

The Heavens 671

Chapter 671: Competition Begins

“It really is a battle formation!” Tian Mengzi muttered to himself while standing somewhere in the training plaza. He watched as Mu Songfang and the others forced Ju Hang into a passive state and he couldn’t help but sigh to himself, “It’s too bad we learned of it too late.”

Tian Mengzi couldn’t help himself as he turned to Shang Xia to grumble. “That’s not very nice of you! Since you decided to bring out something as good as this, why didn’t you think of your old friends?!”

There were several Custodians and teachers of the Upper Division beside Tian Mengzi and they clearly didn’t think Tian Mengzi would speak to Shang Xia so casually. They were greatly taken aback by his casual attitude.

Shang Xia chuckled in response, “I didn’t know if it would work. I wouldn’t dare to play around and spread this to the Upper Division without testing it out.”

The moment a student in the Tongyou Institution entered the Upper Division, they could easily join the Protection Division, the Outreach Division, the Contributions Division, or any other division for that matter. They would be thrown into the workings of the enormous faction that was the Tongyou Institution for real.

If Shang Xia used them as his test subjects, things might go very wrong. If everything went smoothly, there would obviously be no problem. However, the moment he messed up, he would have to pay a massive price.

Shang Xia’s reply shocked those beside Tian Mengzi. They didn’t know their fellow teacher had such a great relationship with the mighty Talisman Grandmaster of the Tongyou Institution. His position in their hearts was immediately elevated by a few levels.

One of the teachers of the Upper Division muttered suddenly, “Ju Hang’s losing on purpose... He hasn’t gone all out!”

Shang Xia and Sun Haiwei merely smiled at the side without saying a word.

Tian Mengzi glanced at the teacher from the Upper Division from the corner of his eye and sighed, “He’s not letting up on purpose. He probably grew stronger recently and is afraid he would fail to control his strength and injure the students. He’s suppressing his cultivation to the small competition stage of the Martial Intent Realm on purpose.”

The face of the Upper Division teacher who spoke flushed red but he quickly realized what Tian Mengzi meant. He gasped in shock, “Ju Hang... Has he already broken through to the large completion stage?”

The various teachers and Custodians present could be said to be the outstanding students nurtured by the institution in recent years.

Even so, they were finding it a little difficult to advance after reaching the Martial Intent Realm. They would have to spend a large amount of time and effort in order to make a small breakthrough. They would normally take 3 to 5 years of time to advance once.

Ju Hang was one of the younger ones among them, and he had only cultivated for a short amount of time. Who would have thought that he wouldn't be weaker than them in any way? He might even be slightly stronger than them. The Custodians and teachers couldn't help but feel a little oppressed by his progress.

Of course, that was because Ju Hang's cultivation was comparable to theirs and they could make a proper comparison. If they were talking about students of the same generation in the institution, they would have to include people like Shang Xia and Sun Haiwei. They were considered monstrous freaks and had long since been kicked out from the comparison pool.

It was then that a sudden change in the battlefield occurred.

Maybe it was because he was forced into a corner by his students and Ju Hang didn't wish to embarrass himself in front of his fellow cultivators, he burst forth with his full strength after blocking the combined strike and broke out of their encirclement.

In the past, he had always been defending himself while staying within their battle formation.

Now that the practice was gravitating more towards actual combat, Ju Hang naturally wouldn't allow them to surround him easily. The students of the Fifth Class would also try their best to prevent Ju Hang from escaping from their battle formation.

Unfortunately, his sudden burst of strength caught them off guard. His original plan was to break out of the battle formation before breaking it from the outside.

Who would have thought that their battle formation would start to change with Mu Songfang's instructions? Originally, they were only able to utilize each other's extremity qi to support themselves. With an intention from Mu Songfang, their extermination qi separated and gathered on both far ends of the battle formation.

As soon as Ju Hang escaped from their battle formation, the giant scissors made from their extremity qi appeared and snipped at him!

That instant, Ju Hang felt a sense of danger. The hair on the back of his neck stood upright and the seasoned expert who had been through many battles felt a sense of death approaching.

With a weird cry, he tossed out a talisman before rushing into the air. He didn't forget to swing his whip behind him.

Crack! Booom!

After the massive explosion, 2 protection screens that were created from 2 tank three talismans were ripped apart. The powerful attack crashed into his whip and a loud ring rang through the plaza.

When the dust finally settled, the members of the Fifth Class flopped down onto the ground. They seemed completely exhausted as their inner qi was drained from their bodies. At the same time, the plaza was wrecked. There were several large cracks in the ground that extended all the way to the walls.

Ju Hang flew through the air and landed outside the plaza. He stumbled slightly when his feet touched the ground. When he turned to look behind him, his face turned pale and fear lingered in his heart.

He wasn't the only one who was shocked. The various Custodians and teachers who were watching the battle revealed solemn expressions.

The students of the other classes who had gathered outside the plaza to watch the battle were dumbstruck.

"Is this the true strength of your Extremity Yin Yang Formation? Did they actually manage to unleash it?" Sun Haiwei asked.

As an expert in the Martial Extermination Realm, Sun Haiwei's knowledge and insight were far above the other teachers and Custodians.

What she paid attention to wasn't the power behind their final strike. Instead, it was how Shang Xia managed to prove his way of cultivation with the use of their battle formation. The power of their extremity qi tied in with Shang Xia's concept of the Yin and Yang. Those extremity qi might be different, but they managed to transform them at the end of the day to unleash their final attack.

Shang Xia expected everything to happen when he observed their training back then. However, he still felt gratified that his hard work didn't go to waste.

The Martial Extremity Realm students of the Fifth Class eventually managed to help each other up.

Shang Xia's gaze landed on Mu Songfang and Shi Huai and a meaningful look could be seen in his eyes as he laughed, "Even though you guys aren't very proficient in it and the final strike was forced, you managed to prove the feasibility of transforming your extremity qi."

Tian Mengzi spoke suddenly, "Weren't you a sword user when you were in the Martial Extremity Realm?"

"Yeah," Shang Xia replied with a smile.

"How many types of polar sword intents did you comprehend back then?" Tian Mengzi asked seriously.

Seeing no point in hiding anything, Shang Xia replied, "I comprehended 7 pairs of opposing sword intents back then."

Glancing at the 7 students of the Fifth Class, Tian Mengzi wondered out loud, "Is that why there's 7 of them in the formation?"

Shang Xia couldn't help but chuckle in response. Strands of extremity qi appeared in his palm as he displayed it for the rest to see. They transformed from time to time and swirled about his fingers.

Clear and turbid, light and heavy. Ice and fire, high and low. Long and short, fast and slow. There were extermination qi that represented life and death, real and fake. Reality and illusory, movement and stillness... All sorts of extremity qis were displayed for the rest to see.

“The Yin and Yang represent every manifestation of nature. The 2 extremities are merely the shallowest representations of it. Even I don’t know much and barely scratched the surface of it. How can there only be 7 pairs of them?”

The qi in his hand dissipated, but Tian Mengzi’s gaze lingered on his palm. He was still dumbfounded.

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It wasn’t as though the Tongyou Institution didn’t hold any competitions or contests in the past. However, the scale this time was much larger than before.

In 1 short month, the students of the Inner and Upper Division would be able to catch up on their training. However, the disciples of the various divisions would need the time to rush back to the institution!

Because of the rich rewards the institution was giving out, the various divisions gathered their best Martial Extremity Realm disciples to take part.

There were 40 teams in total, as Shang Xia had mentioned. They were split into 8 different groups and the 5 teams in each group would challenge each other in a round-robin fashion. The 2 strongest teams would advance. Moreover, every single battle would be held in the central plaza of the Tongyou Institution.

When all 40 teams had gathered, Deputy Patriarch Ji Wenlong appeared to take charge of the splitting of groups.

Ju Hang represented the Fifth Class in their draw and they were sent to the fourth group. They would have to face 2 teams from the Protection Division, 1 team from the Warehouse Division and the Seventh Class of the Inner Division.

“Our luck isn’t the worst...” Ju Hang told the students about who they were up against, “As long as you manage to do what you have been doing, it shouldn’t be a problem to advance from the group stage.”

Yan Weihai and the rest turned to look at Shang Xia.

Shang Xia laughed, “Custodian Ju Hang is right. In the competition, the disciples of the Protection Division and Outreach Division should have a lot more combat experience. All of you have been practicing with your teacher the whole time and you might not be familiar with their fighting styles as you have never challenged them before. There’s also the Seventh Class. It’s no secret that you guys have been practicing your battle formation and I believe the various divisions have also learned of it. It’s best if you don’t think you’re superior just because of your battle formation.”

When Yan Weihai and the others entered the main plaza to make their preparations, Ju Hang couldn’t help but turn to Shang Xia. “You were too harsh earlier! They seem a little nervous after your speech...”

Shang Xia chuckled mirthlessly, “Hehe, you best not underestimate your students.”

“What do you think of them? How optimistic are you about their strength? I believe it shouldn’t be a problem for them to advance out of the group stages, right? Do you

think they can still win a little more and enter the top 8? Also, there's the top 4..." Ju Hang blabbered on after a short pause.

"Haha! Looks like you're the nervous one!" Shang Xia chided.

On the plaza, the Formation Masters of the Tongyou Institution had already arranged 5 massive platforms that were 500 feet long. It was more than enough for the 10 or so students who would be taking part in the battle.

Also, there were protection formations on each of the platforms to prevent any accidents.

The battles were mostly arranged by their experience and the battles would usually involve teams of the Inner Division, followed by those of the Upper Division, and finally, the other Divisions.

The fourth group consisted of 2 teams from the Inner Division and they were the first to take the stage.

Chapter 672: Embarrassment

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"Humph, they're messing around!" Ju Hang growled when he saw the 14 students of the Fifth and Seventh Classes of the Inner Division on the platform.

Shang Xia couldn't help but break into a bitter smile. He shook his head slowly and sighed, "Perhaps, that's the hot-bloodedness of youth..."

If they were to talk about everyone's age, Shang Xia and Ju Hang were both barely over 20.

"What the hell are you talking about?! If they face the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World again in the battlefield between the two worlds, they will understand how stupid they are! I don't even know how many of them will be able to return alive when that happens!" Ju Hang growled in frustration. It seemed as though those students were unable to meet his expectations as he continued, "If they used their battle formation immediately, they would have already won the battle!"

"Hmph, what do you mean by already won?! What a joke!" A cold snort came from behind them.

When they turned to look, they saw Liu Zhifei staring at them with a frown. He was the practical combat teacher of the Seventh Class.

As someone in the second generation of the Liu Clan, Liu Zhifei could be considered Shang Xia's senior. Back when Shang Xia was still in the Outer Division as a student, he was already a Custodian.

When Shang Xia and Ju Hang ran into him, they would cup their fists and address him respectfully as their teacher.

Now that several years had passed, Liu Zhifei was no longer the Martial Extremity Realm cultivator he once was. He had also entered the Martial Intent Realm, and his status had risen from a Custodian of the Outer Division to a practical combat teacher of the Inner Division.

“Little Brother Ju, your Fifth Class has always been at the bottom of the ranking in the Inner Division. Do you really think you can defeat my Seventh Class just because 2 of your students entered the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm?” Liu Zhifei clasped his hands behind his back and approached them.

Ju Hang’s face nearly turned green in anger when Liu Zhifei called him ‘Little Brother Ju’. There were still many students around them who had lowered their heads quickly to prevent meeting the teachers’ gaze. Their shoulders were trembling uncontrollably as they held their laughter.

“Hah... What do you mean by that? Teacher Liu has been teaching for so many years and you have so much more experience than me! I’m afraid my useless students can’t defeat those you brought up personally and I hate that they didn’t go all out the moment the battle started!” Ju Hang chuckled dryly and he didn’t plan to squabble with the man.

With Ju Hang’s current strength, he could probably defeat 2 Liu Zhifeis and decided not to be petty.

Liu Zhifei nodded with satisfaction. His glance landed on Shang Xia who also had a smile on his face and he asked, “Little Shang, looks like you managed to develop a battle formation like what the Changbai Sect did. Is that true?”

Ju Hang found his words extremely jarring to the ears. He hated Liu Zhifei’s pretentious attitude and he quickly turned to look away.

Obviously, Shang Xia couldn’t be bothered. He simply chuckled in response, “I merely gave them a taste of it and allowed them to practice a little. Time was of the essence and they have a lot of room for improvement.”

Liu Zhifei nodded as though he agreed. “Yeah, that’s right. We don’t have much time and I heard that those battle formations developed by the holy lands have been perfected through the generations. Ha... Little Xia, you might be the genius of our institution and I definitely wouldn’t question your methods. However, it has only been a short month. How much can those students have learned? They’re not you. Why don’t you let them train step by step like they should?”

Clearly, Liu Zhifei was mocking Shang Xia for biting off more than he could chew.

With the smile still on his face, Shang Xia was too lazy to talk to him. He turned to look at the battle on the platform that had finally started.

The 7 students of the Fifth Class weren’t being careless. They were probably trying to deploy their battle formation carefully in order to prevent other people from seeing through their weakness.

Shang Xia found their thoughts amusing. If the Extremity Yin Yang Formation could be so easily seen through by those people, he wouldn’t have wasted a month of his time to teach them its execution.

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Because of their constant training in the past month, many students of the Fifth Class experienced an increase in strength.

With the exception of Mu Songfang and Shi Huai who were already at the large completion stage and Wang Chenglin who broke through to the small completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm, the others also became stronger.

With their increase in strength and constant practice, Despite not being able to find time to enter secluded cultivation, all of them could feel the dramatic increase in their combat abilities.

They didn't know that their understanding of Shang Xia's cultivation philosophy was the reason behind their rapid increase in strength. Shang Xia's lessons had something to do with it, but their heavy utilization of the Extremity Yin Yang Formation was the key factor.

The students of the Fifth Class had always been looked down on because of their lack of experts and weaker cultivation bases. Now that their combat capabilities took a huge leap forward, they needed to vent their frustrations somehow.

Liu Zhifei still had his hands clasped behind his back in an unperturbed manner and Shang Xia was standing beside Ju Hang while watching the battle. Even so, Shang Xia could see that the outcome had already been decided.

Of the Martial Extremity Realm students in the Seventh Class, there were 2 of them in the large completion stage. 3 were in the small completion stage, and the last 2 were slightly worse.

On the surface, their combat strength was a level above the students of the Fifth Class. Liu Zhifei was so confident that they would be the winner because his students had been in their current cultivation realm for a longer time than the students of the Fifth Class.

Mu Songfang, Shi Huai, and Wang Chenglin had just entered their current level of cultivation. They might not even have consolidated their foundations, and in his eyes, they were no match for his students.

The moment the exchange started, things went exactly as Liu Zhifei expected. The students of the Seventh Class erupted with their overwhelming strength and forced the students of the Fifth Class to retreat repeatedly. From the looks of it, the Fifth Class was barely able to withstand their ferocious assault.

Just as Liu Zhifei was about to start gloating, the situation on the platform changed. The students of the Fifth Class who seemed to be forced into a passive state started their counterattack from out of nowhere.

Mu Songfang's slow and smooth sword strokes transformed to one of aggression and speed. It was surprisingly fast as it managed to catch her opponents off guard.

Without waiting for them to react, she retreated from her original opponent and stabbed at the student fighting Shi Huai.

Mu Songfang's sword intent was related to the attribute of speed. She had already reached the point where her sword strikes could move as quickly or slowly as she wished.

Facing her sneak attack, Shi Huai's opponent's figure twisted in an attempt to avoid being struck.

Coordinating perfectly with Mu Songfang, Shi Huai's blade came crashing down. However, it seemed pretty strange as his blade seemed weightless.

With the combined might of Shi Huai and Mu Songfang, the student of the Seventh Class was at a loss for what to do. When he noticed Shi Huai's 'powerless' blade, he thought that it was a mistake and he quickly reached out to block it with his weapon.

Who would have thought that Shi Huai had practiced the art of weight? As soon as their weapons collided, the student from the Seventh Class felt as though he was hit by a truck. Even his weapon was sent flying.

Losing his weapon in the middle of their formation, there was no hope for him. His fellow student tried to come to his rescue but was stopped by Mu Songfang. Shi Huai might not have reached an enlightened level where he could wield the weapon however he wished, but he could at the very least alternate between a light and heavy sword. With 3 moves, he forced the weaponless student off the stage.

Now that his opponent was gone, the Fifth Class freed up a student with cultivation at the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm. They quickly pushed their advantage and Mu Songfang quickly defeated another student at the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm.

The situation tilted in the favor of the Fifth Class immediately and their opponents were eventually chased off the platform.

The situation changed so quickly that Liu Zhifei didn't have time to lower his hand after stroking his beard.

When he finally realized that his students were defeated, he felt a massive ache in his heart. He nearly tore away a portion of his beard.

He could only leave with his tail tucked between his legs and he didn't even greet Shang Xia or Ju Hang when he left.

Before the students of the Fifth Class could celebrate their victory, they ran into Ju Hang whose face was as black as a thundercloud. They were immediately reprimanded.

The few of them also understood that they made several mistakes, and they took the scolding without so much as a whimper.

When Ju Hang's mouth finally ran dry, Shang Xia chuckled and took over, "Alright, start talking. What were you guys thinking up there?"

Yan Weihai looked at his fellow students before responding, "I was thinking of fighting with them for real. Even if we didn't use our battle formation, we wouldn't be the worst class in the Inner Division."

Wang Chenglin felt a lot more gutsy now that someone else had spoken. He seemed a little excited as he blabbered, "Teacher, there is a combat ranking among the Inner Division and none of us in the Fifth Class are in the top 10. Even Chief Yan is ranked 15. The Seventh Class had 2 students in the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm. They were ranked 7 and 11 respectively and today, they lost to Brother Shi and Sister Mu. Looks like our Fifth Class finally produced an expert who can rank in the top 10! With Chief Yan, we have 3 students in the top 20 ranks! Let's see if anyone dares to say that our Fifth Class is ranked at the bottom of the Inner Division after today!"

“Oh? You seem very proud of it?!” Ju Hang snapped, “Experts my ass! So what if you’re ranked in the Inner Division?! Can you not be a little more far-sighted?”

Everyone lowered their heads in shame.

Mu Songfang raised her head slightly to glance at Ju Hang and Shang Xia before lowering it again. However, she didn’t stay silent. She muttered, “Teachers, actually we were confident of deploying the battle formation at any time. We wouldn’t have lost no matter what.”

Ju Hang glared at her and wanted to start round 2 but he was stopped by Shang Xia with a single gesture.

Shang Xia stared at Mu Songfang with a meaningful expression and seemed to have seen through everything. He eventually chuckled, “Alright, let’s not rain on their parade anymore. No matter what, winning the Seventh Class is a good start.”

He turned to the students and gave them another reminder, “You can’t act like this in the future rounds. You’ll be facing disciples of the Protection Division next and you need to use all the time you can now to restore your exhausted inner qi and adjust your condition.”

Chapter 673: Shock

The group stages would fly by as every team would be required to take part in 2 battles every day. They had to fight once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

The students of the Fifth Class exhausted a huge portion of their inner qi in the previous battle. It was especially so for the students who hadn’t reached the small completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm. They suffered several heavy hits from the students from the Seventh Class and even though they weren’t heavily injured, they were still slightly affected.

Luckily, there were 2 other students who managed to enter the Martial Extremity Realm in the Fifth Class and could immediately take over a few of them. Those who suffered the most would sit out the next battle.

Even though their teamwork wouldn’t be as great, they would still be able to hold off their opponents after half a month of training together.

Moreover, they had been training in the Extremity Yin Yang Formation for quite some time. They were familiar with it and gradually discovered other ways they could utilize the formation.

In the afternoon, they would be up against a team from the Protection Division. The team they would be facing lost to the other team from the Protection Division, and their members were smoldering with rage. They planned to take their anger out on the Fifth Class during their battle in the afternoon.

According to the rules of the institution, teams from the Inner Division could be made up of 7 students while teams from the Protection Division could only consist of 5.

The teams of the Inner Division might have 2 more members, but when they arrived on the platform, they discovered that every single member from the Protection Division had a cultivation base at the small completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm or higher. There were even 3 of them who were in the large completion stage!

The students of the Fifth Class seemed as though they were facing a terrifying foe as their expressions were deadly serious.

In comparison, the members of the Protection Division seemed rather relaxed. They didn't seem affected by their loss in the morning and a sharp gleam could be seen in their eyes from time to time as they conversed casually with each other. Their attitude clearly showed the elite mindset that belonged to disciples of the Protection Division.

With the command for the battle to commence, the members of the Protection Division rushed at the students of the Fifth Class without hesitation. When they were a hundred or so feet from their opponents, whistling sounds could be heard as several hidden weapons soared through the air.

In terms of battle instincts, the students from the Fifth Class were clearly at a disadvantage. However, they were lucky the platform was huge enough and the distance between the teams was sufficient for them to react in time.

By the time the hidden weapons had arrived, the students of the Fifth Class had already gotten into position. Mu Songfang pointed her sword forward and a powerful force swirled around the team. The hidden weapons were sent flying in an instant.

Those weapons were sent flying, but the students of the Protection Division entered their range of attack with astounding speed. It was clear they wanted to catch the students of the Fifth Class by surprise and win the round without much casualties. Well... they could only say that things didn't go as planned. They might be able to reach the students of the Fifth Class, but that would also mean that they had entered the range of their Extremity Yin Yang Formation.

None of them knew what had happened even after they were thrown off the platform.

When they charged over to the students of the Fifth Class, they didn't have time to break down the situation in front of them when flashes of light blinded them. The image of several figures flashed rapidly and at that moment, they weren't fighting against 1 student from the Fifth Class. Instead, they seemed to be taking on all 7 at once.

Before they could launch their attack, they were thrown off the platform.

The battle started quickly but ended just as rapidly.

Everyone who was observing the battle from below didn't react when the battle concluded. There were only several waves of cheer that came from somewhere after some time.

Those students who were observing the battle might not understand what happened, but the same couldn't be said for the Martial Intent Realm disciples of the institution who were also watching. Their expressions were grave as they looked at the students of the Fifth Class who were slowly leaving the platform. No one knew what they were thinking about.

In the group stages, the Fifth Class no one had looked highly upon in the fourth group won twice in a row! As long as they defeated one more team, they would be able to progress to the next round. Once that happened, they would be able to receive double their yearly stipend of cultivation resources!

On the second day, the Fifth Class only had a single battle in the afternoon.

In the morning, they gathered around the Central Plaza to watch the battle between the other team from the Protection Division and the Seventh Class.

After the battle concluded, the members of the Fifth Class realized that they wasted their time.

Against the members of the Protection Division, the students of the Seventh Class couldn't even show off their skills. They were basically trashed by their opponents.

In the afternoon, the Fifth Class would be facing the team from the Warehouse Division.

The Warehouse Division might not be a combat-oriented division in the Tongyou Institution, but that didn't mean that their disciples were weak.

After all, the Warehouse Division was made up of the Formations Hall, Talisman Hall, Weapons Hall, and other auxiliary departments. Shang Xia noticed that among the 6 members who made up their team, there was at least one of them from the Talisman Hall.

Indeed...

When the battle started, the members from the Warehouse Division kept their distance and tossed out rank two talismans.

Streams of sword qi and blade lights filled the platform. There were also fireballs and ice shards flying everywhere, painting a pretty impressive picture.

The team from the Warehouse Division clearly wanted to prevent the students from setting up their battle formation by messing up their coordination. After they started running around like headless flies from the effects of those rank two talismans, the members of the Warehouse Division would claim their victory.

"Hiss... These guys aren't holding back at all! Those rank two talismans should cost them quite a bit!" Ju Hang gnashed his teeth and growled. He might be complaining about the methods used by the Warehouse Division, but he didn't seem worried about his students at all.

Shang Xia chuckled, "That's because they know that if they're defeated here, they won't be able to advance to the next round. They have to win even if they throw all their wealth away. It's a pity..."

The powerful attacks from the rank two talismans eventually dissipated in a massive spiral of energy. However, the students of the Fifth Class seemed completely unaffected. In fact, they didn't seem to have exerted themselves much when dealing with those talismans.

Of course, the battle that came next bore no suspense. They claimed victory easily, and the Fifth Class managed to win 3 battles in a row. There was no doubt that they would be able to advance to the next round.

"Their final battle in the group stage would be against the other team from the Protection Division who also won 3 battles in a row!" A trace of hesitation flashed across Ju Hang's face. He turned to his students and asked, "What do you plan to do next?"

Yan Weihai looked at him before turning to stare at Shang Xia who was smiling to himself.

“Teacher, do you think we should preserve our energy?”

“Hmm...” Ju Hang mumbled, “You guys can decide for yourself.”

Just as Yan Weihai started to think of their best course of action, Mu Songfang spoke up, “Teacher Ju Hang, there’s no need for us to do that. We can’t forget the other team from the Protection Division we defeated. They’re up against the Seventh Class and there’s no doubt they’ll win. Their eventual record will be 3 wins and 1 loss. Even though they lost to us, we’ll have the same record if we lose on purpose. There’s no need to give others an excuse to drag us down.”

Ju Hang looked at Shang Xia before looking at his students again. He could only laugh helplessly, “Alright. However, you should swap out Wang Chenglin and Qiu Cheng.”

Qiu Cheng was a student of the Fifth Class who had just broken through to the Martial Extremity Realm. Earlier, he wasn’t swapped out of the team and he hadn’t taken a break. As such, Ju Hang wanted him to recover his energy.

As far as swapping out Wang Chenglin went, Ju Hang had his own opinions about the matter. He agreed for them to challenge the other team, but he wished to preserve some form of fighting strength.

Shang Xia couldn’t help but shake his head. Since they wanted to win, they had to give it their all. Swapping out Wang Chenglin was reducing their combat strength.

Of course, he didn’t say a word regarding it as he felt that as long as those taking part didn’t mess up, they would still be able to win.

The Fifth Class wanted to go all out and chase the win. Surprisingly, the team from the Protection Division chose to throw the match. They swapped out 3 of their strongest fighters.

Looking at the team that consisted of 5 small completion stage Martial Extremity Realm cultivators, Ju Hang snorted heavily, “Aren’t these people the ones who left the Teaching Division?”

The team from the Protection Division might have chosen to conserve the energy of their strongest fighters, but they didn’t plan to surrender before the match started.

As soon as the battle began, they didn’t rush up like the previous team from the Protection Division. Otherwise, they would be thrown off the platform and suffer the same fate. Instead, they maintained a suitable distance from each other where they could provide support if required before carrying out their assault on the students of the Fifth Class.

Ju Hang couldn’t help but grumble angrily while staring at the match. “Are they trying to drag the battle out and waste each other’s inner qi?”

Shang Xia couldn’t care about the match at the moment as he noticed more and more Martial Intent Realm and Martial Extermination Realm experts of the institution arriving. He chuckled in a strange tone, “Your students have already caught the attention of many experts. A lot of them are trying to feel out the secrets behind the battle formation. I’m afraid they will be coming up with more ways to challenge your students.”

As the battle raged on, the members of the Protection Division discovered the weakness of the battle formation. They realized that the back of the formation moved a little slower than the rest, and they wanted to use it as a break through point.

Using their movement skills, they made their way to the back of the formation.

Unfortunately, Shang Xia's Extremity Yin Yang Formation wasn't so easily broken.

With everyone working together, no matter who had to bear the brunt of their opponent's attack, they would have the assistance of the others.

The members of the Protection Division were quickly picked off one by one and eventually, they were thrown off the platform unceremoniously.

In the end, the Fifth Class managed to advance out of the group stage as the champions with 4 victories in a row.

The other group battles were also concluded, and the top 16 teams were formed.

Of them, 4 teams came from the Protection Division and another 4 came from the Outreach Division. The Contributions Division obtained 3 spots, and the Warehouse Division maintained one. The Upper Division and Inner Division managed to keep 2 teams each in the competition.

The most eye-catching of them all came from the Inner Division. Of the teams that qualified, the first came from the First Class, which was acknowledged as the strongest among those in the Inner Division. The other was the Fifth Class, who used to be known as the weakest class in the Inner Division.

With a battle formation that no one had seen before, the Fifth Class managed to defeat every single opponent they went up against in the group stages. They shocked everyone with their battle record!

Chapter 674: Choice

"Alright, our opponents have been drawn. We're facing the second-placed team from the fifth group. They're a team from the Outreach Division," Ju Hang frowned as he spoke. However, he quickly regained his composure and laughed, "Just do what you normally do. Let's show them the strength of our Fifth Class. Since we already managed to advance from the group stages, we have already achieved our goal. If we get anything more, that will be great. However, you don't have to feel pressured!"

When he was done with his speech, Ju Hang sent them away to practice. He then turned to Shang Xia with a serious expression. "Have they really started to act against us?"

"They're acting against the battle formation. Do you think the Fifth Class will be the only ones to know the principles behind it after the competition ends?" Shang Xia chuckled.

Ju Hang grumbled softly, "That isn't fair! Didn't the First and Second Classes also learn the battle formation? Why aren't they targeted?"

Shang Xia smiled, “Not everyone can practice the Extremity Yin Yang Formation. Otherwise, those classes would have used it during the competition. The Second Class was eliminated, and the First Class was barely ranked second in their group.”

Ju Hang didn't stop complaining. “Didn't they say that they didn't have too much time to practice their battle formation and failed to grasp the core of it? Isn't that why they didn't use it during the competition?”

Shang Xia didn't reply and he merely maintained the smile on his face. Instead, Ju hang fell into contemplation as though he had realized something.

With Shang Xia's instructions, the members of the Fifth Class could challenge Ju Hang after a period of training. The stronger students from the First and Second Classes didn't choose to listen to Shang Xia's personal instructions. They chose to train alone, and even after half a month, they failed to grasp the fundamentals of the Extremity Yin Yang Formation.

It wasn't as though both classes didn't think to use their battle formation. However, some of them had a strong resistance to the principles behind it and they were unable to coordinate with the others. Even Sun Haiwei was unable to do anything about it. She could only allow them to make their own decisions.

What Shang Xia and Ju Hang didn't know was that the students of the First and Second Classes had a falling out because of the Extremity Yin Yang Formation right after the group stages were concluded.

There wasn't a need to mention the Second Class. They were eliminated from the group stages and their discussion of the formation mostly revolved around if they could have advanced if they worked harder and utilized the battle formation well.

If they were honest with themselves, there was no need for any doubt. They would definitely have done better if they used the formation. After all, the reason the Fifth Class could emerge victorious was because of it!

No one would think that the Fifth Class managed to get so far based on their personal cultivation level. After all, the teams they defeated weren't exactly useless. There were 2 teams from the Protection Division and it was impossible for the Fifth Class to have defeated them easily.

There was only one reason behind their victory, the Extremity Yin Yang Formation.

The students from the Second Class managed to get the chance to learn the same battle formation used by the Fifth Class thanks to Sun Haiwei's recommendation, but they chose to give it up.

That led to the stronger members in the Martial Extremity Realm facing a lot of doubt from the other members.

...

The chief disciple of the First Class of the Inner Division, Zhuang Su, had already reached the grand completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm. Facing the pressure and doubt from his fellow students, his face flushed red with rage and he yelled, “That battle formation walks down the unorthodox path and I'm sure our cultivation will be negatively affected if we choose to comprehend the principles behind it! We'll just get further and further off the path of cultivation and never be able to advance again!”

“Chief Zhuang, are you so sure?”

“Wouldn’t the other members of the institution discover its weakness if it’s as bad as you say? Wouldn’t our teachers, or the various Instructors know?”

“That’s right! Teacher Sun is an expert at the Martial Extermination Realm and she brought us over to Teacher Shang to learn the battle formation. Are you saying that she planned to harm us by doing so?”

“We managed to advance from the group stages and doubled our cultivation resources for the year. What if we manage to advance again and enter the top 8? We will be able to enter the Polarity Essence Gathering Pool to cultivate!”

“Heh, Chief Zhuang has already entered the Polarity Essence Gathering Pool in the past. He has already reached the peak of the Martial Extremity Realm and is a step away from entering the Martial Intent Realm. The Polarity Essence Gathering Pool is useless to him!”

“...”

Zhuang Su could no longer endure his anger and he snapped at the rest, “If you wish to use the battle formation, go ahead! I won’t stop you, but I will not be joining no matter what!” He stormed off after speaking.

A portion of students from the First Class left with him, including some in the Martial Extremity Realm.

It became a little awkward after they left, but the next moment, one of the students in the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm coughed once before breaking the silence, “We’re going to face a team from the Contribution Division next and I went to ask around. They swapped out several disciples during the group stages and we can’t be sure who their strongest disciples are and their respective cultivation levels. In their final battle in the group stage, they sent out 5 disciples at the small completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm. The only thing we can be sure of so far is that they have at least 4 disciples in the large completion stage. We have no idea if there are any grand completion stage Martial Extremity Realm experts among them.”

With someone breaking the strange atmosphere, everything became lively again.

“There might be very few cultivators who entered the grand completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm, but we cannot forget that we’re up against the Contribution Division. They are in charge of judging the sinners of our institution and they wouldn’t be able to do that without sufficient strength!

“That’s right. The Contribution Division sent 3 teams into the competition, and all of them advanced from the group stage. Not even the Protection Division or Outreach Division can match their achievement.”

“It wouldn’t be strange if a disciple or two in the grand completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm appears...”

“In that case, wouldn’t that mean that we don’t stand a chance?”

The student who analyzed the situation earlier spoke up again. “That’s exactly the reason we should bank all our hope on the battle formation. We can’t match them in experience or cultivation, and we can only hope this works!”

“...”

...

Ju Hang stared at the bunch of crossbow-wielding disciples on the platform and felt his back drenched in cold sweat.

They released their arrows the next instant and sent 2 members of the Fifth Class off the platform. The team that consisted of 7 students was left with 5, and Ju Hang spat in anger, “Are the disciples of the Outreach Division all so sinister? They even made use of crossbows to launch a long range attack. They might as well...”

Before Ju Hang could finish his sentence, the 5 disciples of the Outreach Division brought out 5 rank two talismans and flung them at the students of the Fifth Class.

“... What the fuck?!” Ju Hang’s eyes widened in shock. He continued, “Are they really going to be so damn shameless?”

“Hmph, you’re still a Custodian of the Inner Division. Aren’t you embarrassing yourself by spewing out so much vulgarities in public?” A female voice came from behind him.

Turning around, Ju Hang glared at Mu Qingyu who appeared out of nowhere. He growled angrily, “This is just a competition held in the institution. Your disciples seem to be going for the kill... What’s the matter? Are you bullying them because they are not as experienced as the disciples of your Outreach Division?”

Mu Qingyu didn’t seem to care much about him as she turned to glance at Shang Xia whose gaze was still fixed on the battle. She replied casually, “Well, you can always buy some talismans for them with your own money.”

“I don’t need you to try to piss me off over here... Do you really think that I don’t have the means to buy them each a talisman?” Ju Hang snapped.

His angry reaction was met with ridicule by Mu Qingyu. “Brother Ju, of course there’s no need for me to doubt your spending power. However, it doesn’t matter if you bought them talismans. They might not be able to use them anyway.”

Ju Hang quickly turned back to the platform to see his students fumbling around the platform. After the initial attack from the crossbows and the follow-up assault from those talismans, the students of the Fifth Class were unable to organize their battle formation.

When 2 students from the Fifth Class were knocked out by those crossbows, there were many Custodians, teachers, and Deacons in the crowd who sighed softly.

“Those students are just too inexperienced. They are unable to react swiftly to the changes in the battlefield.”

“It’s going to be difficult for them to use their battle formation now that they lost 2 people...”

“It’s a pity. After those talismans were used, those students had to fend for themselves. The battle is already over.”

“Hmm... The power behind their formation is pretty good. However, there seems to be some sort of defect...”

“Huh? I thought there would be something special about the battle formation. It’s a pity... We won’t be able to use those things we prepared for them!”

“It’s already amazing for them to achieve what they did. After all, those battle formations developed by those holy lands went through countless generations of changes and refinement. At the very least, our institution possesses a battle formation of our own now. In the future, we can continue to work on it. After 100 years, it will be a core part of our fighting strength.”

“Hmph, 100 years?! You wish!”

“I heard that Talisman Master Shang was the one who came up with the battle formation, am I wrong?”

“Who are you calling Talisman Master Shang? He’s Grandmaster Shang now!”

“I heard that he’s about to enter the Martial Dipper Realm...”

“Impossible! Do you think experts in the Martial Dipper Realm are cabbages that grow by the side of the road? His grandfather, Deputy Patriarch Shang Bo, just completed the advancement! Do you think he will be able to break through so quickly?”

“Hey, we’re talking about the battle formation here, not Talisman Master... Not Young Master Shang. Haven’t you guys noticed the strangeness of the battle formation? It’s said that Young Master Shang is planning to work on the unification of the different types of extremities...”

“Huh? That’s strange! Look at that! The students of the Fifth Class seem to be holding on quite well under the assault!”

“Hey, aren’t you guys...”

“This... This... They’re still using the battle formation! They split into 2 groups consisting of a pair and a trio respectively!”

“What?! Wasn’t their battle formation made for 7 people?”

“Do you still not understand? I’m afraid the battle formation Young Master Shang developed isn’t as simple as we thought. They don’t need 7 people to use the formation! If they’re able to work together when there’s only 2 or 3 of them... Wouldn’t that mean that they would be able to utilize the formation with 5 people?”

Everyone watching the battle with a cultivation base of the Martial Intent Realm and above started to discuss fervently among themselves. Shang Xia’s attention might be on the platform, but he was able to hear everything that was going on. He was just too lazy to respond to any of them.

As the battle raged on on the platform, a shocking scene played out on the other platform.

There were 2 teams from the Inner Division left, and the other team was made up of students from the First Class. After losing a student at the grand completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm and 2 students at the small completion stage, they eventually managed to gather whatever fighting strength they had left. Their team of 7 was made up of 2 students in the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm, 3 in the small completion stage, and 2 who had just entered the Martial Extremity Realm. They managed to forcefully deploy the battle formation and defeat the team from the Contribution Division!

Just like that, they entered the top 8, shocking everyone in the process.

Chapter 675: Dou Zhong’s Cultivation

The team from the First Class of the Inner Division brought in 3 replacements after losing a substantial amount of combat power. With the Extremity Yin Yang Formation they weren’t exactly too familiar with, they still managed to defeat a team from the Contribution Division to enter the top 8.

However, it seemed as though that was their limit.

They managed to win, but they paid a huge price in the process.

Of the 7 students who took part in the battle, 5 of them were injured. The final 2 were utterly exhausted and they were in no condition to fight the next battle.

That might be so, but according to some rumors going around, the First Class was celebrating like there was no tomorrow.

Since they entered the top 8, they would each gain a spot to enter the Polarity Essence Gathering Pool.

When Shang Xia entered the Polarity Essence Gathering Pool back then, it was because he managed to make huge contributions to the institution. It wasn’t easy to obtain a chance to cultivate in the pool back then, but now that several years had passed, Shang Xia learned that the institution managed to build several more Polarity Essence Gathering Pools. Every one of them was built larger than the other, and it became much easier to gain a spot to cultivate in it.

All they had to do at the moment was to enter the top 8 of the competition held by the institution. They didn't even have to go out there to kill cultivators from the Azure Spiritual World or risk their lives hunting spiritual beasts. 'Seniors' like Shang Xia and Sun Haiwei could only sigh helplessly.

There were people celebrating their victory, and there were people who were doing the exact opposite.

The Second Class of the Inner Division had also learned the basics of the Extremity Yin Yang Formation. However, they chose not to use it and were eliminated. Their complaints became even louder.

The same could be said for the chief disciple of the First Class and those who left with him. They couldn't be more upset.

What caused them extreme discomfort was the conflict in their mind on whether they should shamelessly follow the rest to enter the Polarity Essence Gathering Pool.

When the news of how the First Class defeated the team from the Contribution Division spread, everyone who was disappointed by the fact that they couldn't observe the proper demonstration of the formation by the Fifth Class started to pay attention to it again.

However, the next moment, the First Class' victory no longer mattered. The team from the Fifth Class, led by Mu Songfang, put up a spectacular show on their platform.

...

The Fifth Class was caught by surprise and lost 2 companions before being thrown into a state of chaos by the onslaught of several talismans. They were unable to properly deploy their battle formation as the disciples of the Contribution Division descended on them to push them into a state of individual combat.

It might seem as though the disciples of the Contribution Division were about to claim their victory, but the students of the Fifth Class held their ground and showed off their frightening resilience.

Mu Songfang held off a disciple at the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm until she managed to regroup with another student in the initial stages of the Martial Extremity Realm from the Fifth Class.

The other student had already been heavily injured, and he was about to exhaust his inner qi at any moment. However, the moment Mu Songfang arrived, he managed to recover at a frightening speed and they worked together to form a simple form of the Extremity Yin Yang Formation. With that, they managed to stop the joint assault from 2 disciples of the Contribution Division!

Mu Songfang quickly displayed her powerful control of extremity qi. Even though there were only 2 pairs because of their combination, she managed to fight evenly with the disciples of the Contribution Division.

Bursting forth with incredible strength, she managed to regroup with Wang Chenglin to increase their battle formation to 3 people. With his addition, they no longer seemed to be at a disadvantage. Despite Wang Chenglin being heavily suppressed by his opponent, everything changed the moment the duo arrived. They started their counter attack and slowly gained the upper hand against their 3 opponents.

That was how quickly and strangely the battlefield changed.

Yan Weihai and Shi Huai made up the other pair and they had been working together for a long time. They might not have been able to do what Mu Songfang did to gather several members herself, but they weren't weak to begin with. They held off their opponents' initial assault before gathering together. They also deployed their battle formation and with their combined strength, they immediately suppressed the members of the Contribution Division.

With things progressing up to that point, there was no way the various experts of the institution couldn't see how incredible the battle formation was.

Initially, Shang Xia taught them how to deploy their battle formation in a team of 7. With that, they managed to step through the gates and understand how it truly worked.

Not only could the formation make use of different types of extremity qi, but they could also maintain balance and transform it into different types according to the people who were part of it.

They would be able to deploy the formation with 7 people, 6, or 5. In fact, they would even be able to increase the number of experts in the formation! It would be possible to have 8, or even 9 experts.

If Shang Xia was the person using the formation, he would be able to deploy it alone! Of course, that was a whole other story...

Everyone could tell that the situation on the platform was slowly tipping in favor of the Fifth Class. They weren't exhausting much inner qi compared to their fellow opponents.

One had to know that the members of the Outreach Division definitely cultivated for a much longer time than the students. They had higher cultivation levels and stronger reserves. They had a lot more experience when it came to fights, but now that they were fighting the students of the Fifth Class of the Inner Division, they were quickly falling behind. Those students seemed to be able to maintain their utilization of inner qi really well and they didn't seem tired in the slightest!

Eventually, those watching came to the conclusion that the battle formation didn't just reduce the amount of inner qi used. It could even supplement the energy they lost during the battle.

That was a little over the top if they thought about it carefully.

If the battle dragged out, that would mean that they would grow stronger by the minute.

Everything might seem unbelievable, but the scene that was playing out on the platform couldn't be faked. After all, those were disciples and students in the Martial Extremity Realm. They wouldn't be able to hide anything from the high-leveled cultivators watching.

When the students of the Fifth Class managed to gain an advantage, everything seemed to fall in their favor. The members of the Outreach Division could do nothing to turn the tides.

Everyone could tell that the disciples of the Outreach Division were trying their best, but under the oppressive might of the Extremity Yin Yang Formation, they were eventually rolled over.

Once again, the extraordinary aspect of the Extremity Yin Yang Formation was displayed to the institution.

Ever since the competition started, everyone could be sure that none of the teams that advanced did so through a fluke. Even so, when the top 8 teams were announced, many people were still shocked by the fact that there were 2 teams from the Inner Division.

All of them thought that the Inner Division would be the weakest link in the competition. After all, they might barely be able to gather 7 Martial Extremity Realm students to form a proper team.

Their cultivation bases were extremely varied too. They hadn't been through many battles and were somewhat lacking in experience. Everyone expected them to be defeated a long time ago.

Who would have thought that both teams from the Inner Division not only managed to advance from the group stages, they would also charge their way into the top 8?

Ignoring those who were there to enjoy the competition and take part in the hype, everyone else who had half a brain could tell that those students didn't reach their level of achievement because of their talent or individual strength. It was because of the Extremity Yin Yang Formation!

Now that the top 8 teams were out, the institution gave everyone 2 days to recover.

Of the final 8 teams, 2 of them came from the Inner Division. The Upper Division managed to keep 1 team in the competition, and there were 2 teams from the Protection Division. The Outreach Division and Contribution Division had 1 team each, and the final team came from the Warehouse Division. The Scripture Depository had been eliminated.

During the short break given by the institution, the chief disciple of the First Class, Zhuang Su, seemed to have reignited the fire in his heart as he wanted to try using the battle formation against their next opponent in a last-ditch attempt to advance.

Unfortunately, he was quickly rejected by the rest due to their injuries and he was eventually given the cold shoulder by the others. In the end, their Custodian relayed the news that they would give up their chance to fight and end their journey in the top 8 before everything calmed down.

2 days later, the competition resumed.

Of the 8 platforms erected on the Central Plaza of the Tongyou Institution, there were only 2 left.

Because the First Class surrendered, the team from the Outreach Division who were supposed to be their opponents advanced to the top 4 without a fight. They erupted with joy as they praised their luck.

Everyone turned their attention to the other platform where teams from the Upper Division and Protection Division were about to fight for a spot in the semi-finals.

There would be another battle later in the day between the other team from the Protection Division and the team from the Outreach Division. Alongside their battle would be the contest between the team from the Fifth Class and the Warehouse Division.

Even though Shang Xia didn't head over to the other platform to watch the fight, he knew everything that was happening.

If nothing went wrong, the team from the Protection Division would emerge victorious.

It wasn't as though the team from the Upper Division was weak, but the disciples from the Protection Division had an advantage when it came to their battle experience.

It was a separate matter when the potential of their individual members was taken into account. They might lose the battle, but the various divisions would probably set their sights on those elite disciples who managed to make it that far. In fact, they probably already offered them a place before the battle.

When he was observing the battle, Ju Hang approached Shang Xia out of nowhere and whispered softly, "Hey, do you know who's the teacher of the Second Class of the Upper Division?"

Shang Xia raised an eyebrow and looked at him.

"Do you still remember Dou Zhong? Back when the institution sent a huge amount of experts into the vast sea of stars, we had a massive power vacuum. That brat managed to grab an opportunity and received the institution's nurturing. He took the chance to break through to the Martial Extermination Realm. He only emerged from his seclusion last year..." Ju Hang muttered.

Shang Xia couldn't help but chuckle in response, "Oh? It's him. Of course I remember him. He even managed to enter the Martial Extermination Realm... Brother Ju Hang, you have fallen behind by quite a bit..."

Rolling his eyes, Ju Hang continued, "The kid never used to stand out much. No one knows how he managed to catch the eye of Chief Shang Lubing of the Contribution Division and his cultivation started to soar. If this granddaddy here had a Martial Extermination Realm expert to guide me, I wouldn't be weaker than Dou Zhong! So what if he entered the Martial Extermination Realm? It's not like he can be compared to you..."

Shang Xia chuckled softly in response, and he clearly didn't care about Dou Zhong's progress.

Ju Hang started to joke around. "Regardless, you better take care of yourself. That brat never seemed to like you. He's been comparing himself to you the whole time. It's a shame you progressed too quickly and he can't seem to catch up for the time being. However, it doesn't mean that he has given up. Among students of your generation, he's the other shining star..."

Chapter 676: Advance!

The Second Class of the Upper Division was the only one who managed to make it into the top 8. Their practical combat instructor was Dou Zhong, who used to be at the grand completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm, but he successfully stepped into the Martial Extermination Realm the year before. When he returned to the Upper Division, he was supposed to become the practical combat instructor of the First Class of the Upper Division.

However, he insisted on finishing what he started and completing his teaching of the Second Class. As the Teaching Division had always been lacking in manpower, Liu Qinglan wouldn't reject the request.

It would be impossible for Dou Zhong to obtain his current achievements if he was actually useless. With his teachings, the students of the Second Class quickly became the strongest among their peers. They were also able to reach the top 8 teams in the competition.

Of course, it wasn't an easy feat to go so far. They used up everything they had in order to do so. In their battle against the Protection Division, they managed to fling 3 opponents off the platform, but

that was it. The Protection Division's team was made up of 5 people, and the other 2 merely sustained light injuries. The team of 6 from the Second Class of the Upper Division was defeated badly. 3 of them were heavily injured, and 2 were thrown off the platform. The last member of their team fainted on the platform after being attacked by both opponents.

The Protection Division seemed to win with much difficulty, but they immediately managed to fill in the spots with members of the same cultivation level. They didn't have to drop out of the competition at all, and that was something classes of the Inner and Upper Divisions could never do.

Just like that, 2 of the 4 spots in the semi-finals were filled. One of them was a team from the Protection Division, and another came from the Outreach Division.

Those divisions were where the elite disciples of the institution gathered, and it came as no surprise they made it that far.

Finally, the next round of battles arrived. The Fifth Class was up against the Warehouse Division while the other team from the Protection Division went up against the Contribution Division.

Comparing the 2, the Fifth Class was getting a lot more attention than the battle on the other platform.

When Shang Xia casually glanced at the members of the Warehouse Division, he discovered that their cultivation base was in the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm at the very least.

It made sense when he thought about it. One had to know that once a team reached the semi-finals, the institution would promise to provide their rank three advancement medicine when they were ready to break through. Even though the institution received a massive upgrade because of everything they've been through, it wasn't cheap to obtain all the herbs and treasures required to make a set of rank three advancement medicine!

In order to receive one, disciples would have to produce amazing results! They would have to go through many trials and contribute to the institution. Ordinarily, a disciple at the peak of the Martial Extremity Realm would have to spend 5 years of time to obtain enough merits to exchange for a set of rank three advancement medicine. Also, that was assuming they were extremely lucky!

Otherwise, there wouldn't be so many disciples in the various divisions who were stuck at the peak of the Martial Extremity Realm.

"The institution wouldn't allow our students to borrow other sources of strength. Other than ordinary weapons, they can't use any outside help. Of course, that's with the exception of the Extremity Yin Yang Formation. The same restrictions don't apply to the other teams!" Ju Hang panted as he ran over to Shang Xia. He brought a piece of shocking news.

Shang Xia couldn't help but laugh, "Looks like the battle formation has finally caught the attention of the higher-ups. They wish to see how far the students of the Fifth Class can go."

"Don't you think that it's a little unfair?" Ju Hang asked.

Shang Xia chuckled in response, “Do you think that they would be able to achieve this without the help of the battle formation? To the others, if the students of the Fifth Class didn’t use the Extremity Yin Yang Formation, they would have been eliminated a long time ago!”

Ju Hang’s expression froze for a second, but he quickly regained his composure. “Well, they can only blame the person who arranged for you to teach the Fifth Class then!”

“Nonsense. Anyway, the institution should have some way to make things up to the Fifth Class if they’re blatantly targeting them.” Shang Xia waved his hands dismissively.

Sniggering under his breath, Ju Hang shifted the topic once again. “Both sides have already arrived on the platform. The battle is about to begin.”

Shang Xia shook his head in amusement. He was too lazy to ask about the compensation given by the institution.

A familiar aura suddenly appeared in range of Shang Xia’s divine perception and Chu Jia appeared silently. She stood beside him and stared at the platform while asking, “Who do you think will win?”

Shang Xia glanced at her with a cursory gaze before sinking into contemplation. He glanced at the platform again and muttered, “Are you planning on laying down a formation?”

“Hehe,” Chu Jia laughed, “I’m not the one laying down the formation. However, there is a Formation Master in the Warehouse Division’s team. He came to ask me how to lay down a formation in the shortest time possible and I didn’t plan on hiding anything. Moreover, everyone out there is thinking of ways to destroy your battle formation and I won’t sit back and do nothing...”

Shang Xia obviously couldn’t say anything else now that she had spoken. He shook his head as a bitter smile appeared on his face as he silently watched the battle.

With a single command from the referee, the battle began. The students of the Fifth Class quickly gathered together to form their battle formation.

After going through several battles, they gained a lot of experience.

Hundreds of feet away, the sound of a bowstring snapping could be heard as an arrow tore through the air.

The disciples of the Warehouse Division didn’t use crossbows like the disciples of the Outreach Division. Instead, they only arranged for a single disciple to provide long range support with a longbow.

Mu Songfang immediately took charge of the battle formation and sent the arrow flying. With all 7 of them in position, the Fifth Class got ready for battle!

As teams from the Warehouse Division could be made up of 6 disciples, they were able to leave behind 1 to provide long range support while the other 5 huddled together while advancing towards the Fifth Class. The distance between both sides shortened, and when the disciples of the Warehouse Division entered their attack range of 100 feet or so, they launched their offensive.

All of them raised their hands at the same time and several short snapping sounds could be heard as rays of frosty lights shot out from their sleeves.

“That’s despicable! They’re using hidden arrow sleeves!” Ju Hang roared in anger.

Chu Jia sneered at the side, “What’s the matter?! You can’t even take a single round of hidden attacks? Well, I don’t mind telling you... Even though the power in those hidden arrows might not be comparable to a crossbow, why don’t you take a guess and see whether or not they have more hidden weapons on them?”

“You...!” Ju Hang pointed at Chu Jia in anger but he seemed to have recalled something. He hastily lowered his hand while glaring at her the entire time.

Shang Xia clapped Ju Hang’s shoulder and sighed meaningfully, “Brother Ju Hang, relax. Calm down and keep watching. Look at how your students will deal with this!”

Turning back to the platform, Ju Hang quickly forgot his displeasure.

Shang Xia tilted his head to look at Chu Jia and chuckled, “What’s the point of provoking him anyway?”

“Heh, he doesn’t dare to mess around with you here! Why can’t I?” Chu Jia rolled her eyes at him and ignored the strange look that was forming on Shang Xia’s face. “Also, the weakest class of the Inner Division actually managed to make it all the way to the top 8! That fellow’s acting a little too arrogantly now. Also, it’s true that every team is targeting the Fifth Class and coming up with ways to destroy their battle formation. After all, the institution is very interested in seeing how far they can go. What you don’t know is that the little asshole Ju Hang is also a factor in drawing over the hatred of the masses. He’s part of the reason why everyone is coming up with countless ways to deal with your battle formation.”

Shang Xia was stunned speechless. Ju Hang was probably too repressed after being looked down on by so many people for so long. Now that they managed to reach their current heights, he probably went around bragging his ass off. There was no one to blame but himself.

After Shang Xia’s gaze landed on the platform again...

If they think they can break the battle formation with this...

Shang Xia stared at the last of the 5 people rushing at the Fifth Class before looking at Mu Songfang.

The Warehouse Division started their close range assault with a round of hidden arrows before tossing out rank two talismans. “When they were done, another round of hidden arrows arrived, along with flying knives and throwing rocks. After that, several jade bottles were thrown onto the platform and a series of yellow smoke and black mist filled the air. The arrows that were coming from the last member of the Warehouse Division didn’t stop either.

With the chaos and cover of everything they had thrown out, the Formation Master took the chance to place down several Array Flags around the platform. Seeing as they were about to complete the

formation, Shang Xia looked at Chu Jia and sighed helplessly, “They are actually going a little overboard with this...”

Chu Jia smiled without giving him a response.

On the other hand, Ju Hang couldn't sit still any longer. He roared with rage, “Who the hell prepares so adequately in a real battle? Members from the Weapons Hall, Talisman Hall, Medicine Hall, and someone from the Formation Hall laying down a formation on the platform... You guys have gone too far!”

Shang Xia noticed Chu Jia's expression sinking and he quickly interjected, “Alright, enough! There's no need to argue with each other. Since they wish to see the true strength of the battle formation, they have to go all out. Moreover, it's not that easy to break my formation. Also, I'm the one who came up with it. I haven't said anything! Why are you 2 so worked up?”

During their conversation, the situation on the platform changed once again.

Even though the students of the Fifth Class were taken by surprise and some of them were flustered, affecting the operation of the formation, Mu Songfang showed her true strength. Her understanding and control of the Extremity Yin Yang Formation were obviously much higher than the rest as she faced the incoming attack with a calm mind. They might be at a disadvantage, but that didn't affect her. She continued to adjust the extremity qi in the formation and the mist and smoke on the platform scattered. She discovered array flags planted all around them.

The archer from the Warehouse Division also seemed to discover the weakness in their battle formation. Shooting several arrows, 2 students of the Fifth Class who were only in the initial stages of the Martial Extremity Realm were shot and Wang Chenglin also took an arrow to his left arm. Unfortunately, that was all the archer could do. The arrows that had been shot at Mu Songfang from time to time were easily deflected.

With a loud thud, one of the members of the Fifth Class fainted. It was their weakest member who had just broken through to the Martial Extremity Realm. He sucked in several breaths of knock-out smoke and failed to keep up with the Extremity Yin Yang Formation. The disciples of the Warehouse Division caught on to his weakness and focused their attention on him, eventually knocking him out with a throwing rock.

The battle had barely started but after several short exchanges, the Fifth Class suffered massive losses. 3 students were injured and 1 of them was knocked out. However, they failed to harm a hair on their opponent's body.

Moreover, the Formation Master of the Warehouse Division completed their formation. It seemed as though dealing with the weakened battle formation wouldn't pose a challenge!

Unfortunately for them, the situation turned on its head the next second. Mu Songfang launched her counterattack and gathered extremity qi from other members of the Fifth Class in her body. Using them to supplement her own energy, she waved her sword at her opponents.

“3... 4, 5... 6... What?! They actually managed to use 6 different types of extremity qi! Mu Songfang unleashed 3 of them herself!”

“That’s not right! Isn’t she at the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm? This... This is a martial intent! She actually comprehended her martial intent and stepped into the grand completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm!”

“I’m afraid she’s the only one who managed to understand the intricacies behind the Extremity Yin Yang Formation...”

The second Mu Songfang unleashed her sword, the various high-level experts of the institution who were watching the battle came to a conclusion. The outcome of the battle was decided!

Chapter 677: Exhausted

Because of their achievement, the high-level experts of the institution had already looked into the Fifth Class’ situation. They knew that they only had 9 students in the Martial Extremity Realm, and the history behind each of them.

They had long since learned that Mu Songfang had only recovered from her injuries close to a month ago, and she entered the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm 20 days prior. However, she comprehended her martial intent in front of everyone present and stepped into the grand completion stage during the competition!

How long has it been?!

Despite what she did, no one thought that she was a genius. Everyone basically attributed her continuous breakthrough to the Extremity Yin Yang Formation!

If one had to mention her talent, that would be her ability to understand the principles behind the Extremity Yin Yang Formation before the others.

After all, her performance before learning the Extremity Yin Yang Formation was slightly above average at best. She wasn’t exactly the most outstanding student in the Inner Division.

It was because of that that her experience of entering the grand competition stage of the Martial Extremity Realm received even more focus from the experts of the Tongyou Institution.

Well, their attention wasn’t exactly all on her. A greater portion of it was related to the principles and meaning behind the Extremity Yin Yang Formation.

There were 4 students of the Fifth Class left on stage and one was slightly injured. However, Mu Songfang still managed to gather 7 different types of extremity qi to unleash a powerful sword strike.

It was as though the 3 students who had been eliminated before didn’t affect the power of the Extremity Yin Yang Formation at all!

Of course, there was also another possibility where Mu Songfang had already controlled 3 different types of extremity qi herself.

Whatever the case, the sword strike she released was terrifying. The array flags that had been placed down by the Formation Master of the Warehouse Division snapped.

The team from the Warehouse Division also had a disciple in the grand completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm, but there were differences in martial intent. They were no match for Mu Songfang, especially since she was using her martial intent in conjunction with the battle formation!

The terrifying sword qi tore through the members of the Warehouse Division and greatly weakened them. It didn't take long for the students of the Fifth Class to kick them off the platform.

The lower-level cultivators of the institution who were observing the battle were flabbergasted by the sudden change.

They might be frozen in shock, but cheers quickly filled the skies. The high-level experts of the institution broke out into praise after observing the battle.

"That's not enough..." Shang Xia muttered softly with a smile on his face. "Even though she could control the different types of extremity qi, she hasn't reached the level where she could unleash the formation alone. She failed to merge the different extremity qi in her final strike and could only use them one by one..."

Chu Jia raised an eyebrow mischievously and stared at Shang Xia. "Hah! That's why your martial intent back then was called the Seven Laceration Sword, right?"

Ju hang witnessed Shang Xia's sword qi back then and he couldn't help but mumble to himself, "Why would you stop at 7 though?"

Sun Haiwei interrupted before he could respond. "They might have won this battle, but it's going to be difficult for them to achieve victory against their next opponent..."

Everyone turned to look at the platform where the remaining members of the Fifth Class stumbled off while supporting each other.

Regardless if it was the Inner Division or the Upper Division, they didn't have too many Martial Extremity Realm disciples to substitute each other. They could only hold out all the way with whoever they had.

The institution might have tried to solve their problem by giving them several days to recover, but it wasn't enough for the heavily injured members to recover to their peak state.

From the start of the competition, the students of the Fifth Class suffered multiple injuries. They were like an arrow at the end of their flight after holding out for so long.

"Looks like we can pretty much conclude what we need to know about their battle formation..." Sun Haiwei seemed to be muttering to herself, but her voice rang in the midst of every expert in the Tongyou Institution.

As the Fifth Class managed to charge their way into the semi-finals, they became the greatest black horse of the competition.

Everyone might know that they had been relying on their special battle formation, but it couldn't be denied that none of their battles were easy. They had many strong opponents, and the battle tactics used against them went slightly overboard.

No one would question their qualifications to take a spot in the semi-finals.

The battle on the other side concluded and the final 4 teams were determined. The final team to enter the semi-finals came from the Contribution Division.

It didn't take long for the battles to be arranged and the Fifth Class would be going up against the elite squad from the Contribution Division next. The Outreach Division and Protection Division would also be going head to head to determine their spot in the finals.

"You guys not only exceeded my expectations by making it this far. I'm afraid a great portion of experts in the institution have set their eyes on you." Shang Xia looked at the students of the Fifth Class and asked in a cordial tone, "What do you guys plan to do next? Are you going to continue fighting? Or will you choose to give up?"

Ju Hang wanted to say something, but the words didn't make it out of his mouth. He fell silent at the side as he waited for their response.

If they had to be honest, the Fifth Class was only able to reach their current state by giving it their all. The only ones who had any sort of combat capabilities left were Mu Songfang, Yan Weihai, and Shi Huai. The others had exhausted their inner qi and were barely holding out in their last battle. Even Wang Chenglin who took an arrow to his arm in the previous battle had used up the last of his reserves.

Even if they forced themselves to continue, they wouldn't be in their best condition to fight.

Wang Chenglin had always been the liveliest and outspoken on the team, but the injury to his arm was just too significant to ignore. He couldn't move his left arm for the time being and despite his desire to continue fighting, he understood that he would only drag the rest down. A reluctant look could be seen in his eyes, but he remained silent as he waited for Mu Songfang and the rest to make the decision.

Surprisingly, the person who spoke first wasn't Mu Songfang, the strongest of them all. It wasn't Shi Huai either, who was the most mature of them all. It was Yan Weihai whose position as the chief disciple of the Fifth Class had been falling since Mu Songfang recovered.

"We have to fight! Even if we lose, we have to lose with glory. Even though giving up will allow us to maintain some sort of reputation, we won't be able to accept the loss if we do! In the future, when we think back to our choice today, we won't regret our decision to stand and fight!"

Yan Weihai didn't seem to be extremely agitated when he spoke, and it was clear he had been thinking about it for a long time.

Shang Xia nodded and the smile on his face didn't fade. He didn't say anything else.

Ju Hang was also feeling really gratified as he stood beside them. A trace of anticipation burned in his eyes.

The institution gave everyone 2 more days of time to recover and the Central Plaza underwent another round of construction. Of the 8 platforms that were initially built, only 1 remained.

Shang Xia didn't plan to watch the next battle. It didn't matter if they won or lost. After all, he had already achieved his goal.

He believed that he wasn't the only one thinking that way. Many experts of the institution should have already observed what they wished to see.

After the competition, it was evident that the Extremity Yin Yang Formation would become a core part of the institution's teachings. That would mean that Shang Xia's plan to establish his foundation where he could teach his way of cultivation had succeeded.

Naturally, the battle formation wasn't restricted to those in the Martial Extremity Realm. It could be used by experts in the Martial Intent Realm, or even the Martial Extermination Realm!

The number of people who could take part in the formation wasn't fixed either. 2 people could use the battle formation, and so could 9. In fact, if they were strong enough, they could even use it when they were alone.

Temporarily leaving his post as a teacher in the Inner Division, Shang Xia's attention returned to talisman crafting. In particular, he was planning to thoroughly research carving better talisman seals.

Back on the Three Unity Island, Shang Xia managed to create rank one and two talisman seals without much difficulty. However, he managed to estimate the difficulty of crafting a rank three talisman seal after some practice. After trying it for himself, he discovered that he was still underestimating the difficulty of making one!

When he returned from the Three Unity Island, he spent all his time outside of the public talisman crafting session in the Talisman Hall and teaching the students of the Fifth Class researching the production of rank three talisman seals.

Actually, it wasn't as though he had anything else to do, His cultivation had reached a bottleneck and before he gathered everything he needed to craft his advancement medicine, he could only make minor adjustments and refine his control over his extermination origins. He couldn't actually grow a lot stronger.

...

With a loud snap, a massive crack appeared on the piece of rock he was carving. It spread rapidly across the surface and the entire piece crumbled to dust in his hands.

"Where am I going wrong?!" Shang Xia thought back to his every action but failed to discover anything. No matter how hard he tried, he always failed when he was nearly two-thirds done with crafting a rank three talisman seal.

That was the sixth piece of rock he wasted.

When he first started, Shang Xia used pieces of rock that were close to 2 inches wide. However, they would all crumble because of the conflicting qi during the carving process.

With no other option, Shang Xia decided to increase the size of the rock he used. It was 3 inches wide and he was able to carve nearly two-thirds of it before it shattered. He failed to progress any further.

He could tell further progress had nothing to do with the size of the rock he used. Instead, he seemed to be missing something during the crafting process.

When Shang Xia was still deep in contemplation, the competition drew to a close.

As he expected, the Fifth Class lost to the elite team of the Contribution Division. Despite that, the Contribution Division didn't seem to win as gloriously as the others had thought.

That was because they dragged out the battle as long as they could while harassing the members of the Fifth Class. Eventually, the students of the Fifth Class exhausted their inner qi and were no longer able to fight.

The Contribution Division didn't actually need to use a method like that to win. After all, the students of the Fifth Class were already exhausted after their previous battles. They were barely holding on. They could easily overpower those students.

However, they were hell-bent on destroying the battle formation like the previous teams. They wanted to use some method to defeat the battle formation and eventually, they discovered a method to do so. They didn't close in on the formation and continually sent out long-range attacks. Eventually, the exhausted students were no longer able to hold on and lost the battle.

Just like that, the disciples of the Contribution Division seemed to have found a way to break the battle formation.

Chapter 678: Kou Chongxue's Visit

"What a joke! How the fuck can they consider that a way to break the battle formation?! Do you think other people will deploy their battle formation and remain motionless for other people to harass them till they're exhausted? Who would show off their battle formation to their opponents before the battle for others to think of a way to break it?"

"We can either use the battle formation when we're facing stronger opponents or catch them by surprise in the middle of a huge battle. This isn't a battle formation that is reliant on the surrounding terrain... We can also move it however we wish. If not for the fact that the contest is held on the platform, everyone would have scattered and run the moment the battle formation took shape. Do you think anyone will be stupid enough to rush straight into it?"

"..."

When the competition drew to a close, the excitement it brought about eventually dissipated.

The most talked about topic after the end of the competition wasn't the champions, the elite team from the Contribution Division. If they weren't the most interesting topic, the second placed Outreach Division definitely wouldn't be. Instead, it was the team from the Fifth Class that was placed fourth!

To be more exact, they should be more interested in the Extremity Yin Yang Formation used by the Fifth Class of the Inner Division!

Even though there was a lot of controversy behind the Extremity Yin Yang Formation, there was no doubt that after the competition, it had already established a strong foothold in the institution.

Not too long after the end of the competition, be it the Inner, Upper, or the various Auxiliary Divisions, experts from all of them gathered in the Fifth Class of the Inner Division to request their teachings.

Naturally, Shang Xia wouldn't reject them all. During his free time when he wasn't trying to craft talisman seals, he resumed his duties in the Inner Division. He didn't go about promoting his lessons and he merely continued his duties as arranged by the institution.

He would usually hold a class every 3 days or so and Liu Qinglan tried assigning him other tasks in the meantime. However, he used the excuse that he was at a critical phase of crafting his rank three talisman seals to reject them all.

Liu Qinglan knew the meaning behind those talisman seals and didn't push him further. She allowed him, a Talisman Grandmaster and a top-tier expert at the grand completion stage of the Martial Extermination Realm to teach a single class in the Inner Division.

In actuality, Shang Xia didn't even use a lot of time for his lesson.

After all, an unexpected monster came knocking. Shang Xia didn't think that Kou Chongxue would make a personal appearance to look for him one day.

Watching the patriarch play with a half-complete rank three talisman seal, Shang Xia got over his initial shock and chuckled, "Patriarch Kou, you seem very free... How did you find time to come all the way to my place to bother me?"

Kou Chongxue glanced at him from the corner of his eye and sneered, "Your place? Are you dumb? This old man here built the Tongyou Institution from the ground up. Everything here belongs to me! Where the hell can't I go?"

It wasn't Shang Xia's first time interacting with Kou Chongxue, and he was pretty familiar with the patriarch's temperament. He knew that the patriarch loathed it when others acted with deference and too respectfully with him. Shang Xia chuckled in response, "Patriarch, you seem a lot more relaxed now that my grandpa has entered the Martial Dipper Realm."

"Relaxed?" Kou Chongxue mocked. However, he quickly shook his head and changed the topic. "You'll understand after you enter the Martial Dipper Realm."

"Patriarch Kou, is there something you need from me?" Shang Xia asked.

Tossing the half-complete rank three talisman seal to Shang Xia, Kou Chongxue continued, "There have been people investigating the origin of the rank one and two talisman seals in the Three Unity Island. Go talk to everyone who was on the island that day and tell them not to say anything."

Shang Xia chuckled in response, "There's no need to worry about that. Instructor Liu already briefed everyone back on the island. None of us will leak anything related to it."

Kou Chongxue nodded slowly before pointing at the talisman seal Shang Xia was working on. "How is it going? Doesn't seem to be going too well..."

Shang Xia forced a smile and responded with a nod of his own. "I didn't think too much into it previously... It's completely different from rank one and two talisman seals."

“I have no knowledge regarding talismans, but this rock you’re using seems pretty unusual. Did it come from the Abyssal Secret Region?” Kou Chongxue raised an eyebrow curiously.

Shang Xia nodded in response and was slightly taken aback by his reaction. “Patriarch Kou, have you not seen anything like it before?”

“There are countless treasures in the worlds... How could I have seen them all?” Kou Chongxue chuckled out loud.

“Patriarch Kou, will you be able to keep a lookout for something like this in the future? I called it the Impaled Stone because of the way I found it, and it seems to possess the ability to nourish the soul. Hmm... Soul...” A thought flashed through Shang Xia’s mind when he spoke about it and he seemed to think of something.

Kou Chongxue didn’t say anything after noticing Shang Xia’s reaction. He simply grabbed a few rank one and two talisman seals from the pile on the table and started stamping them on talisman papers to entertain himself.

Shang Xia eventually snapped back to reality.

Staring at the bunch of rank two talismans he created with the seals, Kou Chongxue coughed twice before addressing Shang Xia. “Did you think of a way?”

“I thought of something, but I can only determine its feasibility after doing some tests.” Shang Xia smiled.

Kou Chongxue turned a little more serious. “Oh right, you caused no small ruckus by coming up with that battle formation in the Inner Division. Anyway, you better break through to the Martial Dipper Realm soon.”

Shang Xia knew that Kou Chongxue wouldn’t tell him something like that for fun and he wondered out loud, “Patriarch Kou, do you think I will be in danger?”

Ignoring him altogether, Kou Chongxue shot another question his way. “How long till you can break through anyway?”

A helpless smile appeared on Shang Xia’s face. “I’m still lacking a water attributed spiritual treasure and a fate dipper essence related to the water element... However, those aren’t things I can obtain just because I want to. Even if another trade fair is held, I might not be able to gather them...”

A rare expression of contemplation appeared on Kou Chongxue’s face and Shang Xia naturally didn’t bother the patriarch.

After some time, he sighed. “I came here to look for your help on some matter. Now that I think about it again, I might need you to take part in it too...”

“May I ask what the matter is about?” Shang Xia turned serious after hearing the patriarch speak.

“How confident are you to craft a rank five talisman?”

Shang Xia was greatly taken aback by the sudden question. “This... Disciple hasn't tried crafting rank five talismans!”

“I know that you have a rank five talisman inheritance on you. Isn't it called the Abyssal Emptiness Talisman? I refuse to believe you didn't try playing around with it in your free time.” Kou Chongxue muttered.

Shang Xia extended his hands out with his palms facing the sky and muttered, “Simulating it in my mind and actually crafting it are 2 different concepts. Moreover, I am limited by my cultivation at the moment and the probability of me crafting one at my current level is close to 0.”

“What if I help you with all my might?” Kou Chongxue growled.

“Patriarch, do you mean...” Shang Xia was shocked by the sudden suggestion.

A sharp gaze landed on Shang Xia and Kou Chongxue sighed, “Kid, do you remember the time a few years ago when I was severely injured?”

“Of course I do. You brought my grandpa to look for some sort of treasure and was surrounded by a group of experts and was injured as a result. That led to several crises that nearly destroyed the institution...” Shang Xia replied.

Nodding slowly, Kou Chongxue continued, “I plan on heading there again. However, it's going to be different this time. Instead of opening the celestial remains normally, I plan on barging my way in!”

He paused slightly before he resumed talking, “I was planning to go alone, but I'm afraid I might have to bring you along this time.”

Shang Xia thought for a moment and responded, “Patriarch Kou, do you mean that you will need the Abyssal Emptiness Talisman to force your way into the celestial remains?”

“Nonsense. I wouldn't need to force my way into it if I had the Abyssal Emptiness Talisman. I might be 70 percent sure I will be able to break through the barrier with my abilities, but that will cause too much of a ruckus. The others will definitely be able to detect it and might even gather around the exit to attack me when I emerge. If you are able to craft the rank five Abyssal Emptiness Talisman, it will be much easier for us to enter silently. I should be able to bring you along with me like how I brought your grandfather back then.” Kou Chongxue explained.

“Is the Celestial Remains really special?” Shang Xia asked.

“If I'm not mistaken, it should be the remains of a destroyed Elysium.” Kou Chognxue muttered.

“Elysium?!” Shang Xia gasped, “Could there be another power other than the Eternal Sect, Divine Capital Sect, and Northern Sea Mystic Sect that possess their own Elysium? Why haven’t I heard of it before?”

“Could it have existed before the Divine Martial Calendar?” Shang Xia seemed to have thought of something.

Kou Chongxue was shocked by Shang Xia’s sudden outburst but he quickly chuckled, “Looks like you’re pretty sharp. You actually thought about the time before the Divine Martial Calendar.”

“... However...” Kou Chongxue’s tone changed all of a sudden, “Did anyone say that the Elysium had to belong to our Azure Origin World or the Azure Spiritual World?”

Ignoring the look of astonishment on Shang Xia’s face, he continued, “When I brought your grandfather into the Celestial Remains back then, he managed to refine his extermination origins. The Grand Silk Silver Sand Fate Dipper he used to step into the Martial Dipper Realm also originated from the Celestial Remains.”

“You might obtain the treasures and fate dipper essence you require in there...” Kou Chongxue concluded.

Shang Xia couldn’t help but ask, “Patriarch, wouldn’t the Celestial Remains be explored by a bunch of others a long time ago, If it’s really the remains of an Elysium, both worlds would have sent their experts in the Sixth Order of the Primary Realm over, no?”

Kou Chongxue snorted coldly in response, “Right. Firstly, who on earth told you that there has to be an existence at the Sixth Order of the Primary Realm for them to possess the power of one? Secondly, even if those factions had those old monsters who refuse to die in the Sixth Order of the Primary Realm, do you really think they can step out from their respective Elysiums?”

A half-snort half-sigh escaped Kou Chongxue’s lips the next moment. “There’s no need to mention those in the Sixth Order of the Primary Realm. Even their Martial Dipper Realm experts might not be able to leave the boundary of their respective continents...”

Chapter 679: Rank Five Talisman Paper and Origin Jade

Thinking back to what he learned from Zheng Chang on the Three Unity Island, Shang Xia asked, “Patriarch Kou, are you in such a rush to enter the Celestial Remains because of the Spirit Abundance World? Are there really spies from the Spirit Abundance World in our lands?”

...

Shang Xia had been practicing crafting talismans and teaching the students of the Inner Division after he came back. However, that didn’t mean that he had no idea what was going on in the outside world.

The Tongyou Institution had been starting a large scale investigation on the members of the Manyu Continent ever since Shang Xia and the others returned from the Three Unity Island. Even Ren Bainian’s clan wasn’t let off.

The Protection Division and Outreach Division had been mobilized and they started to patrol the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range in order to strengthen their security and control.

With Ji Wenlong's entry to the Martial Dipper Realm backing them, the Tongyou Institution had been expanding their influence, especially in the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range.

That was several years ago, and with the recent advancement of their second Deputy Patriarch, Shang Bo, the institution had 3 Martial Dipper Realm Ancestors among their ranks. They were no longer afraid of anything as they didn't just openly expand their reach into the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range. They simply intensified their control and brazenly took over whatever territory they pleased.

In the eyes of the Tongyou Institution, the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range was no longer a border between the You, Ji, and Bing Continents. It simply belonged to the You Continent and the Tongyou Institution could move as they pleased within it.

With the fusion of the Azure Origin World and Azure Spiritual World on the horizon, the members of the You Continent's desire for territory exceeded every expectation. They didn't hold back and used all their power to expand the land they controlled.

...

Kou Chongxue chuckled after hearing Shang Xia's question. "Ever since the experts of the Spirit Abundance World appeared on the Manyu Continent, we couldn't have stopped their infiltration into our lands. Those aboriginal cultivators and citizens of the Manyu Continent might have been sent over to our worlds on purpose to serve as a guide for their experts who are coming."

Pausing slightly, Kou Chongxue eventually continued, "Today, all we need to do is to delay the invasion as long as we can. No matter what, it's a matter of time before both our worlds will clash with each other.

Shang Xia noticed how Kou Chongxue wasn't referring to the Azure Origin World and Azure Spiritual World from what he said. The worlds he was referring to was probably the new world that would be produced after their fusion and the Spirit Abundance World.

He understood that since the patriarch could speak about the matter, peak existences like those Martial Dipper Realm experts of both worlds were already lumping both the Azure Origin World and Azure Spiritual World together.

"Patriarch, after the complete fusion of our worlds, what will the new world be called?" Shang Xia asked.

Raising an eyebrow to stare at Shang Xia with a strange look on his face, Kou Chongxue grumbled, "Do you think that's something I get to decide?!"

Shang Xia simply chuckled in amusement.

"Don't you wish to know where I've been all this time?" Kou Chongxue asked suddenly before taking out something from his sleeves.

Of course, Shang Xia knew how he should react in a situation like that. He quickly followed up with a curious cry, "Where did you..."

Kou Chongxue took out 3 pieces of talisman paper that were 7 inches long and 4 inches wide before Shang Xia could finish.

“Talisman paper?” Shang Xia received the papers and the moment he touched the material, his eyes widened in shock. “These... These are rank five talisman papers!”

He quickly thought of something and he raised his head to look at Kou Chongxue again. “Were these made from the skin of the Moon Worshipping Beast?”

Kou Chongxue nodded in response. “Exactly. It’s the skin of the Moon Worshipping Beast we found from the remains of the expert from the Spirit Abundance World.”

It was the first time Shang Xia was seeing rank five talisman paper and he admired them for a little while more before wondering, “Wait, that isn’t right. The skin of the Moon Worshipping Beast we obtained back then is tens of feet wide. Why did it shrink by so much?”

“How high do you think the success rate of crafting these talisman paper is? Even if we manage to find a master craftsman who makes rank five talisman paper, we will have to pay a substantial amount of commission!” Kou Chongxue muttered in response.

Shang Xia was slightly taken aback. “Even if I had 3 pieces of rank five talisman paper, I’m not confident of crafting a rank five talisman!”

Pausing for a second, he couldn’t help but ask, “If you managed to find a rank five talisman paper craftsman, couldn’t you have found a rank five Talisman Grandmaster?!”

Kou Chongxue glanced at Shang Xia from the corner of his eye and sneered, “Is that a problem you should be thinking about?! I already attracted too much attention by finding people to craft rank five talisman paper! Do you think the others are stupid? If I get someone to craft a rank five talisman for me, I might as well announce to the world that I’ve set my sights on the Celestial Remains. Moreover...”

“Moreover?” Shang Xia followed up instinctively.

“Moreover, it’s not like those Talisman Grandmasters would know a talisman that would allow me to silently enter the Celestial Remains.” Kou Chongxue muttered before taking out a stick of blood-red ink.

Reaching out instinctively, Shang Xia held the ink stick in his hand and wondered out loud, “Is this also of the fifth rank?”

“You need to use spirit spring water while grinding the ink.” Kou Chongxue muttered without giving him an exact answer.

Shang Xia nodded in response before carefully storing the stick of ink. He eventually continued, “Well, if you went to commission rank five talisman paper and went to find a stick of rank five talisman ink, the holy lands would probably learn of your intentions. In that case, there might be some people who would also be able to make the connection and guess that you plan to enter the Celestial Remains!”

Kou Chongxue chuckled sinisterly and his eyes narrowed in amusement. “That’s why this old man here bought them in your name! Hehe, The institution I created managed to produce its first Talisman Grandmaster and you even reached the grand completion stage of the Martial

Extermination Realm. You will be qualified to start crafting rank five talismans soon. As such, I had to start preparing for your future progress.”

Shang Xia nodded in response. “Even though people already know about the rank four Abyssal Void Shattering Talisman, they don’t know that I received an inheritance of the rank five Abyssal Emptiness Talisman. Even if they have their guesses, they should only consider it after I enter the Martial Dipper Realm. Moreover, they wouldn’t think that you would be crazy enough to let me try crafting a rank five talisman at my current level.”

“How confident are you of success?” Kou Chongxue asked.

After a short moment of contemplation, Shang Xia sighed, “If you help me with all your might, I should have a 30 percent success rate. However, rank five talisman paper and talisman ink isn’t easy to come by...”

“What are you on about? Since when are you so interested in all this bullshit? Are you going to do it or not?” Kou Chongxue snapped.

“Alright! I’ll do it!”

Since Kou Chongxue had already said it, there was no need to reject his suggestion any longer.

Also, regardless of whether he succeeded this time, it would be an invaluable lesson for him. Once he steps into the Martial Dipper Realm, his ability to craft talismans would take a huge leap forward.

“When do you wish to start?” Shang Xia asked.

“The sooner the better. However... Before we enter the Celestial Remains, we would also need to lay down a formation outside to guide us when we leave.” Kou Chongxue explained.

Shang Xia was slightly taken aback. “Do we need to coordinate with the Formation Hall for this? Are we unable to leave as we wish after we enter? The moment we lay down a formation outside the Celestial Remains, it might be discovered by the others.”

Kou Chongxue could only sigh helplessly in response, “Unless you can craft 2 Abyssal Emptiness Talismans with these rank five talisman paper, we’ll have no choice but to lay the formation. Otherwise, we will only be able to emerge when the Celestial Remains open for real. If we charge out however we wish, we might appear in a random region in the vast sea of stars.”

“Alright. I’ll also take the chance to ask our Formation Grandmaster about the thing she promised me...” Shang Xia mumbled.

“When did I promise you anything?” Chu Jia’s voice came from outside and she strolled in while glaring at Shang Xia. “You better tell me what you mean by that!”

Glancing at Kou Chongxue who was tilting his head upwards while maintaining his nonchalant expression, Shang Xia couldn’t help but sneer. There was no way Chu Jia could have avoided his divine perception if she was right outside the door. The patriarch definitely interfered and disrupted his divine perception.

“It’s nothing, it’s nothing!” Shang Xia waved his hand and denied. He definitely wouldn’t fight Chu Jia over something so small. He quickly forced a smile, “I only wish to ask Teacher Chu if you managed to come up with the Five Element Jade we spoke about.”

“Hmph!” Chu Jia raised her chin before tossing a sealed spirit case over to Shang Xia. “Take a look for yourself. Is that the thing you need?”

Shang Xia grabbed the case while revealing an expression of shock. He couldn’t help but yell before opening the case, “You actually made it?! That didn’t take long at all!”

Chu Jia sneered coldly, “You seem to have forgotten the fragments of fate dipper fragments back on the Tongyou Island.”

Shang Xia opened the case and discovered a sparkling palm sized crystal sitting within. “Did you make this from the shards? Why do I feel like these things resemble essence crystals?” he wondered out loud.

He quickly reached in to hold it and prepared to let the Crimson Soul Tablet evaluate the treasure.

Chu Jia smiled and replied, “You’re pretty good. I created the Five Elements Jade you requested after gaining some insights from the essence crystals. I didn’t use spiritual jade as the base of the treasure. Instead, I used those impure shards you retrieved after the battle at the source of the Manyu Continent’s World’s Will.”

“Useless shards?” Shang Xia looked at Chu Jia in slight confusion before turning to look at the item in his hand. The Crimson Soul Tablet didn’t give its evaluation, and that might mean the treasure hadn’t reached the fourth rank.

Chu Jia saw the look of disdain on Shang Xia’s face and she couldn’t help but snort coldly, “Do you really think that those impure shards are completely useless?”

Shang Xia shook his head. After all, those shards were similar to what came from a fate dipper fragment.

Because the source of the Manyu Continent’s World’s Will cultivated many different Origin Dippers and fate dipper essence, the layer that contained those treasures was obviously something of the same level. It had the ability to seal those treasures and might have some form of filtering effect. It’s considered impure only when compared to Origin Dippers and fate dipper essences.

As their conversation dragged out a little longer, the Crimson Soul Tablet suddenly completed its evaluation. “Origin Jade, rank five spiritual treasure. Ability to contain many different elements.”

Chapter 680: Competed Rank Three Talisman Seal?

“Origin Jade?!” Shang Xia questioned the evaluation given by the Crimson Soul Tablet. What did the treasure have anything to do with the five elements?

Did Chu Jia mess it up?

The moment she saw the hesitant look on Shang Xia's face, Chu Jia's voice rang in his mind. "I might not understand what the Five Element Jade you're talking about means, but from your description, I felt that it has to be some sort of treasure that can contain the different elements."

She snatched the Origin Jade away from Shang Xia and continued, "I learned from how essence crystals and fate dipper fragments were made before creating it like how I would lay down a formation. However, it hasn't been refined by the various elements. To put it simply, this is merely an empty container. If you wish to store the various elements, you will have to do it yourself."

She tossed the Origin Jade into the air again and returned it to Shang Xia after her explanation.

Playing with the treasure, Shang Xia pressed his lips together and he didn't know what to say.

After all, he wasn't too sure about the five elements and how they interacted with each other. How was he supposed to explain the concept to her?"

It was an impressive feat for her to create the piece of Origin Jade with what he told her back then.

Moreover, from what the Crimson Soul Tablet had shown, it wasn't impossible for the Origin Jade to become the Five Elements Jade he required.

The five elements he required were the Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth elements. However, it seemed as though the Origin Jade was able to store more than those.

Whatever the case, Shang Xia would have to test it himself.

If it could truly store more elements, wouldn't that mean that the Origin Jade was superior to the Five Elements Jade he wanted?

After thinking about it, he turned to Chu Jia and spoke. "I hope that you can keep the creation method a secret for now."

He might have asked her to keep it a secret from the others, but he said it in front of Kou Chongxue.

Covering her mouth, Chu Jia giggled softly. "Relax. I created this 'Five Elements Jade' with my own abilities. No one other than myself knows how to make it. Moreover, it's not really possible for me to make another one anyway. Unless another world is destroyed and you manage to find more of those impure shards that came from the World's Will..."

Shang Xia chuckled with amusement and patted the treasure in his hand lightly. "This treasure isn't the Five Elements Jade. I think you should call it the Origin Jade. It sounds a lot more appropriate."

Actually, Shang Xia never expected the treasure he needed to break through would be man-made! Well, whatever it was, at least there was progress.

Also, he seemed to have learned something else from what she said earlier. Chu Jia seemed to have grasped the crafting process of essence crystals. She even managed to use the method in her art of formations.

...

Shang Xia might have agreed to craft rank five talismans back then and enter the Celestial Remains with Kou Chongxue, but after they left, he threw all his effort into crafting rank three talisman seals.

He seemed to be enlightened after his conversation with Kou Chongxue and he discovered what he was missing. He had a whole perspective and he immediately started to work on it.

His new method seemed to be a little clumsy and it exhausted a huge amount of his energy, but there was no doubt that he managed to make huge progress.

At the very least, he was nearly able to complete carving the seal that he had only been able to craft a portion of before.

That was right. He was only missing one last rune before it was complete.

Holding the talisman seal that was 3 inches long and 3 inches wide, a grave expression could be seen on his face.

Not too far away, there were 2 talisman seals that seemed to be complete. However, if one looked carefully, it was filled with cracks and looked like defective products.

When Shang Xia looked at them, a pained look flashed across his eyes.

Other than the main boulder he kept, he didn't have many pieces of the Impaled Stone he obtained back in the Abyssal Secret Region.

He knew that the moment he completed the final rune, the talisman seal in his hand would follow in the footsteps of the others.

He might have made great progress in the way he could craft rank three talisman seals, but without the final rune, he would never be able to complete it.

“There has to be something I'm missing... Spirituality, sentience... I haven't tried letting a Martial Intent Realm cultivator imbue their divine sense into it. Am I supposed to make this talisman seal possess its own spirit?” Shang Xia wondered to himself. If that was the case, wouldn't that make the talisman seal akin to a divine weapon?

That was a rank three talisman seal they were talking about. It was something that had a definite lifespan. If he truly made it into something like a divine weapon, the gains wouldn't make up for the losses!

Shang Xia forced a laugh before keeping the incomplete talisman. He hoped to be able to complete it one day.

Several months had already passed since he tried crafting rank three talisman seals, and he finally headed over to the Beyond Heavens Pavilion with Chu Jia.

They arrived at the pavilion that wasn't too far away from the Void Abyss like before and Kou Chongxue had been waiting for them. Ji Wenlong was also present, but Shang Bo was nowhere to be seen.

Even though Shang Xia was at the grand completion stage of the Martial Extermination Realm and was the strongest expert in the institution under the Martial Dipper Realm, he still had no idea where the Martial Dipper Realm Ancestors of the institution had gone.

With the fusion of their world and the looming threat of the invasion by the Spirit Abundance World, the ancestors of the Tongyou Institution seemed to be preparing something in the dark. Their movements became wildly irregular and no one had any idea what they were doing.

“Did you craft your rank three talisman seal?” Kou Chongxue asked the moment he saw the kid.

According to Kou Chongxue’s plan, he was supposed to start crafting the rank five talisman right away.

However, he seemed to have gained some inspiration from their conversation and he resumed crafting his rank three talisman seals.

Shang Xia could understand Kou Chongxue’s sense of urgency when it came to exploring the Celestial Remains, and he understood how important it would be for Kou Chongxue and the Tongyou Institution. However, the flash of inspiration was something he couldn’t ignore and he chose to focus on it.

He could only shake his head in embarrassment when he heard Kou Chongxue’s question. He took out the incomplete talisman seal and muttered, “It’s a shame. I came all the way and I’m lacking the final rune. I am unable to complete carving it...”

After he spoke, Shang Xia described the general process of crafting the rank three talisman seal. At the same time, he spoke about his guess that it might be similar to a divine weapon.

When he was done, he sighed, “This is just a rank three talisman, but if it turns out to be similar to a divine weapon, our loss will far outweigh the gains. I can only choose to stop here and see if there’s anything more I can do in the future.”

Kou Chongxue and Ji Wenlong didn’t say anything after his explanation. Instead, they glanced at each other meaningfully.

A moment later, Ji Wenlong eventually broke the silence, “If you truly complete the rank three talisman seal with your method, how many times can it be used before it’s destroyed?”

Shang Xia was slightly taken aback and he fell into contemplation. He replied after some time, “I might not have completed the talisman sea, but the material used is several times more than rank one and two talisman seals. Moreover, rank three talisman seals can only be created when supplemented with divine sense. Creation of a rank three talisman wouldn’t actually cause too much damage to the seal and if everything goes smoothly, we should be able to use it a hundred times or more.”

Ji Wenlong nodded in response. “Let’s call it a hundred rank three talismans then. Before you became a rank four Talisman Grandmaster, how many rank three talismans can the Talisman Hall create?”

Shang Xia thought for a second before shaking his head. “I don’t know.”

Sighing softly, Ji Wenlong muttered, “Go ahead and craft it. The worth of your talisman seal might far surpass what you estimate. After all, we’ll be able to craft rank three talismans without a rank three Talisman Master. The worth of that is definitely comparable to that of a divine weapon.”

Kou Chongxue chuckled at the side, “Don’t bother about the cost of crafting a talisman seal. When you’re done, you should be able to learn more about it and familiarize yourself with the process. Try to make it easier then. If you are truly able to craft talisman seals higher than the third rank, every faction can store 3 to 5 of them in their treasury. They will definitely become inheritance treasures

of whichever faction possesses them. You only seem to be thinking about rank three talisman seals right now. Are you thinking of mass producing them to exchange them to essence crystals or something?"

"Wait a second. 3 to 5 pieces of talisman seals? How can we produce so many of them so quickly? Those factions that truly require them will never be able to get their hands on those talisman seals anyway. Those holy lands out there might not lack rank three Talisman Masters, but they will definitely lust over the talisman seals. They probably wish to get their hands on it to try to recreate them. They probably only need a talisman seal or two to do so. We can't make so many of them!" Ji Wenlong interjected.

At that moment, Shang Xia also realized something. He seemed to be thinking about it the wrong way.

Whenever he was crafting talisman seals, he would take into account the cost of it by the size of the rock he was using. In fact, there wasn't much left and there was no way he could mass produce those talisman seals in the future. What he needed to do wasn't to care about the cost of creating them. Instead, he should be thinking of how he could craft higher ranked talisman seals before he used up all the materials he had.

Kou Chongxue looked at Shang Xia who was deep in contemplation and laughed, "What's the matter? Do you need some more time to complete the talisman seal? I can give you a little more time if that's what you need."

"No." Shang Xia shook his head in response. "I definitely need more time to complete the rank three talisman seal, but I was too hasty. We should start preparing to craft the rank five talisman. After all, I'm looking forward to that more than anything."