

Worth 551

Chapter 551: Internal Conflict

Mie Liezi narrowed his eyes when he heard Feng Qiuran's words, and he cast a cold glance at her. Back then, Feng Qiuran was at the peak of the early-stage Soul Conduit realm, pressuring the then Mie Liezi who had just entered early-stage Soul Conduit realm, which left him without a choice but to work with the Federation.

However, he had gradually advanced in his cultivation, and the difference between him and Feng Qiuran wasn't large. Despite that, unless he had no choice, he didn't want to go against Feng Qiuran. After all, there was still You Ran as one of the Elders of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace.

Even though You Ran always seemed nonchalant about matters, Mie Liezi was still vigilant towards him. Mie Liezi was about to speak when You Ran, who was beside him, sighed.

"Mie Liezi, Feng Qiuran, stop arguing, the both of you. This happens every time... However, Elder Feng, Elder Mie Liezi was right about something. What's most important is the incident involving the Hyacinthus Tree! I also think that we should first reach a conclusion regarding the Hyacinthus Tree before discussing other matters. What do you think?"

With Daoist You Ran acting as the peacemaker like always, Feng Qiuran silently nodded her head as an indication of her agreement to discuss the Hyacinthus Tree issue first.

"Thirty-seven years ago, seven leaves fell off the Hyacinthus Tree, and now, there's only three. The number of falling leaves are decreasing, and it is likely that only one will fall the next time." Daoist You Ran sighed softly, and a look of anxiousness and concern could be seen in his eyes.

"That means that we only have three tokens this time around. If everything goes smoothly, three disciples could enter the Worship Palace Pavilion of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace and carve their names down on the Dao Plate based on the opportunities that they have obtained. That will allow them to be bestowed with an identity as a true Dao Palace disciple. Do both of you have any suggestions on how to choose the three disciples?" As Daoist You Ran spoke, he looked towards Mie Liezi and Feng Qiuran.

Without waiting for Feng Qiuran, Mie Liezi began speaking with a cold tone.

"Back then, there were seven leaves, and we sent seven people, but four of them didn't survive. Only Chi Lin and three others successfully became the outer sect disciples of the Dao Palace. There were simply too many losses. Furthermore, since we only have three leaves now, I don't think there is any meaning to sending anyone there!"

Hearing those words, Feng Qiuran was immediately displeased and began speaking.

"The leaf of the Hyacinthus Tree is the token needed for one to officially be part of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. This is a tradition that has been passed down since the Dao Palace was established. Wasn't that the case for us too? Even though there is some danger in entering the Worship Palace Pavilion now, the fact that the Hyacinthus Tree still sheds its leaves means that there is a significance behind it!"

“Perhaps there could really be someone whose opportunity is so valuable that he is able to become an inner sect disciple. That would mean a lot to us. Of course, if Elder Mie Liezi doesn’t agree, you can give up on the eligibility to receive the Hyacinthus Tree leaf for the disciples under your wing.” As Feng Qiuran spoke, Mie Liezi laughed suddenly.

“What Elder Feng said makes sense. I have not been considerate. Since this is the case, it’s easy to distribute the three leaves. We shall receive one leaf each, and let our respective disciples undergo a trial. The winner of the trial will receive the Hyacinthus Tree leaf!”

“Right now, the disciples are too complacent. We must let them know how brutal cultivation can be, that it is a fight between people and the heavens. After all, back in the day, the three of us also overcome all sorts of trials to achieve what we have today.” With that, Mie Liezi narrowed his eyes and looked towards Feng Qiuran. However, he was laughing evilly in his heart. On the surface, whatever he said about distributing the three leaves amongst the three of them sounded fair, but in reality, there was an evil intent behind it!

For Daoist Mie Liezi and You Ran, they could appear to let their disciples battle it out to receive the Hyacinthus Tree leaf on the surface but actually make the decision through a simple command.

However, it was a different case for Feng Qiuran. That was because things were made more complicated with the involvement of the Federation under her lead. Even though she had tried to prevent it, two different factions were forming. One continued to support Feng Qiuran, while the other was beginning to show signs of revolt amidst their silence.

Building on the formation of the two factions, that was the case for the disciples as well. The Federation Seedlings were weak and could only stick with each other. While the other disciples of the faction working under Feng Qiuran supported them, they were unable to see the Federation Seedlings as their own in a short period of time.

Therefore, the problem now lay in who to give the leaf to. If it had to be obtained through battling like Mie Liezi suggested, there would be an issue of whether the Federation Seedlings should participate...

If they participated, then the Federation Seedlings would definitely have to fight with each other for the Hyacinthus Tree leaf, and it would be inevitable that deaths and injuries would result. After all, not many would give up on this valuable opportunity. Therefore, once the real battle began, the distance between the Federation and the complex web of factions under Feng Qiuran would grow continuously, despite it being a fair and reasonable battle.

However, if the Federation Seedlings weren’t allowed to participate, this differential treatment would still widen the gap between them. At the same time, even if Feng Qiuran didn’t choose to let the disciples battle it out, she would still be faced with a similar dilemma. Giving the leaf to anyone amongst the Federation Seedlings would cause unhappiness amongst the cultivators under her lead and vice versa.

According to Mie Liezi’s plan, regardless of how this issue was handled, conflict would arise between Feng Qiuran and the Federation. Then, if a further push were given, it would definitely result in the switching of alliances amongst the currently unhappy cultivators under Feng Qiuran’s lead right now!

That was a sinister plot!

From the beginning, his disagreement towards welcoming the second batch of Federation Seedlings, and his opinion that the Hyacinthus Tree leaf was meaningless, were all to set the stage so that he could make the proposal for the battle!

After all, if Feng Qiuran was so adamant at preserving the tradition, she couldn't object to the suggested method of distributing the leaf. Through this, it also gave Daoist You Ran the autonomy of choice. Mie Liezi believed that even if Feng Qiuran were to see the problem in his proposal, it would be difficult for her to go against it.

At the same time, he had made preparations for what to come.

In reality, even though Feng Qiuran appeared indecisive and slightly weak, she wasn't stupid. After she thought about it, she retracted her gaze, apparently realizing the traps in Mie Liezi's proposal. She was about to speak when Daoist You Ran laughed and began speaking while nodding his head.

"This is indeed a good suggestion. I agree!"

Feng Qiuran fell silent, an awful expression on her face upon hearing Daoist You Ran's words. She had been too laid back in terms of how she handled the matter today. In addition, it was possible that Mie Liezi and Daoist You Ran had secretly collaborated with each other to make her helpless.

At the same time, the more one thought about this matter, the more frightening it seemed. The significance of everything deepened once it became confirmed that the two of them had reached a consensus regarding the matter and that it wasn't a spontaneous decision made by Daoist You Ran himself.

All these thoughts were darting about Feng Qiuran's mind. She knew that she needed to find a way out of this situation as soon as possible. If not, once everything went according to Mie Liezi's proposal, she would completely lose all say.

Furthermore, she still didn't believe that Daoist You Ran would suddenly choose a side after being a neutral party all these years!

With that thought, a chilly look flashed across Feng Qiuran's eyes. She raised her right hand and hit the handle of the seat beside her. As a loud sound was produced as the chair broke apart. She stood up, with anger and pain in her eyes.

"Mie Liezi, You Ran, the main Dao Palace has been sealed now, leaving the Patriarchs either in hibernation or missing. The three of us have the huge responsibility to rebuild the inner sect disciples of the Dao Palace, and this is not the time to go our separate ways!"

"Mie Liezi, what intentions do you have by mentioning the three lineages all the time?"

"There is only one lineage, instead of three, in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. There is also only one Vast Expanse Dao Palace! Mie Liezi, are you trying to establish a lineage by yourself?" Feng Qiuran let out a cold tone and a desire to kill in her eyes that was rarely seen. That was especially so due to the agitated and angry look in her eyes, which made her killing intent carry a meaning of anger and pain!

You Ran was shocked as he looked at Feng Qiuran without saying anything. Mie Liezi also didn't seem to have expected Feng Qiuran to pick on his mention of the three lineages and was now thrown into a bad

light. With an awful expression on his face, he was about to speak, but Feng Qiuran didn't give him the chance to, as her agitated voice was heard once again.

"There is no need to distribute the Hyacinthus Tree leaves equally amongst the so-called three lineages. We are all members of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace, and we will each assign two hundred Core Formation realm disciples, totaling six hundred of them, and let them go through a trial to obtain the three leaves. In addition, no deaths are allowed in the Dao Palace. Therefore, the trial must take place in the Endless Possibilities Array Formation!"

"Daoist You Ran, what do you think of that?" As Feng Qiuran spoke, she turned towards Daoist You Ran.

"This... I agree. Ah, both your proposals are feasible, and I am agreeable with either of them." With a bitter laugh, Daoist You Ran nodded and agreed. At the same time, he even tried to calm things down between Feng Qiuran and Mie Liezi.

Mie Liezi, on the other hand, looked deeply into Feng Qiuran's eyes. He realized that he had made a mistake this time, especially as he needed to avoid being seen as divisive and wanting to strike out on his own. After a moment of silence, Mie Liezi snorted and didn't speak, silently agreeing to Feng Qiuran's proposal!

Chapter 552: Each Making Their Own Preparations!

Even though she managed to resolve Mie Liezi's proposal, Feng Qiuran was still troubled. In reality, even if everything went according to her proposal, it was still extremely disadvantageous to her.

However, she had no other choice. If Mie Liezi's proposal were adopted, there would basically be no way out. Therefore, her current proposal of having six hundred people battle it out was the best that she could think of within the short period of time.

As such, thoughts continuously ran through her mind as she tried to analyze the advantages and disadvantages. She was also thinking about whether there were better ways to influence this matter to a state that would be beneficial for her.

However, it was clear that Mie Liezi wouldn't give Feng Qiuran the time to ponder over it. As he snorted, he diverted the topic away from the Hyacinthus Tree leaves, and dived into the second matter to be discussed!

"I'm still against the second batch of Federation Seedlings. Those Federation Seedlings don't have much value in terms of capability or other qualities. Their presence in the Dao Palace is simply a waste of our already limited resources!"

"Those resources are sufficient for us to cultivate disciples who are even more capable than them!" Mie Liezi didn't mince his words. However, Feng Qiuran couldn't agree with that, and she spoke as she laughed coldly.

"The fact that the Federation Seedlings all managed to improve in such a short period of time implies that they all have great potential. At the same time, the population of the Federation is bigger. Even though they have just begun to cultivate, they will definitely grow to a state that will benefit us in no

time. Furthermore, since this matter has long been decided, no changes are allowed. The second batch of Federation Seedlings must come as agreed!”

“Feng Qiuran!” Mie Liezi stood up slowly, his Soul Conduit realm cultivation suddenly being unleashed. A look of hostility appeared in his eyes, and he seemed like he would attack her if he heard something that he didn’t agree with.

Feng Qiuran may have a soft character, but there was no giving way this time as it involved plans that had been decided. After all, unlike previously, this didn’t just involve setting up an obstacle for the alliance between her and the Federation. Instead, this involved breaking the alliance. As such, her cultivation was similarly unleashed, and her aura was emanated as a chilly look appeared in her eyes.

Seeing that both of them were so hot-headed, Daoist You Ran stood up and went between the two, laughing bitterly while shaking his head.

“Don’t fight anymore, the both of you. Junior Sister Qiuran, how about this? If you have such a good opinion of the Federation, why don’t we see how they perform in the trial this time?”

“We have already decided that a total of six hundred people will participate in the trial this time. Even though only Core Formation realm cultivators are eligible, I remember that there are also some Core Formation realm cultivators amongst the Federation Seedlings. Therefore, let’s allow them to participate as well. If someone eventually manages to obtain the identity token, it would mean that they indeed have some value. Then, we can agree to let the second batch of Federation Seedlings come!”

“However, if they are unable to obtain it... Junior Sister Qiuran, recently, many have indicated to me their doubts about you. When I think about it occasionally, I also feel that Junior Brother Mie Liezi’s stance is perhaps not wrong.” Hearing Daoist You Ran’s words, Feng Qiuran was shocked. Her heart skipped a beat, and her pupils constricted when she looked towards Daoist You Ran.

From the previous incident, she had already sensed Daoist You Ran leaning towards Mie Liezi. Right now, on this second matter, Daoist You Ran spoke like a peacemaker, but the meaning behind his words were signs that he was siding with Mie Liezi!

Mie Liezi smiled and didn’t speak anymore. Instead, both he and Daoist You Ran looked at Feng Qiuran.

The entire great hall fell into silence. Feng Qiuran felt bitterness in her heart. She wanted to change things but had no ability to do so...

Three days later, a decree that all of the disciples anticipated and were shocked at receiving was announced directly from the main hall.

“A trial will begin seven days later. The top three cultivators will be given a Hyacinthus Tree leaf!”

When the news emerged, a commotion arose amongst numerous disciples. As they discussed amongst themselves, they tried to find out more details. Even the Federation Seedlings went into heated discussion after hearing of the matter. Wang Baole also had his attention on the three tree leaves after realizing that his dried fruit was the fruit of the Hyacinthus Tree.

Therefore, he was immediately tempted after receiving the news from the sect. After that, he opened up the regional group chat to look at the discussions on it, and also contacted Yun Piaozi to ask for further details.

As a native cultivator of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace, and with the relatively impressive background of his, Yun Piaozi knew a lot more than the Federation. If someone else had asked him, he wouldn't have revealed anything. However, since it was Wang Baole who was asking, Yun Piaozi didn't withhold anything and told him everything he knew.

"This time, the three Elders will send out two hundred people each to participate in the trial. The competition will be strong, especially as the trial-takers must be Core Formation realm cultivators at the very least. However, there is no restriction on the level of Core Formation realm cultivation, which is to say that in this trial, there could be early-stage Core Formation realm cultivators or those who have perfected Core Formation realm cultivation!"

Wang Baole raised his eyebrows upon hearing that.

"What is the purpose of this trial, then?"

Yun Piaozi chuckled when he heard the question, before sending another voice transmission.

"There is, of course, no meaning. Most disciples wouldn't stand a chance. Therefore, to a certain extent, this is very unfair. I guess that everything has already been secretly determined, and others are just there to be part of the show.

"However, these are just my guesses. I have also heard that in response to the unfairness, the three Elders have made alternative preparations. As for the details, they would probably only be made known when the trial begins."

Yun Piaozi was only aware of all that. He didn't know of the finer details. Wang Baole even sent a voice transmission to Xie Haiyang to ask about it and received the same answer. Xie Haiyang wasn't unaware of the finer details on how to resolve the unfairness, but he required a hefty payment.

Even though he had given Wang Baole a great discount on account of them having numerous transactions, Wang Baole still felt that Xie Haiyang was too opportunistic and directly rejected his offer.

"Fifty thousand battle credits for a piece of news... Extortion!" Wang Baole mumbled as he put down the voice transmission ring. He couldn't bear to buy it, as, after all, everyone would know if they simply waited for a maximum of seven more days.

Even though there were advantages to knowing about it in advance, Wang Baole still felt that it wasn't worth it the more he thought about it. Therefore, he refocused his attention on Feng Qiuran, thinking about whether he should pay her a visit. After all, his current batch of Federation Seedlings could be considered to be under her lead. He was also a Core Formation realm cultivator and would probably have a place amongst the two hundred people.

While Wang Baole was deep in thought, Feng Qiuran was in her cave abode, immersed in her low spirits. She had been unhappy for the past few days, as the alliance between Daoist You Ran and Mie Liezi this time had left her helpless in retaliating. After analyzing the matter in detail, she realized that Mie Liezi had the upper hand throughout the entire negotiation.

Right now, there was a huge problem before her. If she wanted to maintain the alliance with the Federation, one of the Federation disciples had to receive a Hyacinthus Tree leaf.

However, there were two challenges to accomplishing this. The first was that more unhappiness might arise in the people under her lead, which would increase their disloyalty towards her. That was still a secondary problem, as the second, and most important point is that... For the Federation to receive the leaf, it was simply too difficult.

Even though she was optimistic about the Federation's capabilities, she was optimistic about its future, not its present. In reality, she also didn't think that, at this stage, the Federation cultivators were more capable than the Vast Expanse Dao Palace cultivators. Under her judgment, it was impossible to emerge in the top three in the six hundred people trial!

After all, there were numerous personal disciples amongst them. Their potential and brilliance, when fully supported by the Vast Expanse Dao Palace, were things that the Federation couldn't compete against.

Therefore, in order to accomplish the second point, there was a need to make her personal disciples give up... Thinking of that, she sighed and looked towards the door of her cave abode. Before long, greetings were heard outside her cave abode, and two cultivators entered.

The duo were youths, one as good looking as a lady. When he stood there, he let out an elegant and gentle demeanor. If he held a fan in his hands, he would seem like a Young Master. After entering the cave abode, he greeted Feng Qiuran with cupped fists.

"Disciple Xu Ming greets Master."

"Disciple Lu Yun greets Master!" The other person looked older and clearly stronger in terms of physique. There was a look of determination in his eyes, like a hill. Even his voice was powerful.

Looking at both of them, a smile finally appeared on Feng Qiuran's face. Both of them were the disciples that she looked upon most favorably, and they were also well-known Core Formation realm disciples in the Dao Palace!

They could be considered the juniors she had the highest hopes of in her entire line!

"Ming'er and Yun'er, I have a task that I need both of you to complete!"

Chapter 553: Li Xingwen and Feng Qiuran!

The moment they heard Feng Qiuran's words, Xu Ming and Lu Yun both put on a serious expression as they stood and waited for their master to give instructions.

Feng Qiuran felt heartened looking at the facial expressions of the two disciples that she valued most. After a brief moment of silence, she began to speak.

"Both of you should have heard of the trial that will take place seven days later by now. I want the two of you to emerge in the top three regardless of anything in this trial!"

“One of the positions must be given to a participant of the trial from the Federation at the last moment. I will pay both of you generously for this!” With that, a sharp look appeared in Feng Qiuran’s eyes as she looked at her two disciples.

Xu Ming and Lu Yun remained silent, before cupping their fists and nodding their heads to heed the order.

Even though she noticed that there were no changes in the facial expression of her two personal disciples, Feng Qiuran still sensed the torrent of emotions in both of them. She also knew that this request was unreasonable, but she didn’t have any other way out. Therefore, she began to speak softly with a gentle expression on her face.

“I promise to provide a boost to the person who gives up on their position so that when his cultivation is in the process of breaking through to the Nascent Soul realm, he will reach mid-stage Nascent Soul realm immediately!”

Hearing that, Xu Ming and Lu Yun looked surprised, and a glow could be seen in their eyes. Previously, they were indeed unwilling to fulfill their master’s request, but if they could be compensated in this manner, they were motivated.

“Master, what if there is only one position?” Lu Yun suddenly spoke.

“One is fine as well, but that is the bare minimum!” After a moment of silence, Feng Qiuran answered.

“Master, if we want to enter the top three in this trial, both of us need to put in our utmost effort. Therefore... It’s not possible for us to look after the Federation cultivators. If we don’t need to consider the Federation cultivators and could fight for it with our full effort, it is more likely that we would succeed. Furthermore, we could, at the very least, give the Hyacinthus Tree leaf to someone from the Federation when the trial ends and let that person go to the Worship Palace Pavilion.” After thinking about it, Xu Ming looked towards Feng Qiuran.

Feng Qiuran frowned and had wanted to reply. However, after thinking about it, she also realized that if she were too strong-willed regarding this matter, it would indeed increase the difficulty of the task significantly. After all, they had to look after the Federation cultivators and had to stay vigilant of the strong competitors. Furthermore, the rules of this trial were unique. Therefore, after thinking it through, she understood that she had been too idealistic.

As such, after considering the situation, she felt that even if the Federation didn’t emerge in the top three and didn’t fulfill Mie Liezi’s proposed idea, she only needed to give the Federation a Hyacinthus Tree leaf in the end, which could be taken as having met the requirements to a certain extent. The worst that could happen was that she needed to continue fighting it out with Mie Liezi...

At the same time, if the Federation disciples could enter the Worship Palace Pavilion with the Hyacinthus Tree leaf after the trial and eventually attain the status of a true Dao Palace disciple, it would help her plan to move things forward significantly. Until then, many things could change, and it didn’t mean that she had to contend with Mie Liezi’s plans!

With that thought, Feng Qiuran knew that she couldn’t hesitate anymore, she had to make a decision. As such, she gritted her teeth.

“Try your best to look after them. If it’s simply too hard, then both of you are to focus on your task!”

Listening to Feng Qiuran’s words, Lu Yun and Xu Ming heaved a sigh of relief. They didn’t belittle the Federation cultivators, but they didn’t have good impressions of them either. Basically, they felt that they were still a burden, and right now, after hearing their master’s decision, they thought it over and inquired further. They only left respectfully after Feng Qiuran informed both of them of the rules of the trial.

Looking at the back view of her disciples, Feng Qiuran sighed. After thinking about it, she called for her bellboy and made arrangements for him to inform the Federation Seedlings Wang Baole, Zhao Yameng, and Kong Dao to pay her a visit.

Feng Qiuran still valued the Federation Seedlings. That was especially so in terms of their progress in their cultivation. Feng Qiuran had managed to hear of Zhao Yameng’s and Kong Dao’s advancement quickly.

Right now, as Feng Qiuran was calling for Wang Baole and company, Mie Liezi was in his cave abode on the Vast Expanse Dao Palace’s main island. He had called for the only personal disciple of his, Dugu Lin!

“Lin’er, are you prepared for this trial?” Mie Liezi looked at the disciple before him, who was giving off a chilly vibe. A rare look of appreciation appeared in his eyes as he spoke slowly.

“It’s no problem for me to become number one.” Dugu Lin’s gaze remained cold, and his tone calm.

“I don’t want you to become number one. Instead, what I want is that in this trial, there is only one position and no other. Are you able to do that?” Mie Liezi narrowed his eyes as he looked at Dugu Lin.

“Eliminate everyone? I’ll try my best.” Dugu Lin thought about it. There was no change to his calm tone.

“Good. Lin’er, I allow you to unlock the seal of your body at appropriate times during this trial and unleash your full combat power. This should let everyone in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace know that the disciple of Mie Liezi is extremely formidable!” A peculiar look appeared in Mie Liezi’s eyes, one that was filled with anticipation.

“If that is the case, then...” Dugu Lin curled his lips into a chilly smile. He raised his head and looked at Mie Liezi before saying the final four words.

“As you wish, Master.”

A chilly aura that was hidden in his body was about to be unleashed. That, coupled with the sinister smile, made even Mie Liezi appreciate how strong it was. He knew that his disciple was extraordinary. He wasn’t only a rare talent in the cultivation world, a Galactic Dust combat body meant for combat, but he was also extremely intelligent, advancing significantly in his cultivation with just the time of a day. In addition, he was long eligible for a breakthrough into the Nascent Soul realm.

However, he had a great goal of wanting to perfect and build a strong foundation. He depended on his uniqueness as a Galactic Dust combat body and a mystic technique of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace to seal himself. He planned to go past the Nascent Soul realm the moment he achieved a breakthrough and enter the Soul Conduit realm, and then sealing himself again. His goal was the Planet realm after becoming a Spirit Immortal!

From ancient times, those that managed to achieve this goal had all become mighty figures. Mie Liezi also admitted that when he was a Core Formation cultivator that he wouldn't have been able to compare to his disciple even if there were ten of himself. He also knew that with his talent and cultivation, a disciple like him would definitely be sought after by the upper powers of the Eternal Star, had the real Dao Palace not been devastated.

It could be said that Feng Qiuran thought Mie Liezi was confident of his own cultivation. However, in reality, there was another aspect of Mie Liezi's confidence, and it came from this disciple of his!

This disciple was the greatest effort and contribution that he had made for the sect. To him, even if the entire Federation was sacrificed and he were to use the Blood Sea and the spirits to pave the way to success for this disciple of his, it would be worth it.

To him, this was a real talent, while people from the Federation were trash.

Therefore, he planned to let Dugu Lin be the surprise this time around. He would also go all out against Feng Qiuran after this trial. Then, leveraging on the shock experienced by everyone in the sect, he was confident that he would have the power to initiate the destruction and sacrifice of the Federation!

While Mie Liezi was feeling confident and ambitious, Wang Baole, Zhao Yameng, and Kong Dao received Feng Qiuran's orders. They immediately departed the islands they were on and charged towards the main island of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace.

Before long, the trio arrived one after another. They looked at each other, and even though they didn't speak, they could guess what was going on. Therefore, under the lead of the bellboy, they arrived in Feng Qiuran's cave abode. After greeting her and entering the cave abode, they noticed the somewhat tired Feng Qiuran sitting on the higher seat.

"Greetings, Elder Feng!" Wang Baole immediately cupped his fists, and Zhao Yameng and Kong Dao followed suit.

Feng Qiuran didn't speak and simply swept her gaze across the trio. She looked at each of them closely, especially at Wang Baole. If it were some other time, she would have put on a look of appreciation. However, right now, she shook her head. To her, Wang Baole and company were brilliant compared to the ordinary disciples but were a far cry when compared to her two personal disciples.

As she sighed in her heart, Feng Qiuran was somewhat despondent. She momentarily wavered in her decision to form an alliance with the Federation. After a while, she rubbed her forehead and gave up on the thought to encourage them, then she spoke.

"I have called you here to notify you that you will all be representatives from the Federation. Regardless of success and failure in the trial seven days later, I will try to give you a Hyacinthus Tree leaf. I hope that all of you... will do your best. You are dismissed; I'm tired." With that, Feng Qiuran closed her eyes.

Wang Baole and company were surprised, sensing that something was amiss. At the same time, they managed to infer something from her words. She seemed to feel that the three of them couldn't obtain the leaf with their own efforts.

Wang Baole raised his eyebrows and didn't speak. After looking at Zhao Yameng and Kong Dao, they turned to leave. As they turned, Feng Qiuran opened her eyes, looking at their backs as she spoke.

“The results of this trial will determine if the next batch of Federation Seedlings will come... Wang Baole, when you return to the Federation one day, tell Li Xingwen that... I tried my best.” With that, Feng Qiuran closed her eyes. An image of a small yet sturdy figure those years ago appeared in her mind.

Many years later, she still didn't know if her acknowledgment of the Federation was due to the recognition of the Federation's potential or due to the crystal clear figure looking at her...

Chapter 554: Prepare!

As Feng Qiuran's fatigued voice arrived from behind them, Wang Baole and company stopped in their tracks, shocked by her words. They looked at each other and remained silent. After turning and cupping his fists again, Wang Baole suddenly spoke.

“Elder Feng, can you please tell us the rules of the trial so that the three of us can make preparations?”

Feng Qiuran didn't say anything, as she felt that there was no meaning regardless of what she said. She waved her hand to signal the three of them to leave. Wang Baole wanted to say something but stopped himself. In the end, he didn't continue to speak and turned to leave Feng Qiuran's cave abode.

Having seen the trio take their leave, the emotional and mental fatigue felt by Feng Qiuran could no longer be hidden. It showed visibly on her body, especially on her face. Even though she wasn't feeling completely hopeless, she had already done everything that she could, with the most important being sending her two personal disciples to obtain the Hyacinthus Tree leaf. However, that was her limit.

Unless she decided to completely cut ties with Mie Liezi through a battle, she had no other ideas on how to handle the situation. However, even if she really were to fight it out, Mie Liezi and Daoist You Ran's relationship, which was evident through this incident, made Feng Qiuran realize that there was no way she could turn the situation around anymore.

“Everything depends on how fate plays out...” Feng Qiuran mumbled. She knew that even though her two personal disciples were outstanding individuals, matters like these leveraged heavily on luck as well. She had even mentally prepared herself for the possibility of failure. Even if they didn't fail, it was unknown whether this could allow her to get out of the difficult situation Mie Liezi had put her in.

Thoughts like these made Feng Qiuran extremely frustrated, and her fatigue compounded as a result. This resulted in her slightly regretting the decision she made those years ago, and for persevering all these years.

There's no way out... Unless the three of them can make it to the top three through their own capabilities, obtaining a top position in the trial with integrity and earning a Hyacinthus Tree leaf with the entire Vast Expanse Dao Palace as witness... However, with their capabilities, how is it possible that they'll emerge the top amongst the six hundred people? Unless a miracle happens... Feng Qiuran shut her eyes. She knew that she was daydreaming.

As Feng Qiuran was feeling doubtful about herself and towards the alliance with the Federation, Wang Baole and company, who had left the cave abode, didn't split up. Instead, with Wang Baole's invitation, the three of them charged towards Wang Baole's Green Fire Island. Along the way, they were each deep

in thought and didn't speak. When they reached Wang Baole's cave abode on Green Fire Island, a glow flashed across Kong Dao's eyes. He broke the silence first.

"There is trouble. Clearly, Elder Feng can no longer sustain the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. While this was what the Federation predicted, they must never have expected that it would happen so quickly!"

"Furthermore, this trial seems to be an act of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace deliberately picking on us. If we don't manage to obtain a position, they will not allow the second batch of Federation Seedlings to enter!" Kong Dao was solemn, his mood heavily influenced by this matter.

"In reality, I have sensed that something wasn't right the last time I teleported cultivation techniques back to the Federation. The Vast Expanse Dao Palace teleportation array formation seemed to be equipped with some sort of algorithm such that it would inspect the cultivation techniques that we teleport back. Put simply, it allowed the cultivation technique to be sent back, but it didn't allow other information that is unrelated to the cultivation technique!" Zhao Yameng looked calm as she spoke, informing Wang Baole and Kong Dao of what she had been investigating these days.

"There's such a thing as well?" Kong Dao had an awful expression on his face as he looked towards Wang Baole, waiting for him to make a decision. After all, when they were on Mars, Wang Baole was Kong Dao's superior. He was used to listening to Wang Baole's commands. Right here, Wang Baole was also the leader, and as such, regardless of whether it was him or Zhao Yameng, they were both waiting for Wang Baole to determine a plan of action.

Wang Baole looked solemn as well. In reality, for the past year, his understanding of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace had grown deeper than the other Federation disciples. He had long realized that Feng Qiuran was somewhat indecisive towards the Federation Seedlings, being firm some times but also wavering occasionally. On the one hand, this was because of the different choices made by the cultivators under Feng Qiuran's lead, and on the other, it was because Mie Liezi was another strong force!

It must be mentioned that Mie Liezi's power gained the recognition of many Vast Expanse Dao Palace disciples, including disciples of both Feng Qiuran and Daoist You Ran. There were some disciples under them that gradually agreed with Mie Liezi. The idea that the Vast Expanse Dao Palace was supreme was slowly becoming mainstream.

That made Mie Liezi's power slowly but steadily increase, such that it had surpassed that of Feng Qiuran's to become the only voice of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. It was all a matter of time before that happened, and that was also a situation that the Federation had anticipated. As such, the Federation had sent the current batch of Federation Seedlings to support Feng Qiuran.

However, it seems that there was insufficient time. The purpose and effect of the support couldn't be seen yet, but this crisis had already started to unfold. Once the three of them failed in obtaining a position in the trial, it would mean that there would likely not be the next batch of Federation Seedlings.

That wasn't the most serious consequence. The worst consequence was that once Mie Liezi became the main authority in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace, what would likely happen next would be... a war between the Vast Expanse Dao Palace and the Federation!

Wang Baole thought about this possibility, and so did Kong Dao and Zhao Yameng. Therefore, anxiety was clear in their eyes. However, they had no solutions and could only look towards Wang Baole.

“Since that is the case... The three of us shall just emerge in the top three and obtain a position in the trial! This is the most direct solution!” After a moment of silence, a look of determination appeared in Wang Baole’s eyes, along with a chilly glow as he uttered each word. Even a chilly aura could be sensed from his tone, and that made both Zhao Yameng and Kong Dao’s breathing quicken. They revealed a look of determination in their eyes.

“It’s a pity that Elder Feng didn’t reveal the rules of the trial to us... In the days to come, we need to make use of the relations of the Federation Seedlings to find out more about it!”

“Yameng, Kong Dao, both of you must make ample preparations in the next few days. This time... let’s see if we can shock the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. Additionally, I want to know whether those elites of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace are indeed better than us Federation disciples!” With that, Wang Baole grew even more competitive. His words made Kong Dao and Zhao Yameng more assured. Therefore, after discussing the details, Kong Dao and Zhao Yameng left.

When the two of them had left, Wang Baole thought about matters and contacted Xie Haiyang. He planned to spend battle credits in exchange for information regarding the rules of the trial. However, Xie Haiyang didn’t pick up.

Wang Baole frowned. After a while, when he noticed that Xie Haiyang had not replied, he decided to not waste any more time. He immediately decided to go into seclusion, maintaining his cultivation at an optimal level while making preparations specifically for the trial.

He first tidied up his Dharmic Armaments. Of them, the tri-colored flying sword and a copper coin Runic Soldier that he could control were the most powerful Dharmic Armaments he had. Even though they weren’t true ninth-grade Dharmic Armaments according to definition, they were close.

Other than that, amongst his eighth-grade Dharmic Armaments, other than the ribbon that appeared like an eighth-grade Dharmic Armament, there were ten treasures that could only be used once. Wang Baole also had some seventh-grade Dharmic Armaments. Regardless of whether they were the megaphone or the flying sword and saber that he had refined, they could all be considered Dharmic treasures for daily use.

What’s next are the puppets... However, there isn’t enough time, and the refinement materials needed are simply too expensive. There is also a low success rate... If not, if the puppets could be upgraded to seventh-grade Dharmic Armaments, they would definitely help significantly in boosting my combat capabilities. Wang Baole shook his head as he arranged the Dharmic Armaments. Then, he sat down with crossed legs and began thinking about his spells.

Thearch Armor, which he had cultivated, could be used as his trump card. However, he didn’t know the rules of the trial, and even if the trial permitted killing, they would never allow large scale deaths to happen. At the same time, there would definitely be spectators watching the trial, and that restricted him, making it difficult to unleash the power of Thearch Armor fully.

“There’s also the Lightning Avatar...” Wang Baole mumbled and thought about his Dark Art and physical power. However, he still didn’t feel confident. He shut his eyes and thought about it, and finally, a cold glow flashed across his face!

Alternatively, should I equip Thearch Armor with a certain level of combat power using the method of Flame Snatch, so that it would be full-proof in the trial? With that thought, Wang Baole stood up immediately. He left his cave abode and grabbed onto the donkey, stuffing it in his storage bag before charging towards the Sea of Fire.

Refining Thearch Armor using the method of Flame Snatch required some killing to occur... Since there was no one to kill now, Wang Baole could only enter the Sea of Fire to search for beasts he could kill in order to use the Flame Snatch on Thearch Armor!

Chapter 555: Killing the Demonic Armor!

There are still six days left, and I must be fast! Wang Baole, who was in the Sea of Fire, made some estimations and realized that there wasn't much time left for him. In addition, the trial that was to happen six days later was extremely important, affecting the alliance between the Federation and the Vast Expanse Dao Palace, or in other words, whether a battle would happen between both sides!

In reality, the sly old foxes in the Federation had long analyzed and even simulated the possible battle between the Federation and the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. Even though the Federation would definitely be defeated, if they could delay the start of the battle, the chances of the Federation would increase with every ten years.

To a certain extent, it might be possible that the battle couldn't happen if it were sufficiently delayed. After all, the process of infiltration involved paying a price. If the price to pay were extremely large, then even if Feng Qiuran were to be weak in terms of power then, she would also make use of the chance to express her stance against it, in order to regain power.

These thoughts were either secretly made known to Wang Baole by Li Xingwen before he entered the Vast Expanse Dao Palace, or concluded by Wang Baole himself after some analysis. As those thoughts circled around his head, he had already arrived in the Sea of Fire and was continuing his advance.

As he advanced, the diamond-shaped spot formed from Thearch Armor on Wang Baole's heart was shimmering and being released. That awakened Wang Baole's meridians, with the spot forming a continuity with his Spirit Qi to be released from his body. Soon, the outline of a huge man was formed outside his body.

The outline was completely formed by the meridians that formed a continuity with the Spirit Qi. It was translucent and would be difficult to notice if one didn't take a close look, especially in the Sea of Fire.

After that, a flash appeared across Wang Baole's eyes. With the first round of activation and transformation of Thearch Armor, a powerful force could be felt in his body, as if he had donned on an indestructible armor. It gave him the illusion that he could destroy every life form.

What's next is to find all the beasts I can kill and kill them using Flame Snatch. After that, I will absorb their Mythical Qi to form the store of energy for my Flame Snatch Thearch Armor! Wang Baole narrowed his eyes, raising and waving his right arm as he took the donkey out of his storage bag.

"Scram, find all life forms except for that of cultivators in the Sea of Fire!" Even before the donkey could take a clear look at its surroundings, it heard Wang Baole's voice. Due to the presence of Thearch Armor,

his voice was somewhat loud and authoritative. The donkey shuddered, and its eyes widened after it took a clear look at Wang Baole.

Others couldn't see the translucent Thearch Armor clearly, but the donkey, being near and possessing unique abilities, couldn't only get a clear look but could also instinctively sense a frightening aura emanating from Wang Baole's Thearch Armor that made it shiver.

Even though it was weak and was hidden deeply, the donkey could still sense it instinctively. Therefore, it responded quickly, and hurriedly nodded its head without hesitation in front of Wang Baole. It immediately began to check its surroundings diligently, even sniffing around with its nose. It seemed to be able to sense the aura in the Sea of Fire, and soon, its eyes lit up and it leaped forward.

The donkey was so fast that Wang Baole was surprised. He thought to himself that either the donkey had some dog genes, or one of its parents was a dog, resulting in it having such a sensitive nose and the habit of wiggling its tail.

As Wang Baole curiously thought about the donkey's parents, the donkey had already brought Wang Baole to an undersea hill. Shriek screams could be heard the moment they neared, and immediately, three Inferno Rats rushed out and escaped.

Without waiting for the donkey to chase after them, a flash appeared across Wang Baole's eyes as he swiftly turned and charged full speed ahead, forming waves in the Sea of Fire as he pursued the three Inferno Rats. No matter how hard the Inferno Rats tried to struggle and escape, they couldn't succeed and were instantly caught by Wang Baole as he grabbed them with his right hand.

He was so fast that, in the blink of an eye, there was an Inferno Rat caught in his large hand as he chanted the words 'Flame Snatch' in his mind.

The moment he chanted those two words, a bloody glow emerged from his body, accumulating in his right hand and enveloping the Inferno Rat. The Inferno Rat trembled violently as it tried to make a sound. However, during the process of it opening its mouth, its body could be seen visibly withering.

Even though it managed to open its mouth eventually, it lost the strength to make any noise. Its flesh and blood were being eroded, its spirit and everything else instantly becoming part of the red glow. The red glow carried a sense of greed as it continued to spread swiftly towards the other two Inferno Rats.

The other two Inferno Rats were obviously frightened as they escaped with all their might. However, they were still unable to escape from the red glow's pursuit and were quickly enveloped by it. When the red glow returned to Wang Baole, the donkey realized with shock that what remained of the two Inferno Rats were just some discolored skin and hair...

The red glow integrated into Thearch Armor, which was outside Wang Baole's body, causing traces of blood to appear in its originally translucent form. It no longer looked translucent, but bizarre, when accompanied by the blood traces!

"Continue!" Wang Baole closed his eyes, sending a voice transmission to the donkey after sensing the Flame Snatch Thearch Armor.

The voice sounded even more frightening to the donkey than before. It hurriedly nodded its head, as if worried that Wang Baole would swallow it if it didn't manage to find enough Inferno Rats. Therefore, it

clearly became a maniac as it searched for more Inferno Rats furiously, its eyes turning red and its nose tired.

This continued and days passed. Wang Baole's killings continued, and as Inferno Rats were continuously killed by his Flame Snatch technique, his Thearch Armor grew increasingly redder. At the same time, as the Flame Snatch was overbearing, Wang Baole didn't care whether the Inferno Rats contained beast cores. After all, the Flame Snatch technique swallowed all forms of energy, so that even if there were a beast core, it would be destroyed completely.

As the killing continued and his Thearch Armor grew red, a frightening aura emanated gradually from it. The aura was boosted through the killing of numerous Inferno Rats, such that in the Sea of Fire, Wang Baole's speed and combat power grew increasingly.

In the end, the donkey was scared stiff. The more they proceeded, the less Wang Baole spoke. The overpowering aura and madness emerging from him felt foreign to the donkey. If not for the connection between their spirits, it would have thought that its daddy was someone else.

As Wang Baole continued the snatch, there were soon only two days until the trial was to begin. In the days that passed, the entire Dao Palace was in discussion regarding the trial, injecting the whole place with a never before seen level of excitement. Numerous outer island disciples also gathered, and the cross-city exchanges between the disciples also grew more frequent.

It seemed that in the few days that had passed, the candidates of the trial had been announced, and those who were involved began making detailed preparations for the trial. That was the case for Zhao Yameng and Kong Dao as well, but even though the Federation Seedlings came to know about the importance of the matter and tried their hardest to search for clues, they still didn't manage to find out much.

Two days soon passed. On the night before the trial was to begin, a loud boom emerged from a region deep within the Sea of Fire. Even though the sound was underground, it spread in all directions, causing the Sea of Fire to churn violently. The donkey rushed out with all its might in response to this powerful force being released. When it felt that it was a safe distance away from it, it turned and looked anxiously behind it.

In the direction it was looking, the red glow was thousands of feet tall as the loud boom reverberated. Painful screams and wails emerged from it, taking a long time before they quieted down. The red glow swiftly contracted, and a figure emerged from it!

The figure had its hair flying in the wind and was expressionless with a chilly glow evident in his eyes. Outside its body, the outline of a red-colored, seventy-foot-tall figure existed. The outline was very clear, as if made up of uncountable meridians gathered together. It was extremely frightening, and a scary force spread from it.

This scene was as if a divine being had arrived.

It was Wang Baole, who had unleashed his Flame Snatch Thearch Armor!

The corpse of a fifty-foot-tall Inferno Rat was being dragged by Thearch Armor's right hand. There was a black horn on the corpse's head, such that even though it had died, a frightening aura was still given off

its body. To the donkey, it was clear that it was an aura from a creature that was beyond the late-stage Core Formation realm, close to that of reaching perfection!

That made the donkey shudder, and what made it even more frightened was that, as Wang Baole approached, the corpse could be seen visibly withering. When Wang Baole reached in front of the donkey, there was only skin and hair remaining on the Inferno Rat's corpse. All its flesh and energies was turned into a squirming pool of blood, wriggling into Wang Baole's Thearch Armor like a fluid!

"Let's go, it's time to return."

Chapter 556: The Five Great Personal Disciples!

The donkey trembled as it stared at Wang Baole. It was an instinctive, primal fear. Its "daddy" who stood before it was a complete stranger. The presence he exuded was akin to a sea of blood, and a single word from the approaching Wang Baole struck terror in the donkey's heart. It shuddered, then sprawled onto the ground limply, afraid to move even an inch.

Wang Baole fell silent at the sight. He was unsure how many Inferno Rats he had massacred in the past few days before he had reached the first tier in the Flame Snatch Thearch Armor inheritance. He had accumulated a startling quantity of nourishment for his armor. He had also gained a deeper understanding of this Flame Snatch Thearch Armor inheritance that had been partly self-invented and partly inherited.

It was clear that as the killings grew and as he continued nourishing his armor, the streak hidden deep inside him became magnified multi-fold. It began to exude from his person and form a part of his main personality. During his cultivation of the Flame Snatch Thearch Armor inheritance, his emotions lost their usual dynamic qualities. He might not have become more distant, but he was now filled with a cold harshness.

He had changed to the point where the donkey was now trembling and staring at him with fear. All of a sudden, Wang Baole felt slightly dazed. Silently, with a wave of his right hand, which was encased in his armor, the large Inferno Rat that he had been dragging turned into dust and fell into the Sea of Fire. Wang Baole's raised right hand tightened into a fist. The Flame Snatch Thearch Armor encasing his body began to shine with a bright crimson light before shrinking rapidly.

From afar, it seemed as if Wang Baole's armor had dismantled itself and reformed into veins of meridians formed from Spirit Qi and stained blood red. The meridians wormed back inside Wang Baole's body, gathered at his heart and formed a blood-colored, diamond-shaped patch.

Wang Baole's true physical body reappeared before the donkey as the armor disappeared. The donkey stopped shivering. It raised its head, its eyes filled with surprise and joy. It flew over to Wang Baole's side, and its head nuzzled Wang Baole's leg. The expression on its face was that of familiar friendliness.

Wang Baole patted the donkey's head. With the withdrawal of the Flame Snatch Thearch Armor, he instinctively pushed down the violence and bloodlust inside him as he normally did, and a smile surfaced on his face.

“Alright, Scram. Let’s go home!” As he spoke, Wang Baole marched forward. The donkey brayed and followed him hastily. Man and donkey raced speedily through the Sea of Fire, emerging out from the sea in the middle of the night, and headed back to Green Fire Island!

When they returned, Wang Baole sat down cross-legged inside his cave abode and began to condition himself and his level of cultivation, so that both his mental state and his Spirit Qi remained at peak condition. He allowed his mind to settle as he waited for the day of the trial to arrive.

The night passed in silence.

The next morning, as soon as the sun rose, a series of bells that surrounded the main Vast Expanse Dao Palace island began to ring. The ringing spread outwards and echoed in the air. It was clearly coming from some incredible artifact. The sound of the bells spread far and wide, reaching across almost half of the entire sword handle. The ringing grew fainter as it spread further into the distance. Green Fire Island was situated quite near the main island though, which was why Wang Baole could hear it clearly as he sat in meditation in his cave abode.

His shut eyes began to open gradually as the bells rang. They flashed. As Wang Baole got to his feet and left the cave abode, this light began to gradually fade from his eyes, and he gave a lazy yell.

“Scram, come over here. Your daddy’s going to bring you out to play.”

The donkey seemed unwilling to comply. However, it dared not disobey Wang Baole and ran over with its head drooping. Before it could bray, Wang Baole grabbed it and threw it into his storage bag. Then, with a single whirl, he transformed into a rainbow and shot towards the main Vast Expanse Dao Palace island like a lightning bolt.

Wang Baole wasn’t the only one racing towards the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. Participants from the islands all around the main island had begun their journey as soon as they had heard the bells. Many more cultivators who weren’t qualified to participate were also headed towards the main island. They didn’t wish to miss out on such a grand event.

Everyone was energized and excited, and many formed teams, sending one another voice transmissions as they traveled. They were clearly discussing the upcoming trial.

More and more people gathered at the public square at the mountaintop in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. There were hundreds of participants gathered on the public square and spectating cultivators in the outer areas that numbered many times more than participants. They were all engaged in fierce discussion. However, the participants were clearly more controlled in their behavior, as they were being watched by tens of thousands of eyes at the moment, and anything they did stood out.

The spectators around them had no such worries. That was why they continued with their loud, excited discussions. Wang Baole could hear the roar of human voices as soon as he approached the main Vast Expanse Dao Palace island.

“I wonder if Dugu Lin will be in the top three this time!”

“I don’t know about Dugu Lin, but I have faith that Senior Brother Xu Ming will definitely be in the top three!”

“Who cares about Xu Ming. My Eldest Senior Brother Zhou Chudao can crush Xu Ming and Lu Yun with a single finger!” The sounds of heated debates rose in the air. Wang Baole watched from afar and didn’t pay them much attention. He turned and raced straight for the public square on the mountain.

Seventy to eighty percent of all participants had already arrived. There were nearly five hundred of them, and they were neatly segregated into their respective factions—under Mie Liezi, Feng Qiuran, and You Ran. Each faction had their own areas. Wang Baole took one look, walked straight towards Feng Qiuran’s faction, and joined that group of cultivators.

His arrival didn’t attract the attention of too many people, and even if someone did see him arrive, they only spared him a glance.

Wang Baole wasn’t bothered. He found somewhere to stand, then began to look around. He soon saw Kong Dao. Their eyes met, and they were about to walk towards each other.

It was then that everyone around them began gasping and shouting. Cheers rose around them outside and in the public square. They came from Mie Liezi’s faction.

“Our eldest senior brother is back!”

“Greetings to Eldest Senior Brother Dugu Lin!”

Someone began to approach in the air, amidst the cheering. He was dressed in black robes, his black hair drifted in the wind, and his eyes were cold like ice. Amidst the crowd’s cheers, he walked, expressionless, towards Mie Liezi’s faction. As he walked past cultivators from Mie Liezi’s faction, their eyes shone with awe and fervor.

Elder Mie Liezi’s only personal disciple... Dugu Lin! Wang Baole narrowed his eyes. This was his second time seeing the other cultivator. As he assessed his own fighting capabilities against the latter, Kong Dao arrived and stood beside him.

“Baole, I didn’t manage to find anything regarding the rules of the trial,” Kong Dao whispered as soon as he came close. Wang Baole nodded. He had expected that. The only pity he felt was for Xie Haiyang’s sudden disappearance. He didn’t know what happened to the latter, but he hadn’t received any response from Xie Haiyang.

Perhaps Xie Haiyang couldn’t reveal anything due to certain reasons? Wang Baole thought as cheers began to resound around him once more. He heard multiple greetings to Senior Brother Xu and Senior Brother Lu. Wang Baole raised his head. He not only managed to guess who they were, but he also saw them!

They were the effeminately beautiful Xu Ming and the well-built Lu Yun. These two were Feng Qiuran’s personal disciples, and they were the true prodigies of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. They might even be considered princes. They were different from the cold and distant Dugu Lin, greeting the crowd with faint smiles on their faces, and nodding as they walked towards Feng Qiuran’s faction. That invited another round of passion infused cheers.

Wang Baole and Kong Dao were like mere weeds next to them. Their presence was faint, and they seemed to serve as wallpaper for the two princes. Following Dugu Lin, Xu Ming, and Lu Yun’s arrivals,

many more cultivators began to arrive as well. Zhao Yameng appeared in the distant horizon. She noticed Wang Baole and Kong Dao and approached them swiftly, landing next to them.

As the only three cultivators representing the Federation, they managed to draw the attention of some people as they stood together. One of those was Yun Piaozi.

As a member of You Ran's faction, he smiled at Wang Baole after spotting him in the distance, his eyes brimmed with encouragement. Wang Baole saw that and smiled and nodded in return. He was about to send a voice transmission to the other cultivator and ask if he had received any news when everyone began to cheer again. The new arrivals were a man and a woman. They were You Ran's personal disciples...

Zhou Chudao and Huang Yunshan!

Besides being You Ran's disciples, they were also Dao partners. There was a fine story about the couple that circulated in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. It spoke of how the male counterpart had mediocre looks and looked like a peasant while the female counterpart's beauty dazzled like the bright allure of a poppy. They clearly didn't look like a couple when they stood and walked next to each other. Dugu Lin, who had his eyes shut all along even when Lu Yun and Xu Ming had arrived, suddenly opened his eyes. He stared at Zhou Chudao, and a flicker of rivalry flashed in his deep, unfathomable eyes.

It seemed that, save Zhou Chudao, he saw everyone else around him as... trash that wouldn't even withstand a single blow from him!

Chapter 557: Let's Begin!

Zhou Chudao noticed Dugu Lin's stare. He grimaced slightly and sighed secretly. If not for his master's insistence that he participated in this trial, he wouldn't have done so.

Why am I inflicting this on myself... Zhou Chudao shook his head. He resembled a peasant. With a hump on his back, he looked even more ordinary. His Dao partner, Huang Yunshan, on the other hand, dazzled like a star. Her alluring beauty blinded as she batted her eyes. She was seductive without planning to be, causing many cultivators' hearts to race. They couldn't help themselves. Huang Yunshan not only possessed a devilishly beautiful face, but she also had an extremely alluring figure. Her slim waist swayed as she approached. Those who stared at her felt an itch inside them that they couldn't scratch.

Even Kong Dao couldn't help but spare a few glances at her...

The expression on Zhou Chudao's face grew more bitter at the sight. He shook his head as he walked towards You Ran's faction with his Dao partner at his side. He shut his eyes so that he might see no evil and hence, escape frustration and annoyance.

Wang Baole had glanced at Huang Yunshan's figure as well. However, unlike Kong Dao, his eyes soon landed on Zhou Chudao instead. He might look ordinary, but Wang Baole trusted his gut. He could sense Soul Qi on Zhou Chudao—one that was invisible to the eyes of others!

The Dark Sect called it Soul Qi. It was a unit of measurement for someone who had killed many people and was tainted by the presence of those vengeful souls. Wang Baole could sense an extremely strong

Soul Qi on Zhou Chudao. His appearance, his slightly bent back, and the way he carried himself might make him seem like an honest and decent man, but in reality... based on Wang Baole's assessment, he was someone who definitely had his hands stained by the blood of many.

That's quite interesting. I thought Dugu Lin was the most powerful amongst all the Vast Expanse Dao Palace disciples. I didn't expect that there's also this Zhou Chudao, who's skilled at concealing his true self! As Wang Baole lost himself in thought, the bells began to ring again. Everyone in the public square fell silent. The spectators also quieted down when they saw silence descend upon the public square.

Wang Baole withdrew his gaze and stood together with Zhao Yameng and Kong Dao, eyes staring in front of them. The bell rang nine times amidst the silence. The doors to the great hall before them opened, and from within walked out a dozen Nascent Soul realm cultivators!

The disciples stared ahead respectfully as soon as they appeared. They didn't look at the crowd as they lined up on two sides and saluted the great halls.

"Greetings to the Elders!" As their voices rang in the air, everyone both inside and outside the public square lowered their heads and saluted the great halls. With Feng Qiuran in the middle, Mie Liezi on the left, and You Ran on the right, the three Elders walked out from the great halls slowly!

Energy waves that surpassed that of a Nascent Soul realm cultivator immediately exuded from the three of them. The winds stirred, and the clouds shifted. The heavens transformed. An enormous hurricane appeared in mid-air, rumbling and roaring as if it could devour everything in sight. Every disciple was shaken at the sight and overcome with awe.

Wang Baole gathered his spirit energy around him, lowered his head, and extended his greetings as well. Mie Liezi's voice rang out across the entire public square.

"The top three victors to emerge in the trial will receive a leaf from the Hyacinthus Tree. They will earn the right to enter the Worship Palace Pavilion and leave their names on the Dao Plate, thus becoming a true disciple of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace!"

"Disciples who have written their names on the Dao Plate will be gifted a different status. They will be able to use their identity tokens to control the great array formation of the ancient sword to a limited degree. Only those... who have their names written on the Dao Plate can be considered... a true cultivator of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace!" Mie Liezi's voice was filled with gravity and authority as it rang out in the public square, and the tinge of murderous violence coloring it prevented anyone from trying to question his authority.

Feng Qiuran stood beside him, with no expression on her face, not saying a word. You Ran smiled beside her and said nothing as well. The three of them had clearly discussed this beforehand. Mie Liezi would host the trial. Even if Feng Qiuran had been reluctant at first, she had obviously agreed to this arrangement. They must have come to some kind of arrangement.

After Mie Liezi was done speaking, his eyes shone with a fierce light. His voice lowered, and when he spoke again, it was as if he was casting a spell.

“The trial will take place... in a minor array formation that is a part of our sect’s greater array formation—the Endless Possibilities Array Formation. As for the rules... listen carefully, for I will only say them once!”

As soon as Mie Liezi said that, every participant on the public square began to look at him attentively. Wang Baole cleared his mind and stared ahead in full concentration as well. Together with Zhao Yameng and Kong Dao, they listened carefully to the rules of the trial.

The rules were clearly very important. Without them, the trial would seem unfair. After all, out of the six hundred participants, there were those at the early-stage, mid-stage, and late-stage Core Formation realm.

Despite having no knowledge of the rules, Wang Baole predicted that the rules should be able to offer the weaker participants some measure of protection. This would allow the trial a semblance of fairness on the surface. As for what went on in reality... it was clear that the law of the strongest would still prevail!

Everyone inside and outside of the public square listened quietly as Mie Liezi’s voice, colored with its typical coldness, rang out in the air.

“When the six hundred of you enter the place where the trial will take place, you will receive a key that’s conjured from the array formation!

“Every twenty-four hours—that is, every day—the array formation will activate a teleportation that will affect the entire region where the trial is taking place. Key-bearers are to sacrifice a key to resist the power of the teleportation and prevent being teleported away. Those without keys will be teleported away forcibly and eliminated from the trial!”

Mie Liezi’s words rang out loudly. Everyone had been trying to control their reactions, but after hearing the full set of rules, a myriad of emotions flashed across their faces. They began to discuss amongst themselves in a heated manner.

Wang Baole and company had never come across such rules before. Even the disciples from the Vast Expanse Dao Palace had not. Simply put, this was a trial conducted via elimination. The smarter ones immediately realized how harsh the rules were!

“The trial’s going to be brutal with these rules!”

“Besides one’s intrinsic strengths and weaknesses, I can imagine that protecting your own key and snatching keys from others will be the critical factors in determining who remain the last ones standing in this trial!”

“Every teleportation will consume a key. This means that the number of keys will dwindle... If everyone remains peaceable and doesn’t fight after they enter the array formation, there will be no keys left after the first twenty-four hours! Of course, that’s not going to happen!”

Xu Ming and Lu Yun frowned. They weren’t aware of the complete set of rules. They found the changes to the rules too drastic after they had heard them. Huang Yunshan felt the same way too. She had a considering look on her face and began discussing it quietly with Zhou Chudao. Only Dugu Lin remained

unaffected, the expression on his face remaining cold and distant. He seemed to pay no attention to the rules at all.

Wang Baole had a contemplative look on his face as well after he heard the rules. Zhao Yameng, who was standing beside him, frowned. She quickly analyzed the situation. Such rules were simply another way of stating the law of the strongest. They were similar to what she had expected and yet different at the same time.

“There’s an additional component of luck that’s introduced in the trials with these rules. The weaker participants will have more means at their disposal. Extreme danger is also present, which might even result in a chaotic battle!” Zhao Yameng said softly in the voice transmissions to Wang Baole and Kong Dao.

Kong Dao nodded. He was frowning as well. As he considered their situation, Wang Baole suddenly laughed. He didn’t say anything, but he had clearly thought things through. The rules were important and unimportant at the same time. There was really no point in making everything so complicated. In the end, everything boiled down to one simple rule... the survival of the fittest!

Everyone was deep in discussion. The participants in the public square, especially, were all discussing fiercely with one another. Mie Liezi’s eyes grew colder.

“Silence!” He shouted. His voice was like thunder, descending with a deafening boom that rumbled and resounded in the air. Everyone was shaken and fell silent immediately.

“Those are the rules. The teleportations will take place until there are three or fewer of you left. The trial will end immediately then. If three participants remain, each will get a leaf from the Hyacinthus Tree. If two remain, each will get a leaf and then decide what you will do with the third. If only one person remains... he or she will have all three leaves!”

“Now, let the teleportation begin!” Having said that, Mie Liezi raised his right hand and swept it sideways. The enormous hurricane in the sky rumbled with a deafening roar and unleashed an overpowering suction force that sucked all six hundred participants on the public square into it!

The trials had begun!

Chapter 558: Everyone, Please Wait!

In the public square that was on the mountain peak on the main Vast Expanse Dao Palace island on the ancient greenish-bronze sword, an enormous vortex hung in mid-air, unleashing an incredible suction force. Within the blink of an eye, the six hundred cultivators in the public square rose into the air, powerless against the suction force, and flew towards the vortex!

Just as they were about to be sucked straight into the vortex, the vortex suddenly shook. With startling speed, it began to split into three smaller vortexes in mid-air.

The three vortexes unleashed their separate suction forces and separated the three factions before each sucking one faction right in. This meant that the three factions would be relatively secure when they first arrived at the location where the trial was to take place.

Dugu Lin and his faction were sucked into the first vortex, Zhou Chudao and his faction representing You Ran were sucked into the third vortex, and Wang Baole, as well as the faction under Feng Qiuran, were sucked into the second vortex.

Describing the entire process might seem like a long and tedious affair, but in reality, the time it took for the vortices to split into three and suck the three factions in was but the blink of an eye. Instantly... six hundred cultivators that had been standing in the public square vanished. All of them had entered the vortices.

After sucking in the cultivators, the three vortices in mid-air began to spin. Vast quantities of images began to appear in the vortices. They were akin to real-time security footage that showed everyone participating in the trial!

As images of the participants appeared in the vortices, the hordes of disciples around the public square began to sit down. Everyone lifted their heads and stared skywards, and some began talking with one another. It was clear that they were trying to predict who the top three would be!

They weren't the only ones settling in. Mie Liezi, Feng Qiuran, and You Ran, as well as the Nascent Soul realm cultivators, after having their disciples move some chairs over, sat down, and awaited the results of the trial.

It might take days before there was any outcome. However, to a cultivator, days went past in a blur. They seemed patient.

Mie Liezi was especially proud. His eyes were fixed on Dugu Lin only. He was his most powerful weapon, one that he had bet everything on. He was the secret weapon that he was going to use to overpower Feng Qiuran and You Ran!

"Our generation is just waiting for Lin'er to rise to his full potential!" Mie Liezi muttered secretly. The never-changing cold expression on his face shifted to accommodate a rare smile tinged with anticipation and hope.

Feng Qiuran, of course, wasn't going to leave. This trial was too important. Even if she wasn't hopeful of the outcome, she still stayed to witness it with her own eyes.

You Ran was the only one whose smile never faded from his face. He didn't seem very concerned. He had a couple of looks before shutting both his eyes.

As the spectators outside watched attentively, the participants had entered the black holes. They experienced a brief dizziness as they were teleported. When their vision cleared again, they had appeared in a strange world!

The place seemed relatively small when compared to the ancient greenish-bronze sword. However, it was a sizable piece of land when compared to Earth. In fact, its size was comparable to that of Earth. There were mountain ranges scattered across the land, and oceans and forests filled the area. In the blue skies ahead, seven suns shone brightly, blasting the land with intense heat.

Three regions in the world shone with the light of recent teleportation. One of the regions was near a mountain range. As the light vanished, the initially blurry silhouettes of Wang Baole, Zhao Yameng, Kong

Dao, Lu Yun, Xu Ming, and the other cultivators from Feng Qiuran's faction grew clearer and clearer until their full forms completely materialized in the world.

The crowd had no time to adjust to their relocation. Immediately after they had been teleported to their new location, they were startled to find a shining key in their hands. It wasn't an ordinary key. The waves of energy it exuded seemed comforting, and it appeared to have certain stabilizing effects on one's cultivation.

The rules that Mie Liezi had mentioned surfaced in everyone's minds as soon as the keys appeared. Everyone began to monitor their surroundings warily. After they ensured that there was no danger lurking nearby, they began to familiarize themselves with the surroundings. They also examined the key in their possession. Some tried to keep it in their storage bag, but they found that it couldn't be done. They had to carry it with them.

Quite a few people, upon seeing the vast land and the suns in the sky, gasped in shock.

"The ground?"

"That's too realistic... This is my first time seeing such a vast expanse of land..."

"And the seven suns in the sky—is this the Endless Possibilities Array Formation?"

As the others discussed in hushed tones, Wang Baole, Zhao Yameng, and Kong Dao quickly gathered in a circle. They confirmed that the key indeed couldn't be kept in a storage bag. They kept the key near their hearts and looked around them. They had seen vast lands like this before and weren't as shocked as the cultivators from the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. However, they did spend some time staring at the seven suns in the sky. They began to discuss via voice transmissions.

"Based on the rules, we have to be careful of everyone around us!"

"Let's form our own team later instead of following the others!" As the three conversed, many disciples around them had completed their inspection of the area. Something flickered in their eyes. Even though they all were part of the same faction, many couldn't help their caution. They began to retreat from one another and keep a safe distance from one another. Some chose to leave immediately, racing into the distance. Others, after some consideration, chose to approach their friends and form a team.

Soon, more than a hundred out of the two-hundred-strong faction chose to leave the area. Feng Qiuran's personal disciple, Lu Yun, hadn't spared Wang Baole and his group a single glance. He led more than thirty disciples, who chose to follow him, away.

Wang Baole and the other two looked at one another. They stepped back with the intention of leaving this place as well. A group of cultivators with Xu Ming as their leader stood nearby. A cultivator stood next to Xu Ming, seemingly conducting a quiet conversation with the latter. He turned his head, and upon seeing Wang Baole's departure, suddenly dashed towards them in pursuit.

"Everyone, please wait!"

They weren't standing that far away from him. His actions immediately drew Kong Dao's hostility, and a sudden blood lust surged from Kong Dao's person as he locked his eyes onto his target. Zhao Yameng's

eyes flashed as well. With a flip of her right hand, she summoned a compass. It gave off waves of inscriptions that flickered dark and bright.

Only Wang Baole remained unfazed as if nothing had happened. He turned and stared at the cultivator approaching them.

He didn't slow down as they stared, coming to a complete stop only after nearing them. He was a young man and appeared to be at the early-stage Core Formation realm. Even though he was at the same level of cultivation as Zhao Yameng and Kong Dao, the expression on his face was clearly arrogant. The smile on his face did nothing to hide that. Instead, it gave others the impression that he was superficial and insincere.

"Our three fellow Daoists from the Federation. I am Liu Wenju!" the young man said, then cupped his fists and gave them a slight salute. He didn't give them a chance to speak and continued immediately.

"Fellow Daoists, this trial is extremely dangerous. It tests not only one's cultivation but also one's understanding of its rules. I will speak the truth. You will not survive long here. Since that is the case, could you perhaps hand your keys over to Senior Brother Xu Ming?" He phrased his words as an inquiry, but his tone was assertive and full of confidence. It was as if he felt that there was nothing wrong with Wang Baole and his team handing over their keys. In fact, it was the right and natural thing to do.

"In fact, I'm not sure if you're aware. Senior Brother Xu has promised his master Elder Feng that he will do his best to win one of the top three placements. Elder Feng will gift the Federation with the awarded leaf from the Hyacinthus Tree. You'll be helping yourselves if you hand your keys to Senior Brother Xu." Liu Wenju smiled as he spoke. He stretched his right hand out towards the three.

Upon hearing what he had said, Kong Dao narrowed his eyes then looked towards Wang Baole. There was a look of contemplation on Zhao Yameng's face. The three of them looked at one another. They could see what they were all thinking. Zhao Yameng turned towards Liu Wenju and smiled faintly.

"Senior Brother, we are sorry, but we wish to help ease Elder Feng's burden in this trial as well. This is also what Elder Feng has requested of us."

Liu Wenju raised his eyebrow when he heard Zhao Yameng's refusal. He eyed the three of them. With displeasure in his eyes, he turned and returned to Xu Ming. He whispered something to the latter, then pointed at Wang Baole and his team. Xu Ming laughed and shook his head as if he wasn't bothered at all. He then spoke casually. His words fell straight into the ears of Wang Baole and his teammates.

"To each his own. I look forward to seeing how you'll be easing my master's burden. Haha! Take care!" Having said that, he turned and led the dozen or so cultivators away, flying off into the distance.

Chapter 559: Night Sky Map!

Wang Baole and his team watched as Xu Ming and his team left. Then, they stared at one another and dashed off in another direction. They were on their guard while they traveled. Zhao Yameng began analyzing the rules of the trial.

“One strategy that almost everyone would think of would be to gather a certain number of keys then hide themselves...” Zhao Yameng said softly. After some thought, Kong Dao shook his head.

“I thought of that too. I found out that while the key can’t be kept in one’s storage bag, it’s hard to detect unless someone else is really near you. I can’t figure out why the Vast Expanse Dao Palace would leave such an obvious loophole in...”

“Since this array formation is called the Endless Possibilities Formation, we may be faced with other transformations in this world later as well!” After listening to what Zhao Yameng and Kong Dao had said, Wang Baole fell into a contemplative silence. Then, he spoke slowly.

The three of them continued their discussion for a while but couldn’t decide on a plan. Zhao Yameng finally suggested finding a place to hide out for a while. They could monitor the situation before deciding on a plan of action.

The cultivators in Feng Qiuran’s faction had scattered. The cultivators in Mie Liezi’s and You Ran’s faction had done the same. The cultivators began to spread out in their regions.

Many people decided to follow Zhou Chudao and his Dao partner Huang Yunshan. Dugu Lin was the only person to leave alone. He forbade anyone from following him.

As the cultivators scattered across the land, the trial truly began. Outside that world, the spectators watched excitedly in the public square. They knew that the real action was about to begin.

There were no intense fights at the moment. In fact, no one had engaged in battle yet. However, the rules ensured that as time passed, every participant would begin to grow anxious.

There were multiple ways that this trial could end. Where multiple probable outcomes existed, a betting pool would typically follow. Like the gamble between Mie Liezi and Feng Qiuran, and like... the betting pool that Xie Haiyang had set up privately.

This was clearly something that couldn’t be done out in the open and so blatantly. However, Xie Haiyang had the means of spreading the news about this and got it done easily. Currently, the people who had placed enormous bets with him numbered in the tens of thousands.

Xie Haiyang was also one of the many who were watching the images in the vortexes. However, he was also extremely busy, receiving voice transmissions and taking bets. He had to make adjustments to the betting pool every so often as well. The crowd bustled around him, and many placed their bets on the spot.

There were elders from the sect who had noticed what was going on, but as soon as they even began to frown, they received a voice transmission. After reading it, they gave Xie Haiyang an unfathomable look, shook their heads, and ignored what he was doing. Xie Haiyang’s betting pool grew bigger and bigger. A middle-aged cultivator standing next to him finally asked curiously.

“Fellow Daoist Xie, even though you’re the one setting up the bets, will you actually be betting on anyone?”

Xie Haiyang smiled upon hearing that. He pulled out three gourds from his storage bracelet and placed them in front of him. He pointed at the gourds, then laughed as he told the crowd.

“I bet ten thousand battle credits on these three people. Their names are in the gourds. Help me keep an eye on them. When the results are out in a few days, I’ll open them right in front of you all!”

Outside the world where the trial was taking place, the crowd bustled. The setting up of a betting pool meant that the crowd was invested emotionally in the trial as they watched what was happening. It livened up the atmosphere.

Comparatively, it wasn’t as intense or exciting inside the array formation. The trial had just begun, after all, and everyone had just made their entrance. It wasn’t yet time for a fight.

This was clearly not something Mie Liezi wanted to see. He raised his right hand and formed a series of hand seals. Then, he pointed at the vortexes in the sky. The vortexes suddenly shuddered, and changes began to take place within the array formation.

The spectators soon noticed the transformation, which caused gasps of shock to rise into the air.

“The array formation is transforming!”

“Look at the sky on the screens... it’s turned black!”

“There’s starlight in the night sky!”

As the spectators gasped in shock, inside the array formation, a myriad of emotions descended upon the participants as they lifted their heads and saw what was going on in the sky.

At that moment... the light around them had dimmed considerably. The change was minute but still perceivable to a cultivator’s eyes. The sky above their heads had transformed from a bright and clear one to a dark, night sky!

It wasn’t exactly a night sky. The light shining upon the land had dimmed, but it wasn’t completely pitch-black as night would be. The only change was to the blue skies, which had now turned black.

It might seem like a contradiction, but this was indeed what had happened. The lands continued to give off light under the black sky. The source of this light was unknown. It seemed as if everything in this world could become a source of light. This was one of the things that made the Endless Possibilities Array Formation unique.

Wang Baole and his team had been traveling when the skies suddenly turned black. They stopped in their tracks immediately and lifted their heads, alarm flashing across their faces. The black sky was undergoing a gradual transformation, and a map formed from starlight began to emerge in the sky!

It was a clear map of the entire world where the trial was taking place, and numerous key-shaped symbols appeared on the map!

They weren’t all stationary!

Some of these keys were shown in isolation, others were shown clustered in groups of three to five. There were also dozens of keys clustered together. Each key-shaped symbol... clearly corresponded to someone who was holding onto a key!

Wang Baole's and his teammates' hearts sank when they found their location as well as their corresponding keys in the aerial map.

They did a test. The keys shifted slightly as they moved. They finally concluded that the aerial map was synced with whatever was going on in the trial on a real-time basis!

Secrecy was thus no longer an option. The possibility of seeking a safe hideout and hiding away somewhere was also eliminated and no longer a realistic plan. The appearance of this aerial map eliminated their previous doubts and confusion.

"This is just too vicious! There's no way for anyone to hide here. Our every move will be exposed!" Kong Dao gasped. His eyes looked solemn. He could predict that the appearance of this aerial map would heighten the intensity of this trial to the extreme.

"That's not entirely true!" Zhao Yameng said suddenly. Her eyes flashed as she whispered.

"The map is not completely to our disadvantage. It might seem to expose everyone's location. However, what it does is add an implicit rule to this trial... Before the next teleportation, those without keys will become... completely invisible on the map!"

Wang Baole frowned as he listened to their conversation, and something flickered in his eyes. Zhao Yameng's spirits were clearly soaring, intense interest flashing in her eyes. She seemed to believe that the rules of this trial and this array formation were an opportunity for her to enhance her proficiency in array formations. She spoke again quickly.

"This world is quite fascinating. It will activate a teleportation once every twenty-four hours. That means a teleportation will take place every day... Those with a key will escape teleportation, and those without will be sent away and eliminated from the trial!

"What's even more interesting is that even if one uses his or her key to evade teleportation the first time, without any additional keys, he or she will have to snatch keys from others in order to escape the subsequent teleportation. Everyone has a day to do that. During that time, they will be hidden, and their location won't be displayed on the map. Those with keys, though, will be shown clearly on the map. They are forcing us to fight and to battle it out for keys!

"Based on my judgment, the most intense fights and the highest number of casualties will take place on the first day, and many participants will be eliminated. This is because the number of keys is fixed. There are only six hundred of them. If there is no intense battle on the first day, and most of the keys aren't consolidated in a few participants' hands, after the first teleportation, many keys will be consumed to avoid elimination. Without keys, those who have become invisible on the map and wish to stay in the trial will have to fight fiercely for another key. However, at that juncture, there would be too few keys left. Keys will become extremely precious. The fight for keys will intensify and reach its climax!"

Zhao Yameng's eyes shone more brightly as she spoke. She was clearly proficient in array formations and deduction. Her mind moved incredibly quickly, and she managed to distill the key points of this trial with a few words.

Chapter 560: I am a Hunter!

Wang Baole blinked as he stared at the enthusiastic Zhao Yameng. He would have been able to work this out as well if he had been given some time to think it through. However, this was clearly a mentally exhausting thing to do.

Kong Dao eyed Zhao Yameng and was about to say something when Zhao Yameng lifted her hand. Her eyes shone brightly as she said hastily, "Don't interrupt me!

"There are pros and cons to us sticking together. The advantage of that is that we'll be more powerful when we combine forces. The disadvantage is that we are easier to spot and will attract attention..."

"What we need to be cautious of are those who lose their keys today. Their number will grow, and they are invisible on the map and hidden from our sight. We, on the other hand, are exposed. They are like venomous snakes in the night. As the time to the next teleportation approaches, they will become more frantic and crazier!" As she spoke, a breeze drifted past and swept a few strands of her hair astray. She subconsciously pushed her hair behind her ear. Her gesture, as well as the spirited look on her face, made Zhao Yameng extremely attractive at that moment. Wang Baole watched her and fell into a slight daze.

At that juncture, Zhao Yameng noticed the expression on Wang Baole's face. She was secretly pleased. Then, she turned towards Kong Dao.

"Kong Dao, what were you saying?"

Kong Dao coughed. Even though Zhao Yameng had stopped him from speaking earlier, he still respected the detailed analysis that Zhao Yameng had done. After some thought, he said.

"I have an idea. Why not... give Baole our keys. We will hide ourselves, and if someone does attack, we'll be able to ambush him unexpectedly!

"Or Baole can let us have the keys. His level of cultivation is higher, so it might be more effective if he stages the ambush!"

"I've another idea. We can set a trap. You can set up an array formation, and we'll place the key there as bait, then hide and wait. Once someone takes the bait, we can attack together. We can stage multiple traps on the first day and win a few more keys!" Kong Dao's eyes began to shine excitedly as he spoke. He seemed to think that this was a good idea. They would gain something regardless of how they set the trap.

Wang Baole's forehead throbbed when he heard what Kong Dao said though, and he glared at Kong Dao.

"Kong Dao, the three ideas you've given are all about ambushing others... It's either I ambush someone, you two ambush someone, or the three of us ambush someone. Why does everything have to do with ambushes!"

Kong Dao didn't seem displeased when he heard Wang Baole's argument. He hit his chest and said proudly, "Baole, this is something you won't understand. I spent three years in the wilderness of Mars alone. This was the tactic I used to survive. This is my first rule for survival. Even at the Vast Expanse Dao Palace, this was the tactic I used, and it won me plenty of gains!" Kong Dao's tone of voice was filled with pride.

Wang Baole pursed his lips. He had gone through thick and thin with Kong Dao, which was why he didn't bother being tactful with him. Kong Dao saw Wang Baole pursing his lips and began to glare at the latter. He felt that it was necessary to make Wang Baole understand the importance of a good ambush. He was about to speak when Zhao Yameng, whose head had begun to throb at the talk of ambushes, interrupted them with great annoyance.

"Stop bickering. The first day of the trial might be important, but what lies after is even more important!"

"The laws of key conservation apply in this trial, be it regarding the intensity of the fights or the number of keys. If the first day turns out to be an intense fight, the remaining keys will be consolidated in the hands of a small group of people. Out of prudence, a period of stagnancy might occur! What we have to do is to seek the opportunity to hold our ground with the existing rules in place!" After Zhao Yameng said that, Kong Dao didn't reply and instead fell into a contemplative silence. Wang Baole only grew more mentally exhausted after hearing what she said.

"I suggest that the three of us work to protect one of us!"

"We'll focus on ensuring Wang Baole lasts for at least three days. This will give us a shot at winning!" Upon saying that, Zhao Yameng turned and looked at Wang Baole.

"Baole, you have to keep your spirits up. We'll focus on examining the night sky map today. If the keys aren't consolidated in the hands of a few, it means that the ongoing fight isn't that intense, and Kong Dao and I will place our keys with you. We will choose between the both of us who is to be eliminated during the first teleportation. After that, you'll still have two keys with you. But Baole, you have to be careful. If the trial really plays out this way, as more keys are consumed, there will be more people looking for new keys. With the dwindling number of keys..."

"If today's night sky map shows that the battle has been intense, then someone will definitely have consolidated a large number of keys. The situation might calm down the second day. If that's the case, Kong Dao and I will not leave. We will all use our keys during the first teleportation. Then, we will join forces. We will either stage an ambush or openly fight for new keys. Regardless, we have to attack someone with many keys and fight for a chance to survive the second teleportation."

Zhao Yameng took a deep breath, determination shining in her eyes. She couldn't help but massage her forehead. This trial had both explicit and implicit rules. It seemed like a simple test of elimination, but in reality, there were many possibilities and probable situations.

This was something they had never experienced in their training in the Federation's mystic realms. It was extremely complex yet not completely unsolvable. However, the effort required for planning was too much. It was mentally exhausting. What invigorated Zhao Yameng was that with appropriate planning, they would have a great chance of gaining an advantage and other opportunities in the trial.

"Simply put, only those who are invisible on the map are hunters. Those holding keys are the prey!" Zhao Yameng said with conviction.

"In addition, theoretically speaking, there can only be as many as eight teleportations during this trial. In reality, though, it won't take as many before the trial ends. Based on my analysis, I predict that the trial will end before the seventh teleportation. That means... as long as we have seven keys and don't get

those keys snatched away from us, we'll be able to earn a place in the top three!" Zhao Yameng's eyes shone when she said that.

She continued, "I can only make further predictions after observing what actually happens and use that as a basis for my analysis!" Done speaking, Zhao Yameng massaged her forehead while looking at Wang Baole and Kong Dao. She stared at Wang Baole and waited for his decision.

"Zhao Yameng, I used to think that your cultivation was average at best, and that array formations weren't of much use. My views have changed now. You're incredible!" Kong Dao said, incredulous. He looked at Zhao Yameng with respect and admiration. Zhao Yameng's analysis had been extremely detailed. She had dissected what had been a confusing situation and made it simple and comprehensible.

Kong Dao now had a clear understanding of the various aspects of the trial because of her reminder of the invisible participants on the night sky map, the different strategies to ensure one of them remained standing at the end of the trial, and even her confidence over how long the trial would last. Zhao Yameng had mentioned staging an ambush in her second strategy to ensure one of them remained the last man standing. He couldn't help but begin to think about the various ways to stage an ambush. He, too, looked at Wang Baole.

Wang Baole's eyes swept past Kong Dao and Zhao Yameng. He shut his eyes and began to think. He acknowledged the logic of Zhao Yameng's analysis, as it was very detailed, but his instincts told him that if they did as Zhao Yameng suggested, things wouldn't go as smoothly as expected.

Wang Baole knew where his instincts were coming from. It came from something that other Core Formation realm cultivators lacked, and that only those who had stepped into the Nascent Soul realm possessed—one's spiritual perception.

This is Zhao Yameng's strategy. It aligns with the cultivation techniques she uses. But this... isn't the way I would do things! Amidst his silence, Wang Baole's thoughts became clearer to him.

The Lightning Dao that I practice emphasizes the overpowering of one's opponents via lightning. It speaks of breaking infinite spells with a mere lightning bolt! The Flame Snatch robs the wills of tens of thousands of souls. Fused with the Thearch Armor, it strives to overpower and crush all opponents. It represents the drive to advance without looking back... Even if there are no paths ahead, one is to create a path! At that thought, everything became clear to Wang Baole. He felt better. His cultivation even began to stir with life, seeming to resonate with his thoughts. A sudden aura that Wang Baole himself didn't even notice appeared around him!

It was imperceptible. Even Zhao Yameng and Kong Dao didn't notice it. If Li Xingwen were in the vicinity though, he would have been startled by its presence. This wasn't the first time Wang Baole had achieved resonance and such an aura had appeared. The first had been in the Ethereal Dao College when Li Xingwen had tested Wang Baole and intercepted a punch from the latter. It had been a punch that infused his will with his spell. Only by doing so could one achieve resonance!

Resonance. This was what the Federation called it. The Vast Expanse Dao Palace had another name for it. It was... the incomparably mysterious... Dao!

Standing within the resonating waves, Wang Baole slowly opened his eyes. A tinge of ferocity glimmered in his eyes. It was a ferocity that had appeared a few days ago when he had been in the Sea of Fire while wearing his Thearch Armor. He said slowly.

“Yameng, your analysis is very useful and yet not useful at the same time... There’s no need to sacrifice the two of you to protect me. Look at the map in the sky. There are three keys approaching us. They are clearly targeting us. That is why... my solution and strategy only consists of two words...”

“We fight!”

The fearsome light in his eyes erupted as soon as he said that. With a sudden step, he dashed out. His destination... the three keys on the map that were rapidly approaching them. He headed straight for them!