

War God 151

Chapter 151 - Earthly Core Realm

“Beitang Mo?”

Long Chen remembered the cold-looking man he had met before.

He had shown utmost respect because of his monstrous strength, but now he just wanted to kill Beitang Mo after hearing what Liu Lan had said.

No one gets to marry her if she doesn't want it, not even Beitang Mo.

Still, Lingqing was powerless right now. But Beitang Mo and the people around him were too strong, so there was nothing she could do. If they forced her physically, she would have no choice but to accept it.

Long Chen was very anxious to rush into the inner family when Liu Lan told him this. He wanted to get her out of that place and take her somewhere where she could live comfortably, but he didn't have the strength.

“I know you are anxious. I would be too if it was my sister, but you need to understand that strength is everything. Currently, there's nothing you can do. You might even drag her down ...”

Liu Lan sighed.

“ ... I thought you would have a chance of joining the inner family with the beast soul and Blazing Thunder Crystals. If you manage to enter the inner family, you will have the chance to quickly increase your strength. At least you might be able to help your sister by then. But unfortunately, you've wasted your only chance. I don't know what to do at this point. I've done my best and it's up to you now ...”

Liu Lan was powerless too.

“Let's go back and prepare for the qualifiers five days from now. The only thing you can do now is to pray that Beitang Mo will treat your sister right and your sister will love him.”

Long Chen took a deep breath and raised his head, his eyes filled with strength.

Liu Lan was stunned. *To think he's still confident even under the intense pressure.*

She walked away, confused by Long Chen's resolution.

Long Chen clenched his fists as he looked at Liu Lan, his heart completely absorbed with Lingqing's matters.

Lingqing, I've told you before that as long as I'm here, no one can force you to do anything ...

Back in the Turquoise Willow Residence, Long Chen simply told Liu Lan, “Make sure no one disturbs me for the next five days as long as I'm inside.”

Liu Lan had already lost all hope for Long Chen, seeing how he had given up the beast soul. She thought this was his final struggle and didn't think much of it.

“Sure, I will tell the others to not disturb you.”

Having said that, she walked away to tend to her matters.

Long Chen had been excited for the Demonic Blood Essence, but now he was very worried after being told what might happen to Lingqing. He felt the weight on his shoulders grow even heavier.

“Long Chen, don't worry. You have me too. I won't let Lingqing get bullied ...”

Ling Xi consoled Long Chen after seeing how gloomy he was.

“Don't worry, Ling Xi. You can go and play by yourself for now. I need to refine the Demonic Blood Essence and break into the Earthly Core Realm.”

Ling Xi was worried when she saw that Long Chen was in a bad mood.

“No need to worry about me. I will show them to not underestimate me.”

Ling Xi thought Long Chen looked cool when he made his way towards the underground room, his tone filled with determination and his spirit unyielding.

Long Chen sat on the mat and took out the Demonic Blood Essence.

There's still some blood Qi inside the Demonic Blood Essence, and it's purer than blood. Blood Transmutation will work wonders here.

Long Chen was close to the Earthly Core Realm after absorbing several Category Four Black-tier beasts.

Now is the time ...

Long Chen swallowed the Demonic Blood Essence. The solid object swiftly melted and was absorbed.

Blood Transmutation!

The almighty Blood Transmutation quickly absorbed the essence and transformed it into Qi before depositing it into his Dantian.

The Human Core inside his Dantian gradually grew stronger amidst the bloody thunder and fire.

There's such a large gap between the Human Core Realm and the Earthly Core Realm ... Even though they are just a single step apart, the gap is very wide ...

Originally, it would've been hard for Long Chen to cross the gap, but it became easier thanks to the Demonic Blood Essence.

Thanks to the overwhelming effect of Blood Transmutation, the Demonic Blood Essence quickly transformed into blood-red Dragon Soul Qi.

Even though the Demonic Blood Essence wasn't large, the energy contained within it was immense. Long Chen kept consuming it, and he soon reached the threshold.

It's almost time.

Within Long Chen's Dantian, just outside of his Human Core, was the Dragon Soul Qi. It had been compressed to the point of becoming liquid, churning and flowing around his Human Core.

I remember reading that when someone enters the Earthly Core Realm, the Human Core shatters. After that, all of the Qi in their body circulates through their Dragon Veins once before condensing into the Dantian and forming the stronger Earth Core!

Under the intense pressure of his Qi, his Human Core shattered and a surge of Qi sprayed forth, circulating through his nine Dragon Veins and innumerable blood capillaries.

Long Chen's skin turned completely red due to this. Ling Xi was shocked and was about to do something when she recalled that she had gone through a similar process once. She sighed in relief knowing that Long Chen was fine.

Long Chen used Dragon Soul Transformation and turned into his dragon form.

His scales, muscles, sinews, organs, and veins were tens of times stronger now. It was easier for him to circulate the Qi and break through to the Earthly Core Realm in his current form.

My transformed body is indeed stronger. To think I could completely contain the Qi of an Earthly Core Realm cultivator, which is ten times stronger than the previous realm!

Long Chen was very happy. Entering the Earthly Core Realm was an important step, so he became very attentive.

All of my Qi will soon crash into my Dantian!

His Qi had circulated his body once, repairing and strengthening it before crashing into his Dantian.

It was as if a hundred rivers had emptied their water into the ocean at the same time.

All the dust within the underground room was blown away in a single shockwave. His blood-red Qi oozed out of his body and encapsulated him.

This is the critical moment!

With a *boom*, all of his Qi crashed into his Dantian and started the intense collision process.

The Qi also crashed into itself, exerting immense pressure. For every hundred units of Qi, Long Chen was capable of producing one unit of physical Qi!

The Earthly Core started to form within his Dantian. The Qi then encapsulated the core and rotated it at high speeds. When all of his Qi had finished colliding, numerous solid Qi pieces fused together.

Amidst the bloody fog, a core, which was around the size of a thumb, could be seen in his Dantian.

I did it! I'm at the Earthly Core Realm now!

Long Chen stood up, and the bloody cocoon fell apart. His aura had been elevated after entering the Earthly Core Realm. His every move and his gaze were filled with the aura of the strong.

"So the Earthly Core Realm has increased my strength by more than ten times. I won't need to be afraid of Chu Yunxi if I use the Blazing Thunder Crystal Body and the Burning Devil Sun Fist ..."

Long Chen smiled when he compared his strength to Chu Yunxi's.

“I will surprise everyone during the qualifiers ...”

Even though he had all the advantages, entering the Earthly Core Realm had been a difficult ordeal. He finally felt like the path of cultivation was not easy.

I mustn't be rash when it comes to cultivation. I've been very agitated recently. I need to calm down in order to obtain victory.

“Long Chen!”

Ling Xi circled around him, happy to see that he had succeeded. “You've entered the Earthly Core Realm! See, I was right! The Demonic Blood Essence was very useful.”

Long Chen felt somewhat relaxed after his breakthrough. He knew that she had been waiting patiently nearby upon seeing how excited she was. He felt grateful for her. “Xiao Xi. You are amazing! I have to reward you!”

“What kind of reward? Hehe.”

“How about marrying me? Look at how youthful I am. Wouldn't you love to have this body of mine?” Long Chen said flirtatiously.

“Hmph! No thanks! I would never marry someone as ugly as you!” Ling Xi glared at him.

Long Chen laughed. He was looking forward to the qualifiers now.

I have to succeed no matter what! I might be able to bide my time, but Lingqing doesn't have that same luxury ... Before that, I have one more thing to do.

Long Chen sat back down.

“What are you doing?”

Long Chen took out all of his Blazing Thunder Crystals. Ling Xi had stolen forty-seven of them, and Long Chen had merged with one before that, so he had a total of forty-eight. After merging with thirty of them, he was left with eighteen crystals. Adding in the ten crystals he had purchased in the auction, he now had twenty-eight.

“Xiao Xi, do you think I will be able to obtain the Level Two Blazing Thunder Combat Body with this amount of crystals?”

“Will the Level Two Blazing Thunder Combat Body lose to the Molten Gold Combat Body?”

Chapter 152 - Level Two Blazing Thunder Combat Body

Long Chen's Dragon Soul Qi reserves had increased by more than ten times since he entered the Earthly Core Realm. His previous Qi was enough to suppress thirty Blazing Thunder Crystals, but now he should be able to suppress even more. He believed that he could completely merge the remaining twenty-eight Blazing Thunder Crystals and attain the Level Two Blazing Thunder Combat Body.

He had a vague feeling that it was almost in his grasp.

Merging with the Blazing Thunder Crystals means that I will have to endure great pain. If it wasn't for my Dragon Soul Transformation and Recovery, I never could've merged with them.

Long Chen knew he was lucky. Even with Blood Transmutation and the other techniques, he still felt like the path of cultivation was difficult. Normal cultivators had it tough.

“There should be enough crystals for you to attain the Level Two Blazing Thunder Crystal Combat Body. But you can't force yourself, Long Chen. Don't push your luck too much.”

Ling Xi was worried.

She had matured a lot while staying with Long Chen.

“The thirty-first crystal ...”

He circulated his Qi and merged the crystal into his body. The Blazing Thunder Power fused with the original power within his body and started circulating through Long Chen's veins. It destroyed his muscles and sinews but forged stronger ones in its wake.

With the help of Recovery, Long Chen could heal faster than the others.

He realized that with his newly empowered Qi, it was much easier to merge with the crystals. At the very least, the thirty-first crystal took no time at all to merge with.

Sensing the increasing strength of his body, Long Chen sighed in relief.

“The next one.”

Since he had merged with more than thirty crystals, Long Chen's body had built up a resistance to it. They caused much less damage than before, but the effects of refining his body were still apparent.

“It's so much easier to merge with them now ...”

Long Chen was surprised too.

Time slowly passed, and he merged with more and more crystals. His supply was slowly dwindling. The time it took to merge with the crystals got longer and longer, but it wasn't as long as before.

“It took me a day to merge with the forty-ninth crystal, but the difficulty was quite high!”

Long Chen was slightly nervous when he recalled how painful it and arduous it was just now.

There were nine more Blazing Thunder Crystals left.

“Thankfully, Liu Lan got me ten more, or I might not have been able to attain the Level Two Blazing Thunder Combat Body ...”

Long Chen felt like he was just one step away from it.

“The fiftieth crystal is the key to it.”

Long Chen calmed himself down. The more important it was, the more calm he had to be.

“Long Chen, it was already very dangerous when you merged the last one. Do you really need to merge with yet another one?”

Ling Xi stood amongst the remaining Blazing Thunder Crystals. She was currently smaller than the crystals, and she could become larger if she wanted, but she didn't want to waste her power.

Long Chen took a deep breath and nodded. “This could decide whether I live or die. I can't give up now.”

Ling Xi was worried even though his tone was calm. She knew Long Chen was under a lot of pressure.

The first heavy burden he had to bear was that he had to find spiritual herbs for her, and the other was Lingqing's potential marriage. On top of that, he wanted to help Mo Xiaolang. There were also a lot of people itching to fight him. If he failed at the qualifiers, his life would end.

Both Chu Yunxi and Jin Sheng'en could easily end him since he didn't have the power nor authority.

“Xiao Xi, move back a little.”

Long Chen took the fiftieth crystal and put the remaining eight away.

He had merged with nineteen crystals over the span of three days, which was much more efficient than last time.

“I hope I can finish merging with the final crystal before the qualifiers. If I still don't manage to complete the Level Two Blazing Thunder Combat Body, the other items won't be of much use either.”

Ling Xi listened to him and ran towards the end of the underground room. She frowned but had a sudden thought. *Hold on ... How could I forget something this simple? I have an advanced Black-tier martial technique that Long Chen could cultivate. I should tell him later.*

Long Chen didn't know what she was thinking, but he was concentrating on the final crystal.

He picked it up and circulated his Qi. The crystal merged into his body.

The Blazing Thunder Crystal became liquid once it came into contact with his Qi and circulated through his body. But Long Chen suddenly frowned.

Damn, it's ten times more difficult than the previous one. If I can endure it, it will end soon.

The fiftieth crystal transformed into a horrible storm when it started the merging process. It quickly circulated his body and merged with the existing Blazing Thunder Power, destroying his muscles and ligaments in the process.

Long Chen felt intense pain, sharper than any pain he had ever felt before. It was just the start of the merging, but his face was already contorting from pain. This was much more pain than a normal person could handle.

“Long Chen!”

Ling Xi's heart was aching when she saw how much he was suffering. She wanted to stop him, but lightning with fire on it streaked past her.

She had no choice but to dodge.

The lightning and fire had exploded from Long Chen's body.

"Don't come close!"

Long Chen was feeling an absurd amount of pain, but he didn't want her to approach. Ling Xi wanted to cry.

Not only did she care for him, she also didn't know if she could interrupt.

"Long Chen, are you okay ..."

Her face was pale, but not as pale as Long Chen's face.

Suddenly, the Blazing Thunder Energy exploded!

Blood-red fire and lightning burst forth from his body, surrounding him in their wild power. Soon, the two energies completely encapsulated Long Chen, causing Ling Xi to lose sight of him.

How could she not be anxious?

She circled the underground room in a panic, wondering whether she should help or not. If she didn't help, Long Chen could die. If she helped, she might stop Long Chen's growth.

"Don't worry. I'm fine."

Just then, she heard Long Chen's calm voice. Ling Xi would cry if she could.

"Bastard! You keep making me worry. I don't want to be concerned about you ever again!"

Ling Xi was helpless against the youth that was risking his all.

If it wasn't for him, she would have perished forever.

Long Chen was still her savior, and after living with him for so long, she had started to develop feelings for him.

What should I do? Mother ... What should I do about my future?

Ling Xi looked in Long Chen's direction, but her heart was empty.

The empty feeling made her afraid of what was to come.

The Blazing Thunder Energy exploded just as she was thinking this and almost destroyed the underground room.

"Long Chen!"

Ling Xi cried out in despair. She saw the exploding energy slowly shrink, being consumed by a human figure. Long Chen slowly came into view before her.

He had undergone another change after breaking through to the Earthly Core Realm. However, he was in his dragon form, so the differences weren't apparent.

But his eyes contained the faint Blazing Thunder Power and his aura was as sharp as a sword. Ling Xi knew he had succeeded.

Even though Long Chen had merged with the final crystal with surprising speed, it had almost killed him.

It was much more dangerous than the previous one, and he had almost lost his life with that one.

Thankfully, he had survived because his heart was filled with conviction.

Ling Xi didn't know if she should cry or laugh while looking at Long Chen.

“Young lady, I must ask, how fast does my Level Two Blazing Thunder Combat Body make your heart beat?”

Long Chen had cracked a joke despite the grave moment.

“Idiot!”

Ling Xi looked at him with anger and tried tackling him with her tiny body. She stopped when her body was sore and grumbled, “Hey ... Do you want to learn an advanced Black-tier martial technique from me?”

“Hm? Since when did you have an advanced Black-tier martial technique?”

Ling Xi was embarrassed when she recalled. “Hmm, I learned it when I was young from my father, but I completely forgot about it until now ...”

She forgot and just recalled now?

Long Chen rolled his eyes. “Stop talking nonsense and give it to me, your elder brother.”

“What do you mean by ‘elder brother?’ You should be calling me ‘elder sister’ instead!”

Ling Xi rolled her eyes back at him.

Chapter 153 - Devil Sword Finger!

There were two more days till the inner family qualifiers.

Based on Long Chen's past speed, two days were not enough to master an advanced Black-tier combat technique. However, Ling Xi was the owner of the technique and had cultivated it before, so she had some experience with it. With her personal guidance and Long Chen's extraordinary talent, he succeeded before the qualifiers began.

“An advanced Black-tier combat technique, the Devil Sword Finger ...”

This technique surpassed the Burning Devil Sun Fist and was now Long Chen's most powerful skill. It was a formidable killing technique.

This was both a finger and sword technique. Long Chen had mastered the Typhoon Nine Fingers before and previously witnessed the Bai family's Abyssal Heaven Finger. But the Devil Sword Finger was much stronger than those two finger techniques.

There was a powerful sword technique merged into this finger technique, so although its destructive abilities were weakened slightly when it was used, its explosive strength was extremely impressive.

Although Long Chen had not formally used it yet, he knew that the Devil Sword Finger was a top-tier technique based on the movements of his Qi during cultivation. It lived up to its advanced Black-tier classification.

This was also Long Chen's first advanced Black-tier combat technique!

After he completely digested the Devil Sword Finger's teachings, Ling Xi returned to the Ling Xi Sword to cultivate. Long Chen walked outside to enjoy the starry night alone.

Now that I have attained the Earthly Core Realm, my Qi is the equivalent to that of a mid Earthly Core Realm cultivator when I activate the Dragon Soul Transformation. Even the most powerful participant of the qualifiers, Jin Sheng'en, is only at the mid Earthly Core Realm. There is no longer a gap in strength between us.

With that thought, Long Chen grinned as he stared at the night sky.

The Level Two Blazing Thunder Combat Body is the equivalent of an advanced Black-tier Body Tempering Combat Technique, but will it be as strong as the Molten Gold Combat Body? I also have the advanced Black-tier Devil Sword Finger now. Chu Yunxi, Jin Sheng'en, you two may be planning to force me to my knees and kill me during the qualifiers, but you just wait and see.

He stretched and enjoyed the night breeze, finally feeling more relaxed. *I'm sure everyone who underestimated me will be shocked once they see my progress this time. Also ...*

When he thought of Liu Lan's beautiful curves, he grinned. *I wonder if she still remembers what she said. As long as I pass the inner family qualifiers ...*

Long Chen's mood lifted along with the breeze.

It was the first day of the eleventh month.

The place was filled with hustle and bustle, as it was a rare, grand event.

The Lingwu family was divided into the inner and outer families. The outer families were directly controlled by the inner families and relied on them for resources.

Everyone knew that the inner families held true power within the Lingwu family.

The prodigies of the outer families had worked hard all their lives towards the sole objective of joining the inner families. The only way was through the inner family qualifiers, which were going to be held today, on the first day of the eleventh month.

There were twenty participants from the outer families, and only two prodigies would be able to qualify and enter the Eastern Dragon family.

On this day, Long Chen had left his quarters early in the morning.

There were already many people waiting outside, all of them famous figures of the Turquoise Sun Hall. The leader was naturally Liu Yuan, who was at the Heavenly Core Realm. Next to him were the Administrators, Elders, and a few more disciples who were at the Earthly Core Realm.

These were the most powerful figures of the Turquoise Sun Hall.

Long Chen would've thought that they were terrifying back when he had just joined the Lingwu family, but now he felt no stress despite being greeted by so many people. His attitude proved just how quickly his strength had progressed during this time. Although it would be difficult for Long Chen to enter the inner families, he was already the pride of Turquoise Sun Hall after attaining the right to enter the qualifiers.

To be honest, excluding Feng Wutian, who was the bastard son of someone from the inner family, Long Chen was the second prodigy to have been given the right to participate in the qualifiers. The first one had been Liu Lan.

This was enough to prove Long Chen's talent.

Although Liu Yuan had no hopes for him to enter the inner family, he was already extremely pleased with Long Chen. He regarded Long Chen's energetic look and laughed heartily. "Long Chen, it's a big day for you! There are almost ten thousand prodigies in the outer families, yet only twenty have the right to join the qualifiers!"

When Long Chen saw that the old man wasn't raging at him, he knew that Liu Lan had not told Liu Yuan about him selling the Purple Demonic Lizard's Beast Soul.

He glanced at Liu Lan, who was standing silently next to Liu Yuan like a beautiful ice queen who could attract the gazes of all.

Sensing Long Chen's eyes, she looked over. There was still a strong look of dissatisfaction and disappointment in her eyes. She still couldn't forgive him for selling the Purple Demonic Lizard's Beast Soul.

"Let's go; we must hurry. I'll take you to the Turquoise Imperial Hall to meet the Grand Elder of the Turquoise family!"

Today was a big day for the Turquoise Sun Hall. Liu Yuan had the chance to stand proudly alongside the other Sect Elders, so he was naturally glowing with joy.

"This way, Sect Elder!"

"All the best, Long Chen! Make the Turquoise Sun Hall proud! Even if you can't join the inner family, you must fight to pass the first round!"

"That's right! You only need to be a bit smarter during the Heaven's Path round. Do your best to avoid other people and you'll stand a chance!"

Only Liu Yuan and Liu Lan would accompany Long Chen to the qualifiers.

That was why the father-daughter duo was clad in luxurious attire. Liu Lan had spent a long time dolling herself up with her hair coiled in a bun, her colorful dress swaying in the wind, her eyes beautifully drawn. *She's made up so beautifully today. Is she trying to send me a signal?* Long Chen mused privately as he bade the other Turquoise Sun Hall members goodbye. Then the excited Liu Yuan led them out of the Turquoise Sun Hall.

When Long Chen left, the other Elders and Administrators stopped waving and looked at each other. "Do you all think Long Chen will create another miracle?"

Thinking about how powerful the other candidates were, they all shook their heads. “He has already made us proud by receiving the right to participate in the inner family qualifiers. I just hope he can maintain this glory and not lose too badly. That is already good enough to not waste the Elder’s efforts on him.”

“Long Chen, have you cultivated the Violet Demonic Lizard’s Beast Soul?” blurted Liu Yuan soon after they left the Turquoise Sun Hall.

Long Chen froze, glanced at the cold Liu Lan, then he replied confidently, “Don’t worry, Sect Elder. How could I disappoint you?”

Those words made Liu Yuan assume that he had indeed cultivated the Violet Demonic Lizard’s Beast Soul. Although he didn’t have a high chance of qualifying, that Beast Soul was enough for him to shine and make Liu Yuan proud. Liu Yuan was greatly content with this.

Liu Lan was annoyed at Long Chen’s shamelessness in blatantly lying to Liu Yuan. *What’s the use of lying to my father now? Let’s see how you’ll humiliate yourself when your opponent attacks you and you’re not able to use the Beast Soul Transformation!*

Liu Lan didn’t understand how Long Chen, the prodigy who had shocked her with his talent, had to resort to lies to maintain his halo today.

She walked in front wordlessly with a smirk on her face.

“You’re saying you’ve succeeded in cultivating it? Long Chen, why don’t you transform once for me now? Could you show me the Violet Demonic Lizard’s Beast Soul?”

Long Chen smiled awkwardly and said, “Sect Elder, there’s no need for that. The Violet Demonic Lizard was a gift from you! I think it’ll make a better impression if I use it during the qualifiers to defeat an opponent!”

Long Chen was currently a precious darling to Liu Yuan, and despite being very curious, the Sect Elder had to act like a dignified elder, so he just waved and said generously, “As you wish!”

“Thank you, Sect Elder!”

Liu Lan was speechless.

She had initially wanted to turn around and scold Long Chen, but she realized that there was no need for it. *Seeing as he’s actually a liar, I should let him destroy his own reputation. Why would I need to intervene?*

Shaking her head, Liu Lan maintained her cold demeanor.

He looked at her from behind. Of course, he knew what she was thinking. *When the time comes, I’ll give you a surprise, you stupid woman. How dare you use me as a human shield?! I’ll teach you a lesson, Long Chen style!*

He smirked to himself, then turned to Liu Yuan next to him and asked, “Sect Elder, may I ask what Heaven’s Path is?”

“I was just about to talk to you about the qualifiers, but you got to it first. Be patient, listen to my explanation.”

Liu Yuan cleared his throat. “Today’s qualifiers aren’t much different from the past. There are two rounds in total, namely Heaven’s Path and the Mortal Caves.”

“Heaven’s Path? Mortal Caves?”

“That’s right. The location of the qualifiers isn’t in Lingwu City or the Heavenly Martial Realm. It’s located on the Western border of Yuanling County in a mountain range known as the Nine Devil Mountains, specifically Mortal Devil Mountain.”

“Oh, it’s not in Yuanling City?”

Long Chen was privately surprised. It showed that the scale of the qualifiers was huge if the event was going to take place in the Nine Devil Mountains at the edge of Yuanling County.

“Mortal Devil Mountain is ten thousand meters tall. It is vast and edgeless, magnificently tall as it touches the clouds. There are countless caves located at its peak, known as the Mortal Caves! They make for a brutal training ground as they are not only home to vicious demonic beasts, but the terrain is also treacherous. That is why it is the chosen location for the inner family qualifiers.”

Long Chen had never heard of this ten thousand-meter-tall mountain. Just from this alone, he knew how much resources the Lingwu family had put into the event!

The names of the places alone were enough to invoke fear.

“Now, let me explain in more detail. First, Heaven’s Path!”

Liu Yuan looked solemn. It was obvious that he also wanted Long Chen to treat the inner family qualifiers seriously.

Chapter 154 - Heaven’s Path!

Long Chen felt like he should ask Liu Yuan about the qualifiers beforehand, seeing as there were many rules. That way, he would be mentally prepared.

Liu Yuan hadn’t met him to explain the rules, probably because Liu Lan had told everyone not to disturb him while he was cultivating for the past few days.

However, as long as he had the capability, he would be able to handle any sudden changes. That was why Long Chen was not too worried. “Long Chen, you’ve participated in the outer family qualifiers before. The inner family qualifiers are actually very similar in format; the levels are just much more difficult.

“Heaven’s Path is a path leading up Mortal Devil Mountain, and it’s basically a path that leads to heaven. The terrain is treacherous, filled with demonic beasts and crawling with venomous insects. Plus, you will face opponents trying to kill you. It will be extremely dangerous. In addition to that, the climate is harsh there, with frequent

gales and storms, lightning, and booming thunder. That is why you must be careful on Heaven's Path."

Liu Yuan paused for a while, then he continued, "When you embark on Heaven's Path, all participants will first be divided into ten teams, two people per team. You will all be given two items before you enter.

"First is a signal flare. I'm sure you know what it is; if you encounter a threat that you're unable to overcome, light up the flare and you will be able to stay alive.

"However, using the flare also means that you're exiting the qualifiers. Long Chen, don't use it unless you absolutely have to. Of course, just use it if you truly cannot defend yourself. If you use it, you'll definitely live."

"What if the other people are unwilling to let me go even after I release the signal? What if they're trying to kill me as fast as possible?" Long Chen probed cautiously.

"That's impossible," Liu Yuan grinned. "The others know the rules better than you do. If you've lit up the flare and they still dare touch you, they will be killed on the spot if the inner family finds out about it. Don't you get any ideas either, there's nothing the inner family doesn't know ..."

Liu Yuan felt an infinite reverence towards the power they held.

Long Chen committed the rules about the flare to memory, then he asked, "Sect Elder, what about the second item you mentioned?"

"The second item is a jade bracelet. It's a magical object made of a hard material. Even I can't break it. As long as you have it on, it can sense the health level of your body. If you have sustained a severe injury, it will fall off automatically, allowing your opponent to take it.

"Heaven's Path is actually a competition to take jade bracelets. Everyone will receive a jade bracelet, so there will be twenty bracelets in total. The more bracelets you retrieve, the more likely you are to pass the first round.

"Passing Heaven's Path is determined by two conditions: first, you must walk through the entire path to arrive at the Mortal Caves within a day. Second, given that participants have fulfilled the first condition, the four teams with the most jade bracelets will proceed to the second round.

Long Chen easily understood the rules.

The top four teams with the most bracelets would qualify for the next round, given that they had completed Heaven's Path. The other six teams would be disqualified.

There was one more condition. If a person received the greatest number of bracelets but his teammate went missing, died, or withdrew from the qualifiers, he would also be disqualified.

The first round of the inner family qualifiers didn't just test a person's combat skills, but also adaptability to terrain, teamwork, attitude, and other qualities.

"Long Chen, there is one thing that I must speak to you about."

Liu Yuan's expression was solemn, though there was a hint of exasperation too.

"Go on, Sect Elder."

"Participants are free to pair up with whoever they choose. Other than the Gold and Silver families, the rest of the families will only be sending two people, so they will form their own teams. However, the Gold family has three participants. Two of them are a pair of twins, so they will be one team. And then there is Jin Sheng'en, who will be the strongest participant. It seems he wants to team up with Chu Yunxi, who is a good friend of his. And there's the conflict between you and Chu Yunxi, so ..."

That conflict was Liu Lan's fault, and Liu Yuan was aware that Long Chen was completely innocent. That was why he was apologetic towards Long Chen.

"I expect your teammate will be one of the prodigies from the Silver family. There are three participants from the Silver family, with one of them also receiving the direct right to qualify, namely Yin Mengyao. The other two are a romantic couple, so if nothing unexpected happens, Yin Mengyao will pair up with you. But I need you to understand this: she received a direct right to qualify, so she will likely be of the proud type. And you know how getting a teammate who isn't considered strong might be a huge burden ..."

"Sect Elder, are you trying to say that she might hate me?"

"I don't know, though I think she might at least protest this. Long Chen, you must control yourself even if you feel like your pride is being challenged. Just control yourself for the moment and it will be over; you'll only need to withstand it for one day. She will definitely do her best to protect you, or she will not be able to pass this round either!"

Long Chen completely understood what he was implying.

So, he means that even if she is disgusted by me, I still have to pretend to be a weak kiss-ass. And when I enter Heaven's Path, I'll have to shamelessly beg her to protect me?

I wonder what sort of person Yin Mengyao will be. If it comes to that, I will definitely make her suffer a little too. I can't let someone treat me like an underling. If Xiao Xi sees me like that, won't she laugh at me?

Long Chen now understood how Heaven's Path worked. He was looking forward to it.

"Sect Elder, I've mostly understood the rules of Heaven's Path now. What about the Mortal Caves?"

“Do you remember the second round of the outer family’s qualifiers?”

Long Chen nodded. “Of course, it was a stage duel.”

“The Mortal Caves will be a supercharged version of the stage duel. There are caves of various sizes at the peak of Mortal Devil Mountain. They are all extraordinarily dangerous with unknown threats. Even I am not sure what they are, specifically. I think the Grand Elder will tell you.

“The eight people from the four pairs who passed Heaven’s Path will be separated and divided into two teams of four. Only two slots are available to join the inner family, so each group of four will be competing for one slot. This means that if you’re lucky enough to become one of the eight, you will need to fight twice and win twice to enter the inner family.

“During the two death duels, all participants must enter a separate Mortal Cave and duel within the dangerous environment until there is a winner. While you fight, you will face not only your opponent but also unknown threats. It’s almost impossible to win ...”

It was unfathomably difficult to emerge as one of the two winners among the twenty participants.

After listening to the terrifying rules, Long Chen knew that it was normal that they didn’t hold out much hope for him.

First, I need to make my way through the treacherous Heaven’s Path while defeating my enemies to get enough jade bracelets, and making sure my teammate is safe. Any team who doesn’t get more than four bracelets will likely be disqualified.

Then, I need to enter the Mortal Caves with my opponents and fight two consecutive death duels to join the inner family. If I had joined as I was five days ago, I wouldn’t even stand a chance, but now...

Long Chen's strength had leapfrogged during the past few days thanks to his breakthrough and leveling up his Body Tempering Combat Technique.

With these improvements, I, Long Chen, will surely give you all a huge surprise.

Long Chen clenched his fists and smiled.

When Liu Yuan saw Long Chen’s confident smile, he froze, thinking that the teenager was forcefully comforting himself. He shook his head in exasperation. “Long Chen, don’t feel defeated. You grew up in a small place like Baiyang Town and you’ve only just begun to develop your potential after you entered the Lingwu family. You still have a lot of room for improvement, so it will still be fine even if you can’t join the inner family. With your talent, you will still shine brightly in the outer family. And there will be other chances to join the inner family in the future ...”

Long Chen listened and walked silently, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Liu Lan was still walking ahead and hadn’t turned around once. As he watched her back, he knew he would make her turn and stare at him in shock once more soon, just like before.

The Grand Elder of the Turquoise family was the previous Turquoise Imperial Hall Sect Elder. Since he was from the Turquoise Imperial family, he naturally favored them more. Even his quarters were within their compound.

Long Chen learned from Liu Yuan that the Grand Elder's name was Chu Tianxiong, and he was Chu Fengqing's paternal uncle. He was also a relative of Chu Yunxi and Chu Yunyao, so he treated them like grandchildren.

After about an hour, Long Chen arrived at an isolated compound belonging to the Grand Elder outside the Turquoise Imperial Hall. When they approached, the guard yelled sternly, "You three! What are you here for?"

Liu Yuan, being a Sect Elder, was greatly insulted to be yelled at by a guard. He replied coldly, "I am the Sect Elder of Turquoise Sun Hall, Liu Yuan. I am here to bring my disciple to participate in the inner family qualifiers!"

"Oh, it's you guys?"

The guards snickered and said, "The Grand Elder told us that you all are late and that arriving past the starting time is against the rules. They've left already!"

Long Chen was instantly furious, cursing out loud, "That son of a bitch! I woke up early to be here, yet he left already? And he said we're late? Did he leave at midnight or something?"

Chapter 155 - Nine Devil Mountains!

Long Chen never expected to be slighted like this.

He knew that the inner qualifiers should start at noon, and so they had set off early in the morning. There was still a long time till noon, yet the Grand Elder and Chu Yunxi had already left. What did that mean?

It meant they didn't take Liu Yuan and Long Chen seriously at all.

It meant they were mocking Long Chen.

In the face of such contempt, Long Chen was so furious that he started laughing.

Liu Yuan was also privately irritated. Although that was the Grand Elder, he was a Sect Elder himself. If news of this humiliating incident spread, Liu Yuan would completely lose face.

His face turned a stony green. He hadn't stopped Long Chen when he cursed, and instead was privately smug. The rage within him lessened when Long Chen cursed them.

Long Chen was the first person who dared to call Chu Tianxiong a son of a bitch.

When the two guards heard him, their faces reddened and they scolded sternly, "You brat! How dare you insult the Grand Elder! Insubordination is a crime punishable by death! Lock him up, and we'll let the Grand Elder deal with him when he's back!"

Then they started to charge at Long Chen!

"You're all mere Initial Earthly Core Realm guard dogs, and yet you dare touch me?"

Long Chen snickered, then he charged at them too!

Liu Yuan and Liu Lan were a little shocked when the guards started to attack.

Long Chen was going to participate in the inner family qualifiers, so he should not sustain any injuries because of these mere guard dogs! They were about to stop the guards, but Long Chen rushed past them!

“That brat’s looking for death!”

The guards raged when they saw that Long Chen charging faster than themselves, which was the opposite of what they wanted him to do. A guard unleashed a punch furiously. A punch from an Earthly Core Realm cultivator was no ordinary punch. Two consecutive punches were unleashed, and they cut off the path behind Long Chen, preventing him from retreating!

“I heard this brat’s only at the Human Core Realm! He deserves to die if he thinks he can participate in the inner family qualifiers at his level! If we can defeat him here today, we will be greatly rewarded!”

The two guards charged with all their might!

“You want to kill me?” Long Chen smirked, raised a hand, and then *whoosh!* He turned into an illusion as he ran.

“What? How is he so fast?”

Shock was written all over their faces. They could not pinpoint his location due to his speed.

Then two slaps fell on their cheeks, and they cried out in pain, blood flowing between their teeth as they flew into the air. They both crashed into the ground, screaming in agony!

Long Chen did not stop there. He rushed forward and kicked both their faces. On top of the bloody handprint on their cheeks, there was now a gigantic footprint!

Their faces were completely disfigured after Long Chen’s brutal attacks. At this point, they had no strength to even fight back. Their faces were bloody and all they could do was scream in pain, rolling on the ground as they regretted their actions a thousand times over!

Long Chen isn’t the weakling they said he was! Good God, he’s so violent! We’re both done for!

As they howled in pain, they had already cursed the people who relayed the inaccurate information a thousand times!

“Long Chen ... You?”

Liu Yuan was surprised when he saw Long Chen attack and successfully teach them a lesson. These two were masters at the Earthly Core Realm. Although they were working as guards because they didn’t have much potential, they were still at a higher cultivation level than Long Chen.

Liu Yuan was astonished at the fact that Long Chen could defeat them so easily.

On the other hand, Liu Lan also saw the easy win and was now staring in shock. *It looks like he actually was cultivating hard for the past few days, and he made some improvements.*

But they were both disapproving when Long Chen made his second attack to incapacitate the guards. Those two were still the Grand Elder’s subordinates, so his violent behavior was out of line!

“Long Chen, that’s enough,” said Liu Lan mildly.

Long Chen kicked them away one last time, then said loudly, “You two guard dogs! Don’t you forget your place! No matter where you are, you’re just dogs guarding the door! Standing before you is the Sect Elder of the Turquoise Sun Hall; how dare you disrespect him? I have taught you a lesson on the Sect Elder’s behalf so you will remember this clearly. Don’t do it again!”

Long Chen’s declaration that he was acting under the Sect Elder also meant he had completely pushed away the responsibility of beating them up.

He felt much more at ease after taking his frustration out on them.

When he turned to Liu Yuan and Liu Lan, he realized that they were looking at him with some exasperation. “Long Chen, you were too brash ...”

Liu Yuan was about to lecture Long Chen and apologize to the two guards, but Long Chen cut him off and said, “Sect Elder, they’ve left already. I’ll leave the decision to you, but we can’t just not go, can we?”

This was the most important question. Liu Yuan’s attention was directed at Long Chen and he was momentarily led away from the topic of Long Chen beating up the guards. His brows were knitted as he said, “The Grand Elder has indeed overstepped the line a little. Long Chen, even so, you are the pride of the Turquoise Sun Hall. We obtained the right to the qualifiers with great difficulty, so how can we not go? I know where the Nine Devil Mountains are. We’ll go back to Turquoise Sun Hall and take the Divine Gale Peng to the Nine Devil Mountains now!

“If that’s the case, we can’t waste any more time. Let’s head back right now!”

To be honest, Long Chen was also very upset to have been toyed with. He smirked to himself. *How dare you toy with me like this! It doesn’t matter who you are, I’ll make you pay!*

They’d just been left behind by the Grand Elder because they were late. If news of this spread within the Turquoise family, he would be seen as a joke.

Now that the decision had been made to go back, the three of them wasted no time on chit-chat. Liu Yuan was still worried because Long Chen had injured the Grand Elder’s subordinates, but this was an urgent matter and time was running out. “Long Chen, I’m not putting you down, but being that rash won’t do your future any good ...”

“I understand, Sect Elder! I won’t do it again!”

Spoken like an obedient child.

To be honest, that had not been done out of rashness. That was the beginning of his plan to shock everyone. “It’s so strange to hear you call me ‘Sect Elder.’ If you don’t mind, call me ‘Uncle Liu,’” said Liu Yuan as he stroked his beard and looked at Long Chen emotionally.

“Why would I mind? I know how well you’ve treated me, Uncle Liu.”

Although the old man was a little weaker than the rest, he was still an excellent person, so Long Chen had no aversion towards him. If the old man was willing to drop the titles and let Long Chen call him ‘uncle,’ Long Chen naturally wouldn’t let him lose face by declining his offer.

I got a Category Six Black-tier Beast Soul for calling him ‘uncle.’ This trade is worth it.

Long Chen was privately pleased.

This time, Liu Yuan and Long Chen hurried along in front while Liu Lan trailed behind. She was no longer walking with her head down; she occasionally looked up at Long Chen with some confusion in her eyes. *He sold the Violet Demonic Lizard's Beast Soul, but why does it feel like his cultivation level has improved greatly?*

To her, he was full of miracles. This time, he was about to face the most difficult obstacle in his life. She wondered if he would make another miracle happen again.

Although she knew that it would be very, very difficult for him, she was still looking forward to the inner family qualifiers.

It was the beginning of a new arc once more.

The people of the Turquoise Sun Hall were left looking at each other.

“Even with the Peng's speed, it will take us a full day to reach the Nine Devil Mountains from Yuanling City. It's morning right now, so I estimate we'll arrive before nightfall!”

Liu Yuan sat at the very front, using his Qi to split the incoming wind. His Qi was wrapped solidly around him and allowed him to sit steadily on the Divine Gale Peng's back. He turned and said, “The Grand Elder actually has a Black-tier beast we could have used as transport to get to the Nine Devil Mountains in just half a day. But today he ... Sigh. Showing such favoritism is very unbecoming of a man of his status. But if he insists that we are late, we won't be able to do anything about it ...”

Liu Yuan's face darkened.

Looking at her father's expression made Liu Lan's heart ache. Liu Yuan was considered the weakest among the eight Sect Elders of the Turquoise family. The reason he had remained in power for so long was all due to him keeping a low profile. However, keeping a low profile also meant being bullied. He'd been bullied ever since Liu Lan was old enough to remember.

“Uncle Liu,” Long Chen suddenly said.

“What is it?”

Long Chen gave a small smile. “Don't dwell too much on this matter. I won't disappoint you when we get to the Nine Devil Mountains. Glory and respect must be fought for by ourselves. What's so great about the Grand Elder anyway? In the future, he's probably going to have to kiss my behind too.”

“Long Chen, that's enough!” Liu Yuan looked a little angry. “Remember! When we get to the Nine Devil Mountains, do not say such disrespectful things! I won't be able to protect you!”

Long Chen smiled, not showing any signs of acknowledgment. He shut his eyes to rest.

Liu Yuan privately shook his head at Long Chen's bold insubordination. He was now feeling uncertain about letting him participate in the inner qualifiers.

Liu Lan had been listening to their conversation. When she heard Long Chen's bold statement, she was initially smirking and mocking him in her heart, but when she saw that he didn't refute Liu Yuan, but instead closed his eyes calmly to rest, she was shaken.

Such confidence ... Can he really do it?

Time passed as she puzzled over her thoughts. The sun had risen from the east and traveled through the sky until it sank in the west.

On the western border of Yuanling County, dark clouds loomed in the skies. The legendary Nine Devil Mountains looked eerie ...

Chapter 156 - Gu Batian!

"Long Chen, it looks like luck isn't on our side today. The weather's terrible."

Liu Yuan's brows were knitted with worry as he gazed at the black patch of desolate mountains with dark clouds looming above them.

Long Chen looked at the legendary Nine Devil Mountains but only saw black peaks peeking above the clouds with streaks of lightning swimming through the cloud layer and the occasional rumbling thunder that sounded like low beast roars.

The nine mountain peaks pierced through the clouds like claws and greeted them with a cold aura. "This is the Nine Devil Mountains? Literally nine of them?"

Long Chen was a little tongue-tied.

"I'm afraid it's going to rain. The storms in the Nine Devil Mountains are harsh with mad lightning, which will make the qualifiers much more difficult ..."

Long Chen was already weaker than the rest in terms of cultivation level, and now there was the harsh weather to deal with. Liu Yuan thought the odds were against them.

"Don't worry, Uncle Liu. I won't be the only one who has to face this harsh environment. I might even be able to adapt to it," said Long Chen with a nonchalant grin.

When Liu Yuan saw how optimistic he was, he shook his head in exasperation.

Once they arrived at the vicinity of the Nine Devil Mountains, the Divine Gale Peng grew increasingly afraid. When they finally neared Mortal Devil Mountain, it landed on its own and refused to move, retracting its neck in fear.

The three of them dismounted.

"The Nine Devil Mountains are dark and cold; the Divine Gale Peng isn't used to an environment like that. Whatever, it's not too far from the Nine Devil Mountain Village. We'll just walk there. It's getting dark, and it's best we arrive before nightfall."

The Nine Devil Mountain Village was a base built by the Lingwu family in the Nine Devil Mountains. Since almost every inner family qualifier event was held in the same place, they decided to build a base here. "The inner family qualifiers start tomorrow. I think it's almost time for them to divide the participants into teams. Long Chen, Lan'er, we need to speed up!"

After Liu Yuan dealt with the Divine Gale Peng, he led Long Chen and Liu Lan towards the Nine Devil Mountain Village.

The Devil Mountains were a vast group of mountains, where the Nine Devil Mountains were the nine tallest peaks, each one tall enough to touch the clouds. Long Chen was currently within the area of the Devil Mountains.

Both the soil on the ground and the wood of the trees were a faded black. Creepy-looking withered trees stood in strange, twisted shapes.

As Long Chen walked, he realized it was very quiet.

"You may only see withered trees here, but the Nine Devil Mountains are filled with dense forests. In general, as you travel, you'll find that the ground is filled with tree roots, and you'll find almost no flat spot to place your feet. A terrain like this can have a great impact on your combat capabilities."

When he thought about the terrain, Liu Yuan lost confidence.

On the one hand, he truly admired and approved of this teenager. On the other hand, the Turquoise Sun Hall had also spent resources on nurturing Long Chen's talent. If he died young, in this place, Liu Yuan would be very disappointed.

"Remember, Long Chen, if you're ever in danger, forget about whether your teammate will be disqualified. Just use the flare, and you'll definitely live!"

Liu Yuan spoke in complete sincerity, so Long Chen could only nod in agreement.

As they hurried towards the Nine Devil Mountains, Long Chen turned and took a glance at Liu Lan. She was made up particularly beautiful today. Her soft, pink skin and devil-like curves gave him the urge to bite her.

When she saw that there was not a hint of worry in his eyes, Liu Lan felt like he was beyond saving, so she said flatly, "Don't you dare fool around anymore. It's best you listen to my father. The inner family qualifiers are no child's play. If you die, it will be a great loss to the Turquoise Sun Hall."

"You just wait and see," Long Chen said nonchalantly, and his eyes darted at her figure. "You're dressed all special today. You're not getting ready already, are you?"

"Ready for what?"

Liu Lan was puzzled, but she was suspicious of the look in his eyes. Being an intelligent person, she quickly recalled that she had told him that he could do whatever he wanted to her once he entered the inner family.

Do you think you can even dream of entering the inner family and having me at your cultivation level?

Liu Lan smirked to herself. She looked down on Long Chen in this aspect.

“A person must, most importantly, be humble and honest. I suddenly realized that you don’t seem to be either. That is why you will always be last,” remarked Liu Lan mildly, then she passed Long Chen and walked in front.

The corner of his lips curved upwards. “Really? But why would I want to be humble?”

Liu Yuan didn’t quite understand what they were talking about, but he mulled over it silently when he saw how sarcastically they spoke with each other. *Why does it seem like Lan’er and Long Chen are arguing? They’re both grown, so why are they saying such childish things? Unless she’s actually interested in Long Chen?*

As an experienced outsider, Liu Yuan instantly realized that something was off.

However, he buried this matter deep in his heart for the moment because this was a somewhat difficult issue to settle. If they truly were interested in each other, that was a good thing, but Long Chen had to come back alive first.

And with Long Chen’s temper, that might be difficult to accomplish.

They were soon approaching the Nine Devil Mountain Village. “The Nine Devil Mountain Village is ahead. You two, remember not to utter a single word about what happened at the Grand Elder’s gates. Do not argue with him either, especially you, Long Chen ...” He glared at Long Chen sternly and then continued, “Although they were being bullies, he’s still of higher status and more powerful than us. He’s at the late Heavenly Core Realm after all. That is why we must hold our tongues and just agree with whatever he says. If you start spouting nonsense because you’re dissatisfied, you’ll be the only one to blame for your own death!”

Long Chen could only nod in the face of Liu Yuan’s solemn warning.

That old man has insulted me. Liu Yuan might have emphasized his stance on this matter, but the future can always change.

The vegetation parted, and a gigantic building emerged from a valley ahead. This place was a few times larger than Turquoise Willow Residence.

There were only about forty people present for the inner family qualifiers, yet they were using such a large place just for transit. The Lingwu family’s budget was surely huge.

The Nine Devil Mountains were pitch black, so the building’s main color was also black in order to avoid being too conspicuous.

Night had gradually fallen. There were already many lights in the building, and red lanterns lit within the black pavilions like the eyes of countless beasts hidden in the night.

“Let’s enter.”

It looked like everyone participating in the qualifiers was present already. Liu Yuan took a deep breath, then he led Long Chen and Liu Lan towards the Nine Devil Mountain Village. Before long, a few cultivators in black armor surrounded them.

They were all at the Earthly Core Realm and were no ordinary men; they radiated a bloody Qi that meant that they had taken many lives before. “This is the Nine Devil Mountains base belonging to

the Lingwu family of Yuanling County! Who are you? State your name or die!” A cold voice came from the surrounding people.

“I am the Sect Elder of the Turquoise family’s Turquoise Sun Hall, Liu Yuan. I am here to bring my disciple for the inner family qualifiers!” announced Liu Yuan, deliberately speaking loudly. He did this to attract the attention of people within the mountain village. As long as he attracted attention, this situation would be easier to deal with.

“Inner family qualifiers? Nonsense! The participants were brought in by their Grand Elders. You may be a Sect Elder, but so what? I think you’re just here to cause trouble. Get him!”

The black-armored guards refused to reason. Despite Liu Yuan’s constant efforts to explain, they didn’t listen. The group of ten mid Earthly Core Realm cultivators attacked immediately.

“Bastards!” Liu Yuan squinted. He was really angry this time. In a situation like this, even the kindest person would be furious!

He was only at the initial Heavenly Core Realm, but the difference between the Heavenly Core Realm and the Earthly Core Realm was like the sky and the land. Even ten mid Earthly Core Realm cultivators were no match for him!

The reason why he didn’t make a move was because future negotiations would be difficult if he did so. There were inner family members in the Nine Devil Mountains, so if he didn’t deal with this matter appropriately and was betrayed by someone, he could easily lose his life.

It was at this moment that his previously loud announcement took effect.

“Stand down!”

An old but powerful voice rang out. The mid Earthly Core Realm guards were about to attack, but there was suddenly a vibration that caused their legs to give out, and they collapsed.

An old man clad in violet robes appeared at the entrance of the Nine Devil Mountain Village. He loomed over them at more than two meters tall. After pushing away the black-armored guards with the shockwaves of his attack, he eyed Liu Yuan for a while and declared loudly, “Indeed, it’s him. Liu Yuan! I can testify to their identities, let them in.”

When the guards heard the old man’s words, they did not dare say anything more and retreated quietly before disappearing into the forest.

Liu Yuan was surprised and overjoyed to see the tall old man, exclaiming in reverence, “So it’s you, Senior Gu Batian, Grand Elder of the Violet family! I can’t believe you still remember me!”

“My memory is excellent. Then again, I haven’t seen you in four or five years. I can’t believe you’re still as pathetic as before. Even that small ant dares to bully you.”

The Grand Elder of the Violet family spoke without reservations, his voice booming loud.

“I am sorry you had to see that, Senior Gu Batian ...” Liu Yuan looked a little embarrassed, then he hurriedly introduced the other two to Gu Baitian. “Senior, this

is my daughter, Liu Lan. She also participated in the inner family qualifiers once but unfortunately wasn't good enough to qualify. This is a disciple of the Turquoise Sun Hall, Long Chen. He's here to participate in the inner family qualifiers. You two ..."

With his reminder, Long Chen and Liu Lan locked eyes and then quickly bowed.

The Violet family's Grand Elder looked like a rough brute, but he was actually very friendly. If Chu Tianxiong ignored or bullied them, they could get Gu Batian to help reason with him. This was a good thing ...

Chapter 157 - Chu Tianxiong

"I've seen your daughter before. She was very cute back then, but it seems that she's still as sweet as she was before. As for Long Chen ..."

Gu Batian looked at Long Chen before smiling. "Not bad. I've heard of you before—you defeated one of the inner family members at the Earthly Core Realm. I'm looking forward to your performance in the qualifiers ..."

Long Chen knew Gu Batian could tell he had reached the Earthly Core Realm.

Gu Batian's confidence in Long Chen made Liu Yuan and Liu Lan slightly puzzled.

But they soon shrugged it off, thinking it was just some words of courtesy.

"Since you are here, let's go in."

Gu Batian waved his hands, and Liu Yuan followed him. Even though he was old, Liu Yuan still had a twenty year age gap with Gu Batian, so he didn't dare to be slow.

Gu Batian walked into the meeting hall of the Nine Devil Mountain Village.

"All of us had arrived and were waiting for the people from the inner family to appear, but I was curious as to why there was only a single person representing the Turquoise family. When I came out for a breath of fresh air, I heard you shouting outside. What was up with that?" Gu Batian said plainly.

Liu Yuan revealed a bitter expression. "It was my fault. I wanted to bring Long Chen to where the Grand Elder was, but we were late. The Grand Elder had left, so the three of us had no choice but travel here as fast as we could."

Gu Batian smiled when he heard that.

"What bullshit. With Chu Tianxiong's character, it's probably because Long Chen has some grudge with his descendant. It's more likely that he's trying to get you in trouble. That old bastard was already here when I arrived in the evening. It's highly plausible that he left in the early hours, before the sun even rose. What a nasty bastard to pull off such despicable tactics even though he's so old!"

Long Chen was happy that someone like Gu Batian was admonishing Chu Tianxiong. Liu Yuan and Liu Lan looked at each other and chuckled too.

Gu Batian was not an idiot. He had noticed that the Turquoise family was missing a person and recalled that there was a genius at the Human Core Realm that had been making waves recently. He pieced it together and roughly guessed what had happened.

The meeting hall was the largest building in the Nine Devil Mountain Village, and it was also where they would hold their meetings for the qualifiers. The Grand Elders of the nine outer families had taken their seats and were waiting for the people of the inner family to show up.

Delicious meals were placed in front of them on the table.

They were happily talking until they saw Gu Batian returning. They were also puzzled as to why he had brought three more people back.

Most of them didn't know who the three of them were.

Every person in the room was an elite, the most important people within the outer family. Even though they were staring at Long Chen, he was not afraid.

Long Chen looked around and noted down the strength of the younger generation.

All of them were younger than twenty and were at least at the mid Earthly Core Realm.

Some of them were as strong as Chu Yunxi. Jin Sheng'en was here too.

The seating arrangement was as follows: gold, silver, red, orange, yellow, green, turquoise, indigo, and violet. Long Chen quickly found where the Turquoise family seats were. He saw four people staring at him with shock and hostility.

It was none other than Chu Fengqing and his children, Chu Yunxi and Chu Yunyao. There was one more elderly person in front of them. While he was short, his eyes were sharp and his entire aura resembled a sharp sword. Long Chen dared not stare directly at him.

Is he the Grand Elder of the Turquoise family, Chu Tianxiong? He's indeed strong!

Long Chen was wary of him, but he didn't say anything. Even though this was their first time meeting, Long Chen had been bullied by Chu Tianxiong once before.

Chu Yunxi had watched Long Chen and Liu Lan enter together. His eyes were filled with bitter hatred, and his sister had the same glare too.

When Long Chen and the other two entered, Gu Batian laughed. "Old Man Chu, I went out to take a piss and brought the other genius from your family. Go on, Long Chen, go to where the Turquoise family is. Let your Grand Elder properly take care of you!"

Gu Batian said that while ushering the three of them towards the Turquoise family seating area. There were enough chairs for them, so they could all sit down.

Chu Yunxi and Chu Yunyao, however, were disgusted when they saw Long Chen sitting beside Liu Lan. They moved away from them.

"Why did you move away? Do you think I'm stinky? Old Man Chu, your grandchildren are a bit rude. Come now, sit together and don't move."

Gu Batian pretended to be offended, causing Chu Yunxi and Chu Yunyao to sit still. They looked at their grandfather for help, but he merely stared calmly at Gu Batian. "Sit down and don't move."

“That’s the spirit. Alright, I won’t bother you anymore.”

After placing Long Chen and the other two down in their seats, Gu Batian chuckled at Chu Tianxiong before returning to where the Violet family was sitting.

It seemed that Gu Batian and Chu Tianxiong were eternal rivals.

It was very probable that the two would fight fiercely during the qualifiers too.

Back in the Violet family seating area, there were two younger men. Long Chen had a feeling that one of them was as strong as Chu Yunxi. It was clear that both of them were the genius cultivators of the Violet family competing in the qualifiers. At the same time, the two men looked at Long Chen with interest.

When Gu Batian walked back and sat down, the meeting hall fell silent. Everyone was staring at Long Chen and started discussing amongst themselves. All of them were talking about the relationship between Long Chen, Liu Lan, and Chu Yunxi, as well as Long Chen’s past battles.

Long Chen’s arrival sparked a lot of discussions.

The teenager in question sat down quietly and evaluated everyone, especially the Grand Elders of the other families as well as the contestants.

There were too many people for him to memorize, but there were certain parties that he paid close attention to. One of them was the man sitting in the middle of the Gold family.

Is he the Grand Elder of the Gold family? But he’s much younger than the others. He should be roughly the same age as Chu Fengqing ... No, wait, his face is similar to Jin Sheng’en’s, but he’s much more composed than that haughty bastard. He must be the Grand Elder!

The man’s eyes were as sharp as a sword and gave off a more frightening aura than Chu Tianxiong. Long Chen understood that this man was indeed a powerful foe.

Long Chen also realized that even though the man was drinking tea with his head down, the latter’s gaze was somehow concentrated on himself.

Everyone was still discussing Long Chen’s arrival. He was one of the contestants that would represent the Turquoise family, but why had he just arrived? There was something amiss, and soon someone asked, “Senior Chu, why did Long Chen just arrive? Did he fall down from the Divine Gale Peng?”

The man who asked was also a Grand Elder.

The Divine Gale Peng was an incredible monster with good endurance and a massive frame. It was commonly used as a means of transportation within Yuanling County. Many larger sects would rear one like the one in the Turquoise Sun Hall.

The man tried to crack a joke to liven up the atmosphere, but Chu Tianxiong became gloomy when he heard that. He turned around and glared at Liu Yuan. “I told you exactly when to arrive, but you were late by an hour. Don’t you think that’s disrespectful to the Grand Elder?”

Chu Tianxiong wanted to shift the blame to Liu Yuan, and there was nothing the latter could do. “I dare not offend the Grand Elder! This was my mistake, and I will accept the punishment once I return to the Turquoise family!”

“There is no need for any punishment, but if you make a foolish mistake like that again, you will be stripped of your position. You haven’t done anything considerable for the family, and this is the last warning you will get,” Chu Tianxiong said plainly.

Even though his voice was not loud, everyone heard it, and there were mixed reactions.

Gu Batian, who knew the truth, chuckled at Chu Tianxiong. “Chu Tianxiong, you’ve become a senile old man. To think you would even bully a junior of your family.”

But only Chu Tianxiong knew what Gu Batian meant.

Chu Tianxiong clenched his fists but said nothing.

“Grand Elder, I won’t do it again. Thank you for your mercy!”

Liu Yuan sighed. He had avoided the worst-case scenario.

Chu Tianxiong sipped his tea and said plainly, “It’s fine that you know your mistake and are willing to improve upon yourself. Alright, now you can remain silent. There’s no reason for you to speak here, or the other families will laugh at you.”

Long Chen saw everything.

He smiled gently, thinking about how to take revenge when Ling Xi suddenly whispered to him. He turned his gaze to the depths of the meeting hall, where he saw shadows moving. Someone was coming. Long Chen saw his chance and suddenly stood up.

Long Chen’s sudden movement made everyone puzzled. Liu Yuan and Liu Lan were surprised and tried to pull him down, but for some reason, Long Chen stood there unwaveringly like a statue. His eyes were sharp and cold when he glared at Chu Tianxiong. “I, Long Chen, heard that the Grand Elder of the Turquoise family is fair and just, but I was wrong. He’s just a coward who favors his own grandchild and would bully others, even juniors of his own family!”

Chapter 158 - Lord Xuanxiao

Everyone was speechless when Long Chen stood up to Chu Tianxiong. They all stared at him. Even the other eight Grand Elders were taken back.

Chu Yunxi and Chu Yunyao were furious.

To them, their grandfather was as strong as the gods themselves. Being humiliated like this caused them to want to kill Long Chen immediately!

Liu Lan’s and Liu Yuan’s minds went blank. Liu Yuan knew Long Chen was rash, so he had reminded him to not cause any trouble. He thought Long Chen had taken his warning to heart, but to think he would pull off something like this!

Long Chen continued to stare at Chu Tianxiong with defiance.

He wanted to put Chu Tianxiong on the spot. With the other eight Grand Elders here, if Chu Tianxiong didn’t do this right, his reputation would go down the drain.

Everyone wanted to see how Chu Tianxiong would deal with it.

“You bastard! I will kill you! You dared to join the qualifiers even though you are only at the Human Core Realm! I will defeat you here right now!” Chu Yunyao shouted before she ran towards Long Chen.

She was the one who thought Long Chen wasn't qualified to join the qualifiers. Both of them were at the late Human Core Realm, so why had Long Chen been allowed to enter while she could only use her connections to come and spectate it?

Long Chen had even humiliated Chu Tianxiong in public. To her, this was unforgivable!

She was already running towards him before Chu Yunxi even did anything.

“Die!”

She unsheathed the Supreme Purity Sword and jabbed it towards Long Chen.

Everyone looked at them with bated breaths.

They wanted to see if Long Chen could defeat Chu Yunyao and probe his strength, but Chu Tianxiong suddenly acted. He disappeared from his seat and held her sword.

“Grandfather, let me kill him! How dare he try to humiliate you!”

“Sit down.”

Chu Yunyao was angry, but Chu Tianxiong's face remained motionless. He gently positioned her behind him and stared at Long Chen without any emotion, as if Long Chen was an inanimate object like a tree or a stone.

This bastard is very calm. It seems taunts won't work on him. But I want to see how much further I can push him. I won't let you bully Liu Yuan and me!

Long Chen had been angry ever since they were left behind at the Turquoise family and were framed by Chu Tianxiong.

He was angry, but he wasn't stupid. He had confidence that he could say this out loud in public without being killed.

Otherwise, he would never risk his life just to humiliate Chu Tianxiong.

He glared at Chu Tianxiong and stated calmly, “Everyone knows I don't get along with Chu Yunxi, your grandson. The three of us arrived at your place early in the morning, but you left even earlier and dared to frame Elder Liu Yuan. Grand Elder, such methods do not befit your position.”

Everyone was taken back by his actions.

“Long Chen, are you crazy?! Don't spout nonsense!”

Liu Yuan tried pulling Long Chen back.

“You ... You are lying! How dare you try to stain my grandfather's reputation?!”

Chu Yunyao wanted to skin Long Chen alive.

“You are courting death!”

Chu Yunxi stood up as well.

But everyone wanted to see how Chu Tianxiong would act.

Everyone secretly knew what Chu Tianxiong had done, but his position was indeed higher than a regular elder. Therefore, there was nothing wrong with him doing this, and it wouldn't affect anyone else. But Long Chen had actually brought it up in public. This could affect his reputation.

Everyone was looking at Chu Tianxiong eagerly, especially Gu Batian. Chu Tianxiong's eyelids twitched and he glared at Long Chen, revealing a minor killing intent. Long Chen had a feeling that he had finally managed to anger him.

Long Chen knew when to stop and didn't act any further. He had humiliated Chu Tianxiong for the purpose of seeking justice for Liu Yuan. And he had accomplished this while tarnishing Chu Tianxiong's reputation at the same time.

Long Chen knew Chu Tianxiong was considering his options. Long Chen was a contestant approved by the inner-family to participate in the qualifiers. No matter what his excuse was, killing Long Chen was not an ideal option.

He stared at Long Chen coldly and said in a hoarse voice, "Everyone, allow me to let loose for a while today. I hope that you all help me seek justice in front of Lord Xuanxiao later on the account that we've known each other for so long and we've led the outer family for decades."

Everyone understood what he meant. He wanted to kill Long Chen.

It was an understandable decision. If any of the Grand Elders were humiliated in public by a nobody like Long Chen, they would kill him too, much less the ill-tempered Chu Tianxiong.

"He's talented, but he's an idiot."

"He would've become a pillar of the outer family in the future if he could hold himself back. Such a shame."

Two Grand Elders shook their heads and sighed. Chu Yunxi and Chu Yunyao were elated when they heard that their grandfather was about to kill Long Chen. They sneered at Long Chen with Chu Yunyao even taunting him. "You managed to enter the qualifiers, but because of how stupid you are, you are going to be killed by my grandfather! Serves you right!"

Chu Tianxiong's eyes were cold when Chu Yunyao said that. A massive aura billowed towards Long Chen, causing him to feel as if the entire world was breaking apart.

Damn, he's too strong! He could obliterate me with just a single punch right now!

Long Chen was frustrated. No wonder those at the late Heavenly Core Realm were at the top of Yuanling County. It reminded him of when he faced the Yang patriarch while he was at the Fourth Draconic Realm. The gap between them was massive.

But the people from the inner family are approaching.

Long Chen was relaxed.

Ling Xi had told him that two people were walking towards them from the depths of the meeting hall. One of them was stronger than the Grand Elders. They had to be the people the inner family had sent to officiate the qualifiers.

Long Chen would never be killed as long as they were present.

Even the Grand Elders would not go against the inner family. When Chu Tianxiong was about to make his move, a deep and attractive voice could be heard from the depths of the meeting hall.

“Chu Tianxiong, stop.”

Chu Tianxiong’s face paled, but he immediately complied and stopped. He didn’t even look at Long Chen before he turned around.

Everyone rose up and greeted the people within the depths of the meeting hall.

Long Chen was happy he had managed to survive even though he felt like that was a little bit too dangerous. Liu Yuan and Liu Lan wanted to ask why Long Chen had done that, but they were too busy showing respect to the people from the inner family.

Two people walked out of the darkness. One of them was Dongfang Tianyu! He was still as handsome and charismatic as before.

But Dongfang Tianyu was not the main character today. The one to his side was the one in charge of overseeing the qualifiers.

Long Chen took a glance and saw that it was a man around thirty. He was slightly skinny and his face was clean. His long hair flowed down his back like a black waterfall, reaching his waist. He wore a loose, white robe and his eyes were a deep black, holding no emotion. Those who gazed into his eyes would feel as if they were trapped within them.

He does look handsome ...

Long Chen was very taken back that he had actually complimented someone for being handsome. He didn't usually do that unless the other person was truly very handsome.

Mo Xiaolang looked handsome too, but he was a bit too young.

Even the Grand Elders lowered their heads and greeted the man respectfully. “We greet Lord Xuanxiao.”

Xuanxiao?

Seeing how the family overseeing the qualifiers would be the Eastern Azure Dragon family and Dongfang Tianyu was here, Long Chen deduced that the man’s full name was Dongfang Xuanxiao.

Dongfang Xuanxiao’s aura was calm and did not reveal his strength, but people had a hard time approaching him out of fear. Even the Grand Elders like Jin Sheng’en’s father did not give Long Chen the same feeling.

“Sit down.”

Dongfang Xuanxiao waved his arm, and everyone sat down, including Chu Tianxiong. Ever since Dongfang Xuanxiao appeared, Chu Tianxiong had completely ignored Long Chen. Dongfang Xuanxiao was indeed someone to be reckoned with.

Dongfang Xuanxiao seems to be an amazing person.

Long Chen quickly sat down too.

Technically, Dongfang Xuanxiao should've been looking at Long Chen since he was bickering with Chu Tianxiong just now, but the former did not even spare him a passing glance.

Once everyone sat down, Dongfang Xuanxiao started giving instructions.

“The disciples who will be joining the qualifiers, come out and stand in groups of two. I will give you your jade bracelets and flares.”

Chapter 159 - Yin Mengyao

He's too calm.

Long Chen silently noted this down.

He then stood up with the other nineteen contestants and made his way to the middle of the hall. He looked around and saw that their ages were roughly the same as his, but Ling Xi told him that most of them were at the mid Earthly Core Realm. Only Long Chen was at the initial Earthly Core Realm. Long Chen didn't know what was happening. When he was granted the opportunity to participate in the qualifiers, he was still at the peak Human Core Realm.

All of them are very strong.

Long Chen was amazed.

He couldn't differentiate which family they came from based on their faces and apparel, but they were standing in groups of two according to Dongfang Xuanxiao's instruction.

Chu Yunxi smiled at Long Chen before walking over to where Jin Sheng'en was.

Behind Jin Sheng'en was a pair of twins. They were most likely the contestants from the Gold family.

Chu Yunxi was from the Turquoise family. After joining up with Jin Sheng'en, Long Chen was left alone. Soon, they were all grouped together in front of Dongfang Xuanxiao.

Everyone looked at the dense Long Chen. Now that Chu Yunxi had gone with Jin Sheng'en, Long Chen stood alone with a girl.

“Damn. Mengyao is super unlucky.”

One of the ladies from the silver family shook her head. Beside her was an old woman with a ruddy face. She was the Grand Elder of the Silver family.

“We know how strong Mengyao is. As long as she passes the first stage, she will win the second stage. I hope Long Chen won't drag her down.”

“How could he not drag her down?”

The younger lady rolled her eyes. “If Long Chen is cowardly and uses the flare when they are in danger, Yin Mengyao will be disqualified too. All of her hard work will go down the drain!”

“Enough! Luck is also part of a person's fate. She cannot blame others if she doesn't succeed.”

They weren't loud, but everyone heard them, including Long Chen.

Drag her down?

Long Chen was speechless.

But it was clear to everyone that anyone who teamed up with Long Chen would be very unlucky on the first stage, Heaven's Path.

The rules were not simple. A person's individual strength was definitely important, but their teammate is equally important. If their teammate failed, they would lose too.

I will show you who will drag who down. Long Chen was calm. He was capable of taking such insults for now.

Dongfang Xuanxiao's gaze finally fell on Long Chen.

He pointed at where Yin Mengyao was and said plainly, "Go there."

Long Chen had no choice but to obey. He approached Yin Mengyao.

Yin Mengyao had been directly given the right to participate as well. She was as strong as Jin Sheng'en and Chu Yunxi.

When Long Chen entered the meeting hall, he instantly saw there were two girls and a guy standing in the Silver family area. The guy and the other girl were paired up together. *The sole remaining girl standing alone should be Yin Mengyao.*

Yin Mengyao's appearance and demeanor were surprisingly similar to Dongfang Xuanxiao's. She was beautiful, roughly twenty years old or so. She was becoming a woman that everyone adored.

She was as beautiful as Liu Lan, but in contrast to Liu Lan's fiery demeanor, Yin Mengyao was cold and calculating, making her much harder to approach.

Long Chen was worried that she would chase him away, but her face was as emotionless as Dongfang Xuanxiao's. She didn't even look at him, as if he was not on her team.

A total of ten teams had been formed. Only four of them would be able to pass the first stage and enter the final round.

Hmm, they do look similar.

Long Chen was perplexed.

Dongfang Xuanxiao looks like he's in his thirties, but he should be around forty, which would make him old enough to be her father ...

When they grouped together, Dongfang Xuanxiao said nothing and brought out flares from his Universe Pouch. He told Dongfang Tianyu to distribute them.

"Infuse your Qi into it and the flare will light up."

Dongfang Xuanxiao briefly explained how to use it.

Dongfang Tianyu finally stood in front of Long Chen, and the latter saw animosity in Dongfang Tianyu's gaze.

“Brat, I recall how cowardly you were when I first met you in the Heavenly Martial Realm. To think you would dare to insult Chu Tianxiong and make my Chu Yunyao angry. Do you think I do not exist?”

Having said that, he placed the flare in Long Chen’s hand and continued distributing them to everyone else. He kept smiling at Long Chen menacingly.

Long Chen had considered that he would get targeted by Dongfang Tianyu by antagonizing the Chu family, but there was no reason to not do so. He already had a grudge against the Chu family because of Liu Lan anyway.

Once the flares had been distributed, Dongfang Xuanxiao brought out twenty white jade bracelets. He waved his arm, and the twenty bracelets flew up into the sky before they wrapped around the contestants’ wrists.

Long Chen was shocked when he saw the mysterious bracelet.

“These are the jade bracelets that will automatically fall off from your wrist when you are injured beyond a certain threshold. Do not worry, as you won’t be able to break them with your current strength. You should know the rules of Heaven’s Path, so I will not explain more. It’s late now, so you should rest. We will depart tomorrow morning.”

“Yes, Lord Xuanxiao!”

Long Chen paid his respects to Dongfang Xuanxiao along with everyone.

Dongfang Xuanxiao said nothing and left.

He never raised the issue of Long Chen and Chu Tianxiong, but Long Chen knew that Dongfang Xuanxiao had silently warned Chu Tianxiong by giving Long Chen the jade bracelet now. Chu Tianxiong would never dare to injure or kill Long Chen at this point.

Once Dongfang Xuanxiao had left, Gu Batian slapped his leg and stood up. “Young man, it seems the Turquoise family is not safe for you. Please come to the Violet family’s residence to rest. I will be sure to treat you right!”

Long Chen didn’t want to stay with the Chu family. Seeing how Gu Batian had come to their rescue, he immediately said, “Thank you!”

Chu Tianxiong glared at Long Chen, seeing both him and Gu Batian standing together.

“Grandfather, don’t worry. I have discussed this with Jin Sheng’en. Long Chen will not be leaving Heaven’s Path alive tomorrow,” Chu Yunxi whispered to Chu Tianxiong.

“Then I look forward to it. Just follow my plan.” Chu Tianxiong’s voice was ice cold.

“I know. I will tear him apart before he even has the chance to take out the flare.”

Both of them were whispering, so no one heard them except for Ling Xi. She repeated what they had said with an angry but hushed tone.

“Don’t worry. I won’t lose to them.” Long Chen smiled.

Long Chen had pulled both Liu Yuan and Liu Lan towards him before leaving the meeting hall with Gu Batian.

Suddenly, the quiet Yin Mengyao called for Long Chen. “Long Chen? Can we talk for a moment?”

Long Chen was surprised that Yin Mengyao would come to him willingly.

Gu Batian was old, but he loved gossiping. When he heard Yin Mengyao, he tried joking with her. “Young miss, did you fall in love with him?”

Even though Gu Batian was teasing her, Yin Mengyao’s face did not betray any emotions. “Senior Gu, I want to discuss some plans with him for tomorrow.”

“Oh.” Gu Batian said nothing after seeing how there was no reaction from her.

Long Chen nodded and followed Yin Mengyao toward the corner of the meeting hall. The closer he got to her, the more he was surprised by her beauty, especially her aura, which made approaching her difficult. Regular women would have a hard time copying it.

When they were alone, she told him her plan. “My Grand Elder has told me that you’ve reached the Earthly Core Realm, so I’m quite relieved to hear that. For the battle tomorrow, all you need to do is to protect your bracelet and hide while I fight. Understand?”

Yin Mengyao did not abhor Long Chen but made the best possible plan for tomorrow based on the circumstances. Long Chen didn’t understand Yin Mengyao because he had never met her before. Even though it was slightly insulting to him, Long Chen did not have any distaste for her.

She’s just afraid that I’m too weak and will lose the bracelet. She’s making a plan based on current circumstances ...

Long Chen was used to it, so he didn’t mind. “Sure, I will do my best.” He nodded at her plan.

Yin Mengyao was worried that Long Chen would be naive and dense based on how he had acted against Chu Tianxiong just now, but she had never expected him to agree so earnestly.

She nodded and left after bidding him goodbye.

Long Chen followed Gu Batian and cultivated for the night. On the next day, everyone followed Dongfang Xuanxiao and walked to the base of the Nine Devil Mountains.

Chapter 160 - Poison Beasts

Even though it was supposed to be dawn, daylight did not reach where they were.

The Nine Devil Mountains’ reputation for its bad weather was not to be taken lightly. Long Chen had a good grasp of the time, but he saw that the sky was still dark when he walked out of the room. Everything was pitch black to the point that he could barely see his fingers.

Dark clouds covered the skies and hung low on the mountain. They blocked off the top half of the Nine Devil Mountains, enshrouding them in lightning and thunder.

An occasional thunderclap caused everyone’s hair to stand on end.

It was the darkest day Long Chen had ever seen.

“It’s already past dawn and yet it’s still so dark. It seems the weather is very bad today.”

Gu Batian frowned.

Long Chen and Gu Batian had stayed together in the same residence. Thanks to that, Long Chen had the time to talk to the two geniuses of the Violet family. Both of them were at the mid Earthly Core Realm. One of them was Gu Cheng, the grandson of Gu Batian, who had been invited to join the qualifiers directly. The other person, Liu Gui, was slightly weaker.

“The three of you must work together if there’s danger up there. The weather today is very bad, so it might be very hard to traverse Heaven’s Path.

“I understand, Grandfather. If Long Chen is in trouble, we will help him.”

Long Chen was indeed the weakest one among them. Gu Batian had given special instructions for both of them to look after Long Chen, and they had agreed.

“I will have to thank you in advance.”

Long Chen thanked them for their hospitality.

Even though they had just met not too long ago, Long Chen was grateful to Gu Batian for treating him kindly.

Even though Gu Batian had only helped him out due to his own rivalry with Chu Tianxiong, Long Chen was still grateful.

Liu Yuan and Liu Lan were behind them.

They didn’t know what to do after Long Chen’s stint yesterday. Everything was now in the past, and Long Chen had a grudge with Chu Tianxiong. If Long Chen did not pass the qualifiers, he would be dead.

Thankfully, Gu Batian seemed to have taken a liking to Long Chen and might be able to help him next time.

Liu Lan was still as pretty as ever, a sight for sore eyes on this dark day. Seeing how the qualifiers were going to start soon, Long Chen recalled what she had promised him before and chuckled.

“What are you looking at?”

Liu Lan blushed at how Long Chen was gazing at her.

“I just want to know whether you are ready or not. About tomorrow night.”

No one knew what they were referring to. Even Liu Yuan was in the dark.

Ling Xi didn’t know what Long Chen was referring to either, but she couldn’t ask right now because Long Chen was surrounded by experts. She didn’t want them to find out about her.

Long Chen still didn’t know despair despite having so many close encounters with death, so he was still thinking about such shameful things. Liu Lan was embarrassed and angry, but she was also very disappointed.

Rash and doesn't think of the consequences. When did he become like this ...

Liu Lan was worried about his future.

Long Chen was the one who was supposed to be the most worried about the qualifiers. Success or failure on his part would not affect Liu Lan or Liu Yuan at all.

After teasing her, Long Chen followed the others to the meeting hall.

Back in the hall, Long Chen regrouped with the other contestants. Dongfang Xuanxiao appeared and guided them to the base of the Nine Devil Mountains.

The others who were not participating followed the Grand Elders and ascended Heaven's Path to reach the Mortal Caves first. The Lingwu family had a base there.

Even though Chu Tianxiong would be there, Gu Batian would also be there to take care of Liu Yuan and Liu Lan. Long Chen relaxed knowing that they were safe. He looked up from the base of the Nine Devil Mountains and saw the sharp cliffs of the mountain in front of him.

Is this Mortal Devil Mountain?

Long Chen was in awe at how dangerous it looked. The dark clouds had separated Mortal Devil Mountain in half.

The peak of the mountain was completely covered by the dark clouds. Below that was a forest with dark trees. Fog intersected between them, making visibility almost nil. It was as if numerous beasts were hiding amongst the trees, waiting with their bloody jaws.

"Once you are on Heaven's Path, your lives are your own responsibility. Do not be careless. You can ascend now."

Once they arrived at the base of the mountain, Dongfang Xuanxiao said nothing else and started the first stage.

Under his arrangement, each team was brought to different locations and entered the mountain in different areas. This was to prevent the teams from meeting early on and killing each other.

Long Chen and Yin Mengyao were the final team. After Dongfang Xuanxiao sent off the team from the Red family, he brought Long Chen and Yin Mengyao to another location.

"Go up from here. Walk five hundred meters straight. After that, your lives are your own."

Both of them listened to his instructions. Long Chen and Yin Mengyao looked at each other and started their ascent up the Mortal Devil Mountain.

"The two people from the Red family seem to be targeting you."

When they were ascending, Dongfang Xuanxiao's voice came from beside them before everything went quiet.

"Red family?" Yin Mengyao was calm. "They are not hard to defeat."

But Long Chen was puzzled. Dongfang Xuanxiao seemed to be looking out for them.

Both of them had ascended the mountain as they were told. They were surrounded by a dense canopy of dark trees. Their branches and leaves were massive and covered the skies. Long Chen saw that each of the leaves was almost as large as a small boat.

The trees of Mortal Devil Mountain are called Devil Wood. They are thick and as strong as steel.

Long Chen was impressed by the Devil Wood.

The mountain was covered in them. Their roots covered the ground, making it hard to find even a single piece of flat land to step on.

While the Devil Wood was an exclusive plant found in the Devil Mountains, there were beasts that called this place home that could not be found anywhere else. They were known as Poison Beasts.

Poison Beasts are mutated beasts. They are much more deadly than normal beasts because they can release poison or venom. If your luck is bad, you might meet poison beasts that are capable of poisoning even someone at the late Heavenly Core Realm!

Liu Yuan had explained the characteristics of the mountain to Long Chen yesterday.

Long Chen knew that the reason why Heaven's Path was deadly was because of the Poison Beasts. They were still at the base of the mountain, so they wouldn't encounter anything too deadly, but the forest would be crawling with them once they ascended a certain distance!

You need to protect your bracelet while fending off the attacks from the Poison Beasts. Heaven's Path is extremely difficult ...

The air around the mountain was humid. The leaves and dirt were covered in moisture. It wasn't long before Long Chen was covered in sweat.

Yin Mengyao, on the other hand, looked slightly better. She took more care in maintaining her appearance.

She had been walking in front of Long Chen the whole time. She was wearing a tight suit that showcased her curves but was comfortable to fight in.

"Long Chen, do you remember what I told you?"

Yin Mengyao was opening up the path while talking to him.

"I remember. If there's an enemy, all I need to do is to hide and not be the hero."

Long Chen sighed. Still, he did not have any ill intention towards her since she was courteous.

"Your priority is to stay alive. Do not venture too far from me."

"Alright."

Yin Mengyao was satisfied that Long Chen knew his limits, so she did not remind him anymore.

The further up they ascended, the more humid the air got. The sound of thunder was gradually closing in on them. Their surroundings were pitch black and they had to rely on the occasional lightning flash to see their surroundings.

"We should be approaching the area where Poison Beasts will show up."

Long Chen saw some markings on the trees made by Poison Beasts or Poison Insects and became alert.

“Both Poison Insects and Poison Beasts are demonic beasts, but they are even more difficult to deal with than normal ones. Once we get poisoned, our lives will be in immediate danger.”

“Long Chen, someone is approaching you.” Ling Xi had been earnestly scanning their surroundings for the presence of living beings ever since they started ascending. Long Chen was much safer with her power to detect danger.

“Hey, stop. Someone’s coming over.” Long Chen stopped and pointed at where Ling Xi told him to look.

Yin Mengyao was puzzled. She couldn’t sense anything over there. She was about to question him when she frowned and stood in front of Long Chen.

She had heard the sound of crunching leaves.

Two cultivators walked out of the darkness. They couldn’t see who they were until they got closer.

“It seems that they only know our approximate location.”

Long Chen recognized the two of them. They were the two cultivators from the Red family that Dongfang Xuanxiao had warned him about. They knew roughly which direction to go because they were the ones who had gone up the mountain just before Long Chen and Yin Mengyao.

When both parties saw each other, the Red family instantly ran towards Yin Mengyao.