued. There were too many teams. Even if it was just the first elimination round, there were more than eighty of them. If the schedule wasn't followed, the planned three days might not even be sufficient to complete the first elimination round.

There were many exciting performances in the first elimination round. Since it was an elimination round, every team gave their best. Some horrifying scenes even occurred. Team after team went up to compete.

Among the familiar teams that Huo Yuhao knew, Wei Na and Mu Xue appeared as part of a sect called the Snowdemon Sect. Wei Na didn't compete, but Mu Xue demonstrated her extraordinary abilities. She conceded after beating three opponents consecutively. This was to protect herself and keep her available for the team round. Wei Na wasn't part of the competing team. She was only a spectator.

The fights in the morning stopped at noon. Nine teams had made it to the next round, which also meant that nine teams had been eliminated, and their journey in this tournament had ended.

The fights in the afternoon carried on until the evening. A total of twenty-six rounds were fought over the course of the day.

There were teams that were vastly different in terms of skill level. However, there wasn't anyone who defeated an entire team on their own. After all, it was difficult to beat seven people consecutively. Even the weaker teams had at least a few four-ringed Soul Ancestors. Different soul masters had different characteristics. The difficulty level of winning seven consecutive fights was very high.

The Tang Sect team was due to compete on the second day. After watching the first day of fights, all the teams came to a simple conclusion. They picked out some opponents that they had to be wary of and analyzed them.

The atmosphere in the Ming Yue Hotel became more tense after the first day of fights, as those who had not competed watched the eliminated teams leave the hotel. Some of the members of these teams had even died tragically during the course of the tournament!

While the Continental Elite Youth Soul Master Tournament could make one famous, it could also take one's life away...

The sky was slowly getting dark. After eating their dinner, Wang Dong'er pushed Huo Yuhao back to his room.

Although they hadn't competed today, it was still tough on Huo Yuhao. Bei Bei was seriously injured, and thus Yuhao had to take on the responsibility of leading the team. He had to unleash his Spiritual Detection to observe his opponents, and had to draw up his conclusions from an entire day's worth of fights after returning. His mind was tired.

"Dong'er, let's get a drink!" Huo Yuhao said suddenly.

"What?" Wang Dong'er was stunned as she asked, "Are you not tired?"

Huo Yuhao chortled, "I should relax because I'm tired! This was what you taught me."

Wang Dong'er didn't reject his proposition, "Alright. However, you must rest once we get our drink. We still have to compete tomorrow."

Huo Yuhao nodded and replied, "Alright!"

Wang Dong'er pushed him into the soul elevator and took it all the way down to the first story. The sky was already completely dark by now. The hotel was extremely peaceful.

Wang Dong'er pushed his wheelchair down to the lobby, where there were very few people. Furthermore, the lighting in the lobby was dimmed at night. Every spot seemed to have its own privacy.

The two of them sat in a corner. They didn't drink alcohol, so they ordered two glasses of soft drinks.

As she sat on the sofa and sipped on her sweet drink, Wang Dong'er felt much more relaxed. She asked him, "Yuhao, do you want me to carry you to sit on the sofa?"

Huo Yuhao shook his head and said, "There's no need. I feel more comfortable in a wheelchair." Although his lower limbs couldn't move, he still had some feeling. He might feel uncomfortable if he was sitting on something too soft.

Wang Dong'er asked softly, "Are your legs and left arm fine? It's been so many days. Have there been any problems?"

Huo Yuhao shook his head and smiled. "Am I so weak? Don't worry, things will be fine. I know my limits. I feel very comfortable hugging you to sleep every night."

"Naughty!" Wang Dong'er rolled her eyes at him. Even though she was dressed as a guy, they were still flirtatious.

As she was talking, she looked over to a corner of the lobby. Over there, a figure slowly stood up and walked towards them.

Wang Dong'er glanced at Huo Yuhao. There was a reason why he had come down to have a drink at this time?

This person was getting closer and closer. Wang Dong'er was stunned, and stood up. "Eldest senior sister?"

Was it really Zhang Lexuan? Right now, she was clad in deep blue warrior robes. She didn't appear very clear, as the lighting was too dim.

Zhang Lexuan nodded at Wang Dong'er. After that, she sat down opposite Huo Yuhao.

Huo Yuhao smiled, "Eldest senior sister, you left a mark for me to meet you. What's up? We are competitors now."

Zhang Lexuan smiled back and answered, "So be it. Yuhao, what's your take after watching today's fights?"

Huo Yuhao laughed bitterly. "What else can I feel? It's not going to be easy."

Zhang Lexuan asked, "Even you don't have any confidence in winning?" Shrek's Seven Monsters were no longer the preparatory squad members like they were in the previous tournament. Among the seven members, four were Soul Emperors and three were Soul Kings. All of them also had strong martial souls. In terms of their soul engineering abilities, He Caitou and Huo Yuhao weren't weaker than the students of the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy, either. Even though Bei Bei was gravely injured and Huo Yuhao was temporarily crippled, their competitive abilities weren't in question. They were still superior to Shrek Academy's team.

Huo Yuhao shook his head and said, "I don't think anyone is really confident. The situation is very complex. Meng Hongchen almost sank in today's fight. If not for her strong protective barrier, she would have lost her second fight. The sects are stronger than I had imagined. All of the teams held back on their abilities, since the tournament has only just started. Under such a situation, it's very hard to tell."

Zhang Lexuan sighed and said, "Shrek's pride and glory is likely to end in this tournament. I feel like Elder Xuan shouldn't have let all of you compete for the Tang Sect."

Huo Yuhao was stunned, and said, "Isn't Wang Qiu'er there? Eldest senior sister, you should know how strong she is. In a duel, I don't have any confidence of beating her even when I'm at my peak condition."

Zhang Lexuan said, "If Qiu'er was on the same team as all of you, I'd be fully confident. However, Qiu'er will find it difficult on her own."

Huo Yuhao shook his head and said, "It's difficult to tell. Qiu'er's fighting will is much stronger than you imagine. Her abilities are also much stronger than you imagine."

"Oh? It seems like you understand her very well?" Zhang Lexuan looked at Wang Dong'er.

Huo Yuhao's lips moved slightly. "Eldest senior sister, you are picking trouble here!"

Zhang Lexuan snapped, "What picking trouble? Guys are the ones who always hurt the hearts of women!"

Huo Yuhao could only laugh bitterly at her words.

Zhang Lexuan also seemed to realize she had gone slightly overboard, and immediately changed the topic. "Yuhao, I have a few things to tell you. We've received news that the Body Sect is also in this tournament."

"What? The Body Sect is also here?" This news was well beyond Huo Yuhao's expectations.

[Chapter 279.2: A Competing Cripple?](#)

Some time ago, the Body Sect had attacked the Illustrious Virtue Hall and inflicted heavy losses on them. They had also given Huo Yuhao the opportunity to leave with the Snow Lady and the huge human-shaped soul tool. That soul tool had already been given to Xuan Ziwen for research purposes.

This tournament was being organized by the Sun Moon Empire, but the Body Sect actually had the guts to come here. Weren't they scared of being trapped in the Sun Moon Empire?

Zhang Lexuan said, "Not only are they here to compete, a few of the senior members of the sect have also snuck into the city secretly. No one knows what they're plotting. Maybe they're here to protect their disciples, or they might have ulterior motives. It's nothing bad for us. I'm telling you this so that you'll be in the loop. If you meet anyone from the Body Sect, don't provoke them."

Huo Yuhao smiled and said, "The enemy of our enemy is our friend. I understand this logic. Don't worry. Is there any other news?"

Zhang Lexuan said, "Another thing is, please don't be too conservative in the tournament and in your daily routine. It's not just us from Shrek Academy who are here."

Huo Yuhao's eyes brightened. Zhang Lexuan was very clear with her words. There were also some strong individuals from Shrek Academy who were here. Evidently, they were worried about the Sun Moon Empire!

"This is good news." Huo Yuhao didn't ask who was here. Just knowing they were out there was already enough.

Zhang Lexuan revealed a look of hesitation in her eyes, and asked softly, "Is Bei Bei feeling better?"

Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong'er's expressions suddenly turned weird. They already knew about the secret between Bei Bei and Zhang Lexuan. As they saw the look of worry that flashed across Zhang Lexuan's eyes, they had the same thought in their mind. She was still brooding over her promise in the past, but was it really just about the promise?

"He's much better. However, he can't compete for now."

"Let him rest then. Alright, the two of you should rest early, too. Your team will compete tomorrow, right? I wish you all the best." Zhang Lexuan quickly ended the conversation. She stood up and left after bowing slightly to the both of them.

Wang Dong'er laughed after Zhang Lexuan left. She said, "If anyone from the inner courtyard learns that eldest senior sister has someone in her heart, do you think eldest senior will be in trouble?"

Huo Yuhao laughed lightly and replied, "I don't know. Her news came just in time. If the Body Sect has really entered Radiant City in such large numbers, it also means that they will try to do something. However, they are in the open this time. Can they even escape? The Sun Moon Empire and Holy Ghost Church are more worrying. I feel like there's something amiss about this tournament, but I can't tell what it is yet."

Wang Dong'er grabbed his hand and said, "You are already exhausted enough. Don't think so much. In fact, we're already the reigning champions of the tournament. Even if we don't win this time, it's nothing. The future is more important. Do you understand what I mean, Yuhao?"

Huo Yuhao nodded slightly before shaking his head. "I'll try my best. If not for Teacher Xiao Ya and eldest senior, I wouldn't be here today. I wouldn't have been able to enter Shrek Academy either and gotten to know you. In my heart, I'll always be eternally grateful to both of them. Teacher Xiao Ya isn't in good shape now. It feels like she's being controlled. Her greatest wish was to rebuild the Tang Sect and reinstate its former glory. I must help eldest senior fulfil her wish!"

Wang Dong'er nodded slightly and said, "I understand. Let me help you." It was just a few words, but there was an indescribable feeling in them.

The two of them smiled as they looked at each other. Just as Wang Dong'er was pushing Huo Yuhao back, someone burst out from the side and exclaimed in surprise, "I've finally found you!"

A wind swept across their faces, and Meng Hongchen blocked their path. She was wearing a long, light blue dress. She was excited as she saw Wang Dong'er. No, it was Wang Dong in her eyes. Furthermore, she completely ignored Huo Yuhao.

"It's you." Wang Dong'er furrowed her brow. Meng Hongchen had been harassing her for far more than one or two days. Meng Hongchen would find her whenever she had time during the two years of the exchange. She couldn't avoid her at all, but she couldn't reveal her true identity, either!

Meng Hongchen leapt in front of Wang Dong'er and said, "Why aren't all of you representing Shrek Academy!? I took some time to search for all of you. I knew that you'd be here!"

Wang Dong'er was a little annoyed. "Is there something you want?"

Meng Hongchen rolled her eyes amorously and said, "Can't I find you for no reason? I found out that all of you were competing on behalf of the Tang Sect from the tournament's organizing committee. Are you trying to take everyone by surprise or something?"

Wang Dong'er replied, "What do you mean? We've joined a sect and are representing our sect. Is there a problem? It's not early anymore. If there's nothing else, go back and rest early. We still need to compete tomorrow."

Meng Hongchen pursed her lips and said, "It's still early. This is only a preliminary round. With your abilities, what are you so scared of?"

Wang Dong'er twisted her lips and answered, "Why not? There are sects involved in this edition of the tournament. It's different from before. You almost lost today too."

Meng Hongchen's eyes brightened, and she said, "You were concerned about me?"

"I..." Wang Dong'er was speechless by how she interpreted things.

"I knew that you've always been very concerned about me." As she spoke, Meng Hongchen took a step forward and held onto her wrist. She looked very blissful.

Huo Yuhao coughed. "This, Dong... Wang Dong, I'll go back first. The two of you can have a chat." Huo Yuhao was amused, but he tried to control his laughter. He pushed his wheelchair along with his one hand.

"Hey! You, you're..." Meng Hongchen only realized there was someone else present at that moment. Following that, she stared at him. "You're Huo Yuhao? How did you get into this state?"

Huo Yuhao rolled his eyes and thought to himself. What kind of look is that? You've just noticed me now? He laughed bitterly and said, "I got into a sticky situation."

Meng Hongchen said, "Can you compete in that state? Weren't you just fine when you returned from the Sun Moon Imperial Soul Engineering Academy a few months ago? Why...?"

"Alright, don't be gossipy anymore." Huo Yuhao was afraid that she might make Wang Dong'er sad if she continued talking. He quickly interrupted her and said, "Aren't you here for Wang Dong? The two of you can chat first. I'm returning to my room to rest. Wang Dong, this is also considered fate. Just accompany her for a while." As he spoke, he threw her a look.

Wang Dong'er was a little frustrated as she glared back at him. "You can't cope on your own. Let me follow you back."

Huo Yuhao hurriedly said, "I'm fine. I'm fine. I can cope on my own. I'm not that weak. Even with only one hand, I can still take care of myself." As he spoke, he immediately pushed the wheels of his wheelchair towards the soul elevator.

Meng Hongchen's eyes broke into a smile when she saw how cooperative Huo Yuhao was acting. She muttered softly, "This guy is not that annoying after all. Wang Dong, are you trying to bewitch us?"

"What are you talking about?" Wang Dong'er's expression suddenly changed. She wrenched her wrist away, and a fierce look appeared in her eyes. Huo Yuhao had landed in his current state because of her. She was heartbroken, and kept on convincing herself to be strong so that she could take care of Huo Yuhao. In her heart, there was still guilt, pain, and affection. Meng Hongchen's words hit her where it hurt the most. How could she not be angry?

Meng Hongchen was shocked by her reaction. She would have acted up if someone else had dared to react like this to her. However, Wang Dong was different. In her heart, Wang Dong was perfect. In the last tournament, Wang Dong and Huo Yuhao had teamed up together to create a miracle. His unyielding spirit and handsome looks had greatly moved her heart. Her exchange at Shrek Academy also gave her more time to interact with him. She was fearful when she saw Wang Dong acting up so suddenly.

Meng Hongchen was a little panicky as she asked, "I'm, I'm sorry, Wang Dong! Why did you react so greatly? Did I say something wrong?"

Wang Dong'er looked at her coldly and said, "Huo Yuhao is in his current state because of me."

Meng Hongchen was jolted awake, and looked apologetic, "I'm sorry. I didn't know. My grandfather told me to be wary of him. That's why I said everything out of fear."

Wang Dong'er was stunned, and she asked, "How did your grandfather appraise him?"

Meng Hongchen replied, "Intelligent, cunning, tolerant, and talented!"

"Intelligent, cunning, tolerant, and talented? I didn't expect Jing Hongchen to appraise me so highly!" Huo Yuhao smiled as Wang Dong'er recounted her conversation with Meng Hongchen.

Wang Dong'er was a little annoyed. "I almost told her I was a girl. You don't know how torturous it is to be with her."

Huo Yuhao chuckled, "You are attractive. It's better not to tell her and continue to act like a guy. Otherwise, you'll invite a lot of pursuers during the tournament. Watch and see. I believe Qiu'er will cause some trouble."

Wang Dong'er said, "Speaking of Qiu'er, I haven't seen her in days. Has she been cultivating?"

Huo Yuhao remained silent for a moment and replied, "She's a stubborn person. For this tournament, I'm afraid she will..." His voice trailed off, and he couldn't help but shake his head. With Wang Qiu'er's competitive personality, she only had one goal, even if her teammates weren't strong enough.

[Chapter 279.3: A Competing Cripple?](#)

"Come here, my love. Let's sleep." Huo Yuhao threw all his worries aside and gestured to Wang Dong'er.

Wang Dong'er blushed and asked, "Are you not cultivating anymore?"

Huo Yuhao blinked, then replied, "I feel like skiving today."

Wang Dong'er said, "I feel that your mindset has changed greatly after your injuries."

Huo Yuhao smiled and replied, "When I opened my eyes that day and saw you again, I suddenly realized that this world is actually very beautiful. Life is very fragile and valuable. However, it's short. It lasts less than a hundred years. I want to spend as much time with you as I can and feel your gentleness."

Wang Dong'er was stunned for a moment. She removed her outer coat and switched off the light before crawling underneath the blanket. She got close to Huo Yuhao's body. As Huo Yuhao's lower limbs and left arm contained the chill of Ultimate Ice, she only stuck close to his upper body.

Huo Yuhao hugged her soft and petite figure. He kissed her forehead and suddenly said, "What do you think Meng Hongchen would think if she found out that her crush is currently lying in my arms and was even given a peck on her forehead?"

Wang Dong'er lifted her head and looked at him with a mysterious gaze. She muttered, "She would think of... castrating you!"

Huo Yuhao's butt clenched, and he felt a chill around his groin.

.....

It was the second day of the tournament. The atmosphere was still as tense as the first day. After five rounds, six people were already gravely injured, and two people had already died. This showed how intense the competition was.

"Next round, The Tang Sect versus the Earthdragon Sect. Both sides, please enter the waiting area. The first competing member from each side, please come up on stage."

They were about to fight. Everyone from the Tang Sect became extremely focused. Six people stood up. They were He Caitou, Xu Sanshi, Jiang Nannan, Xiao Xiao, Wang Dong'er and Na Na.

Wang Dong'er went behind Huo Yuhao's wheelchair and pushed him into the waiting area.

"What?" On the main stage, Xu Tianran focused his gaze. "Why is there someone in a wheelchair?"

No matter how ambitious Xu Tianran was, he was still very young. He was very eager to watch this tournament. He had sat on the main stage all day yesterday and watched all the fights that went on. He also came with Ju Zi and his officials early this next day to watch the second day of fights.

He was in a wheelchair himself. When he saw someone in a wheelchair going to compete, it naturally caught his attention.

Ju Zi's attention turned in the direction where Xu Tianran was looking. As she was too far away, she could only roughly see who it was. Furthermore, only Huo Yuhao's profile could be seen. However, she had a feeling that something was going to happen. It was a feeling that came for no reason.

All seven of the Tang Sect's competing members entered the waiting area. Xu Sanshi asked, "Yuhao, do you really want to fight?"

Huo Yuhao nodded slightly and said, "It's the best way of concealing our overall abilities. Even if someone finds out, he won't know what level your cultivations are at. Don't worry, I know what I'm doing."

Xu Sanshi nodded and didn't say anything else. Wang Dong'er bit her lips and pushed Huo Yuhao onto the stage.

All the spectators were already cheering at this moment. A cripple in a wheelchair had actually appeared on the big stage where soul masters and soul engineers exhibited their abilities. This was beyond their expectations.

Those who had seen Huo Yuhao before were also shocked. They initially thought Huo Yuhao wasn't a competitor, but who knew that he would be the first to compete? This was completely unimaginable.

Even the referee was a little dumbfounded. He quickly walked over and doubtfully asked, "What's going on, Tang Sect team? Are you sending a cripple to compete?"

Wang Dong'er answered, "Who says he's a cripple?" She hated it when others called Huo Yuhao a cripple.

The referee thought to himself, "Why is he in a wheelchair if he's not a cripple? Is this some kind of trick?"

"I'm just ascertaining whether you are sending him to compete first." The referee's expression also turned gloomy. To qualify as a referee, his cultivation wasn't weak either. He naturally wasn't bothered about these young people in front of him. Moreover, the Tang Sect wasn't that reputable. He didn't have to show them any face.

Huo Yuhao smiled and said, "That's right. I'm the one competing. Sorry for troubling you."

The referee furrowed his brow and didn't say anything else. He only nodded. On the other side, the Earthdragon Sect team's first competing member had also entered the stage. It was a youth with a very proportionate figure. He was also stunned when he saw Huo Yuhao. He mumbled, "The Tang Sect is really interesting – sending a cripple to compete!"

Wang Dong'er glared at him and said, "I've said that he's not a cripple."

The youth expressed the inner thoughts of the referee earlier. "If he's not a cripple, why is he in a wheelchair?"

"You..." Wang Dong'er was about to act up, but she was stopped by Huo Yuhao. He smiled and said, "Dong'er, you can go first."

Wang Dong'er held in her anger and looked at Huo Yuhao concernedly as she lowered her head. Huo Yuhao gave her a reassuring glance before she left the stage.

The referee said, "Since you should be clear on the tournament rules, I won't repeat them again. Please retreat to your positions. The fight will begin once I give the signal."

"Yes." Huo Yuhao smiled as he nodded at the referee. He pushed his wheelchair with one hand as he proceeded to one side of the stage.

"Hey!" The youth from the Earthdragon Sect shouted.

"Oh?" Huo Yuhao was confused as he turned to look at him, "Is something the matter?"

The youth replied, "Aren't you going to at least report your name?"

"Apologies, I forgot." Huo Yuhao gave an apologetic smile and said, "I'm Huo Yuhao. What about you?"

"My name is Xu Shenshu. Remember me, as I'm going to defeat you." After he finished speaking, he turned around. As his right foot stomped on the ground, he flew several tens of meters away and reached the opposite side of the stage.

"Haha." Huo Yuhao laughed. After this, he turned his wheelchair around and slowly pushed it to his own side.

Xu Shenshu was indeed inexperienced. He was blatantly telling Huo Yuhao that he was an assault-type soul master. Interesting.

Everyone's focus was on Huo Yuhao as he pushed his wheelchair. There were very few people who knew he was a part of the champion team in the last tournament. However, it was also these few people who were the important figures to watch in this edition of the tournament.

Xiao Hongchen furrowed his brow and asked his sister, "Meng, is he really crippled?"

Meng Hongchen nodded and replied, "I think so. Wang Dong's expression couldn't have been fake. Wang Dong was very furious then, and almost acted up. If I wasn't quick to change the topic, he would have thrashed me." As she spoke, she pouted her lips and revealed an indignant look on her face.

Xiao Hongchen sighed. "It's a pity then. I thought of fighting him properly in this tournament. According to grandpa, he should be my match. It's really a pity. It's difficult to find a good match!" As he spoke, he placed his hands behind his back and revealed a cold and arrogant look on his face as he looked at the stage.

Meng Hongchen snorted and said, "It's better that he's crippled. It's less trouble for us. This Earthdragon Sect is also stupid. They must be underestimating the Tang Sect. Can't they tell that those people in the waiting area are the main ones they have to beat?"

Xiao Hongchen chuckled and said, "This is called karma. Even though they can't possibly beat us in this tournament, they are still the reigning champions! They've actually been underestimated. Oh yes, Meng, you should stop finding Wang Dong. You should know that the two of you are impossible."

Meng Hongchen said furiously, "Why not? Why not? If he's willing to join the Sun Moon Empire, can't we be together? I don't care. If we meet the Tang Sect later on, you must not hurt him. Otherwise, I'll take your life."

Xiao Hongchen revealed a sad look on his face, "Girls always side with outsiders! We must meet them first. According to my investigation, the Earthdragon Sect isn't considered weak, even though they aren't that strong. Let's see what improvements this bunch from the Tang Sect have made. Why isn't Bei Bei here?"

Meng Hongchen shook her head and said, "I don't know. I'll ask someone to check it out when we return."

They weren't the only ones discussing the Tang Sect team. Princess Jiujiu and Princess Wei Na were also focused on Huo Yuhao at this point. They hadn't expected Huo Yuhao to be the first to compete on behalf of the Tang Sect. They were also interested to see how much energy he still had after he was crippled.

Xu Tianran gestured, and a middle-aged man came to him. The middle-aged man bowed and said, "Your Highness."

Xu Tianran said, "Go and find out the background of this guy in the wheelchair, and why he's here to compete even though he's in a wheelchair. If he wins the first round, ask someone to instruct the referee to preserve his life no matter what happens next."

"Yes." The middle-aged man acknowledged his words and quickly went on his way.

Ju Zi was in a daze now. She was even on the verge of tearing up.

It's him. It's him. Why is it him?

When Huo Yuhao turned his wheelchair around, Ju Zi saw his face clearly. She hadn't expected him to be the one in the wheelchair.

[Chapter 280: The Cute Yet Powerful Snow Lady](#)

Why is he in a wheelchair? Why? He was fine the last time I saw him. What happened?

Considering how proud he was, it was definitely impossible for him to act like he was disabled to trick others, unless he was really incapacitated.

Even though Ju Zi had warned herself many times to forget him, there were some things and people that couldn't be easily forgotten. Ju Zi hadn't expected Huo Yuhao to be in a wheelchair the next time she saw him.

Before the tournament had started, she had sent someone to investigate Shrek Academy. However, she hadn't discovered Huo Yuhao among the students from Shrek. She was still feeling very weird, but her emotions started to flow when she saw Huo Yuhao. If not for Xu Tianran beside her, she would have rushed over to him and demanded an explanation.

Besides these people, there were two more figures in the pergola that trembled slightly when they saw Huo Yuhao in his wheelchair.

The referee lifted his hand up high and looked at both parties, especially Huo Yuhao. After ascertaining that they were ready, his right hand swiped down, and he announced the start of the tournament.

Huo Yuhao moved. However, his soul rings didn't appear. He only turned the wheels of his wheelchair and moved forward slowly. It was as fast as it was when he went into position earlier.

On the other side, Xu Shenshu's aura soared!

He looked into the sky and roared. After that, he burst out like a cannon shell. His right foot stomped on the ground, and his body lifted into the air. As he was in the air, his bones crackled. Two yellow and three purple soul rings appeared concurrently from his body. His body also grew in size as he unleashed his martial soul.

Earthdragon Sect! It was exactly as its name suggested. Soul masters of this sect had varied versions of the Earthdragon as their martial soul. As Xu Shenshu's body expanded in size, his skin also bulged with a layer of black keratin. Bulges also started to surface from his back. As the bulges burst open, several sharp dorsal fins poked out of his back.

His martial soul was a Sabertooth Earth Dragon, a pure strength-type martial soul. It was good at both attack and defense. Its weakness was that it wasn't adept at long-range attacks.

As his body burst forward, Xu Shenshu's arms extended to his sides, and he revealed his developed chest muscles. On the outside of his arms, a layer of curved claws poked out.

His first soul ring lit up. Xu Shenshu's layer of keratin exuded a black glow at this moment, and his strength seemed to have increased, too. In a few steps, he was less than twenty meters from Huo Yuhao.

There was only one thought in everyone's minds right now; they believed he didn't have to be so ferocious against a disabled person.

Empathy for the weak. This was almost the same mindset that everyone possessed. Moreover, Huo Yuhao seemed too weak!

Huo Yuhao stopped pushing his wheelchair forward. After that, an orange glow lit up from his body. A small and petite figure crawled out from his forehead and blocked the way in front of him.

This figure wasn't more than three feet tall, and seemed around two years old. She wore a deep blue belly wrap, which accentuated her powdery-white skin. Under the illumination of the orange glow, this small lady looked extremely beautiful.

Xu Shenshu's aura was still very scary when he leapt over. However, he was wondering what was going on when he saw the small lady between him and Huo Yuhao just as he was about to reach him.

Xu Shenshu was in a daze, and frantically changed directions. He was here to compete, not to kill, especially not such a cute little lady. How could he bear to!?

"Uncle!" The young lady called. Her voice sounded like a baby, and it even sounded a little unclear. He could only roughly hear what she was saying.

"Yes, yes..." Xu Shenshu lost a little of his balance as he changed directions because of the great power that he exerted. After hearing such a cute lady call to him, he acknowledged her words subconsciously. Her big, beautiful eyes were even filled with a sense of closeness. His heart softened when he saw her.

After that, he saw her delicate finger pointing towards him. What happened next?

Xu Shenshu felt a gust of chill engulfing him, and everything turned deep blue in front of him.

All of this happened instantly. From the Snow Lady's appearance to Xu Shenshu's directional change to being called and pointed at by the Snow Lady to the deep blue glow that surfaced in front of Xu Shenshu, everything happened in just a matter of seconds. After that, he was frozen into an ice sculpture and collapsed to the ground.

The Snow Lady turned around and flew back to Huo Yuhao. She sat on his shoulder and called out in delight, "Daddy!"

Every time she called him that, Huo Yuhao would shudder in his heart as he remembered how strong the Snow Empress was. However, he absolutely adored this Snow Lady.

This was the end?

The entire grounds went silent.

No one had expected this result. Absolutely no one. Even the Tang Sect team didn't know that Huo Yuhao would unleash the Snow Empress' Spirit the moment he appeared.

Everyone from the Earthdragon Sect was also dumbfounded. They could have never expected such a result!

The referee rushed over and checked on Xu Shenshu's condition. After that, he immediately announced that Huo Yuhao had emerged victorious. The referee's eyes never left the Snow Lady. He had clearly heard her calling Huo Yuhao her father.

He had never even heard of anyone bringing their kid to compete in the tournament before. Was that really his daughter? No, that was impossible! She was such a small kid, but she was very powerful. Was it his soul skill? However, he didn't even unleash his martial soul. Or perhaps that was his martial soul?

Even the referee, who was pretty strong, had his own doubts. The rest of the competitors were in greater doubt. They were all confused when they saw the Snow Lady. All sorts of guesses started to surface.

When the Snow Lady came over to Xu Shenshu to help him melt the ice, Xu Shenshu was shivering as he looked at her. "You, you, you..."

The Snow Lady unleashed her most lethal weapon – she pointed her two index fingers forward and lowered her head, revealing an indignant look on her face.

Xu Shenshu's pupils dilated, and he quickly said, "Little girl, don't cry! Don't cry, I've lost! I'll leave the stage!"

As he spoke, he started to leave the stage in low spirits. After walking past Huo Yuhao, he shot him a furious look and said, "You are too despicable. How can you bring a kid to compete? Aren't you scared of hurting her?"

Huo Yuhao was a little helpless, "Thanks for your reminder. I'll keep her safe. Oh, you are a good guy."

"You don't have to play this card!" Xu Shenshu quickly made his way off the stage.

Victory! The guy in the wheelchair had actually won. From the looks of it, he didn't do anything either! However, where did the young lady come from?

No matter how confused the spectators were, the tournament still had to continue. The second competitor from the Earthdragon Sect entered the stage. As he looked at the Snow Lady, he cursed in his heart. However, this was a tournament! He kept on telling himself that he couldn't be bewitched by her. He clearly saw how the Snow Lady had defeated the unwary Xu Shenshu with her finger earlier. She was far more than just cute on the surface!

Both parties set their distance from each other. As the referee's hand swiped down, the second fight officially started.

The second competing member was called Feng Jue. His martial soul was also a type of Earthdragon, but it was no longer a strength-type, it was an agility-type. This was also a decision that the Earthdragon Sect made after they saw the fight between Huo Yuhao and Xu Shenshu. The Snow Lady was too cute, and it was difficult for them to lay their hands on her. However, Huo Yuhao was the one controlling her. He couldn't be very mobile, as he was in a wheelchair. As long as he was restrained, the fight would be over.

Feng Jue's martial soul was called a Wind Dragon, a type of Earthdragon. As he unleashed his martial soul, green scales started to cover the left side of his body. Two yellow and two purple soul rings were unleashed... he was a four-ringed Soul Ancestor! The first two soul rings shone concurrently, and Feng Jue was like a gust of wind as he rushed towards Huo Yuhao. His hands turned into sharp dragon claws as he stared at the Snow Lady. Once she moved, he would avoid her and deal Huo Yuhao a lethal blow! This was his strategy.

Seeing that the two parties were closing the distance, the Snow Lady also flew out.

She's indeed coming!, Feng Jue thought, and immediately reacted. His figure flashed, and he quickly leapt to one side. He was trying to make his way around the Snow Lady.

However, a deep blue ice wall appeared in front of him without any warning.

At this point, Feng Jue was racing forward at full speed, and it wasn't possible for him to stop. He shrank his body in panic and reached forward with his dragon claws as he prepared for a collision.

The spectators who were watching from the side could clearly see that the ice wall was unleashed by the Snow Lady. She mimicked the action of holding the moon, and an ice wall three meters high and one meter thick appeared out of nowhere to block Feng Jue.

It was actually a meter thick! And it was ice formed from Ultimate Ice too, much tougher than reinforced steel! If he collided with it...!

Bang!

Feng Jue struck the wall as he burst forward at full speed. His dragon claws were really sharp and managed to pierce through the wall, but his body was also stuck to it.

The Snow Lady laughed and pointed with her right finger. Another streak of deep blue light struck out and ended the second fight.

The first two fights were very easy, and the first two members of the Earthdragon Sect had been defeated. The expressions of the rest of the members changed greatly. Not only was there a disabled person, but the Tang Sect had used a cripple to win two consecutive fights. How was the Earthdragon Sect going to cope in the future fights to come? The most depressing thing was that they couldn't change their competing members once they entered the waiting area. The few remaining ones could only watch, and couldn't do anything to change reality.

The third competing member from the Earthdragon Sect didn't last longer than the first two members. Once he entered, he burst towards Huo Yuhao and the Snow Lady like the first two. However, he was much more intelligent this time. He attacked the Snow Lady directly.

However, the Snow Lady made a dancing motion with her hands when he closed to around twenty meters from her. After that, a white ice ring appeared in front of him.

This Earthdragon Sect member reacted quite quickly. As he flipped his body, he avoided the ice ring. However, the ice ring formed a thick ice pillar which blew apart instantly. The crushed ice trapped his body, and he was turned into an ice sculpture after the explosive force disappeared.

The rest of the Earthdragon Sect team couldn't keep their cool anymore as the tournament reached this stage. They were truly impressed by the Snow Lady's fighting strength. It wasn't just luck, Huo Yuhao was truly strong! No wonder he dared to compete even though he was in a wheelchair!

The Snow Lady flew back in front of Huo Yuhao and sat on his thigh. She grabbed his sleeve, and her eyes were filled with an innocent look. The soul power that she had depleted was instantly restored.

Huo Yuhao was full of the origin energy of Ultimate Ice, so he let the Snow Lady fight. On the one hand, he could remain mysterious to his opponents. On the other hand, the Snow Lady could absorb origin energy from him if she used up hers. The Snow Lady sucked away the chill on the surface of his skin, but the essential origin energy was absorbed by him. When she returned to his body, they could share this essence.

Huo Yuhao had thought of this before, but the Snow Lady had sucked away too much origin energy the last time. It was only recently that she had finally managed to completely absorb her share of the origin energy. As her powers greatly increased, she became more telepathically connected to Huo Yuhao, too. That was why she could now come out to fight.