

Tang Sect 31

Chapter 31.1: The Golden Path VS Netherworld White Tiger

However, Dai Huabin's third soul skill was still extremely powerful. Even though he'd been attacked in a situation like this, he still hadn't suffered any serious injuries.

Wang Dong had flown into the air, but Huo Yuhao was still on the ground! Huo Yuhao didn't retreat like Wang Dong had. Instead, he immediately charged forwards. As he moved forwards with the Ghost Shadow Perplexing Tracks, his hands turned jade-white. This was the Tang Sect's Mysterious Jade Hands. He took advantage of Dai Huabin's half-kneeling position to rush forwards, then brought his palms backwards. Just as Dai Huabin was about to stand up, Huo Yuhao slammed his palms into Dai Huabin's chest.

Huo Yuhao had put everything he had into this attack. He knew that he wouldn't be able to kill Dai Huabin with it, but this attack could be said to contain all the grievances he'd experienced during the eleven years he'd spent within the White Tiger Duke's Mansion. As he struck Dai Huabin's chest, his eyes even turned somewhat red.

His three months of bitter training hadn't been for naught. Not only had Huo Yuhao's soul power and various skills grown in strength, the quality of his physique had improved as well. This attack, boosted by the Mysterious Jade Hands and Controlling Crane Capturing Dragon, was the most powerful physical attack he could release at his current level. Furthermore, Dai Huabin's White Tiger's Vajra Transformation was in a slightly weakened state due to Wang Dong's Light of the Butterfly Goddess. Huo Yuhao had gone all-out in this attack, and despite there being an enormous gap between their soul power rank, he was still able to depress Dai Huabin's stomach and shove his body into the ground a little, while nearly causing him to spit out a mouthful of blood.

Even though Huo Yuhao's emotions were surging, he was still a spiritual-type soul master. His spiritual power—which was much stronger than that of an ordinary soul master's—allowed him to remain clear-headed at all times. He swiftly retreated as soon as his attack landed. The instant after he had, Dai Huabin shot right back up, his claws cutting through the air where Huo Yuhao had just been. With his attack power, Huo Yuhao's muscles and bones both would've been broken if Dai Huabin's attack had landed

Wang Dong slowly descended, landing back on Huo Yuhao's shoulders. Although Huo Yuhao wasn't able to truly injure Dai Huabin, he still felt a sense of catharsis in his heart.

Mom, did you see that? Your Little Yuhao has already begun to obtain his revenge for you. This palm strike is only the beginning; there will be a day when I have enough strength to get revenge for you, and cleanse the pain and humiliation that we've suffered these past ten years.

An angry light filled Dai Huabin's eyes when he missed Huo Yuhao. He didn't think that he'd actually be unable to obtain an advantage against him, even at such a close range. There was a distinct gap between their strengths, yet Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong were able to rely on their astonishing synergy and timing to suppress his strength. Although the White Tiger's Vajra Transformation was a powerful skill, its soul power consumption was extremely large. If it was used for a prolonged period of time, he'd be fully exhausted.

Without any hesitation or pause at all, Dai Huabin rushed straight towards Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong again.

The battle had reached its most climactic stage. nove/lb/In

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On the other side of the arena, Xiao Xiao had completely entered the zone. Her cultivation rank wasn't any weaker than Zhu Lu's, and even though Zhu Lu's Netherworld Civet was a peak-level existence amongst agility system martial souls, Xiao Xiao had twin martial souls! In terms of attributes, she even had a slight edge over Zhu Lu, as the speed-reducing effect of her Ninephoenix Worshipping Flute was able to reduce her opponent's speed.

In a situation like this, where Xiao Xiao also had the assistance of Huo Yuhao's Spiritual Detection, she might as well screw off if she wasn't able to block Zhu Lu.

Xiao Xiao's three large black cauldrons rotated around in midair, interrupting Zhu Lu's every move by utilising Huo Yuhao's foresight. Even though Zhu Lu was extremely quick, it was as if she'd fallen into a cage created by Xiao Xiao's Threelives Soulcrush Cauldrons. No matter how hard she tried to escape from it, she wasn't able to.

She'd tried to use brute force to break out of the prison, but even though she wasn't weak, breaking a top-ranked Tool Soul like the Threelives Soulcrush Cauldron wasn't something that she could achieve.

Contrarily, Xiao Xiao wasn't good at attacking, which meant that defeating Zhu Lu would be a difficult task to pull off. As such, their battle had turned into a closely-fought one.

In the eyes of the spectating teachers, this was already Xiao Xiao's win. In the world of soul masters, the agility system would normally be able to subdue the control system. However, Xiao Xiao had been able to rely on her twin martial souls to control Zhu Lu, allowing her to gain the upper hand. At the very least, Zhu Lu wasn't able to help Dai Huabin. On the other hand, Cui Yajie had been dispatched early, due to Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong's clever machinations. Because of this, the comprehensive strength of both teams were now much closer to each other's.

"How about it? Old Yan, it seems that my foresight was better than yours. Haha." Qian Duoduo spoke with a pleased voice.

Yan Shaozhe merely smiled. "You shouldn't speak so early. Those three fellas haven't won yet."

Qian Duoduo laughed. "From what I've seen, even though there's a gap between them in terms of strength, they're still not at a disadvantage as long as they rely on their synergy. Once this match has been drawn out, which side do you think will win?"

Yan Shaozhe indifferently said, "I know what you're about to say. That flute-playing girl who also uses cauldrons has been minimizing the consumption of her soul power since the beginning of the match; she's only been using her flute's soul skill. If this continues, the match will tilt in their favour once that little black cat runs out of soul power."

Qian Duoduo smiled cunningly. "I knew that you'd realise it. If that's the case, why don't you quickly surrender?"

Yan Shaozhe glanced at him. “Old Qian, you’ve been playing with your metals for too long. You’ve already forgotten one of the traditions of the world of soul masters. What relationship does the White Tiger Duke’s Mansion have with the Star Luo Empire’s Zhu Family?”

Once he heard Yan Shaozhe’s words, the smile on Qian Duoduo’s face instantly stiffened. “No way. The Zhu and Dai Family only have a single pair in each generation, two at most. How old is that kid? Don’t tell me that the White Tiger Dukedom plans to let him inherit the position of Grand Duke?”

Yan Shaozhe smiled. “Why would that be impossible? He’s already managed to gather three soul rings before the age of twelve. With this, he’s already exceeded the ancestor of the Dai Family—the leader of the Shrek’s Seven Monsters whose statue currently sits at the Academy’s entrance. The Dai Family has always allowed the strong to inherit the position of Grand Duke. Didn’t the White Tiger Duke send his kid to Shrek Academy for him to pursue his studies, and to see how much potential we can unlock within him? The Zhu Family has many internal factions, and this girl should be an investment that a certain faction from the Zhu Family has made in Dai Huabin. If they were winning this match, my speculation might have remained simply a speculation. However, they’re losing now. We’ll soon be able to see whether or not my guess was correct.”

As the Dean of Shrek Academy’s Martial Soul Department, Yan Shaozhe didn’t just have an extremely high cultivation rank; he also had control over the various secrets and resources that Shrek Academy had accumulated over the past ten thousand years. It wouldn’t be incorrect to call him the encyclopedia of the Douluo Continent.

After hearing Yan Shaozhe’s words, the smile on Qian Duoduo’s face vanished completely. A pained look appeared on his face. “I just knew that a crafty old fox like you wouldn’t let me take even a small advantage from you. You were just waiting for this to happen. Is it fine if we reduce our bet? Look, I know the match hasn’t ended yet, but can I just give you 30 shells if I give up right now? We’ve been brothers for so many years, and you also know about the bad habit I have. You’re just torturing me now!”

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Du Weilun’s facial muscles twitched as he resisted laughing out loud. Fan Yu, on the other hand, had covered his face with his hands and buried his head in his lap, acting as if he didn’t recognise Qian Duoduo.

Dean Qian was an extremely outstanding person in many aspects, but he had a single shortcoming—his stinginess. Because of that, he was given the extremely long nickname of ‘lots of money, small hands, cheapskate, porcelain quail, glass rat, glazed cat’ in the Academy. The meaning of this nickname was that, even though he had a lot of money and resources, it’d be an extremely difficult task to take anything from him. He was the very definition of the word stingy! nDvε)LB)In

It was true that Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong had a slight edge in the match. Strength-wise, they were inferior to Dai Huabin, even if they worked together. However, Huo Yuhao’s Spiritual Detection played a decisive role in their current situation. By relying on its powerful prediction abilities, they were able to fight with Dai Huabin without meeting him head on; all of their attacks were strategic in that they forced Dai Huabin to act defensively. Wang Dong’s wings were fully unfurled under the strengthening effect of the Haodong Power, while Huo Yuhao moved around using the Ghost Shadow Perplexing Tracks, making

it seem as if the two were acting as one. As Wang Dong's dazzling blue wings soared about the sky, Dai Huabin could only cry out to no avail, no matter how fiercely he attacked.

It wasn't as if he hadn't taken any risks; the problem was that his opponents seemed to be able to see through all of his plans. In the end, the only things he had to show for it were the wounds on his body. However, Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong were still able to ingeniously evade all of his attacks.

Dai Huabin had also been paying attention to Zhu Lu's situation. At the beginning of the battle, Zhu Lu had already gone all-out, bringing her speed to the limit in an attempt to break through Xiao Xiao's wall. Because of that, her soul power consumption had been extremely large. On the other hand, Xiao Xiao, who'd already formed a strategy to counter her, had consumed much less soul power than Zhu Lu. Even though she'd released both of her martial souls, she was only using the first soul skill of her Ninephoenix Worshipping Flute.

Zhu Lu's speed had clearly decreased, and due to the Ninephoenix Worshipping Flute's speed-inhibiting soul skill, her exhaustion was now beginning to show.

Dai Huabin had continuously used his White Tiger's Vajra Transformation for the sake of maintaining his absolute advantage in attack power, but he was starting to find it difficult to manage its enormous consumption of soul power. From his point of view, Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong should've consumed a similarly enormous amount of soul power. However, they were both seemingly still filled with energy. If the battle continued like this, he could actually lose the match.

"If you have any ability, meet me head on!" Dai Huabin roared angrily. He wasn't able to hold back his rage any longer.

A trace of disdain appeared on Huo Yuhao's lips. "Don't you know what strategy is? You're the son of the White Tiger Duke, yet you don't even know what strategy is. What a piece of rubbish."

A savage light flashed through Dai Huabin's eyes. Suddenly, to Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong's astonishment, he cancelled his White Tiger's Vajra Transformation.

Although they had the assistance of Huo Yuhao's Spiritual Detection, the two of them had always avoided a direct confrontation with Dai Huabin; they'd always maintained a fixed distance between them. Even though Huo Yuhao was aware of Dai Huabin's actions, their movements had slowed due to their bewilderment.

Dai Huabin didn't advance, but instead wildly retreated. The sudden change in his movements sent Huo Yuhao's trio into a daze. Furthermore, Huo Yuhao was able to tell from the circulation of Dai Huabin's soul power that his actions weren't a trap, but a genuine retreat.

The instant Dai Huabin turned back, Zhu Lu made a move as well. After using a Netherworld Stab on Xiao Xiao, she instantly retreated towards Dai Huabin.

What are they doing? Are they trying to recover their soul power?

Wang Dong jumped off Huo Yuhao's shoulder, while Xiao Xiao hurriedly rushed back to their side. The three of them all had puzzled looks in their eyes.

Suddenly, inexplicably, Huo Yuhao's heart began to palpitate intensely. This feeling wasn't new to him; when he'd entered the Great Star Dou Forest before entering Shrek Academy, he'd felt this exact feeling when he met his first soul beast. It was a mysterious premonition that came from his Spirit Eyes.

They were in a match right now, and their strange actions along with the palpitations in his heart shook Huo Yuhao's heart. He cried out involuntarily, "Are they trying to release a fusion skill?"

At that exact moment, Dai Huabin let out a tiger-like roar. This was followed by his body immediately expanding once again, along with white fur and black stripes frantically surging out.

Zhu Lu softly bit her teeth together, followed by her body being covered in a faint black light. Her body then floated into the air, and even seemed to have become transparent. Afterwards, she spread her arms towards Dai Huabin.

The current Dai Huabin and Zhu Lu could only see each other. Dai Huabin's twin pupils had fused into a single pupil, but the grimness in his eyes still remained. Contrarily, Zhu Lu's gaze had become as tranquil as water, making it seem as if she were going to melt into him.

In that instant, the auras of the White Tiger and the Netherworld Civet had fused completely, giving off an extremely mysterious feeling. The white tiger seemed to have devoured the black cat, and an intense undulation of soul power erupted from their fused body like a geyser. The two lights fused into a single entity within the golden halo, giving off a transcendent feeling.

A martial soul fusion wasn't as simple as '1+1=2'. Even two identical martial souls might not possess a fusion skill, because the act of the fusion itself required the two souls to both complement each other and have perfect compatibility. When a fusion skill was released, its incarnation was definitely not just at the level of two soul masters; it was a transcendent existence.

Dai Huabin and Zhu Lu's bodies vanished in the instant that the fusion occurred, leaving only an enormous White Tiger in the Assessment Area. The White Tiger's body was transparent, while its fur was lined with black stripes. Its purple eyes gazed coldly at Huo Yuhao's trio.

Yes, this was the secret that belonged to the bloodline of the White Tiger Dukedom and the Zhu Family, which was also a top-ranked noble family within the Star Luo Empire; the secret of a martial soul fusion.

Almost all White Tiger Duke's were wed to a woman from the Zhu Family. This was also the case for the Duke's wife who'd persecuted Huo Yuhao's mother. The reason that she was able to cover the heavens within the White Tiger Duke's Mansion wasn't just due to her own authority. It was also due to the strength of her family, as well as the large amount of strength she herself possessed!

The martial soul that belonged to the White Tiger Dukedom had a more accurate name—the Evil Eyed White Tiger. Moreover, the most distinct trait of a person who possessed the Evil Eyed White Tiger would be the two pupils in his eyes. On the other hand, there was an extremely high chance that the Evil Eyed White Tiger would have a high enough compatibility rate to perform a martial soul fusion with the Zhu Family's Netherworld Civet.

The bloodline of the White Tiger Duke had maintained a close relationship with the Zhu Family since ancient times. In the past, when the bloodline of the White Tiger Duke was still the royal family of the Star Luo Empire, the Zhu Family had inherited the position of prime ministers. Although the two families

no longer held their past glory, these enormous, deeply-rooted powers still held important positions within the Star Luo Empire. Furthermore, the best tie and bridge between the Duke's Mansion and the Zhu Family were the marriages that had occurred in the past.

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Naturally, not all Evil Eyed White Tigers could fuse with a Netherworld Civet. However, since ancient times, there would always be a pair, or even two, appear within each generation. Furthermore, one of the most important prerequisites for a descendant to assume the position of the White Tiger Duke was for said descendant to successfully marry a woman from the Zhu Family. Currently, Dai Huabin was the only son of the White Tiger Duke's first wife within his generation that could perform a martial soul fusion with a daughter of the Zhu Family.

The fusion of the Evil Eyed White Tiger and Netherworld Civet would create the enormous, eight-meter long, two meter tall figure that had just appeared in the Assessment Arena. It was Dai Huabin and Zhu Lu's fusion skill—the Netherworld White Tiger!

The enormous white tiger appeared somewhat transparent, and gave off the impression that it was a completely illusory existence. However, Dai Huabin and Zhu Lu's figures had already disappeared. The White Tiger's huge body squatted slightly, then immediately used its terrifying speed to pounce towards Huo Yuhao's trio, transparent ripples trailing behind it.

As it leapt into the air, it raised its head haughtily. Its gaze that overlooked the entire world was filled with arrogance as it revealed its bearing as both the tyrant of the world, and the king among beasts.

"Xiao Xiao, let's begin!" Huo Yuhao shouted, turning around and spreading his arms towards Wang Dong.

They hadn't originally planned to go this far, as Huo Yuhao had been determined to wait patiently for the sake of his future. However, when their opponents had activated their fusion skill, they'd been left with no other choice. Huo Yuhao didn't want to lose this match; he wanted to let his mother's spirit in heaven see his diligence and strength, and let her see that he had a chance at avenging her.

Dai Huabin and Zhu Lu had their last resort, so why couldn't Huo Yuhao's trio have one as well?

Wang Dong had already spread his arms wide, and a strange light appeared in his eyes as he looked at Huo Yuhao. There was a gentle look in his eyes, yet it also seemed both encouraging and consoling. This strange light caused Huo Yuhao's heart to beat fiercely, and his gaze to become even more determined. However, a faint smile also appeared on his face; a smile that only Wang Dong could see.

Right. Just before the match started, they had tried activating their fusion skill, and had succeeded in doing so; they'd actually regained the ability to unleash their mysterious fusion skill after only three days.

Up on the tall stage, the teachers were all holding their breaths. However, the most nervous person on-site was the referee; he was already prepared to intervene at any time.

Aside from an extremely small number of teachers, an overwhelming majority of them had never expected a spectacular scene like this in a match between freshmen. A fusion skill—that was a martial soul fusion skill!

The referee was already preparing to stop the Netherworld White Tiger. Although a fusion skill was extremely strong, the users were still far off from his cultivation rank. He was confident that he could save Huo Yuhao's trio in the instant that the Netherworld White Tiger launched an attack. However, he hadn't made a move due to Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong's movements, as well as Xiao Xiao's actions.

A dark light simultaneously erupted from the three large cauldrons beside Xiao Xiao as they instantly shot towards the middle of the Assessment Arena. At the same time, both of her soul rings for her Threelives Soulcrush Cauldron simultaneously lit up.

Halos of black light emerged from Xiao Xiao's body, but they didn't simply stop like they had last time. Instead, they poured into the Threelives Soulcrush Cauldrons.

The three cauldrons then fused into one, causing a violent boom to ring out. Following that, an enormous cauldron that was double the size of her normal fused cauldron filled the sky. There were strange runes faintly discernible on the surface of the enormous cauldron, which caused an indescribable pressure to surge forward from it.

Xiao Xiao's face instantly paled, but she closed her eyes and pointed forward with her right hand. The enormous cauldron flickered, then immediately appeared in front of the Netherworld White Tiger, letting out an ear-deafening boom. n.-Ov**Elb**In

"National Treasure, Cauldron's Quaking Tremble." This was Xiao Xiao's most powerful control technique.

This time, she didn't attempt to use its suction ability. Xiao Xiao knew that her strongest skill—which was borne from the fusion between two of her soul skills—wouldn't be able to stop the Netherworld White Tiger. She activated it as a single-use skill, allowing its power to explode outwards. Although its cost was high, to the point where her soul power was almost entirely drained in an instant, she wouldn't suffer a backlash like she had previously.

Xiao Xiao's Cauldron's Quaking Tremble violently distorted the air surrounding her to the point where even the naked eye could see it, and its tyrannical vibrations filled the ten-meter area surrounding it. Due to the accurate guidance of Huo Yuhao's Spiritual Detection, it had been able to perfectly block the advance of the Netherworld White Tiger.

After taking on the distorting ripples from Xiao Xiao's skill, the enormous Netherworld White Tiger lit up with white light. After that, it turned sluggish for a brief moment. It had taken on the violent vibrations from Xiao Xiao's skill, but its enormous body had barely been affected at all.

Xiao Xiao's face was filled with shock. She'd never expected the enormous White Tiger to only pause for a brief moment after taking on her Cauldron's Quaking Tremble.

However, an even more astonishing scene occurred in the next instant, as a strange golden column of light shot up from beside her. The only thing left in her eyes after seeing that enormous golden pillar was an image of resplendence—a resplendence that came from Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong!

On one side was Huo Yuhao, whose eyes were releasing a pale golden light.

On the other side was Wang Dong, whose dazzling wings were unfurled as he released his Radiant Butterfly Goddess.

The instant they released their martial souls after hugging each other, the surrounding ten meter area instantly lit up. An unusual light then surged from their bodies.

That light was very peculiar. It was a peculiar radiance that alternated between blue, purple, and gold. A dense, radiant aura served as the trunk of the light, but there were mysterious soul power undulations mixed within it as well.

An enormous figure had appeared behind Wang Dong. It was a complete, magnificent figure of the Radiant Butterfly Goddess.

On the other hand, an enormous yet illusory eye with a vertical pupil had appeared behind Huo Yuhao. This eye was pale gold, but there was a faint hint of purple within its pupil.

The two enormous figures slowly approached each other in midair, and transformations began to occur as they got closer and closer to one another. The figure of Huo Yuhao's Spirit Eye gradually became even more arcane, and its entire body turned purplish-blue; the gold colour in it had completely vanished.

As Wang Dong's Radiant Butterfly Goddess approached Huo Yuhao's Spirit Eye, it violently combusted into a bluish-golden flame.

The instant the Netherworld White Tiger neared them, the two enormous figures had already merged into a single entity above their heads.

The instant that Xiao Xiao's Cauldron's Quaking Tremble unleashed its powerful restrictive abilities on the Netherworld White Tiger was also the instant that the combusting Radiant Butterfly Goddess spread its dazzling wings, slowly hugging the figure of the Spirit Eye.

In the blink of an eye, the figure of the Radiant Butterfly Goddess had vanished, leaving only the bluish-purple Spirit Eye, which released a brilliant ray of light.

A dazzling bluish-golden flame instantly erupted from the figure of the Spirit Eye, then slowly descended towards the hugging figures of Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong, shielding them.

The enormous Spirit Eye seemed extremely arcane, and it seemed as if there were a boundless world within it if one were to look at it carefully. Immediately afterwards, a terrifying tri-colored laser shot out from it.

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The illusory ray of light shot straight out, and a resplendence that seemed to last forever covered anything the light touched. The only thing left behind was a blurry, distorted brilliance.

The previously fully-confident Dean Yan Shaozhe had suddenly stood up the instant that he saw Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong hug each other, his eyes filled with an inconceivable look. At the same time, the miserly Dean Qian had stood up alongside him.

The shock in Qian Duoduo's eyes was no less than that of Yan Shaozhe's. Neither he nor Yan Shaozhe had known that the two of them had a trump card like this! Furthermore, they'd never expected the occurrence of such an astonishing scene within the freshmen tournament's final round. This was a fusion skill pitted against another fusion skill! This was an extremely rare sight, even amongst the upperclassmen of the outer courtyard, or even the inner courtyard! However, they were currently

watching the tri-colored laser from the enormous vertical eye head towards the enormous Netherworld White Tiger. n.-O**V**e**l**b1n

Even the extremely experienced referee had been left flabbergasted at this moment. He didn't know if he should stop the collision between the two attacks, as both parties were using fusion skills. However, how could the victor be decided if they weren't allowed to forcefully clash against each other?

Although the referee didn't know what to do, that didn't mean that nobody knew what to do. The instant the two attacks were about to collide, a white figure appeared out of nowhere in the Assessment Arena. The figure appeared right in-between the two fusion skills, and used its back to take on the Netherworld White Tiger's palm, while it blocked the resplendent tri-colored beam of light head-on.

A dense white light soared straight into the heavens, forming an illusory yet incomparably sturdy barrier that simultaneously blocked the two fusion skills.

The extremely-strong looking Netherworld White Tiger instantly collapsed as soon as it hit the white barrier, causing Dai Huabin and Zhu Lu's bodies to reappear on the ground with pale expressions on their faces. They didn't even have the energy to stand up.

On the other side, the enormous Spirit Eye had appeared yet again after the resplendent tri-colored beam of light dissipated. Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong were still hugging each other, but they hadn't collapsed this time around. Instead, they looked towards the figure who'd blocked their Golden Path with an expressionless look in their eyes.

The person who'd appeared out of thin air and used his body to block the two fusion skills without suffering any negative repercussions was none other than the Director of Shrek Academy's Martial Soul Department, Du Weilun.

The white light coming from his body was formed purely of soul power. In that instant, eight soul rings had emerged from his body.

There were two yellow, two purple, and four black soul rings, the most optimum combination of soul rings. This was the domineering strength of an eight-ringed Soul Douluo!

How could one neutralise such an intense collision? Du Weilun had answered that question—by using his body to simultaneously block both attacks! By using his body, Du Weilun could also tell which attack was stronger, and thereby determine the victor of the match.

The two attacks were fusion skills, and they were both each team's last resort. By taking on both attacks, Du Weilun could undoubtedly tell which attack was stronger with a single glance.

The other teachers on the tall stage had ordinary reactions to this, but a look of shock flashed through the eyes of Yan Shaozhe and Qian Duoduo. Du Weilun's body had turned golden, which made the current him look like an upright-standing statue that had been carved from gold. However, the back of his clothes had been torn apart by the Netherworld White Tiger's palm, exposing his sturdy back. In addition to that, there were even five bloody streaks on his back.

An eight-ringed Soul Douluo had actually been injured? Injured by a bunch of students led by someone merely at the three-ringed rank?

This was simply inconceivable. Gradually, the other teachers started to realise the gravity of the situation, and each and every one of them was flabbergasted.

Naturally, Zhou Yi was one of the many spectators to the battle. Her eyes instantly darkened as she watched this scene unfold. Although she couldn't believe that something like this had occurred, the Netherworld White Tiger had truly wounded Du Weilun! She was aware of Du Weilun's cultivation, and she was entirely confident that Du Weilun wouldn't want to lose face in a situation like this. Therefore, the wounds on his back must be real.

Yan Shaozhe's current expression was extremely ugly. He turned towards Qian Duoduo, but was met by an innocent-looking Qian Duoduo staring back at him.

"Did you know about this?" Yan Shaozhe lowered his voice, yet spoke with a fierce tone.

Qian Duoduo smiled bitterly. "Do I look like I knew about it? These are students from your Martial Soul Department; how the hell would I know about them!? Old Yan, you're not trying to renege on your promise, are you?"

Yan Shaozhe snorted and left the tall stage with a flash. His body flashed yet again, and he vanished as everyone looked on.

As he watched Yan Shaozhe leave, Qian Duoduo smiled. He didn't let out a laugh, but the pleased look on his face revealed how happy he currently felt.

"Dean Qian, Dean Yan...?" Fan Yu had a doubtful look on his face as he walked towards Qian Duoduo, puzzled. From what had happened in the arena, Dean Qian should've lost! But it seemed as if...

Qian Duoduo smiled cunningly. "Let's go. I'm a man of high moral standards, so we can't neglect our appearances even when we're proud of ourselves. However, I have to say, Fan Yu! You've really found a good seedling this time. We'll have to rely on this brat for our plan. I don't care what you do, you can't let that brat become a core disciple of the Martial Soul Department. You heard the bet that I had with Old Yan, right?"

Fan Yu whispered, "Dean Qian, you're saying that we won?"

Qian Duoduo smiled mischievously, "Obviously. Let's go." With that, he left the tall stage in a flash, rapidly vanishing from sight.

Within the Assessment Arena, Du Weilun's golden body had already returned to normal. However, the current him had a look of astonishment and disbelief on his face. A light flickered through his eyes as he turned to look at Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong, who were struggling to escape from each other's embrace. Even he didn't dare to believe that this was real! However, the scorching pain from his back reminded him that everything in front of him was real.

Struggling, Dai Huabin rose to his feet and helped Zhu Lu up. Cui Yajie had already run excitedly to their side, cheering exuberantly.

Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong currently had downcast expressions on their faces. They hadn't seen Du Weilun's wounds, but they could tell that they'd lost from their opponent's happy faces. They were unable to tell what their 'Golden Path Amidst Withering Resplendence' had done, but this loss was truly

somewhat baffling to them. Huo Yuhao was disappointed, as he hadn't been able to forcefully clash against Dai Huabin's attack in the end. He truly wished to see whether his and Wang Dong's all-out attack could defeat their opponents!

Du Weilun was still the Director of Studies for Shrek Academy; after blanking out for a brief moment, he quickly came back to his senses. A bitter smile appeared on his face as he inwardly thought, This is truly embarrassing!

"Very good. You all have done extremely well." Du Weilun's voice rang out, causing both teams to calm down and turn their gazes towards him.

Du Weilun spoke dully, "I'm very surprised your cultivation ranks were able to reach this level as freshmen. Moreover, both of your teams were able to unleash fusion skills. I've personally felt the strength of your fusion skills."

While he spoke, he glanced coldly at the not-too-distant referee. Were it not for his malfeasance, would he have had to have his back exposed for the crowd to see? The referee had already lowered his head ashamedly, not daring to meet Du Weilun's gaze.

Du Weilun spoke with a deep voice. "Now then, I will announce the final champions of the freshmen assessment's knock-out tournament. They are..." With that, he paused. Afterwards, he suddenly raised his right hand and pointed towards Huo Yuhao's trio, speaking loudly, "Wang Dong, Xiao Xiao, and Huo Yuhao!"

"Boom—" The entire crowd went into an uproar.

Dai Huabin's team weren't the only ones who didn't dare to believe their own ears; even the teachers on the tall stage had shocked expressions on their faces. From what they'd seen, the winning team definitely should've been Dai Huabin's team, as they'd managed to injure Du Weilun! There were immediately people who thought, Was Director Du using his position to take revenge for the embarrassment he'd suffered? No, that wasn't possible! The two other Deans had also been watching the match earlier, so how could Director Du abuse his position for his own private benefits? Furthermore, Du Weilun was always known for how just he was. After serving as the Director of Studies for the outer courtyard for so many years, he'd never made a mistake.

Even Huo Yuhao's trio were somewhat uncertain. The three of them glanced at each other, and Xiao Xiao looked towards Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong as she whispered, "We won?"

Wang Dong replied, unconvinced, "Did Director Du announce the champions or the runner-ups?"

Huo Yuhao smiled and gave the final word, "It seems like we've actually won!"

As Huo Yuhao's trio gradually accepted the fact that they'd won, Dai Huabin's trio were still unwilling to accept it. Ignoring how weak her body was, Zhu Lu didn't want to give in. "Director Du, why did they win? We're the ones who should've won."

Du Weilun turned around and swept his glance over them, saying indifferently, "Are you questioning my judgement?"

Zhu Lu immediately paused as she faced his powerful aura. However, the unconvinced look in her eyes was obvious to any onlooker. Although Dai Huabin didn't utter any words, he pursed his lips tightly and stared straight at Du Weilun without any intention of giving up.

Du Weilun forcefully suppressed the indignation in his heart as he inwardly thought to himself, I've already embarrassed myself; do I also have to explain the process of how I was embarrassed!? These brats!

Chapter 32.1: Rewards and the Core Disciples

However, Du Weilun naturally had enormous mental fortitude as the Director of Studies for the outer courtyard. After feeling depressed for a brief moment, he quickly regained his composure and exposed a somewhat helpless smile on his face.

"I have to say, you were all extremely outstanding. I've lost face because I underestimated the strength of your fusion skills. I can't blame anyone else for this fault of mine. I won't even charge a fee for allowing all of you to see my back today."

Once he spoke, laughter immediately rang out from the tall stage. One definitely had to admit that Du Weilun was extremely charismatic. With just a simple sentence, he'd already gotten rid of his embarrassment. In addition to his self-derision, the teachers above were even praising him inwardly. If it were them in this sort of situation, could they be as calm and collected as Du Weilun was?

Du Weilun continued, "I know, there will be doubts in everyone's hearts if I don't explain everything clearly. First of all, I need to reaffirm my previous words. I made no mistake; the final champions are Wang Dong, Xiao Xiao, and Huo Yuhao. They've performed spectacularly to obtain the final victory in this year's freshmen assessment, and they are entirely worthy of their positions as champions."

He repeated his previous announcement, causing the expressions of Dai Huabin's trio to become even uglier.

Du Weilun continued, "Everyone saw what just happened. As a teacher, I must do all I can to prevent the death of outstanding freshmen. Both sides were using fusion skills, so it was impossible for even the two Deans to determine the victor of this match via eyesight alone. Thus, I had no choice but to receive both attacks with my body. I know, I was injured by Dai Huabin and Zhu Lu's Netherworld White Tiger, so they should've obtained the win. However, I ask all of you: As a Soul Douluo, is my defense really that weak? They were using a fusion skill, but it was still a fusion between a Soul Elder and Soul Grandmaster. If they were actually able to directly wound me, even when I'd used my soul power to protect myself, then I might as well resign from my position of Director." **nV(lb-1n**

The anger and discontent in Dai Huabin's eyes gradually vanished as he listened to Du Weilun's words. Right! As an eight-ringed Soul Douluo, how could their fusion skill actually injure him? That was truly somewhat inconceivable.

Du Weilun continued, "With this, everyone should've guessed the answer to this question. The reason why the Netherworld White Tiger was able to injure me was because I'd taken on another fusion skill. Wang Dong and Huo Yuhao, I still don't know the name of your fusion skill. As a person who personally took on your fusion skill, don't I have the qualifications to know what its name is?"

Wang Dong laughed softly. "Teacher Du, you're the first person to receive our fusion skill. This is also the first time we've used it in an actual battle after testing it out."

Du Weilun was somewhat astonished as he looked at him. "I'm extremely honoured to have been the first to receive it. Then, can I know its name?"

Wang Dong nodded. "Of course. Yuhao, you tell him."

Huo Yuhao gazed towards the distant Dai Huabin, then spoke slowly with a calm voice, "Our fusion skill is called 'The Golden Road Amidst Withering Resplendence.'"

Du Weilun cast his gaze downwards, and a trace of shock flashed through his eyes. A 30-meter long, half-meter deep gorge had appeared in the ground of the Assessment Arena, which flickered with a dazzling golden luster that couldn't be concealed beneath the sun's rays.

Previously, the teachers atop the tall stage had only been paying attention to the outcome of the battle. Thus, they only noticed the dazzling golden road after Huo Yuhao mentioned it. The golden trail stretched all the way to where Du Weilun was standing.

Du Weilun nodded slightly. "I have to admit, your fusion skill is one of the most peculiar ones I've ever seen. The fact that you two were able to release this much power with your current cultivation ranks has already exceeded the range of my research towards fusion skills. I believe that your compatibility rate is definitely extremely high."

With that, he turned back towards Dai Huabin's trio. "There's only one reason why your Netherworld White Tiger was able to injure me. Before your attack reached me, I was struck by their Golden Road. Only after that did your attack arrive. The effect of a fusion skill is a soul master's secret, so that's all I can say about their attack. The other two Deans were also there just now, and I believe that they were able to tell whose skill was superior from the fluctuations in my soul power the instant I was struck."

"Your Netherworld White Tiger is extremely strong. In a situation like that, you undoubtedly would've won if you were able to dodge their Golden Road. However, you were stunned after being hit by Xiao Xiao's soul skill. In other words, you would've been unable to dodge it. Under those circumstances, you would've definitely lost after taking their Golden Road head-on. Alright, that's all I can say. The freshmen assessment has ended. The freshmen meeting will occur tomorrow afternoon, and the top three teams will receive their prizes while we divide you all into your classes for your first year."

"If you win, don't be arrogant; if you lose, don't be discouraged. This is a necessity if you want to improve. You're all a part of the most outstanding students I've seen in this year's freshmen; I don't wish for this match to affect your future growth. Alright, let's end it here."

With that, Du Weilun turned away and hurriedly left the Assessment Area.

Dai Huabin's body swayed slightly. He was only able to avoid falling down with Zhu Lu's help. The obstinance and arrogance that had once filled his face had been swept away, with disbelief and an intense unwillingness taking its place.

I lost, I actually lost. I lost to two opponents who had cultivations far below mine. How is this possible? How could this be possible?

Huo Yuhao's eyesight was exceedingly good, which allowed him to clearly see the changes in Dai Huabin's expression. A hard-to-describe feeling of elation rose in his heart, and he suddenly discovered that beating Dai Huabin at his most conceited state seemed to be a very good way of obtaining revenge.

"We won!"

"We're the champions!"

Xiao Xiao and Wang Dong's exuberant cheers rang out, and the two of them grabbed ahold of Huo Yuhao and flung him into the air.

Three people, one team. They had finally become the champions of the freshmen assessment. But, who was the true nucleus of their team? Xiao Xiao and Wang Dong were fully aware of who it was.

Without a doubt, Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao's powerful strength had been completely displayed during their many matches, attracting the attention of all of the teachers. However, were it not for Huo Yuhao's Spiritual Detection and Spiritual Shock, as well as his grasp of the battlefield and his movements at the vital points of their battles, and were it not for Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong's fusion skill, how could they have reached their current position?

Chapter 32.2: Rewards and the Core Disciples

Huo Yuhao was extremely weak by himself, but even a Soul Grandmaster wouldn't have been able to do better than he had! Disregarding their friendship, Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao both truly admired him. Huo Yuhao had an astonishing amount of both talent and diligence, but only the two of them knew of that fact.

Zhou Yi had already left the tall stage and was running towards them. The always-strict teacher currently looked as excited as a child as she hugged Huo Yuhao's trio and cheered exuberantly.

The teacher in charge of Dai Huabin's class had also walked over to their team to console the trio. However, the expression on Dai Huabin's face hadn't changed at all. From time to time, he'd glance viciously towards Huo Yuhao's trio with his fists tightly clenched. Next time, I won't lose!

The results for the freshmen assessment's final round spread throughout the entire school extremely fast. However, Huo Yuhao once again decided to skip selling roasted fish. Instead, he went into the wilderness alongside Wang Dong, Xiao Xiao, Bei Bei, and Tang Ya, and roasted some fish for them.

Bei Bei and Tang Ya hadn't expected Huo Yuhao's trio to become the champions; they'd given up the concept when they heard that there'd be three Soul Elders participating in the knock-out tournament. And yet, despite the odds, Huo Yuhao had managed to give them an enormous surprise.

"Wang Dong, do you still want to join our Tang Sect?" Tang Ya only recalled Wang Dong's wish to join the Tang Sect after she'd finished gorging herself on roasted fish.

Wang Dong hurriedly nodded. "Of course I'd still like to join!"

Tang Ya giggled. "Alright, seeing as you guys were able to become the champions, this Sect Master can't renege on her words. I'll let you join the Tang Sect like I promised. Xiao Xiao, what about you? Are you interested as well?"

Xiao Xiao blinked and mumbled, “The Tang Sect?”

Tang Ya replied, “Right! The Tang Sect. Our Tang Sect doesn’t have many benefits to offer you if you do join, but we value all of our disciples. Our Tang Sect will definitely impart all of its secret techniques to its disciples for them to cultivate.”

Xiao Xiao smiled. “That sounds good. I’ll join as well. In any case, I don’t have a sect I’m tied to. Sister Tang Ya, I want to learn that footwork technique that Yuhao used.”

Xiao Xiao nodded graciously. “No problem. I’ll teach it to both of you when we get back.” Despite how carefree she appeared to be, she was actually extremely happy right now. There was no need to doubt Wang Dong’s strength; a large part of why Huo Yuhao’s team had been able to become champions had been due to his strength. On the other hand, Xiao Xiao’s talent didn’t lose out to Wang Dong’s in the slightest; she had twin martial souls! Tang Ya had never expected her to agree to join the Tang Sect so easily.

In reality, the reason that Xiao Xiao had been willing to join the Tang Sect was due to Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong, but Tang Ya didn’t know that. The fusion skill that Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong had unleashed had simply been too breathtaking to her; the more she stayed with them, the more favourable her impression of them became. Huo Yuhao’s strength and looks were much inferior to Wang Dong’s, but his calmness and unswerving determination were things that Wang Dong didn’t have. Xiao Xiao believed that the future Huo Yuhao would definitely wouldn’t lose out to Wang Dong in the slightest, and being in a team with them would definitely be a good thing, regardless of whether it was for her cultivation or for her future.

Good companions were a must in the world of soul masters, and Xiao Xiao had already gotten used to the carefree and uninhibited way of fighting that Huo Yuhao’s Spiritual Detection allowed. Furthermore, the three of them were getting more and more coordinated with each other; if they were able to enter Shrek Academy’s inner courtyard, they’d have to stay together for ten years at the very least. If they continued to work together like this, their team would be incomparably steadfast once they left Shrek Academy.

However, in the end, Xiao Xiao was still just a little girl who’d only thought about her future and having companions that she could trust. She hadn’t thought too deeply about the seriousness of her decision to join the Tang Sect. On the other side of the equation, Tang Ya had been able to conveniently get another member at a huge bargain.

As of now, the Tang Sect had become a five-person sect, which was more than twice the size of its original two. Although they weren’t very old, the Tang Sect had finally increased in size.

Bei Bei said, “Now that you’ve all passed the freshmen assessment, you’ll be split into your respective classes. The assault and control systems are all part of the same family, and you three are on the same team, so you’ll probably be placed in the same class. I don’t need to repeat this to Yuhao, but you two should’ve heard that our Tang Sect is famous for our hidden weapons. However, the appearance of soul tools has gradually caused hidden weapons to disappear from the stage of history. That’s the main reason that our Tang Sect has fallen into decline. As such, we need to redefine our hidden weapons in order for the Tang Sect to reemerge, but they can’t be as simple as our previous hidden weapons. The only way that we can reforge our glory is by combining hidden weapons with soul tools. What do you

two think about soul tools? After you formally becoming first year students, you should choose to study them.”

Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao glanced at each other, furrowing their brows slightly. Xiao Xiao replied in a soft voice, “Since I have two martial souls, I won’t have enough time to cultivate if I have to research and create soul tools. I feel that soul masters should focus on cultivating as their main priority. Research soul tools is something that only soul masters with subpar talent or martial souls are willing to do, no?”

Wang Dong nodded. “I agree with Xiao Xiao. I don’t really feel like learning how to forge a soul tool either.”

After speaking their mind, the two of them originally thought that Bei Bei and Tang Ya would be unhappy. However, they unexpectedly began to laugh. Helpless, Tang Ya replied, “It’s no wonder that you two are outstanding students of the Martial Soul Department! That’s the typical way of thinking for a student from the Martial Soul Department. In fact, you’re not the only ones who think that way. Even Bei Bei and I think that you wouldn’t have enough time to cultivate if you were to study soul tools as well. There won’t be a lot of time for you two to carefully study soul tools, thus, just do as you wish. The Tang Sect won’t force everyone on to a specific path of cultivation. I was just wondering whether any of you were interested in it. You all have exceptional talent, so it won’t be too good if you’re distracted. We’ll just have to recruit a few disciples that are specialised in cultivating soul tools in the future.”

However, at that moment, Huo Yuhao suddenly opened his mouth, “Teacher Xiao Ya, I wish to study soul tools.”

Tang Ya’s eyes lit up. “Yuhao, you’re willing to?”

Huo Yuhao nodded. “Soul tools have their own unique fascinating aspects. Since they were able to replace our Tang Sect’s hidden weapons and become the most valued weapons in the world, they definitely can’t be weak. I want to try them out. If I don’t have the talent for them, then nevermind. But if I do have the talent for them, I want to learn as much as I can about them.”

“Good! Good!” Tang Ya was overjoyed. “Soul tools truly do fit you. You have a mental-type martial soul, which makes it so that you’re lacking a way to attack your opponents at the moment. If you had a soul tool with you, your combat power would increase exponentially. Furthermore, the strength of your soul tools will increase as your comprehension of them increases as well.”

Bei Bei reminded him, “Junior brother, you have to manage your time well. Your martial soul has a lot of potential, thus you can’t spend too much time on your soul tools. After all, both soul power and soul rings are the foundation of a soul master. Some stronger soul tools even require soul power to activate.”

Chapter 32.3: Rewards and the Core Disciples

“Yes, Senior Brother.” Huo Yuhao answered hurriedly. He already had his own plans in mind. After witnessing the domineering might of a stationary soul tool, his interest in soul tools had been piqued. He knew that the target of his revenge was extremely strong, so he needed to use every bit of strength he could. How could he know how strong soul tools were without studying them beforehand?

He didn’t know this at the moment, but his way of thinking would be verified in the not too distant future. The study of soul tools would eventually open a huge door for him.

Tang Ya mused, “Now that I think about it, you might not be able to cultivate in the Soul Tool Department even if you wanted to. Aih, there are many prizes that come along with winning the freshmen assessment, but there are no lack of problems either! Yuhao, you should continue to cultivate properly if you can’t get into the Soul Tool Department.”

Huo Yuhao was briefly stunned, “Teacher Xiao Ya, why wouldn’t I be able to enter the Soul Tool Department?”

Tang Ya replied, “Do you know what the rewards for the freshmen assessment are?”

When they heard the word ‘rewards’, Huo Yuhao, Wang Dong, and Xiao Xiao’s eyes lit up. They weren’t able to conceal their desire much because of how young they were. Shrek Academy was the number one soul master academy in the world, and they had managed to become the champions of the freshmen assessment. How could their rewards be lacking in any way?

Wang Dong impatiently asked, “Teacher Xiao Ya, what will our rewards be?” He’d already started to call Tang Ya ‘teacher’, just like Huo Yuhao, despite having just joined the Tang Sect.

Tang Ya replied, “There’s a slight difference between each year’s rewards, but they’ll generally be the same. Generally speaking, the rewards are determined based off the quality of the entire batch of freshmen. I don’t know about past years, but I’ve never seen a Soul Elder in a batch of freshmen during the few years that I’ve been in Shrek Academy; you’re the first batch of freshmen I’ve ever seen that has had Soul Elders among them. Because of that, I reckon that you’ll get extremely good rewards. I don’t know about the other rewards you’ll receive, but there’s always a specific reward given to the champions of the freshmen assessment, and that is—the opportunity to become a core disciple.”

“A core disciple?” This wasn’t the first time they’d heard of the term. Teacher Zhou had mentioned it in the past.

Tang Ya nodded. “You’re the champions of the freshmen assessment, so there wouldn’t be any problems for you to become a core disciple of the Martial Soul Department. However, once you become a core disciple of the Martial Soul Department, the Academy will give you even more resources in order to ensure that you diligently pursue your studies and become an even stronger soul master. Because of this, the Martial Soul Department will naturally not allow you to enter the Soul Tool Department. After all, the Martial Soul Department has always held a leading role in our academy.”

Only then did Huo Yuhao’s trio understand what Bei Bei had meant. Huo Yuhao couldn’t help but feel happy when he recalled the nutritious meals core disciples ate everyday.

When Bei Bei glanced towards Huo Yuhao, a trace of worry flashed through his eyes. Still, he didn’t say it out loud. Instead, he thought to himself, I hope that I’m just worrying for nothing.

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It was another bright and beautiful morning, while the air within Shrek Academy was both clean and extremely moist due to the presence of the Sea God’s Lake.

All of the students who’d passed the freshmen assessment were gathered in Shrek Plaza, waiting for to be assigned to their classes.

The Director of the Martial Soul Department—Du Weilun—quickly walked to the front of Shrek Plaza, alongside ten or so other teachers. Huo Yuhao only recognised two of the teachers who were following him. One of which was naturally their previous class's teacher, Zhou Yi, while the other was Teacher Wang Yan. He only had a vague impression of the other teachers.

Du Weilun held a folder in his hands and swept his gaze over the small group of students with a smile on his face. "I'm sure that everyone already knows this, but the freshmen assessment's knock-out tournament has now ended. The top three places have also been decided. As such, I will now formally announce the the top three teams and hand out their prizes. Third place in the freshmen assessment goes to Team Huang Chutian. Team members: Huang Chutian, Lan Susu, and Lan Luoluo. Please step forward."

Right, Team Huang Chutian, who Huo Yuhao's team had previously defeated, had obtained third place in the freshmen assessment. They'd lost to Dai Huabin's team during the semifinals, but they'd been able to obtain third place by beating Zhou Sichen's team. In actual fact, they'd been extremely lucky. During their match with Team Zhou Sichen, the Lan sisters had recovered the ability to use their fusion skill, allowing them to defeat their opponents. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been able to win based on their individual strength alone.

The three walked up to Du Weilun with Huang Chutian standing in front. Their young faces were slightly flushed due to their excitement. Obtaining third place in the freshmen assessment had far surpassed their expectations!

The first year students immediately let out a thunderous applause. After the knock-out tournament, there were only around three hundred students left in Year 1. This was a third of the number of students who'd been present at the beginning of the year.

"Second place goes to Team Dai Huabin. Team members: Dai Huabin, Zhu Lu, and Cui Yajie. Step forward."

Applause rang out yet again, but Dai Huabin's team had no traces of excitement on their faces as they stepped forward. This was especially so for Dai Huabin; his expression was clouded, and his head was lowered slightly, as if he had something else on his mind. His eyes were even somewhat bloodshot.

After pausing for a brief moment, Du Weilun used a slightly louder voice to continue speaking, "Next, can everyone enthusiastically cheer for the first place champions of the freshmen assessment! They are—Team Wang Dong! Team members: Wang Dong, Xiao Xiao, and Huo Yuhao."

The crowd immediately burst into enthusiastic cheers, but Huo Yuhao's trio were somewhat stunned when they heard Du Weilun's announcement.

According to the name that Class 1 had handed in to the academy, their team should've been called Team Huo Yuhao, as Huo Yuhao was the leader of their team! However, the trio didn't dare to slow down under the cheers and applause from the many Year 1 students. They hurriedly stepped forward, but Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao deliberately slowed down as they walked, allowing Huo Yuhao to remain in front. n(-Ove**1b**1n

A smile appeared in Du Weilun's eyes as he watched the three of them walk forward, indicating for them to stand in the middle. Huo Yuhao towards Dai Huabin, but Dai Huabin himself was actually looking at Wang Dong. He clearly didn't think that his loss had anything to do with Huo Yuhao.

Du Weilun said, "Alright, I will now announce the prizes for the top three teams of the freshmen assessment. First, each of the members of the top three teams will receive a prize from the Academy itself. All of them will be able to request assistance from the Academy in order to obtain a soul ring that he or she can withstand when the time arises. Furthermore, it will be a soul ring that is most suitable for them."

Once he finished speaking, the students of Year 1 immediately let out astonished gasps. This prize was equivalent to the Academy promising them that their next soul ring would definitely be an optimum one. For example, if Huo Yuhao could withstand a seven hundred year soul ring for his second one, the Academy would find a suitable seven hundred year soul ring for him. This would be the case for every single member of the top three teams. This prize was extremely valuable.

Chapter 32.4: Rewards and the Core Disciples

Du Weilun continued, "In light of both Team Wang Dong's exceptional performance, and their lossless win-streak throughout the entire tournament, the Academy has also decided to award them something special. However, this reward will be kept secret by the Academy. When the class-division has been finished, the three of you can follow me to collect it."

A special reward on top of what they'd already received? This really showcased the difference between the champion team and the second and third place teams. Huo Yuhao's trio immediately became excited; even the awkwardness that they felt from Du Weilun calling them 'Team Wang Dong' had diminished greatly.

Nobody had any objections to Huo Yuhao's team obtaining an additional reward, as they'd managed to defeat teams led by the Soul Elder-ranked Ning Tian, Xie Huanyue, and Dai Huabin throughout the course of the tournament. The three great Soul Elders among the freshmen had all lost to their team; it wasn't simply luck that they'd become champions. For them to receive even more rewards would definitely be within reason.

Du Weilun said, "Alright, you all can return."

Huo Yuhao and the other eight students returned to their original positions.

Du Weilun then said, "The quality of this year's students exceeds that of previous years, thus I hope that you all can continue to work hard. The Heavens reward the diligent, so I hope that all of you will be able to smoothly graduate while obtaining excellent results. Now then, seeing that a few outstanding students have appeared in this year's freshmen assessment, the Academy has decided to promote a few students to core disciples. I will now announce the names of the students that've been promoted."

Shrek Plaza immediately became completely silent. After all, core disciples didn't only come from the top three teams! Du Weilun hadn't said it outright, but who didn't know that core disciples would receive a large amount of resources from the Academy? This issue concerned every single student present, thus, they all listened attentively, in fear that they'd miss their own name being called.

Du Weilun opened the file he'd been carrying, then began to read through the names of the students who'd been promoted to core disciples, "In accordance with the performance of the students during the freshmen assessment, the Academy has decided to choose these following students as core disciples: Wang Dong, Xiao Xiao, Dai Huabin, Zhu Lu, Zhou Sichen, Cao Jinxuan, Lan Susu, Lan Luoluo, Ning Tian, and Wu Feng."

The instant that Du Weilun had mentioned core disciples, Huo Yuhao, Wang Dong, and Xiao Xiao simultaneously thought inwardly, Teacher Xiao Ya's information was actually correct.

When Du Weilun called out Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao's names at the very start, the two of them clearly became excited. However, this was followed by astonishment when they realized that Du Weilun hadn't called out Huo Yuhao's name. Instead, he'd directly skipped to Dai Huabin. How was this possible? Huo Yuhao was their leader!

They still held a trace of hope in their hearts as Du Weilun continued down his list, but Huo Yuhao's name still wasn't announced.

Huo Yuhao was also astonished. In that instant, he felt as if something had been wrenched out from his heart, and his face immediately turned pale white.

Ever since he'd entered Shrek Academy, he'd cultivated with all his might, and had worked tirelessly to improve himself. When the others were resting, he'd been cultivating; when the others had been slacking off, he'd still been cultivating. When the freshmen assessment had begun, he'd put his all into working together with his teammates, which had allowed him to obtain the highest form of glory a freshmen could receive. But why? Why wasn't I chosen as a core disciple? Why?

On the surface, Huo Yuhao's expression hadn't changed. However, his heart had a dark side that ordinary children wouldn't have. The darkness that had gradually accumulated during his childhood had nearly exploded out when he saw Dai Huabin, but he'd forcefully suppressed it. However, right now, he once again felt like he was going to lose control of himself. Why, why did they have to do this to me? He finally realised why Du Weilun had referred to their team as 'Team Wang Dong' instead of 'Team Huo Yuhao' during his speech. This had all been planned from the start!

Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao were naturally able to sense how strangely Huo Yuhao was acting. Wang Dong hurriedly grabbed ahold of Huo Yuhao's arm, fearing that he'd act rashly. However, he didn't know what to say at the moment. Both he and Xiao Xiao had become core disciples, but Huo Yuhao hadn't. How would he be feeling right now?

At this point, Du Weilun continued, "However, although a few students are currently somewhat lacking in terms of their talent and ability, they still performed exceptionally well during the freshmen assessment. As such, the Academy has decided to temporarily let them enjoy the benefits of a core disciple until the school year finishes. If they're able to make a breakthrough by next year's promotion assessment, the Academy will consider making them formal core disciples. These students are as follows: Huo Yuhao, Cui Yajie, Huang Chutian, Long Xiangyue, and Nanmen Yun'er. The announcement is now finished."

Huo Yuhao's gaze was somewhat vacant, but the anger in his heart gradually receded. That's right! My abilities are still somewhat lacking. Of all the people that were chosen as core disciples, I'm the only one

who's yet to reach Rank 20. A pained look flashed through his eyes. Lowering his head, Huo Yuhao buried his sadness deep in his heart.

If it weren't for the fact that I'm able to release a fusion skill with Wang Dong, maybe I might not have even received the temporary treatment of a core disciple. But, who can I blame? I can only blame the fact that I'm not strong enough yet, and the fact that my first soul ring is only a ten year soul ring in their eyes. A self-depreciating smile appeared at the corner of Huo Yuhao's lips, but when he raised his head back up, his smile had disappeared, and a trace of coldness had appeared in his eyes.

"Yuhao, are you okay?" Wang Dong whispered.

Huo Yuhao softly shook his head, then forced himself to smile. "I'm fine. I just don't have the qualifications to become a core disciple. After all, I'm only a Rank 17 Soul Master."

Wang Dong hurriedly replied, "No, that's not it! They don't know how important you are..."

Xiao Xiao nodded her head in agreement.

Huo Yuhao's smile became slightly more natural. "I'm really fine. Didn't Director Du say that I'd still be able to enjoy the treatment of a core disciple? That's already an extremely good reward. I'll continue to work hard. Who knows? I might be able to formally become a core disciple by the time the promotion assessment comes around."

Wang Dong sighed softly as he released Huo Yuhao's arm. He'd been together with Huo Yuhao for a long time, and they were companions who shared a fusion skill. He understood Huo Yuhao's personality to some extent by now: Huo Yuhao had a calm appearance and a gentle temperament on the surface, but he was actually a very strong-minded person. When he'd heard of Huo Yuhao's background, Wang Dong had gradually begun to understand the obstinance and unbending will that Huo Yuhao had buried deep within his heart. However, no one else would be able to help him. If he wanted to cross this threshold in his heart, he'd have to rely on himself.

Following that, the division of classes began. Year 1 was split into four classes: Class 1, which had assault-type and control-type soul masters, Class 2, which had defense-type and agility-type soul masters, Class 3, which had auxiliary-type soul masters, and Class 4, which had food-type, healing-type, and other unique types of both Battle and Tool Soul Masters.

Without a doubt, the strongest class was naturally Class 1. Huo Yuhao, Wang Dong, and Xiao Xiao were all placed in this class. In Class 2, the strongest student in it was undoubtedly the defense specialist, Xie Huanyue. His Rubberdon truly stood out as a uniquely defensive martial soul. Class 3 was an auxiliary-type class, but it didn't consist of only auxiliary-type soul masters. Instead, it was meant for both Battle and Tool Soul Masters who could directly aid their teammates during a battle. An example would be Ning Tian, who had the Seven Treasures Glazed Pagoda. As for Class 4, it consisted of a diverse range of soul masters. Comparatively speaking, they had no combat power whatsoever. Instead they had unique abilities that fit within certain special fields. Of them, the most important soul masters in Class 4 were food-type and healing-type ones.

Almost all year groups were split this way, with the classes from higher years having fewer students in each class. Shrek Academy's expulsion rate had always been extremely high; the number of students who were able to successfully graduate from the outer courtyard each year didn't exceed fifty. In other

words, if 20% of the current three hundred or so students were able to graduate, that would be an extremely good result.

When everyone had been placed in their classes, the teachers in charge of each class introduced themselves. The only piece of good news for Huo Yuhao was that Zhou Yi was one of the teachers in charge of Class 1. Every class had two teachers, and the other teacher in charge of Huo Yuhao's class was Wang Yan, who'd viewed him highly.

Wang Yan, who'd originally intended to teach the higher years, had actually chosen to come to Year 1's Class 1 and teach alongside Zhou Yi for the sake of Huo Yuhao, but not even Zhou Yi knew that.

"Alright, follow your new teachers and return to the school buildings. Wang Dong, you three follow me and claim your prize." Director Du Weilun announced.

Huo Yuhao seemed to have returned to normal. At the very least, one wouldn't be able to see that his emotions had been affected based on his external appearance alone. The three proceeded to follow Du Weilun to the teacher's offices, which were located behind the higher year's school buildings.

Du Weilun's office was situated on the top floor, and his office was much bigger than Zhou Yi's. Although it didn't have any fanciful decorations, there were four bookcases inside, which were filled with an abundant number of books.

Du Weilun smiled and pointed towards the sofa. "Come, sit. Huo Yuhao, don't let this burden you. You've seen it as well. It wasn't just you; there were also a few students from the top three teams who weren't able to become core disciples. You performed extremely well, especially considering the fact that you were able to help Wang Dong release a fusion skill. However, your individual ability still needs to be improved. When you need your second soul ring, you can request assistance from the Academy in order to ensure that you obtain an optimal soul ring. If you also manage to perform exceptionally well during your Year 2 promotion assessment, the Academy will consider formally accepting you as a core disciple."

Wang Dong began, "Director Du, it's not like that! Huo Yuhao wasn't helping me, it was..." At that point, he was suddenly stopped by Du Weilun, who'd raised his hand. In Du Weilun's opinion, this was merely a show of friendship between two young kids.

Huo Yuhao also tugged on Wang Dong's sleeve, then replied respectfully to Du Weilun, "Director Du, I'll definitely work hard. Thank you for your concern."

Chapter 33.1: Two Soul Bones

Du Weilun was extremely pleased with Huo Yuhao's attitude. Nodding his head, the large red gem on his right hand flashed, causing a leather bag to appear in his hands.

The leather bag seemed to be a soul tool, as there were a few dark-colored patterns inscribed on the brown bag, and Huo Yuhao was able to sense minute undulations of soul power from it.

Du Weilun said, "Children, seeing as how you were able to defeat three Soul Elders, and have become the champions of the freshmen assessment, I've requested that the Academy make an exception and give you another prize. However, there's only a single prize—which means that you'll have to choose who to give it to. At the same time, this is the most valuable prize that the Academy has given out in the

past three hundred years. Take a look.” After he’d finished speaking, he handed the leather bag to Wang Dong.

Wang Dong reached out his hand and received the leather bag. At that moment, he was still feeling somewhat downcast due to Huo Yuhao’s inability to become a core disciple. As a result of this, his excitement towards the reward had dulled greatly. When he’d received the leather bag, he subconsciously untied the string holding it closed.

A ball of yellow light was instantly released from the leather bag without any warning. Under the astonished gazes of Huo Yuhao’s trio, it slowly rose into the air.

It was a small yet exquisite bone that seemed to be about the size of one’s palm. It radiated a pale yellow light, which caused the heartbeats of Huo Yuhao’s trio to palpitate the instant they saw it. The strong undulations of soul power it emanated caused the air within the office to seemingly become viscous. This was the first time that they’d experienced a strange feeling like this.

“This, this is... a soul bone?” Wang Dong asked, an astonished look on his face. Even though Du Weilun had hinted that their prize was extremely valuable, they’d never even thought that it’d be a soul bone. This was a soul bone! This was something that was a hundred times more valuable than a soul ring to a soul master!

A soul ring was an energy-based object that would always appear when a soul beast died, but the chances of a soul bone appearing were less than one in ten thousand. Even though higher ranked soul beasts had a higher chance to drop soul bones, only hundred thousand year soul beasts were guaranteed to drop soul bones.

If a soul master managed to obtain a soul bone, their strength would immediately go up a level, which would allow them to have an enormous advantage against other soul masters of the same rank. However, a soul master could only have six soul bones at most: The head bone, the torso bone, and the four limb bones. Of the six possible soul bones one could have, the most valuable one was the torso bone. However, it was also the rarest among the six. The head bone was the second most valuable, while the four limb bones were slightly less precious.

Even though that was the case, a soul bone would always be the most precious item at a country’s auction when it was present, regardless of which country the auction was held in. Furthermore, there wasn’t a market where one could simply buy a soul bone. One would need a hundred thousand gold soul coins, at the very minimum, in order to stand a chance at buying one in an auction. More often than not, one would need to barter to obtain a soul bone.

Regardless of how rich Shrek Academy was, they still didn’t have that many soul bones stored away. Only the most outstanding students, or students who’d performed extraordinarily meritorious deeds, would have a chance at obtaining a soul bone as a reward. When the Academy handed out a reward such as this, it signified that they thought that the benefits and influence they’d gain in the future outweighed the cost of the soul bone.

Huo Yuhao still had some resentment buried deep in his heart from not being made a core disciple. However, the instant he saw the soul bone, both it and the threshold in his heart gradually disappeared.

It wasn't because it was something that he desired, but rather because it allowed him to realise how fair the Academy was.

He hadn't been able to become a core disciple of the Martial Soul Department, yet could the Academy be blamed for being unfair? After all, he only had a single soul ring! Freshmen with higher cultivations than him were commonplace, and even though he was a member of the champion team, he had only been a bystander in the eyes of those watching. His first soul ring was also only a white one. If he'd been placed in Du Weilun's position, would he have been willing to let himself become a core disciple?

The knot in his heart had already begun to undo itself, thus Huo Yuhao's expression began to relax more and more. Following that, his original stiffly respectful attitude became much more natural.

Du Weilun smiled. "Didn't expect that, eh? Correct, your prize is a soul bone. However, you all should know just how valuable soul bones are. Because of this, there's only a single one despite there being three of you. As such, you'll have to decide who to give it to after you get back. However, don't let this soul bone affect your friendship. Even though soul bones are hard to find, good companions are even rarer than soul bones. Now then, I'll give you guys a quick rundown of this soul bone."

"This soul bone is something that I chose especially for you guys, as both assault-type and control-type soul masters can use it. It's a left leg bone known as the 'Emptybright Devil Leopard's Left Leg Bone'. After fusing with it, a soul master will experience an increase in speed, as well as obtain an offensive skill that can be activated using their left leg. However, the greatest benefit of this soul bone lies in the fact that it will produce different skills when fused with different martial souls. However, it'll definitely be suitable for all three of you. I'll give it to you now, along with this leather bag. The leather bag can conceal the soul power undulations generated by the soul bone. You should fuse with it as quickly as possible as, even though the Academy grounds are extremely safe, a precious treasure can doom an innocent man. Also, you'll have to keep this a secret for the Academy. Now then, I trust that you'll know what to do."

After putting the soul bone away, Du Weilun sent them off. The trio respectfully bid him farewell as they left the school building.

The instant they stepped out of the building, they all simultaneously stopped walking. Huo Yuhao, Wang Dong, and Xiao Xiao all glanced towards one other, after which Xiao Xiao said, "Let's give it to Yuhao."

Wang Dong nodded. "I agree."

After saying this, the two looked towards Huo Yuhao. Wang Dong had already placed the leather bag in front of him. In terms of individual strength, there was no doubt that Huo Yuhao was currently the weakest of the three. If he obtained this left leg soul bone, he'd finally possess an attacking skill. Combined with the increase in speed he'd receive from fusing with the soul bone, Huo Yuhao would immediately have the strength to contend against the other core disciples.

However, Huo Yuhao resolutely shook his head. "No, I can't have this soul bone. Wang Dong, have you forgotten the concept of 'ladies first'? We have to give this soul bone to Xiao Xiao. This is only our first assessment in the Academy. So long as we work even harder and obtain even better results, we'll definitely receive another soul bone as a reward. Of the three of us, Xiao Xiao is the only girl. You both

recognise me as your team leader, so how could I take something as good as this away from the both of you?"

Although he was quite young, he could tell that Du Weilun hadn't planned to give this soul bone to him. Furthermore, it was as he'd said. As a leader, how could he reap all the benefits for himself?

Xiao Xiao was stunned. "Yuhao, you can't be like this. You played the most important role in our matches. At the same time, you're the person who needs this soul bone the most!"

Huo Yuhao simply smiled. "Xiao Xiao, you don't need to say anything else. I've already decided. No matter what, I don't want this soul bone. Haven't you at least thought about it? It's true that I might be able to obtain an attacking-type skill when I fuse with this soul bone, but I'm a mental-type soul master; having a skill like that might not be a good thing for me! I need to work even harder, and use my own ability to become even stronger. Giving me a soul bone right now might unwittingly make me overly reliant on the attack power it gives me, but you're a different story. Even though you have twin martial souls, an increase in speed is definitely the best benefit you could receive right now, as an increase in speed would make it much safer for you to activate your two Tool Souls on the battlefield. I've already thought it through; this soul bone is most suited for you, there's no doubt about it. Ladies first, you don't have to be polite."

Wang Dong looked at Huo Yuhao, then glanced at Xiao Xiao. Helpless, he said, "Yuhao, you're valuing a lover over your friend!"

Xiao Xiao giggled. "Save it, you. To him, you're the lover and I'm the friend. It's fine if a girl and a guy hug each other during a fusion skill, but you two guys hug each other for yours, hehe."

Wang Dong immediately flew into a rage and threw the leather bag that contained the soul bone towards Xiao Xiao. Xiao Xiao caught it and continued to laugh. "I won't be polite then. If we get another soul bone as a team, one of you two can have it."

After she'd finished speaking, she put the soul bone away in her storage-type soul tool. An inconcealable smile of excitement had appeared on her face.

Wang Dong turned to Huo Yuhao. "Yuhao, you weren't able to become a core disciple. This..."

Huo Yuhao shook his head. "You don't have to say anything, I'm fine. I've already thought it through. Even though I might have the qualifications to be a core disciple when I'm together with you, what about when I'm alone? Would I still be able to defeat my enemies? If my opponent had an area of effect ability and was wary of my Spiritual Shock, I definitely wouldn't even have a chance at beating him without your help. The Academy not choosing me as a core disciple was a fair decision. Thus, I need to work even harder to prove myself."

"Well said." A voice that was familiar, yet made them shudder, suddenly rang out. They turned to see Zhou Yi slowly approaching them.

"Teacher Zhou." Huo Yuhao's trio couldn't help but feel astonished. Wasn't Teacher Zhou supposed to have taken the students of Class 1 back to the school buildings with Teacher Wang? Why had she suddenly appeared here?

Zhou Yi looked deeply towards Huo Yuhao, then revealed a rarely-seen look of gratification and satisfaction. “Yuhao, I came to see you. I didn’t think that you’d be able to figure it out by yourself. However, I’m very happy; you’re worthy to be called a disciple of mine. Oh, right. Since you guys were able to become the champions of the freshman tournament, I have a present for you as well.” After she finished speaking, the storage-type soul tool on her hand, which was in the form of a silver bracelet, flashed. A leather bag appeared in her hands, and she passed it to Huo Yuhao.

The leather bag was virtually identical to the one that Director Du Weilun had given them, which instantly flabbergasted Huo Yuhao’s trio.

“It can’t be?” The three said in unison.

Zhou Yi was stunned as well. “What can’t be?”

Xiao Xiao speechlessly took out the leather bag containing the Emptybright Devil Leopard’s Left Leg Bone that she’d just put away. They needed to keep it a secret from other students, but why would they hide it from the teacher in charge of their class?

Chapter 33.2: Two Soul Bones

Zhou Yi was instantly astonished. “This is...? Is this the prize the school gave you?”

Huo Yuhao’s trio simultaneously nodded.

A trace of excitement appeared in Zhou Yi’s eyes. “It’s no wonder that Director Du was being so secretive. He’d actually planned to give you something as valuable as this. What soul bone is this?”

Huo Yuhao gave her a brief explanation of its abilities, and told her that they planned to give it to Xiao Xiao.

Zhou Yi nodded. “You’re all good kids! You have to know, even Soul Emperor—or even Soul Douluo-ranked experts—would find it hard to remain calm when they were facing a soul bone! I’m only giving you another soul bone because you deserve it. Do you still remember that match you guys had with Ning Tian, Wu Feng, and Nanmen Yun’er? During that match, I made a bet with their teacher; that’s how I won this soul bone. It’s a relatively poor quality soul bone, but it has the ability to fuse with other soul bones. If you can find two more soul bones that have similar attributes to this one, you can fuse them together with this one. It’s a priceless treasure to someone who needs it, but the chances of you being able to obtain two other soul bones with similar attributes to this one are simply too small. Thus, I’d suggest you fuse with it right away. It’s a left arm bone, and it’s known as the Secret Law Soul’s Left Arm Bone. Actually... this can’t really be considered a true soul bone, as it wasn’t produced by a single soul beast.”

“This Secret Law Soul Bone was obtained through a special, yet brutal method. To obtain a single Secret Law Soul Bone, one has to kill a hundred soul beasts of the same type within an hour, then use a secret technique to activate all of their soul rings at the same time. Even then, there’s only a 10% chance that it will produce this soul bone. It’s a relatively simple method of obtaining a soul bone, but due to its low success rate and brutality, very few soul masters do it. If you directly fuse with it, it’ll increase your soul power by 5%. It doesn’t sound like much, but this increase will always be there, regardless of your cultivation rank. Once your cultivation rank has increased, its effects will become much more obvious.”

Huo Yuhao received the leather bag that Zhou Yi gave him, then turned to Wang Dong. However, Wang Dong immediately faced away from him. “Don’t look at me, I don’t want it. Don’t you think that it’s a little bit too ordinary for me?”

Huo Yuhao felt touched when he saw Wang Dong’s seemingly arrogant expression. Naturally, he knew that Wang Dong was deliberately doing this to give the soul bone to him. It was just as he’d previously said to Xiao Xiao; it’d be no big deal to split it among themselves if they obtained one in the future. However, obtaining a soul bone was easier said than done! At the same time, who knew when they’d get another soul bone?

Wang Dong’s cheek became rosy under the rays of the sun, which added a faint layer of light to his face. Although he’d turned away, Huo Yuhao could still see the determination in his eyes. He could sense that Wang Dong was trying to make up for the injustices he’d suffered, thus he didn’t refuse the soul bone again. He carefully put the Secret Law Soul’s soul bone away while burying the feelings of brotherly love deep in his heart. Sometimes, the love between brothers wasn’t said out loud, but shown through actions.

“En, this soul bone will be quite useful. Let’s hang onto it for now, I’ll help you use it soon.” The Skydream Iceworm’s voice rang out in Huo Yuhao’s mind without any prior warning, jolting him.

“Brother Skydream.” Hearing its voice, Huo Yuhao immediately felt as if he’d seen a close relative of his. The grievances he’d suppressed for so long immediately exploded out, causing his eyes to turn somewhat red. However, Zhou Yi, Wang Dong, and Xiao Xiao naturally assumed that he’d been moved by Wang Dong’s actions.

The Skydream Iceworm spoke unhappily, “Little Yuhao, don’t feel so down. You naturally have this brother supporting you. Those humans are so short-sighted, thinking that this brother’s soul ring is a ten year one. Humph, you don’t have to worry. In a few years, I’ll make them tremble when they see this ten year soul ring. I’m going to repeat this again—quickly raise your soul power to Rank 20. When that time comes, I’ll make sure that no one dares to look down on you.”

“En, I’ll definitely get to Rank 20 as quickly as possible. I’ll definitely get there before I graduate from Year 1.” The tension in his heart had disappeared, but he still felt a sense of urgency from not being able to become a core disciple. With his current cultivation, it was definitely hard to say whether or not he could continue his studies within Shrek Academy.

Zhou Yi said, “Wang Dong, go back with Xiao Xiao first. I have some things I need to say to Huo Yuhao.”

Wang Dong looked towards Huo Yuhao, his large, beautiful eyes full of encouragement. He waved his fist towards Huo Yuhao, then walked away with Xiao Xiao.

Zhou Yi walked over to Huo Yuhao and grabbed his arm with her right hand. Immediately afterwards, Huo Yuhao once again experienced the feeling of flying through the clouds.

Not long afterwards, Zhou Yi stopped. To his astonishment, Huo Yuhao discovered that they’d arrived back at the Soul Tool Testing Area. This place had left a deep impression on him the last time he’d come here; it’d also solidified his wish to study the creation and utilisation of soul tools. At this moment, he naturally knew what returning here signified.

“Teacher Zhou, is Teacher Fan Yu willing to accept me as his disciple?” Huo Yuhao asked, a trace of surprise present in his voice.

Zhou Yi nodded slightly. “You’re a smart child. However, I must warn you. Because you’re a first year, your current cultivation puts you in a very dangerous position. The minimum requirement to become a second year student is to have two soul rings, thus you’ll have to get your second one by the end of your first year. I don’t have any objections towards you cultivating the art of soul tools along with you continuing your studies in the Martial Soul Department, but you still need to have a good foundation in the field of martial souls, even if you decide to specialise in soul tools in the future. As such, you’ll have to manage your time rationally.”

Zhou Yi brought Huo Yuhao into the Soul Tool Testing Area as she spoke.

The sturdy-bodied Fan Yu quickly walked over to them when they walked in. Compared to the cold and stern face he’d had last time, the current Fan Yu had a much gentler expression on his face. He took the initiative to pat Huo Yuhao on the shoulder and said, “I watched the finals of your freshmen assessment. It was extremely brilliant, you did very well.”

Zhou Yi looked at Fan Yu with a somewhat stupefied look on her face. Although she seemed like a strict person on the outside, she was actually a warm-hearted person on the inside. On the other hand, she understood Fan Yu’s personality very well; he was a person who rarely complimented other people, and was also incomparably arrogant on the inside. Huo Yuhao was only a first year student, therefore it was no small thing for him to be praised so highly by Fan Yu.

“Greetings, Teacher Fan Yu.” Huo Yuhao greeted Fan Yu respectfully.

Fan Yu nodded. “I’ve heard from Zhou Yi that your Spiritual Detection has improved a lot. Come, let’s try it out.” A person like Fan Yu, who’d devoted his entire life to research, was always straightforward when dealing with things.

“Alright.” As his pure white million year soul ring rose from his feet, Huo Yuhao’s pupils turned pale gold. An extremely minute amount of pale gold flashed through his white soul ring, but nobody managed to notice it.

Huo Yuhao instantly released his Spiritual Detection, encapsulating everything within a fifty meter diameter.

When he sensed the omni-directional three-dimensional image appear in his mind, Fan Yu nodded in satisfaction. “En, it’s actually improved by quite a bit. It’s no wonder you guys were able to become the champions of the freshmen assessment. With your Spiritual Detection, you guys would’ve definitely been able to predict all of your opponent’s movements. Eh...?”

As he spoke, Fan Yu suddenly realised that the image of the Spiritual Detection in his mind was changing. The originally omni-directional image had begun to shrink towards a single direction, but its range was gradually increasing. This strange feeling of having one’s senses extended was simply too magical.

Zhou Yi was also under the effects of Huo Yuhao’s Spiritual Detection Sharing, thus she felt it too. Her eyes immediately widened, and she cried out involuntarily, “How are you doing this?!”

Huo Yuhao saw the astonished gazes of the two teachers, but didn't reply; when he was focusing his Spiritual Detection towards a single direction, he had to concentrate intensely.

Finally, when the range of his Spiritual Detection had reached its limit, he stopped, then cancelled the activation of his soul skill.

Fan Yu looked at him, a fierce gaze in his eyes. "A hundred and twenty one meters. Very good, you've done what I asked you to do. Yuhao, let me ask you this: Will the range of your Spiritual Detection continue to increase along with your cultivation?"

After hesitating for a moment, Huo Yuhao nodded.

"Good!" Fan Yu shouted loudly, jolting both Huo Yuhao and Zhou Yi. nOVe-lb-1n

Fan Yu patted Huo Yuhao's shoulder again. "Follow me." With that, he turned around and walked back towards the Testing Area with large strides.

"Caitou, come here." Fan Yu waved his hand, causing He Caitou—who Huo Yuhao had previously seen—to quickly run over. The moment he saw Huo Yuhao, he immediately shouted in a surprised tone, "It's you! Huo Yuhao, long time no see!"

Huo Yuhao smiled when he saw He Caitou's simple face. "How are you, brother He? You look even sturdier today."

It was true; the dark-skinned He Caitou basically had the physique of an adult at this point. His muscles were rugged, while his robust body wasn't far off from Fan Yu's.

Fan Yu continued, "Caitou, show Yuhao the power of soul masters from the Soul Tool Department. You don't need to hold back."

"Sure!" He Caitou clearly became somewhat excited. He quickly shed his upper garments, revealing his sturdy body. After doing so, he did something that flabbergasted Huo Yuhao.

He Caitou's hands flew about his body as he slapped the belt on his waist unceasingly. This caused countless strange metal objects to fly out from his storage belt, which he then equipped.

It took less than ten seconds for him to finish equipping himself with the strange metal objects. The current him was completely covered in pieces of black metal, however Huo Yuhao naturally had no idea what the black metal was or what it was used for.

Afterwards, He Caitou's body glowed, and his three soul rings lit up. He had two yellow and one purple soul rings—the optimum combination of soul rings. Immediately afterwards, his first soul ring lit up, causing a two or so centimeter long thick yellow object that was as long as an adult's palm to appear in his mouth.

He casually raised his left hand, and a spark appeared on the black metal covering his hand. The thick, long object in his mouth lit up, in turn causing white smoke to rise into the air.

Huo Yuhao's facial muscles twitched violently, but he forcefully stopped himself from laughing. The thing in He Caitou's mouth was simply too similar to a freshly baked, piping hot... turd....

Naturally, the object seemed to have a much harder texture....

Chapter 33.3: Two Soul Bones

At that moment, He Caitou's cheeks suddenly bulged, like he'd forcefully inhaled something. Afterwards, a cloud of smoke left his mouth. With the "turd" still in his mouth, he walked into the Testing Area.

Even though Huo Yuhao was stunned by the strange effect of He Caitou's martial soul, he hurried to activate his Spiritual Detection to observe He Caitou's movements more carefully, as the omnidirectional three-dimensional image allowed him to sense things around him much more clearly.

The instant he activated his Spiritual Detection, Huo Yuhao immediately sensed that something was amiss. He discovered that the testing area seemed to have come alive, as large metallic balls with diameters of at least half-a-meter had begun to appear from all directions. **nOVe-lb-1n**

"Brother He, be careful!" Huo Yuhao couldn't help but cry out.

He Caitou turned towards him, then smiled and gave him a thumbs up. Immediately afterwards, He Caitou's aura drastically changed.

The normally straightforward He Caitou's gaze suddenly became sharp as he moved the 'turd' in his mouth to the side and breathed in deeply. Afterwards, his movements instantly became as vigorous as a cheetah.

Two large metallic balls had appeared beside him, and were rapidly flying towards him. He Caitou swiftly ran to the side, then rolled forward, allowing him to dive out of the way. He immediately turned around afterwards, and the two black metal pieces he'd put on his shoulders opened up, revealing minuscule holes.

At this point, Huo Yuhao sensed that the soul power in He Caitou's body had suddenly began to surge violently and was rapidly gathering in his shoulders. As soon as it had, he released two thin rays of white light from his shoulders, which accurately struck the golden balls hurtling towards him.

Huo Yuhao noticed that He Caitou's shoulder muscles had slightly moved the instant he released the white ray of light; most likely for the sake of adjusting the white laser's direction.

The two metallic balls paused slightly for a moment, before unexpectedly melting midair.

This, this is the power of a soul tool? Huo Yuhao was stunned. He knew, based on his Spiritual Detection, that the two metallic balls were hollow on the inside. However, they were still relatively heavy! And yet, they'd instantly been blasted apart by the two thin lasers.

However, Huo Yuhao was even more astonished by what happened afterwards. The black pieces of metal on He Caitou's shoulds rapidly extended to cover He Caitou's arms, causing six foot-long metal tubes that were as thick as a child's arm to appear on both of his arms. After the metal pieces had finished extending, Huo Yuhao was able to see He Caitou shift his soul power from his shoulders to his arms, which caused the six metal tubes to spit tongues of fire. In that instant, He Caitou's berserk soul power distorted even Huo Yuhao's Spiritual Detection.¹

The six huge metallic balls that were charging towards He Caitou were all struck violently, multiple depressions appearing on them. He Caitou had only been firing the six metal tubes for less than three seconds before the six metallic balls had been entirely blasted apart.

As soon as they disappeared, six more metallic balls appeared to both his left and right sides and shot towards him.

He Caitou angled the 'turd' in his mouth upwards, revealing a fearless smile. Then, the black pieces of metal all over his body started moving. Furthermore, it seemed like they'd all been activated by him moving his muscles. As soon as they finished moving, He Caitou's soul power erupted outwards like an explosion.

Huo Yuhao had the assistance of his Spiritual Detection, yet he still wasn't able to count the number of metal, tube-like objects that had appeared all over He Caitou's body. Soon afterwards, he saw that He Caitou had been fully covered in light. Countless barrages of rays of light shot out wildly from him towards the metal balls. Beneath his terrifying undulations of soul power, the twelve enormous metal balls instantly disintegrated in midair.

This was simply too mind-blowing!

After doing all of this, He Caitou's soul power had been almost entirely drained. The metal tubes on his body quickly disappeared and transformed back into the original shape of his black metal armor. At that moment, Huo Yuhao no longer thought that He Caitou looked strange; in his eyes, the gentle and straightforward He Caitou had become a monster!

He'd seen quite a few three-ringed Soul Elders in the past, such as Dai Huabin, Ning Tian, his own senior brother Bei Bei, and Teacher Xiao Ya. They'd all had three soul rings, but in terms of combat strength... they weren't even on the same level as the current He Caitou! The destructive power of those metallic tubes was simply too terrifying.

He Caitou walked over to the side and quickly removed the black pieces of metal from his body. The small object in his mouth had disappeared as well, but the faint scent of smoke still lingered around his body.

Fan Yu smiled and looked towards Huo Yuhao. "What do you think?"

Huo Yuhao subconsciously replied, "This, this is simply too powerful."

Fan Yu replied, "Caitou's cultivation level is still limited, thus he's only able to release part of a soul tool's power. Currently, he still can't use any of the stronger soul tools. Other than the stationary soul tool you saw last time, all soul tools are activated via soul power. Because of that, cultivating soul power is also important to soul masters from the Soul Tool Department."

"I know that you're definitely curious as to how soul masters from the Soul Tool Department fare against those from the Martial Soul Department in a battle. Let me tell you this: Under the Soul Sage rank, our Soul Tool Department holds an absolute advantage against the Martial Soul Department in battle. On the contrary, the Martial Soul Department holds an absolute advantage against us in fights between soul masters above the Soul Sage rank. Our Douluo Continent focuses primarily on martial souls, but the armies of the other various countries focus primarily on soul tools. From another

standpoint, soul tools are more helpful for ordinary people, as they can easily grant them a large amount of combat power in a short period of time.”

After listening to Fan Yu’s explanation, Huo Yuhao finally had a basic understanding of soul tools. He’d seen the power that He Caitou had shown, and could guarantee that, unless the abilities of his enemies martial soul were able to restrict him, not even four-ringed Soul Ancestors would be a match for him! This raised Huo Yuhao’s interest towards soul tools to an unprecedented high.

Fan Yu knew that the crucial moment had arrived. He lowered his tone, “Currently, the Soul Tool Department is weaker than the Martial Soul Department after the seven-ringed stage... but that’s not a certainty. Of the many research topics I have, the most important one of them all is to nurture a consummate soul master from the Soul Tool Department. I’m 46 years old this year, and the only disciple I’ve ever taken in is Caitou. If you’re willing, I’m also willing to take in another disciple.”

Huo Yuhao was relatively intelligent, and Fan Yu had already explained things so clearly; how could he hesitate? With a ‘Putong’, Huo Yuhao kneeled on the ground. “Teacher Fan Yu, please take me as your disciple. I’ll definitely work hard to study soul tools.” Afterwards, he kowtowed to Fan Yu three times.

Fan Yu nodded slightly as he allowed Huo Yuhao to pay his respects. After he’d kowtowed three times, Fan Yu helped him to his feet.

“I’ve heard of your diligence from Zhou Yi. From now on, you’re the second, and also last, disciple of mine. I’ll do my best to nurture you and Caitou. Someday, I’ll show the Martial Soul Department just what level our Soul Tool Department can reach. Yuhao, you aren’t just my disciple; from now on, you’re also a core disciple of the Soul Tool Department. I heard how the Martial Soul Department evaluated you; it’s their loss for not taking you in as a core disciple.”

I’m a core disciple now? This stroke of fortune was too sudden, to the extent that Huo Yuhao couldn’t help but stare blankly. The difference in treatment between the Martial Soul Department and the Soul Tool Department immediately caused the scales within his heart to shift.

Regardless of the facts, Huo Yuhao was still an eleven-year-old child. Because of his childhood, he was someone who held grudges. However at the same time, this made him cherish favors even more. The instant that Fan Yu said he would be a core disciple of the Soul Tool Department, Huo Yuhao felt warmth rise up from his heart. The grievances that he’d suppressed immediately turned into a warm stream that surged towards his eyes.

“Teacher.” He couldn’t help but let his tears flow freely.

Fan Yu spread his arms and held Huo Yuhao’s shoulders. “Good child, don’t cry. I know how aggrieved you feel, but I have to tell you this: no matter who it is, if you don’t want to feel aggrieved, and you want to be respected by other people, you can only rely on yourself. What you need to do is use your own strength to reject your grievances.”

“En.” Huo Yuhao nodded repeatedly as he wiped the tears from his face.

He Caitou walked over as well. Laughing, he hugged Huo Yuhao, then used his enormous strength to lift him up off the ground and spun him around in a circle.

“I have a junior brother now, hahaha! This is too good, I don’t have to be alone anymore. Yuhao, we’re brothers from now on.”

“Senior brother.” The feelings that came from He Caitou’s heart made Huo Yuhao feel something similar to the feeling that his senior brother Bei Bei had given him. As such, his inner emotions couldn’t help but surge up again.

Fan Yu said, “Yuhao, even though you’ve already become a core disciple of our Soul Tool Department, you still need to lay yourself a solid foundation as a soul master. Because of that, you’ll have to continue increasing your knowledge in the Martial Soul Department; at least until you graduate from your third year. Furthermore, you need to focus most of your energy towards cultivating your martial soul. Soul power is the foundation for everything we do; this is the case for the Soul Tool Department as well. At the same time, you have a special martial soul, so you have to pay attention to your soul skills too. I hope that you won’t just become an outstanding soul master of the Soul Tool Department in the future, but will also become an outstanding Control System Battle Soul Master as well.”

“I won’t hide this from you: Our Soul Tool Department has a rivalry with the Martial Soul Department. As such, you’ll have to keep the matter of you becoming one of our core disciples a secret for the time being, so that we won’t provoke a reaction from the Martial Soul Department. Also, you can’t become a core disciple of the Martial Soul Department. When you enter the inner courtyard, you’ll enter our Soul Tool Department’s inner courtyard. Zhou Yi will help you fill in the form that allows you to join our Soul Tool Department. Your classes at the Martial Soul Department normally end at around four in the afternoon, so after class you’ll have to come to me to study for two hours every day. The Martial Soul Department has a rest day every week, but you’ll have to come here and study on that day as well. Are you scared of hard work?”

1. From the Manga.

Chapter 34.1: Taking on an Impossible Challenge

Huo Yuhao shook his head, a determined expression on his face. “I’m not afraid of such a thing.” Fan Yu’s attitude had completely won over Huo Yuhao’s heart. It only took him a few seconds to get over the regret he’d had from not being able to become a core disciple of the Martial Soul Department. This was because he wasn’t alone; he also had Brother Skydream within his body! The greatest advantage of joining the Martial Soul Department was that it would help its students obtain suitable soul rings. However, the Skydream Iceworm had already promised to obtain a soul ring for him. If he didn’t factor this in, the Soul Tool Department could practically give him everything that the Martial Soul Department could. Furthermore, he would still be able to temporarily enjoy the treatment of a core disciple from the Martial Soul Department.

Fan Yu continued, “If you’re not afraid of hardship, I’ll do all that I can to teach you. Our Soul Tool Department also has more resources than the Martial Soul Department.” He walked towards Huo Yuhao and placed a black necklace on his neck. The necklace was adorned with a tiny, dark-gold medallion made of some unknown metal, and there were a few complicated patterns on its surface.

“With this medallion, you can enter any of the areas within the Soul Tool Department’s outer courtyard as you wish. Now then, we’re done here for today, but you’ll need to come here every day from tomorrow onwards. You’ve just been put into your new class, so you should head back first.”

“Yes. Thank you, Teacher Fan Yu.”

As Zhou Yi led Huo Yuhao away, a satisfied smile appeared on Fan Yu’s face. On the other hand, He Caitou’s excitement hadn’t diminished in the least. “This is too good, I have a junior brother now. Now Teacher can’t keep tormenting me by myself!”

Fan Yu grumpily hit He Caitou on his dark, bald head. “I’ve been tormenting you? Go do some work.”

With a downcast expression on his face, He Caitou obediently walked away. The instant he left, a tall figure suddenly appeared and walked towards Fan Yu. Unexpectedly, this figure was the Vice-Dean of the Soul Tool Department—Qian Duoduo.

“Not bad, it went quite smoothly. This Huo Yuhao has quite a sincere temperament; he’s a good seedling. I was quite happy when they won the finals with their fusion skill, but now that I think about it, I can’t help but regret it greatly. Fortunately, Old Yan wasn’t even able to recognise such a precious treasure, which allowed us to snatch him up a large bargain. Fan Yu, how confident are you that you’ll be able to successfully implementing our Ultimate Soldier plan on him?”

Fan Yu replied solemnly, “I’m 40% confident if we use it on Caitou, but our chances of successfully implementing it with Huo Yuhao increase to 70%, at the very least. If the two of them work together, I’m 100% confident that I can produce a prototype of the Ultimate Soldier in ten to fifteen years. Once they’ve cultivated to my age, we’ll have reached our true objective.”

“Good!” Qian Duoduo slapped his sturdy chest. “With this, the Soul Tool Department will dedicate all of its resources to you from now on. As long as we complete the Ultimate Soldier plan, I can guarantee that you’ll be the next Dean of the Soul Tool Department.”

A feverish gaze appeared in Fan Yu’s eyes, and he hurriedly replied, “Dean Qian, you should know that I’m not trying to complete the Ultimate Soldier plan simply for the sake of a higher position.”

Qian Duoduo smiled. “Of course I know that, as this is a common dream we share. The moment we complete our objective, the Douluo Continent will turn a new page in its history.”

Fan Yu smiled. “If Huo Yuhao’s martial soul continues to grow at the same rate it’s currently growing, we’ll definitely succeed. The Martial Soul Department might not want someone with a Body Soul, but we do. Does it really matter if he has a ten year soul ring? So what if he’s had a late start? In my opinion, Huo Yuhao has a ten year soul ring that’s better than any hundred year soul ring. Furthermore, Zhou Yi told me that he’s increased his soul power from Rank 13 to Rank 18 in a mere three months. I’ve asked Zhou Yi to conceal this fact, but is it really possible for him to be trash with a growth speed like that? Fortunately, only class teachers have access to a student’s registration forms.”

Qian Duoduo said, “Your Zhou Yi is too strange; she insists on making herself look like an old woman. Don’t you care about that?”

Fan Yu was somewhat helpless as he replied, “With a temper like hers, do you think I can really control her? According to her, the only way for her to appear imposing in front of her students is to disguise herself. Whatever, it’s fine as long as she doesn’t look like that in the house at night.”

After leading Huo Yuhao out of the Soul Tool Department’s Testing Area, Zhou Yi quickly returned to the Martial Soul Department with him. However, she didn’t bring him to the first year’s school buildings.

After reaching the Martial Soul Department's Assessment Area, Zhou Yi stopped and asked him, "Yuhao, when you saw Director Du Weilun earlier, did you ask him what effect your fusion skill had?"

"Nope." Huo Yuhao replied.

Zhou Yi furrowed her brows slightly. "That won't do. If you don't even know what your fusion skill does, how would you be able to use it in a fight next time? Let's do it this way. After you head back, ask Wang Dong to ask Director Du for you."

Ask Wang Dong to? Huo Yuhao was stunned.

Zhou Yi smiled. "You still don't understand? You've already become a core disciple of the Soul Tool Department, so you should do your best to show your face around Director Du as little as possible. Also, Teacher Wang Yan seems to think quite highly of you, so you should try to keep a lower profile when you're normally cultivating. I know that you have a lot of doubts in your heart right now, but I promise you that Teacher Fan Yu wholeheartedly wants to raise you into an outstanding talent. I do as well. You might be wondering why I'm inclined towards the Soul Tool Department, even though I'm clearly a teacher from the Martial Soul Department. Let me tell you a secret: A woman should always go along with what her husband does, and Fan Yu is my husband. Thus, I have to support him."

After she'd finished speaking, Zhou Yi raised her right hand and gently pulled something off of her face from the left side of her cheek. She slowly pulled off an elaborate face mask, revealing an extremely beautiful face that also seemed extremely youthful. Her eyebrows were as beautiful as the scenery in the spring, while her complexion was both graceful and touching.

Huo Yuhao was dumbstruck. Even in his wildest dreams, he'd never thought that the 'Perverted Old Grandma' Zhou Yi would actually be a beauty. Furthermore, how could her true appearance even look strict at all?

Zhou Yi quickly pulled the face mask back over her face and said helplessly, "Now you've seen what I look like. My original appearance can't deter anyone at all, so I had to put on a disguise because of my philosophy of teaching. Now then, head back to Class 1. It's still in our original classroom. Remember, you have to keep everything you've seen and heard a secret, especially the fact that you've become a direct disciple of Fan Yu. Also, I've heard that you've been selling roasted fish at night. You should stop, as you won't have any time to in the future. Don't worry though, the Soul Tool Department will take care of all of your expenses from now on. In the future, you'll see just how well core disciples of the Soul Tool Department are treated."

"Yes, Teacher Zhou." Huo Yuhao had received too much information during this short hour, to the extent that he was even somewhat muddle-headed. However, there was no doubt that the injustice he'd felt from not being chosen as a core disciple of the Martial Soul Department had thoroughly vanished due to how highly the Soul Tool Department thought of him, as well as the encouragement that Teacher Fan Yu had given him in addition to taking him in as a disciple.

The moment he got back to Class 1, Huo Yuhao shouted from outside the classroom, "Reporting in!"

"Enter," Wang Yan's voice rang out. After Huo Yuhao had entered the classroom, all of the students in the classroom's gazes immediately gathered on him.

Of the four classes in Year 1, Class 1 was undoubtedly the strongest. Yet, they weren't the largest class; that title belonged to the diverse Class 4. This was because the total number of assault-type and control-type soul masters amongst the freshmen didn't exceed sixty.

The instant Huo Yuhao entered, he'd immediately attracted the attention of every student present. Wang Yan smiled. "Yuhao, you came at just the right time. We're about to begin the selection of the class monitor. Come in and take a seat first."

Although their classes had been re-divided, Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong's seating arrangements hadn't changed. On the contrary, Xiao Xiao now sat to Huo Yuhao's left, which allowed the three to be seated in a single row.

Huo Yuhao noticed that Dai Huabin, Zhu Lu, and Cui Yajie were seated two rows behind them. The moment he'd entered the classroom, Dai Huabin had glared at him coldly.

As he stood behind the podium, Wang Yan said, "Next up, we'll be electing the class monitor and assistant class monitor of our class. Our class consists of assault-type and control-type soul masters, so each monitor will be in charge of a single System. We'll be re-electing both monitors each month. Now then, I'll nominate a few people, then let everyone cast their votes into a ballot."

With that, he turned towards the blackboard and wrote two rows of names on it. The first row was titled 'Assault System', and the names below it were: Wang Dong, Dai Huabin, Zhou Sichen, Huang Chutian, and Wu Feng.

The second row was titled 'Control System', and the first name he wrote down was Huo Yuhao's. Afterwards, he wrote down Cao Jinxuan, Lan Susu, and Lan Luoluo's names.

A total of nine names had appeared on the blackboard, and one could tell what Wang Yan was thinking from the order he'd written the names down. Nobody objected to Wang Dong's name being written at the top of the Assault System list; after all, his team had just become champions of the freshmen assessment, and Wang Dong had been the main force of his team. Even though he didn't have a three-ringed cultivation, everyone had seen the power of his Radiant Butterfly Goddess. n--0ve1BIn

However, Huo Yuhao's name being at the top of the Control System list sparked a flurry of whispers. The students who were originally from Class 1 were fine with it, as Huo Yuhao had been their class monitor in the first place. Moreover, they'd seen how hard he worked. However, the students who'd come from other classes all had disdainful expressions on their faces.

Huo Yuhao had been one of the members of the freshmen assessment's champion team along with Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao, but many students had secretly talked about him behind his back, calling him the luckiest person amongst this year's freshmen. The fact that a mere Soul Master—one with only a ten year soul ring—had been able to mingle his way into the champion team, and was even able to enjoy the treatment of a core disciple, had aroused the envy and hate of several people.

"Teacher Wang, I have an objection to this." Wu Feng, who was sitting near Dai Huabin, raised her hand.

Unlike Zhou Yi, Wang Yan had a warm personality. He smiled. "Wu Feng, do you have any problems with this?"

With a disdainful expression on her face, Wu Feng replied, “I don’t think that Huo Yuhao has the qualifications to be nominated as a candidate for the position of class monitor. He’s only a one-ringed Soul Master, and his soul ring’s even a ten year one. Even if he was one of the champions of the freshmen assessment, he only did that by tagging along with Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao. Why should he be nominated in this class monitor election?”

Chapter 34.2: Taking on an Impossible Challenge

Ning Tian had already given voice to her doubts about Huo Yuhao’s extraordinary abilities once before, and after their recent battle, she’d reaffirmed her belief. That, in addition to the final fusion skill they’d unleashed, resulted in everyone unanimously agreeing that Wang Dong’s skill had knocked Ning Tian unconscious; it was impossible for Huo Yuhao to have done it. Furthermore, the obvious conclusion was that Huo Yuhao’s martial soul fusion with Wang Dong was the only reason he’d been able to join the champion team.

Plus, Ning Tian’s team had been eliminated after they lost to Huo Yuhao’s team. The resentment she held from losing that match was why she’d immediately protested Huo Yuhao’s nomination.

Her words were immediately met with agreement, especially from students who were a part of the Control System. Because of her, the entire class’ emotions had been stirred up.

Wang Yan furrowed his brow and replied sternly, “Huo Yuhao was part of the freshmen assessment’s champion team alongside Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao; they all have their own strong points. I’ve personally experienced his soul skill, and I can say that, within the same rank, there are very few control-type soul masters capable of comparing to him. The people I’ve nominated were all based off of the freshmen assessment rankings as well as their individual strengths.”

However, Wu Feng wasn’t willing to give up. “Teacher Wang, you’ve just stated what I have wrong with him. ‘Within the same rank, his soul skill is good.’ However, what rank is he again? He’s only a one-ringed Soul Master! Our class doesn’t lack two-ringed Soul Grandmasters—we even have three-ringed Soul Elders! What right does a one-ringed soul master have to participate in the election for class monitor? Can you even convince our class to listen to him?”

“Bang!” Wang Dong suddenly slammed his hands on his table and stood up. He turned towards Wu Feng and spat angrily, “Don’t go too far! Are you angry because you were eliminated by us last time? If you have the ability to, beat us fair and square during an assessment!”

Wu Feng replied angrily, “I’m still unhappy about our loss, but so what? Aren’t control-type soul masters supposed to have an advantage against assault-type soul masters? If he’s strong enough to beat me, I’ll admit that he has the qualifications to be nominated as a candidate for class monitor.”

“You’re full of shit. I’ll fight with you. If you dare, come with me to the Soul Duelling Arena.” Wang Dong’s clear eyes glared daggers at Wu Feng. The soul power in his body had already begun to stir.

“Enough.” Wang Yan’s imposing voice suddenly rang out, accompanied by a strong undulation of soul power. This forced the two to immediately shut up.

“Sit down.”

Only after Wang Yan interfered, did Wu Feng and Wang Dong unwillingly sit back down.

Wang Yan sternly said, "Since it seems like there are those with objections, let's put it to a vote. If the number of students who disagree with Huo Yuhao being nominated exceeds half the class, I'll rub his name off. Students who disagree, please raise your hands." n/)O1elBIn

Zhou Yi definitely wouldn't have handled the matter like this. Instead, she would've stood her ground, or might have even directly appointed Huo Yuhao as the class monitor. If someone wasn't happy with her decisions, she would've punished them with an iron fist.

However, Wang Yan was different. He was a gentle scholar who excelled in theory, but he was much worse than Zhou Yi when it came to dealing with students.

Regardless of whether it was jealousy that the one-ringed Huo Yuhao had been able to become part of the champion team, or if it was due to the influence of Wu Feng's words, two-thirds of the class ended up raising their hands once Wang Yan had finished speaking. Only the students originally from Class 1 and a few moderate students hadn't raised their hands.

Anyone that had entered Shrek Academy could be considered chosen; this could be seen from the optimum combination of soul rings that most students had before the four-ringed rank. Of the students within Shrek Academy, how many of them weren't proud and arrogant? How could they not be resentful and envious after they were forced to agree to a Soul Master, one who only had a ten year soul ring, being appointed as their class monitor?

Wang Yan had clearly never expected a situation like this to happen. He was left somewhat dazed for a brief moment.

In a fit of anger, Wang Dong nearly stood up again. However, he was stopped by Huo Yuhao.

Somewhat satisfied, Wu Feng said, "Teacher Wang, over half the students in the class have disagreed. Please rub his name off the blackboard."

Wang Yan had truly been put into a difficult situation. He'd taught many students in the past, but this was the first time he'd encountered a situation like this. Furthermore, he'd already given his word earlier. It was impossible for him to take back his word now. He could only look towards Huo Yuhao apologetically.

Just as he was about to remove Huo Yuhao's name from those qualified to partake in the election, Huo Yuhao slowly raised his right hand.

On the outside, Huo Yuhao's mood hadn't changed at all, even when Wu Feng had started to object. He'd even stopped the enraged Wang Dong. However, was he truly as calm as he appeared on the inside?

Wang Yan said, "Yuhao, you can talk."

Huo Yuhao slowly stood up without even sparing a glance towards Wu Feng. Using a calm tone, he spoke in a voice that was slightly slower than his usual voice.

"Teacher Wang, I understand Wu Feng's objections. She's questioning my qualifications to be chosen as one of the class monitors. Before you rub my name off, I want to say this: I'm willing to accept Wu Feng's challenge. If I can beat her in a fight, I'd like everyone to vote again."

His voice was moderate, but the originally clamorous Class 1 instantly turned quiet.

Dai Huabin, Zhu Lu, and even Wu Feng herself were instantly stupefied. They never thought that Huo Yuhao would actually accept Wu Feng's challenge.

Wu Feng had the Red Dragon martial soul. In terms of quality, it was slightly inferior to Dai Huabin's White Tiger and Wang Dong's Radiant Butterfly Goddess, but there was only an extremely tiny gap between them. Moreover, she also had the most optimum combination of two hundred year soul rings. That, in addition to her tyrannical combat power, as well as her Rank 25 cultivation, made it so that she exceeded Huo Yuhao in all aspects! This could be seen from how she'd been able to become a core disciple, despite the fact that she didn't have a high ranking in the freshmen assessment. Even Shrek Academy's picky teachers had recognised Wu Feng's relatively large amount of talent.

Even though Huo Yuhao was a spiritual-attribute control-type soul master, he was still only a one-ringed Soul Master, and his only soul ring was that of the ten year rank. No matter which angle you looked at it from, nobody believed that he'd be able to contend against Wu Feng.

And yet, Huo Yuhao had expressed his willingness to accept Wu Feng's challenge. In addition to that, his calm voice didn't seem impetuous in the least. Furthermore, the determination in his voice had surprised everyone.

Wang Yan's pupils contracted slightly. Seeing the calm gaze in Huo Yuhao's eyes, he became silent for a few seconds. Afterwards, he took a deep breath, then nodded. "Fine. Since that's the case, I'll allow you two to have a match in the Soul Duelling Arena. However, we'll change the bets to make it fair—if Wu Feng can defeat Huo Yuhao, he'll be stripped of his qualifications to participate in the election. Conversely, Wu Feng will also be stripped of her qualifications if she loses to Huo Yuhao."

Wu Feng didn't raise any objections to the conditions of the bet. Either way, she was unlikely to be chosen as one of the class monitors, due to the presence of Dai Huabin and Wang Dong. At the same time, what were the chances of her losing to Huo Yuhao, who only had a ten year soul ring?

After being astonished for a brief moment, Wu Feng's face became filled with disdain and contempt. As the other students from Class 1 left the class one-by-one, Wu Feng walked over to Huo Yuhao and whispered, "I'm gonna beat you to the point that you won't even be able to take care of yourself."

Huo Yuhao glanced coldly at the tomboyish Wu Feng, then took large strides out of the classroom.

He'd experienced a great deal of things today. He understood that, if he gave up like a gutless coward and lost his qualifications to become a class monitor, he'd never be able to hold his head up high in the class. An adverse effect on his mental state far surpassed the pain he'd receive from any physical damage to his body, so he chose to fight. Even if he'd definitely lose, he still had to accept Wu Feng's challenge. Even if he lost, he had to lose like a man. If he didn't even have the guts to accept Wu Feng's challenge, how would he obtain his revenge in the future?

After the students of Class 1 had arrived in the Soul Duelling Area, Wang Yan helped them pay the entrance fee. This was a Soul Duel where no one other than the students of Class 1 could spectate. In addition to that, this was the first Soul Duel that Huo Yuhao was participating in since he'd entered Shrek Academy.

Wang Dong had walked to the Soul Duelling Area alongside Huo Yuhao, but he hadn't said anything to him. He could understand how Huo Yuhao was feeling today; not only had he not been chosen as a core disciple, he'd even been called into question like this. Now, it seemed that Huo Yuhao could no longer endure things silently. Instead, he'd chosen to prove himself through a method such as this.

Xiao Xiao didn't utter a word either. However, she silently fixed her gaze on Huo Yuhao's body. In her mind, her companion was no longer a mere youth; he was a man, a man who'd had the courage to take on a challenge. Not everyone had the courage to face an opponent who was clearly stronger than them. How many people could take on a challenge like this while fully knowing that it was impossible?

"Let's bet, let's bet! I'll be the banker, does anyone wanna bet? Huo Yuhao's odds will be 1 to 10, while Wu Feng's odds will be 10 to 1." Zhou Sichen stood and shouted. Teacher Wang Yan had accompanied Huo Yuhao and Wu Feng to the Soul Duelling Arena, but naturally didn't bother to care about the other students.

"I'll bet a hundred gold soul coins on Wu Feng." Dai Huabin was the first person to approach Zhou Sichen. He handed him a heavy coin pouch.

Zhou Sichen's facial muscles immediately twitched. "You don't have to be this cruel."

Dai Huabin replied disdainfully, "If you want to be a banker, you should have the guts to take a bet. If you don't, you should keep your thoughts to yourself."

Stirred up by Dai Huabin's arrogant words, Zhou Sichen immediately spat out angrily, "I'll take it! I'm just scared that you won't give it to me. Even if you win, I'll only owe you ten gold soul coins. I'll take any bets."

However, Zhou Sichen wanted to cry after the following scene unfolded. A large number of students ran towards him, with practically all of them betting on Wu Feng. The disparity in strength between both parties was simply too great, to the extent that nobody was optimistic towards Huo Yuhao's chances. Betting on Huo Yuhao would give an extremely high payout, but nobody was willing to bet on him.

Zhou Yi's expression was becoming uglier and uglier, but it was too late for him to take back what he'd said. Instantly, his expression had become as dark as the bottom of a pot.

At that moment, a voice that caused Zhou Sichen to become overjoyed rang out, "I'll bet a thousand gold soul coins on Huo Yuhao."

The person who walked up and handed him an exquisitely made gold banknote was precisely Wang Dong.

Immediately after Wang Dong handed his banknote to Zhou Sichen, Xiao Xiao also took out a golden banknote. "I'll bet a thousand as well."

Chapter 34.3: Taking on an Impossible Challenge

Hearing these two voices, Zhou Sichen immediately took their bets. The other students had bet a total of around two thousand gold soul coins, yet Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao alone had just equalled that. In other words, he wouldn't have to pay out of pocket if Huo Yuhao lost. On the whole, a crisis had been averted.

“We’ll bet fifty gold soul coins on Huo Yuhao.” Two crisp voices rang out simultaneously, jolting Zhou Sichen. There were actually still more people who dared to bet on Huo Yuhao. After looking carefully, he realised that the two people betting on Huo Yuhao were actually the Lan sisters.

The sisters smiled at Wang Dong, then took out a total of fifty gold soul coins.

“I’ll bet fifty as well.” Another voice rang out. This time, Zhou Sichen was somewhat flabbergasted. The person who’d placed a bet this time was actually his good brother, Cao Jinxuan. During their match with Huo Yuhao’s team, Cai Jinxuan hadn’t even been able to even release a soul skill before he’d been knocked out by Huo Yuhao and Wang Dong’s combined Spiritual Shock.

“Jinxuan, what’re you doing?” Zhou Sichen asked suspiciously.

Cao Jinxuan smiled cunningly. “I know that a fella like you has a lot of money; why can’t I bet on an unknown gamble?”

Still somewhat suspicious, Zhou Sichen replied, “That can’t be right. You’ve never done something that doesn’t profit you, nor have you done something that you’re unsure of.”

Cao Jinxuan replied in an easy-going manner, “That’s not your problem. Besides, I’m only betting fifty gold soul coins. That isn’t too cruel. However, let me remind you: If Huo Yuhao does win, you’ll go bankrupt. With odds of 1 to 10, you’ll have to pay out twenty one thousand gold soul coins for these two thousand one hundred gold soul coins. Do you even have that much money?”

“Uh...” Cold sweat immediately began to drip off of Zhou Sichen’s face when he heard Cao Jinxuan. Right! In the extremely unlikely chance that Huo Yuhao managed to win, what would he do? Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao had each bet one thousand gold soul coins! That, multiplied by ten, was an astronomical figure to him!

“Wang Dong, Xiao Xiao, can you guys lower your bets a bit?” Zhou Sichen had previously hoped that Huo Yuhao would cause an upset. However, his current attitude had completely flipped around.

Wang Dong replied, “You said that you were willing to accept any bets, no matter how high they were. I’m confident in Huo Yuhao, and I’m not afraid of losing. What’re you afraid of?” With that, both he and Xiao Xiao turned around and found a place to sit.

Seeing their backs, Zhou Sichen mumbled unhappily, “Humph, let’s see how you start crying after you lose. It’d be weird if Huo Yuhao really was able to beat Wu Feng with such a large gap between them. Still, I’ve really dug a hole for myself with the odds I’ve set! If I’d known people would make such large bets earlier, I would’ve taken it easier, so as to guarantee that I’d still make a slight profit.”

Cai Jinxuan patted him on the shoulder and replied in a sincere voice, “Being impulsive truly is the devil!”

As the spectating stage continued to buzz with activity, Huo Yuhao and Wu Feng proceeded to enter the Soul Duelling Arena. For the sake of safety, Wang Yan was personally acting as the referee for their match.

After entering the arena, Wang Yan said solemnly, “I’ll once again remind you that this is merely a sparring session between fellow classmates, so although you can go all-out, you absolutely cannot injure

your opponent. Do you understand? Once one party gains an upper hand in the match, I'll stop it immediately."

Both Huo Yuhao and Wu Feng nodded at the same time. However, Wu Feng said offhandedly, "Teacher Wang, doesn't that mean that you'll have to stop the match after only a few seconds?"

After saying that, she turned around and walked towards her side of the arena. Wu Feng hadn't even turned twelve, yet she'd clearly developed much faster than other girls her age. This was exemplified by her extremely tall figure. Furthermore, her feminine traits were very obvious; this was especially so for her fiery red hair, which had a peculiar beauty to it. Only, her tomboyish personality, which caused her to be even rowdier than boys, was clearly somewhat disharmonious with her beauty.

As Huo Yuhao slowly walked towards the other side of the arena, Wang Yan whispered, "Try your best, but don't force yourself. Sometimes, patience is a form of strength."

Huo Yuhao could see how concerned Wang Yan was for him. After nodding to him, he slowly moved backwards. He understood Wang Yan's good intentions, but he'd already decided not to spare any costs when he fought against Wu Feng. He had no intentions of backing down.

Both sides were quickly separated by a distance of a hundred meters.

Wang Yan stood in the middle of the arena with his arms spread out. After ensuring that both parties had finished making their preparations, he suddenly raised his hands and shouted, "Begin!"

Wu Feng moved instantly. Her red hair fluttered in the wind, resembling a red cloud as she charged towards Huo Yuhao at full speed. Her slender yet forceful legs caused her body to rapidly shoot forwards whenever her feet touched the ground, and in the blink of an eye, she'd already traversed several tens of meters.

As her tender body rushed forward, dragon scales began to cover half of her body. Though they were still a good distance away from each other, yet Huo Yuhao was already able to sense the valiant air coming off of her body.

Surprisingly, Huo Yuhao didn't move at all. Instead, he simply shut his eyes and stood there, making it seem as if he was meditating while standing up.

The spectator's stage had become completely silent; everyone's eyes were currently focused on the Soul Duelling Arena. Naturally, the most attentive students were Wang Dong, Xiao Xiao, and Zhou Sichen.

Likewise, Cao Jinxuan was also looking concentratedly at the arena. However, he wasn't following Wu Feng like many people were. Instead, he'd fixed his eyes on Huo Yuhao, and was observing his every move.

It was just as Zhou Sichen had guessed; Cao Jinxuan placing a bet on Huo Yuhao hadn't been a moment of impulsiveness, nor had it been because he was trying to obtain a large profit. Rather, he had his own motives for doing so.

The true core of Zhou Sichen's team was actually Cao Jinxuan. His Time Elapsing Clock was an extremely rare control-type Tool Soul that had the ability to control time. Cao Jinxuan had contributed the most

during their arduous journey to the top four. As an outstanding control-type soul master himself, Cao Jinxuan had a much greater understanding towards the similarly control-type Huo Yuhao.

During their match that time, he'd instantly been knocked unconscious without even being able to use a soul skill. Many people had assumed that it was the work of Wang Dong, but Cao Jinxuan was fully aware that it had been a spiritual-type attack. Even though he'd had Wang Dong's assistance, the truth was that it had still been Huo Yuhao's attack. More importantly, he'd even been specifically guarding against a long-range attack like this. The time surrounding his body had been slightly distorted, which was extremely hard to see with the naked eye. Because of this, he hadn't been afraid of long-distance single-target attacks. However, even though his Time Elapsing Clock was able to distort time, it wasn't able to distort Huo Yuhao's Spiritual Detection. Once Huo Yuhao's attack had landed, Cao Jinxuan didn't have the chance to do anything at all. This had greatly increased Cao Jinxuan's interest towards Huo Yuhao.

Cao Jinxuan was someone who had a strong desire for knowledge. He really wanted to know how Huo Yuhao had been able to do what he'd done. After all, Huo Yuhao only had a ten year soul ring! Could his soul skill be used in two different ways? Or did his soul skill have two different effects? With its detection and attacking abilities, could that still even be considered a ten year soul ring? Only hundred thousand year soul rings could have two skills!

Because of that, even though everyone else believed that Huo Yuhao would definitely lose to Wu Feng, Cao Jinxuan had a certain amount of confidence in him. This confidence was even stronger than that of even Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao's. Sometimes, a person's rivals can understand them more than their teammates.

The distance between the two parties gradually decreased. Facing the motionless Huo Yuhao, Wu Feng raised her vigilance. After all, Ning Tian had been knocked unconscious during their previous match. In their post-match research, they'd felt that the best way to protect themselves would be to gather their soul power in their heads. If they protected their spiritual seas, their opponent's attacks wouldn't be able to overcome their defenses.

Because of that, Wu Feng didn't bother to use any soul skills. From her point of view, Huo Yuhao had no chance of winning in a direct competition of combat power. As long as she was wary of his Spiritual Shock, everything would be fine. In reality, none of the students present—other than Wang Dong and Xiao Xiao—were aware that Huo Yuhao's main soul skill was his Spiritual Detection.

Currently, the distance between the two had shrunk to a mere five meters. Stamping the ground with her left leg, Wu Feng shot towards Huo Yuhao like a sharp arrow that had been released from a bow.

At that moment, Huo Yuhao finally made a move. The instant Wu Feng moved, he shifted his feet. As a result, he was able to quickly sidestep to the left. At the same time, he sent a kick flying straight towards Wu Feng's abdomen.

The instant that Wu Feng had leapt out, her arms had been raised up high, while her palms had slashed towards Huo Yuhao's shoulders. By relying on his Spiritual Detection, Huo Yuhao had grasped the trajectory of her movements perfectly. Because of this, Huo Yuhao had sidestepped her attack the very moment she'd begun moving. At the same time, he'd sent a kick flying towards an area that was very hard for Wu Feng to defend against.

Even though she was extremely confident in herself, it was extremely uncomfortable for Wu Feng to deal with Huo Yuhao's attack. However, she wasn't willing to get kicked by Huo Yuhao. Helpless, she could only twist her body in midair in an attempt to dodge Huo Yuhao's kick. However, the fact that she was in a leaping position couldn't be changed.

Unexpectedly, Huo Yuhao suddenly stopped his kick in midair, then jumped forward using his left leg. After jumping half a meter off the ground, he changed his right leg's sweeping kick into a regular kick. This allowed him to perfectly kick Wu Feng's slightly defined and perky round buttocks.

One's buttocks practically represent a person's center of gravity. If someone's buttocks were to be kicked midair, their balance would immediately be broken. Just as Wu Feng twisted her body to the side, she felt a large amount of force transmitted through her buttocks. She immediately let out an alarmed cry when this happened, and used her left hand to push against the ground in an effort to seize an opportunity to control her own body.

After kicking Wu Feng's butt, Huo Yuhao immediately used a follow-up move. Landing his right foot on the ground, he suddenly rushed towards Wu Feng. Up to this point, his eyes had remained shut. However, his perception of the outside world was far clearer than it would've been if he'd been using his eyes.

As Wu Feng pressed her left hand onto the ground, the speed of her fall decreased slightly. However, Huo Yuhao arrived at that point again. Stamping his right foot on the ground, he rushed forwards and used his left leg to strike Wu Feng's slender waist.

Naturally, Wu Feng wouldn't just let him have his way with her. She hurriedly raised her left knee and angled it towards Huo Yuhao's left leg. At the same time, she exerted some strength with her left arm, borrowing the strength of her physique to forcefully turn around and send a vicious kick towards Huo Yuhao with her left leg. noVe(lb-1n

As a result of the embarrassment she was feeling, Wu Feng had put all of her strength into this kick. Even though she hadn't used a soul skill, the all-out kick of a Soul Grandmaster that was using her martial soul couldn't be underestimated.

However, Wu Feng made another miscalculation. Huo Yuhao suddenly pulled his left leg back mid-kick, then went down into a squat, allowing him to dodge Wu Feng's kick. Immediately afterwards, he nimbly shot forwards and firmly slapped Wu Feng's lower back with his palms.

Chapter 35.1: I Haven't Lost Yet!

At this moment, Huo Yuhao had no intentions of going easy on Wu Feng. His palms became jade in colour as he unleashed Controlling Crane Capturing Dragon on Wu Feng.

With a "bang", Wu Feng was shoved more than five meters away from Huo Yuhao. This time around, she couldn't maintain her balance. As a result of this, Wu Feng fell down and rolled on the ground.

Huo Yuhao's cultivation wasn't as high as Wu Feng's, but he was still someone with Rank 17 soul power; he was a true soul master. His all-out Controlling Crane Capturing Dragon and Mysterious Jade Palm had still been relatively heavy blows.

Wu Feng couldn't help but shake slightly as she got up. With an "ah" she spat out a mouthful of blood. She'd clearly been injured.

The students standing in the spectator's stage were all left flabbergasted.

Before the match, who would've predicted an outcome like this? Who could have!?

Huo Yuhao had actually managed to gain the upper hand! Beneath his relentless attacks, Wu Feng hadn't even had a chance to counterattack.

Both Dai Huabin and Zhu Lu were astonished, Xiao Xiao's eyes had widened in surprise, and Zhou Sichen was chewing on his finger nervously. The only exception to all of this was Cao Jinxuan, who was currently staring at Huo Yuhao with sparkling eyes.

From their outer appearances, it seemed like both sides hadn't used any soul skills yet. Yet somehow, an assault-type soul master had actually lost to a control-type soul master in hand-to-hand combat! Furthermore, this was with such a disparity in cultivation between the two.

Wu Feng, who had the Red Dragon martial soul, was definitely much stronger than Huo Yuhao in terms of physique alone. Her speed, power, and flexibility were all greater than Huo Yuhao's; what had happened?

It didn't matter that she'd been kicked in the bum, yet Huo Yuhao's palms had sent her flying and forced her to cough up blood. Her defense had been strengthened considerably under the effects of her Red Dragon martial soul, yet she'd actually been forced to cough up some blood. Since when did Huo Yuhao have the ability to do something like this?

Huo Yuhao basically hadn't participated in any direct confrontations throughout the entire freshmen assessment, except for the time that he'd used the Ghost Shadow Perplexing Track against Dai Huabin's team. Because of that, his hand-to-hand abilities had been entirely overlooked. Only now did everyone realise how wrong they'd been about him. This was especially so for those that weren't at the two-ringed rank yet. They couldn't help but ask themselves: if they were to fight against Huo Yuhao in a close-combat fight, could they win? Had Wu Feng's loss truly been due to carelessness alone?

Wang Dong couldn't help but stare blankly. He'd thought of many ways for Huo Yuhao to stave off Wu Feng, but he'd never considered the possibility of hand-to-hand combat. Huo Yuhao had actually decided to use his own weakness against his opponent's strong point... yet he was winning?

The most astonished person present was Wu Feng herself. She hadn't expected Huo Yuhao to fight her like this, not even in her wildest dreams. The Spiritual Shock she'd been constantly wary of hadn't come either, yet she'd suffered a huge loss in a close-combat fight.

She also felt a burning pain coming from her back. Huo Yuhao's palms were like two chunks of metal when they'd viciously smashed into her back. Furthermore, she'd felt two gentle forces surge through her body as soon as his palms hit her. These forces that had seeped into her body could be described as 'gentle', but they had seeped directly into her internal organs. Unexpectedly, Wu Feng wasn't able to remove them in a short period of time, even with her tyrannical soul power. Thus, she had had no choice but to cough up a mouthful of blood in order to slow down the progression of her injuries. However, her internal organs had still been badly shaken.

Huo Yuhao's kick hadn't hurt that much, as there was a large amount of flesh on her bum. However, this had been done in front of the entirety of Class 1! Furthermore, a man had never touched her buttocks before. And, as soon as he'd kicked her, a strange feeling had begun to spread throughout her buttocks; this was the main reason that she'd stumbled after getting up.

"Bastard, I'm going to kill you!" Wu Feng roared angrily, then pounced towards Huo Yuhao like an enraged lioness. This time around, she didn't hold anything back. She instantly activated her first soul skill, Dragonfire.

The person who had the strongest self-augmenting soul skill amongst Class 1's assault-type soul masters was definitely Dai Huabin and his White Tiger Vajra Transformation. However, Wu Feng was the strongest person after Dai Huabin. Her Dragonfire and Dragonfury had extremely strong self-augmenting abilities in addition to the increase in attack power they gave her. Because of this, Wu Feng was definitely an expert in close-quarters combat. If Dai Huabin didn't use his third soul skill, the two of them would definitely end up locked in a stalemate during a close-combat fight. And yet, she'd just suffered a loss to Huo Yuhao, and it hadn't been a small loss either!

Huo Yuhao continued to keep his eyes shut, but his expression became serious. He'd been able to injure Wu Feng in their close combat fight by catching her unaware and using of the Tang Sect's secret techniques in addition to his Spiritual Detection's foresight. At the same time, it was also because Wu Feng hadn't used any of her soul skills yet.

Wu Feng's burning Dragonfire instantly scorched everything within a foot of her. Because of this, the scorching stream of air struck Huo Yuhao in the face before she'd even arrived. Huo Yuhao was a spiritual-type soul master, thus his Spirit Eyes weren't able to strengthen his body in any way. He could predict all of her moves, but he wasn't able to break through Wu Feng's defensive soul skills!

However, Huo Yuhao didn't choose to retreat. He knew that he hadn't had much of a chance in the first place, and that being able to take advantage of his opponent's lack of awareness was already an extremely good result for him.

However, Huo Yuhao didn't want to admit defeat. Even if he only had a sliver of hope left, he didn't want to give up.

As such, Huo Yuhao chose not to retreat. As he withstood the high temperatures that were assaulting him, he used his Ghost Shadow Perplexing Track to rush towards Wu Feng.

This time around, Wu Feng didn't choose to jump into the air. Instead, she rushed towards Huo Yuhao on foot. The moment that Wu Feng was close enough to strike Huo Yuhao, she stopped and sent her left hand towards Huo Yuhao's stomach while firmly balanced.

As a core disciple, even though Wu Feng had a fiery disposition, she definitely wasn't an impulsive person. After suffering a loss to Huo Yuhao, she'd definitely pay attention to his attacks.

Facing Wu Feng's palm strike, Huo Yuhao suddenly leaned to the left and dodged her attack. Making sure not to enter the one-foot area around Wu Feng, he crouched down and side-stepped to her right side.

Like a bolt of lightning, Wu Feng sent a kick flying straight towards Huo Yuhao with her right leg. Her kicking speed was extremely fast, and her leg reached Huo Yuhao's chest in the blink of an eye.

However, at that moment, Huo Yuhao unexpectedly slipped. He seemed to fall down, as if he'd lost control of his body. Wu Feng's kick brushed past his chest as if it were stuck to it, instantly charring the front of Huo Yuhao's shirt. At the same time, the scorching hot temperatures from Wu Feng's Dragonfire enveloped his body.

Huo Yuhao's Spiritual Detection wasn't omnipotent, as his physical speed couldn't follow the speed of his thoughts. He'd used up the of his energy in order to dodge Wu Feng's last attack.

Chapter 35.2: I Haven't Lost Yet!

Wu Feng had missed, which resulted in her back being exposed to Huo Yuhao. Whilst leaning backwards, Huo Yuhao grabbed onto Wu Feng and—enduring the the high temperatures caused by her Dragonfire—viciously kicked Wu Feng's back, causing her to stumble forward.

However, Huo Yuhao immediately let go after grabbing ahold of her. With her Dragonfire, the temperature surrounding Wu Feng's body in a one foot radius was simply too high. Furthermore, he'd felt that something was amiss after he'd grabbed her.

He'd grabbed ahold of two extremely elastic yet firm mounds, which had instantly tightened the moment he'd touched them. However, his hands had actually bounced off them. Huo Yuhao had only grasped hold of Wu Feng's clothes; no, it would be more accurate to say that he'd grabbed her dress...

Huo Yuhao was dazed in that instant, and in turn had unconsciously lowered the direction of his kick.

When Wu Feng stumbled forward, she unconsciously held onto her skirt. In a state of embarrassment and anger, she rapidly entered a half-squatting position after sweeping her right leg backwards.

This guy! After doing such a shameful deed, one would definitely be distracted for a brief moment, and Huo Yuhao was no exception. Though he hadn't seen them with his eyes, the three-dimensional image he'd seen in his mind wasn't too far off from the real things.

Just as he blurted out the words, "I didn't see anything", Wu Feng's kick arrived in his face.

Dodging Wu Feng's kick was impossible. Thus, Huo Yuhao could only helplessly block Wu Feng's attack with the Mysterious Jade Hands.

Wu Feng was extremely strong, and she'd even used her soul power to strengthen her attack. Wu Feng's kick resembled an enormous, burning piece of iron as it viciously slammed into Huo Yuhao, who was forced to the ground from the force.

Huo Yuhao wasn't scalded from Wu Feng's attack due to the protection of the Mysterious Jade Hands. However, her kick had simply been too powerful; he wasn't able to withstand it by merely relying on the strength of his arms. As the back of his arms smashed into his face, Huo Yuhao felt his mind go faint, while his nose began bleeding intensely.

Wu Feng had finally managed to protect her skirt from being torn off after she kicked Huo Yuhao away, and could feel herself getting madder and madder as the fight went on.

“Huo Yuhao, you son of a bitch!” The intense red light surrounding Wu Feng’s body instantly turned dark red as she activated her second soul skill, Dragonfire. Her entire body now resembled a genuine Red Dragon as she pounced towards Huo Yuhao; it seemed like she wouldn’t be able to rest without killing him.

In that instant, Huo Yuhao finally opened his eyes. Just as Wang Yan was about to save Huo Yuhao from Wu Feng’s attack, he couldn’t help but pause his footsteps.

Even with the scarlet flames surrounding Wu Feng, the trace of gold within Huo Yuhao’s eyes couldn’t be concealed.

In her enraged state, Wu Feng had forgotten to defend herself against Huo Yuhao’s true attack.

Wu Feng felt as if her brain had been gently pricked by a needle, which instantly caused her to become dazed for a moment. Following that, the dark-red light on her body dimmed slightly. She subconsciously buried her head within her hands because of the pain caused by Huo Yuhao’s Spiritual Shock.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, Huo Yuhao jumped into the air and shot towards Wu Feng. He grabbed onto Wu Feng’s clothes with his hands in an attempt to throw her to the ground.

However, even though Huo Yuhao’s calculating abilities were extremely precise, there were still times when even he made a mistake. He’d underestimated the strength of Wu Feng’s Dragonfury, and neglected the injury that his arm had suffered from Wu Feng’s kick.

He managed to grab ahold of Wu Feng’s clothes, but he was immediately engulfed by a boiling stream of hot air afterwards. The intense waves of heat struck him in the face and made it seem like he’d touched the sun itself. His sleeves instantly turned to ash, and he subconsciously loosened his grip right as he was about to pull his arms back due to the extreme pain that had suddenly spread from his hands.

Even though Wu Feng had been struck by Huo Yuhao’s Spiritual Shock, she still had her basic combat instincts. While she was still struggling subconsciously, she slammed her right arm into Huo Yuhao’s chest and forcefully flung him away.

Wu Feng’s blow was simply too heavy. Though his bones didn’t shatter due to the soul power protecting his body, Wu Feng’s blazing fire energy still madly surged into his body. As he flew through the air, he couldn’t help but cough up a mouthful of blood. When he finally landed on the ground, everything in front of his eyes turned dark and he nearly fainted.

At the same time, Wu Feng kneeled on the ground with her head buried in her arms and let out painful groans. Having stored up so much energy, Huo Yuhao’s Spiritual Shock wasn’t something that could be easily endured. There were traces of blood flowing from Wu Feng’s nose, but she was still in slightly better condition than Huo Yuhao.

It’s finally ended. Wang Yan sighed inwardly. Though Huo Yuhao had lost, it could be considered a glorious defeat. For him to be able to injure Wu Feng in a close-combat fight, with his current cultivation, was already something he could be proud of. After all, he was a soul master that specialised in the control and auxiliary systems! Wang Yan had never expected him to be so skilled in close-combat fight.

However, was it truly over?

Still hugging her head, Wu Feng slowly stood up. However, she wasn't able to stabilize her footing due to the intense pain coming from her head. Humiliation, this was an enormous humiliation!

After alleviating the intense headache she had with much difficulty, Wu Feng discovered that Wang Yan was standing between the two of them. She knew that she wouldn't be able to make a move against Huo Yuhao for the time being, but the anger in her heart caused her to hysterically yell out, "Huo Yuhao, you just wait! As long as you stay within Class 1, I'll keep targeting you till the day you screw off from Shrek Academy!"

As everyone gazed on, Huo Yuhao began to crawl back up with great difficulty. To the astonishment of the onlooking students, a slight hint of red had appeared in Huo Yuhao's eyes the instant he raised his head. He gazed coldly at the nearby Wu Feng, making it seem as if he were a blood-thirsty tiger that was about to devour its prey. The hysterical Wu Feng felt as if she'd suddenly been stung by a poisonous scorpion, and a chill ran up her spine.

"I haven't lost yet!"

Huo Yuhao's voice was somewhat hoarse, but it was filled with decisiveness. Right, he hadn't lost yet. As long as he had a trace of energy left in him, Huo Yuhao would never admit defeat. With obstinance and perseverance in his heart supporting him, both the suffering his body had experienced and the humiliation he'd suffered from her insults instantly caused the resentment he'd suppressed for so many years to erupt like a geyser.

At that exact moment, his body suddenly trembled. Immediately afterwards, the pale red in his eyes once again changed color, becoming a terrifying grey filled with the aura of death!