

Cultivating 141

Chapter 141: The Martial Saint's Unfortunate Later Years, Blood Jade Pill Completed_3

After all, the Blood King Gu is even more energy-rich than the Relic.

On the third day.

...

On the fourth day.

...

Ning Qi went daily to listen to stories, and many people gradually became familiar with this regular from out of town.

"Liu, you're here again!" someone greeted him, using Ning Qi's alias.

Ning Qi smiled and nodded.

On this day.

Ning Qi finally heard something different.

"Our small town is the hometown of the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint. He grew up here in his youth and returned in his later years. Some people once caught a fleeting glimpse of him, but the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint was unbelievably old..."

This was something Ye Qinghe mentioned before.

It seems Ye Qinghe also stayed here for a few days.

Ning Qi was very patient.

He continued listening.

This information felt significantly more authentic, as if one could see the desolation of the Martial Saint.

Thus.

Time passed.

Ning Qi had already stayed here for nearly a month, which was the longest he had ever spent outside True Martial Mountain since he was born.

The reason he stayed so long.

Firstly, to see if there was more news about the Martial Saint.

Secondly, for the Blood King Gu.

Although he previously learned from the Skinny Elder that there was no resonance or tracking mark on the Blood King Gu, to be safe, Ning Qi still planned to remove it outside of True Martial Mountain to avoid leaving any hidden dangers there.

Three days ago.

Ning Qi had already devised a Pill Formula using the Blood King Gu as the main ingredient, which he called the Blood Jade Pill.

He sent a message asking Luo Wentian to send the remaining auxiliary materials down the mountain.

By then.

Only after refining the Blood Jade Pill at the foot of the mountain would he return. This way, even if the Southern Border Alliance truly had a Secret Technique to track the Blood King Gu, it wouldn't lead to True Martial Mountain.

Ning Qi looked up at the torrential rain outside the window, sighing softly:

"Perhaps Old Mr. Sun only knows this much."

The Blood Jade Pill Formula was complete. He planned to leave in a few days when the materials were delivered to the designated location.

Although staying here didn't hinder his cultivation, he was still more accustomed to True Martial Mountain, and there were many Taoist Scriptures waiting for him there.

Ning Qi took an umbrella and went out.

The streets were almost deserted.

Upon reaching the storytelling wooden shed,

it was completely empty.

Only the blind old man remained.

In today's heavy rain, no matter how addicted one was to listening, they wouldn't come. Originally, Ning Qi thought Old Mr. Sun wouldn't come either, but he surprisingly did.

And Old Mr. Sun clearly didn't expect Ning Qi to come either.

"Oh, it's you, Liu..."

The old man sighed with a smile, routinely starting his storytelling. This was a habit he had formed over the years.

Ning Qi listened quietly, relaxing his mind.

During this nearly month-long period, he had heard much of the content more than once. Gradually, he came to see this period as a special experience, perhaps something he might think back on fondly one day.

He would leave in a few days.

He didn't have many other thoughts.

The storm poured down on the wooden shed, the elder telling a story and the younger listening, creating an indescribable Intent Realm.

After a long time.

Old Mr. Sun finally stopped. He glanced at the rain outside, as if he could truly see it.

"Young man, how long have you been here?" he suddenly asked, not addressing Ning Qi as 'Liu.'

Ning Qi, too, looked outside the shed, calmly saying:

"Almost a month now."

"A month, how many months can one have in life? Go back early. It's not worth wasting so much time here with an old blind man like me."

Ning Qi smiled:

"It's quite nice here. I think this month has been very meaningful."

This was the truth. This month had subtly transformed his state of mind, a feeling entirely different from his experiences at True Martial Mountain.

Silence again.

After a moment, Old Mr. Sun's ethereal voice slowly emerged:

"Perhaps the story of the Martial Saint should have ended long ago. In a while, I, too, should leave."

He had noticed Ning Qi's particular interest in the Martial Saint's story.

Ning Qi was taken aback:

"Where do you plan to go?"

The blind old man gazed distantly:

"The world is my home."

He started packing his storytelling tools, his voice seemingly magical:

"It's best not to delve too deeply into matters of the Martial Saint's level. Too much curiosity isn't always good."

Ning Qi fell silent, asking:

"Old sir, did someone really see the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint return in his later years?"

The blind old man chuckled:

"Perhaps. Who can tell truth from lies? No one knows about the Martial Saint's affairs. Perhaps calamity befell them in their old age, or they tried to convey something that couldn't be conveyed."

The unfocused eyes suddenly lifted, striking a chilling sensation in Ning Qi's heart.

The blind old man floated away.

The downpour was torrential, yet he held no umbrella, and the rain never touched him. Occasionally, passersby who witnessed this showed no surprise, as if they hadn't seen it at all.

Ning Qi stood alone in the wooden shed.

"Calamity? Ominous?"

He sensed he was touching upon the secrets of the Martial Saint.

After a long time.

Ning Qi exhaled deeply.

"The boat will straighten itself when it reaches the bridge."

Although he didn't yet understand what secrets were hidden beyond this realm, he at least was mentally prepared.

What remained,

would have to wait until he reached the level of Martial Saint to explore thoroughly.

Ning Qi thought this could be approached once he broke through to the Celestial Human Realm, and he wasn't too far from this step.

Once he finished refining the Blood Jade Pill, Ning Qi could accelerate his advancement to the Primordial Core.

And after that, the Celestial Human Realm.

Chapter 142: Uncertain Later Years of the Martial Saint, Success of the Blood Jade Pill_4

The next day.

Ning Qi left without a sound.

The storytelling shack was still there, and only after several days of not seeing Ning Qi did some people realize he had already left, inevitably feeling a sense of regret and loss, now having one less companion to listen with. The blind old man sighed softly and continued recounting the stories of the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint.

...

After leaving the small town, Ning Qi arrived at a city near True Martial Mountain.

He had previously sent word to Luo Wentian to have the auxiliary materials for refining the Blood Jade Pill prepared and delivered to this place.

By the time Ning Qi arrived, the auxiliary materials had already been delivered.

In the small courtyard.

Ning Qi laid out each precious herb and casually picked up an alchemy furnace. For him, alchemy didn't require external assistance.

Only the main ingredient was left.

He took out two Purple Jade Bamboo Tubes from his bosom, opening one first. The Blood King Gu appeared, circling around Ning Qi. Even though Ning Qi controlled it with a special pitch, the Blood King Gu seemed to have a hint of frenzy.

Ning Qi had already noticed during this period that the Blood King Gu became more ferocious after maturing.

If he were to let the two Blood King Gu's be together, they would probably go completely out of control.

Even so, the current Blood King Gu kept circling the other Purple Jade Bamboo Tube containing the Blood King Gu.

With a thought, Ning Qi solidified it in mid-air with Gang Qi.

Over this period, he had researched the method of using the Blood King Gu.

Its essence lay in the three pairs of wings, while its vigorous body was secondary. Ordinary people wouldn't know how to use the Blood King Gu even if they acquired it.

Fortunately, this was not difficult for Ning Qi.

In the past month, he occasionally studied the Blood King Gu and comprehended special pitches he learned from the Fat and Skinny Elder, thus creating a method to extract the essence blood from within the Blood King Gu.

At this moment.

His Gang Qi vibrated at a special frequency, transmitting a special pitch only the Blood King Gu could hear into its mind.

In the next instant.

Strands of denser blood patterns emerged on the surface of the Blood King Gu, gathering towards the three pairs of wings.

As time passed.

The three pairs of wings had become akin to a work of art, their blood jade wings were breathtakingly beautiful, yet the most captivating was the incredibly dense energy essence.

And the Blood King Gu's eyes had completely lost vitality.

Ning Qi casually plucked off the three pairs of wings, and with a tremor of Gang Qi, the remnant body of the Blood King Gu turned to ashes, dissipating between heaven and earth.

In Ning Qi's eyes, there was a bit of anticipation.

He didn't hesitate.

Start refining pills!

The Gang Qi turned into an incredibly fierce flame, yet it changed according to Ning Qi's will. Each herb was refined, and the entire process of alchemy was as beautiful as a painting, though, unfortunately, no one could witness this scene.

A two-hour period later.

The pills were formed.

Ning Qi's expression shifted, and Gang Qi enveloped the entire courtyard, preventing any disturbances from leaking out.

He opened the alchemy furnace, and a blood-colored radiance surged out, bursting with vigorous life energy.

"Six Blood Jade Pills."

Without the slightest hesitation, Ning Qi consumed one, then operated the Heaven and Earth Grinding Wheel Quenching Gang Technique to begin refining Gang Qi and cultivating.

Rumble!

A rumbling sound that only Ning Qi could hear echoed, and the Jade Liquid Sea shook, with streams of seawater pouring into the grinding wheel for quenching. However, after taking the Blood Jade Pill, the grinding wheel took on a blood-colored radiance, and the quenching efficiency greatly increased.

Ning Qi felt the efficiency of the quenching process was much faster than before, feeling joyful.

"Similar to the Golden Jade Pill, a single Blood Jade Pill can accelerate my cultivation for a month's time, but with better effects."

"At this pace... ten Blood Jade Pills would be enough for me to naturally reach the Primordial Core Realm."

Ning Qi nodded in satisfaction.

Refining one Blood King Gu yielded six Blood Jade Pills, leaving two extra.

At that time, whether to keep them as heritage for the True Martial Sect or for other uses would be up to him.

However, he did feel a bit emotional.

Indeed, he surpassed others in the same realm by too much. One Blood King Gu was enough for an ordinary Primordial Core Realm practitioner to advance to the Celestial Human Realm, but for him, two could barely allow him to break through to the Primordial Core Realm, and it merely accelerated the process rather than directly breaking through.

This was normal.

After all, Ning Qi, at the Jade Liquid Realm, already had strength far beyond an ordinary Celestial Being, so naturally, breaking through was difficult.

That said, even if there were pills that could directly help break through, Ning Qi wouldn't consume them. He needed to ensure his foundations had no defects, so whether it was the Golden Jade Pill or the Blood Jade Pill, Ning Qi pushed for a direction that accelerated cultivation rather than directly breaking realms.

Ning Qi felt relaxed.

Following the same pattern.

He successfully refined the other Blood King Gu into six Blood Jade Pills as well.

In this way.

Even if the Southern Border Alliance had heaven-reaching methods, they could not trace the whereabouts of the Blood King Gu.

Currently.

The Southern Border Alliance hadn't shown any signs of action, presumably because they hadn't yet noticed that the Fat and Skinny Elders had lost contact.

But if they did react, they would ultimately suspect the Demon Sect.

That unique poisonous martial art could be traced with a little check. After all, Elder Wang had used it at True Martial Mountain before. Although Ning Qi deliberately erased his traces, he thought the Southern Border Alliance's methods should be able to uncover the truth, or they wouldn't deserve to be compared with the Demon Sect.

As for Zhuang Chen escaping to the True Martial Sect after Divine Sword Sect was destroyed.

This might cause suspicious towards the True Martial Sect.

But it might also make the Southern Border Alliance think that the Demon Sect was using someone else's power to kill.

After all, on the surface, the True Martial Sect's strength was far from enough to annihilate the Southern Border Alliance's strongholds, even with True Man Tianjian included, it would still be challenging. The means and strength displayed by the Fat and Skinny Elders wouldn't be weaker than Taoist Longshan and True Man Tianjian.

Ning Qi thought deeply.

After ensuring there were no omissions, he headed in the direction of True Martial Mountain.

For the first time being away from home for so long, he did feel a bit homesick.

Chapter 143: Returning to the Mountain, Southern Border Saintess, Dao Companion (Two-in-One)

Ning Qi looked at the familiar True Martial Mountain, his heart filled with countless emotions.

This time, his trip down the mountain took a little over a month. He had seen some of Great Yan's national conditions, but he still hadn't stepped out of Qing State.

But for Ning Qi, there was nothing to regret. After going out, he actually felt quite comfortable staying on True Martial Mountain.

While no one knew.

Ning Qi returned to True Martial Mountain.

He first went to see Taoist Longshan.

When Taoist Longshan saw Ning Qi, he was incredibly excited.

Although Ning Qi had already demonstrated his strength before going down the mountain, there was still some danger in this trip. He was worried, and if Ning Qi hadn't repeatedly sent secret messages saying everything went smoothly, he would have been unable to resist going to help.

"Jiu, did everything go smoothly on this trip?" Taoist Longshan couldn't help but ask.

Although Ning Qi already had Dong He escorted back, he hadn't mentioned many other details.

Ning Qi respectfully bowed, then smiled and said:

"Master, don't worry, I'll slowly tell you."

He organized his thoughts.

Starting from the affairs in Canghe Prefecture City.

During this time, he used disguise and transformation to become 'Lei' and 'Fatty Elder', setting a trap to capture them all in one go.

Ning Qi explained everything in detail except for some secrets related to himself.

Taoist Longshan listened with amazement, then a look of incomparable admiration and emotion appeared in his eyes.

"I never expected you, Jiu, to have such a thrilling experience on this trip down the mountain. It seems wise of you to have told me not to follow, otherwise, I really would have been a burden to you."

Taoist Longshan felt both bittersweet and proud.

His little disciple had grown too quickly, and was slowly reaching a level he could no longer match. This was a rare prodigy, unparalleled even in ancient history.

He thought the only thing he could do for Ning Qi now was to handle the logistics well.

"I never imagined that the Southern Border had quietly formed an alliance. I wonder if I should inform the Great Yan imperial court about this." Then Taoist Longshan shook his head, "It's better not to get involved in such murky waters. With Great Yan's foundation, they can't possibly be unaware of the Southern Border's alliance, and must have a way to handle it. They might even know parts of the Blood King Gu matter."

"However, there is one coincidence." Taoist Longshan said with a smile.

"During the two days you were clearing the Southern Border stronghold, I made an appearance in True Martial City. As a result, the suspicion on our True Martial Sect will be much smaller."

Ning Qi also smiled.

This served as an alibi.

Master and disciple talked about the events of recent days. When Ning Qi shared his insights on the True Martial Underground Palace, Taoist Longshan was also somewhat impressed, having never had the capacity to explore it himself before.

"I hope that someday the True Martial Underground Palace will reappear, and I will keep a covert watch. If it does appear, your talent, Jiu, will surely allow you to receive all its heritage!"

Thinking this way, Taoist Longshan was excited, as his lifelong wish was to revive True Martial.

Ning Qi simply nodded with a smile.

He asked about Dong He's matter again.

Taoist Longshan slowly said:

"Previously, when you sent Dong He up the mountain, I told them that I secretly found the clues and captured him, and then handed Dong He over to Shi to deal with."

"That Dong He was eloquent, but Shi's determination remained strong. He personally killed Dong He and took his head to the Divine Sword brother's tombstone for offering."

His gaze showed some satisfaction.

Taoist Longshan was never a gentleman. He had a chivalrous heart but was also decisive, and he didn't think Zhuang Chen did anything wrong by killing Dong He. If he couldn't avenge such a grave betrayal, he would have been disappointed with Zhuang Chen.

Ning Qi nodded approvingly.

Chatting with Taoist Longshan into the night, Ning Qi returned to the Seeking Tao Institute.

The White Ape was cultivating Ape King Strength.

His cultivation was deepening day by day, and his bloodline was continuously awakening. His actual combat power was probably not inferior to that of Jiang Baishan and others.

Ning Qi watched with a smile, feeling very satisfied with the White Ape. The White Ape was steadfast in his pursuit of the Dao, and although sometimes he was mischievous and playful, he never slacked off when it was time to exert effort. Perhaps he would accompany Ning Qi for a long time.

Moments later.

The White Ape stood up, seeing that familiar figure under the peach tree, rubbed his eyes in confusion, and when he realized it was indeed Ning Qi, joy sprang from his eyes.

"Teacher!"

He greeted Ning Qi respectfully, scratching his head.

His excitement was evident.

During this time Ning Qi wasn't there, he felt like he had lost his anchor, his essence, qi, and spirit were somewhat droopy, but now he was invigorated in an instant.

Ning Qi smiled:

"I'm back."

He hadn't hidden his trip down the mountain from the White Ape. As they lived together, the White Ape always guarded him during his retreats, naturally sensing when he was at the Seeking Tao Institute.

The next day.

Ning Qi 'emerged from his retreat', and the Seeking Tao Institute became lively again.

Luo Wentian and others came upon hearing the news.

They chattered about the recent events.

Ning Qi felt the noise and smiled slightly, his heart especially tranquil.

...

After returning to the mountain.

Ning Qi's life resumed its former rhythm.

Reading scriptures, seeking enlightenment, cultivation, nurturing the Spirit Tree... One by one, these things filled his time, making his days fulfilling, and Ning Qi liked living this way.

With the aid of the Blood Jade Pill, Ning Qi's cultivation speed became even faster.

Every day he could feel his strength growing.

Chapter 144: Returning to the Mountain, Southern Border Saintess, Dao Companion (Two-in-One)_2

The Jade Liquid Sea grows wider and deeper with each passing day.

In this process of accumulating power and unleashing it, Ning Qi's strength is also growing at a speed unimaginable to ordinary people. He feels that, after consuming another five or six Blood Jade Pills, he might be able to compete with the Town North King.

Meanwhile, the Taoist Scripture from the True Profound Sect is constantly being absorbed, and it is estimated that in half a year's time, it will have fully become his foundation.

Ning Qi wonders whether to take advantage of the upcoming Taoism ranking event to find Taoist Baishan; the old man's suggestion is becoming increasingly appealing to him.

He truly feels that these classics are immensely helpful to him.

The Myriad Phenomena True Gang absorbs the strengths of a myriad families, becoming more perfected.

Ning Qi gradually comprehends his own path. With his wisdom, he can take a myriad of ways for his own use.

The further he progresses, the more reference and spiritual light he needs, especially after reaching the Celestial Human Realm. The predecessors' insights into heaven and earth are even more beneficial to him than some martial arts classics. Otherwise, relying solely on himself, even though he could succeed, would take more time.

For example, Ning Qi is currently contemplating the Gang Qi Avatar.

Thanks to this accumulation, he already possesses various applications.

Meanwhile, the Enlightenment Tea Tree is growing extremely smoothly after sprouting, now reaching the height of Ning Qi's forearm.

After much thought, Ning Qi finally decides to convert his extra two Blood Jade Pills into Pill Liquid to cultivate the Enlightenment Tea Tree.

He initially intended to leave them as a foundation for the True Martial Sect.

But then he thought again.

There are only two Blood Jade Pills, which are too few. Giving them to any senior brother or sister makes him feel uncomfortable.

Moreover, when the senior brothers and sisters are able to use Blood Jade Pills to enhance their cultivation, there will likely still be a long time ahead. After all, the potency of the Blood Jade Pill is quite strong; for Ning Qi, it's only useful for accelerating cultivation, but for others, it requires careful consumption.

By then, Ning Qi might even refine more pills that are more suited for them.

Given this, why not use them to cultivate the Enlightenment Tea Tree first?

If the Enlightenment Tea Tree matures ahead of schedule, it will also be the foundation of the True Martial Sect and can benefit everyone.

With the blessing of Blood Jade Pill Liquid.

The growth of the Enlightenment Tea Tree becomes even more gratifying.

Ning Qi estimates that before next year's True Martial Peach Assembly, it may be possible to obtain some Enlightenment Tea leaves!

However.

This year's True Martial Peach Assembly is also drawing nearer.

All true disciples are anticipating it, especially Zhuang Chen. He has heard Ye Qinghe mention the True Martial Peach Assembly many times and has long been envious and hungry for it.

...

Time passes slowly.

Just as everyone is eagerly awaiting the True Martial Peach Assembly.

A palace built atop a mountain welcomes two martial artists with cold expressions and formidable auras.

One of them is an old woman, her back slightly hunched, most notably with two strange serpents wrapped around her neck, one blue and one purple, crystalline like jade, reminiscent of artworks. Her aura is very strong, stronger than the Skinny Elder Ning Qi previously killed.

But she still trails half a step behind her companion.

The companion is a woman with a black veil covering her face, her true appearance unclear, but her figure is enchanting, and her mere form indicates an unparalleled beauty.

The two drift towards the palace.

Walking slowly.

The guards at the palace finally notice the newcomers, shouting aloud:

"Who goes there?!"

The woman with the black veil seems to ignore them, continuing forward, while the old woman snorts coldly:

"Presumptuous! Is this how Skinny taught you the distinction between high and low?"

She unleashes the Power of Heaven and Earth, and with just a hint of pressure, causes everyone to vomit blood and fly backward, their eyes looking fearfully as a blood-red token shoots forward, embedding itself in a column of the hall.

"If it weren't for needing to question you, you'd already be dead for offending the Saintess today!" The old woman's gloomy voice makes everyone's heart race.

The Southern Border Saintess gently waves her hand.

She sits in the main seat, her voice carrying a cold and unparalleled tone, softly speaking:

"Snake Granny, what is the point of troubling them? With the Skinny Elder absent, who can tell me where he went?"

Looking at the token.

Finally, someone reacts.

First fear and dread, then a sense of grief, crying out:

"Lady Saintess, you have finally arrived. The Qing State... Qing State here is finished! You... you must stand up for us!"

The Southern Border Saintess and Snake Granny exchange a glance, both seeing the gravity in each other's eyes.

In recent days.

After failing to contact the two elders through Secret Technique, the Southern Border Alliance finally realized there was a problem here. The two have come together to resolve this matter, initially harboring some hopes. However, now it seems the issue is far from ordinary.

"Explain in detail." The Southern Border Saintess's voice grows colder.

After a moment.

Listening to the people below speak.

The Southern Border Saintess's voice reveals no emotion.

"You're telling me that Fat Elder and Skinny Elder are missing, suspected to have been killed, and all Primordial Core Realm officials at that outpost are dead, yet you still haven't identified the culprit or even found a trace?"

All the kneeling individuals shiver.

Someone trembles and says:

"Saintess, the force behind this is extremely cautious, erasing all traces. We had hoped to report to the higher-ups early, but... we couldn't make contact."

They indeed feel wronged.

More than a month ago, they already discovered the outpost had been wiped out. Not only the two elders but also those great figures of the Primordial Core Realm were all dead.

Yet they couldn't find a single trace of the culprit.

Chapter 145: Returning to the Mountain, Southern Border Saintess, Dao Companion (Two-in-One)_3
We've lost contact with the headquarters of the Southern Border Alliance.

Everyone is as anxious as ants on a hot pan.

Snake Granny sneered:

"Making excuses? A bunch of useless fools!"

She waved her hand, and the person who spoke was slapped into a bloody mist, causing everyone's hearts to tremble violently. The Southern Border Saintess slowly said:

"Granny, don't be angry. Give them a chance to redeem themselves."

"Thank you, Saintess!"

"Take us to that location."

She rose and stepped into the air, and Snake Granny cast a cold glance at the crowd, casually pointing out a few leaders, and dragged them along with her.

...

One day later.

The stronghold destroyed by Ning Qi.

Everyone's figures descended.

"Saintess, Snake Granny, this was the stronghold where Skinny Elder and the others gathered that day. Before that day, Fatty Elder suddenly sent a message, calling all the leaders in Qing State to come. He said 'Lei' from the Blood Rain Tower had betrayed us, and we needed to investigate carefully..."

Someone slowly recounted the cause and effect.

The Southern Border Saintess and Snake Granny stood side by side, gazing down from above. The Southern Border Saintess gently frowned, speculating:

"Could it be that Fatty Elder was greedy for the Blood King Gu and betrayed the alliance? The traces seem to have been erased quite cleanly..."

Snake Granny slowly shook her head:

"Saintess, you might not know, that dead fatty, though his strength is a bit weaker, he comes from the Heilan Tribe and his loyalty to the alliance is beyond question. This matter likely has another twist—perhaps someone used the dead fatty's hand to bring this about, which led to Skinny Elder and the others falling into calamity."

At this point.

They had already abandoned the hope that Fatty and Skinny Elder were still alive, just knowing the intelligence available indicated that this matter had been long premeditated.

"Granny, is there a way to restore these traces?" The Southern Border Saintess turned her head to ask, the breeze occasionally lifted a corner of her veil, revealing a fair and sharp chin, somewhat breathtaking.

Snake Granny confidently smiled:

"The perpetrator was indeed cautious, the traces wiped clean, but they underestimated us Southerners a bit, though it's impossible to completely restore, tracking the power aura characteristics of the perpetrator is no problem."

She landed in the midst of the collapsed ruins.

Gently taking the blue jade-like snake from her neck, she kissed it and then began chanting quickly in bizarre syllables. The blue snake surprisingly began an incredible transformation, its abdomen swelled, dropping small snake eggs, from which soon emerged tiny blue snakes.

The blue snakes shot out like lightning, dispersing in all directions.

Spectators got goosebumps, their scalps tingling.

Snake Granny merely closed her eyes, chanting the incantation, while the blue jade snake coiled on her palm, occasionally raising its body.

After a stick of incense time.

The blue snakes died, turning to powder.

Snake Granny began to listen to the hissing of the blue jade snake, and after a moment, she raised her head, confidently smiling:

"Saintess, I've found it."

A look of delight appeared in the Southern Border Saintess's eyes, silently thinking it fortunate to have brought Snake Granny, whose unique secret technique could track the enemy's traces, otherwise more time would have been wasted.

"Snake Granny, who did it?"

Snake Granny replied:

"There are only traces of a battle between two Celestial Human Realm experts, one being Skinny Elder, and the other, a strong person adept in using poisonous strength, much stronger than Skinny Elder!"

She began mobilizing the Power of Heaven and Earth, with green mist forming at her side, exactly like what Elder Wang and Ning Qi used. If Ning Qi were here, he'd be amazed at how many remarkable people there are in the world.

However, Snake Granny's simulation was only in form, the essence of the power was completely different.

"This is how their power should manifest."

The Southern Border Saintess's eyes sharpened:

"Just one person, wiped everyone out?"

Snake Granny slowly nodded:

"Indeed, it seems incredible, but actually it's not difficult to understand. This person or entity first used means to capture the dead fatty, then deceived Skinny Elder and others to come using his name, and then attacked them off-guard. Done this way, it can be completely achieved."

"The others in front of them were like ants."

The gaze of the Southern Border Saintess was deep and distant:

"That must be the case, I had already investigated before, the aura of the Blood King Gu has completely vanished, the one who acted might be coming for the Blood King Gu, but other possibilities can't be ruled out."

She looked towards the person kneeling, her voice like ice that never melts:

"Is there any strong person using this kind of power within Great Yan? You have three days, if you find nothing, there's no need to face me again. Also, gather all intelligence related to various forces under the command from this period!"

Everyone felt as if granted a great reprieve and hastily responded:

"Yes, Saintess!"

...

One day later.

The Southern Border Saintess sat upright at a desk, reviewing the gathered intelligence, while Snake Granny sipped tea and played with two exotic snakes nearby.

"Saintess, how is it?" Snake Granny asked.

The Southern Border Saintess raised her head, gently massaging her brow:

"As of now, there are two forces with considerable suspicion."

"Which two?"

"Firstly, it is... the Demon Sect!"

Upon hearing these words, the expressions of both the Southern Border Saintess and Snake Granny turned serious.

Even though they are in the Southern Border, they know of the Demon Sect's name, a force that, despite being suppressed by Great Yan for many years, can repeatedly rise from the ashes and return, showing just how troublesome it is.

"As Granny found earlier, the kind of poisonous strength appeared last year when five Celestial Being Strong Persons from the Demon Sect attacked the True Martial Sect in Qing State, and one of them used this power."

The Southern Border Saintess detailed the events that had occurred on True Martial Mountain at that time.

Chapter 146: Returning to the Mountain, Southern Border Saintess, Dao Companion (Two-in-One)_4

"The essence of power of a Celestial Human Realm master can't be changed, unless dual cultivation is involved. Since we've found out, it's probably this person who acted. He managed to escape from the ninth-ranked Town North King on the Celestial Being List, indeed showing he has the ability to kill the gaunt one."

"There might be more than one person in the Demon Sect cultivating this kind of power, which makes them even more suspicious!"

Snake Granny's voice gradually filled with killing intent.

"Isn't it that this damned Demon Sect covets the Blood King Gu we've been nurturing, which is why they suddenly struck? According to your words, Saintess, the Demon Sect has suffered repeated losses at the hands of Great Yan, losing several Celestial Human Realm masters."

The Southern Border Saintess nodded in agreement, indicating her concurrence.

She also thinks the Demon Sect is the most likely suspect.

"What's another force that's under suspicion?"

"Secondly, it's the True Martial Sect," said the Southern Border Saintess.

"True Martial Sect? The one attacked by the Demon Sect?"

"Yes, I looked through the sects that recently had conflicts with our affiliated forces. Just months ago, Divine Sword Sect was destroyed by Zhao Dong and his team. Then the sect leader Divine Sword Old Man escaped to True Martial Sect with his young disciple. Given True Man Longshan's relationship with Divine Sword Old Man, True Martial Sect also has the motive to act. Previously, they sent people to investigate the Blood Pool affair."

"True Man Longshan's strength may not suffice, but True Martial Sect also has True Man Tianjian."

Snake Granny hesitated:

"But isn't True Man Tianjian a swordsman? His power and that of the traces from the attack are utterly opposite."

"Saintess, do you think the Demon Sect might be trying to frame the True Martial Sect, making us act as pawns? They tried to destroy True Martial Sect before."

The Southern Border Saintess slowly nodded:

"I have considered this possibility as well. For now, the Demon Sect seems most suspicious, but we can't completely ignore the True Martial Sect."

Snake Granny nodded with a smile.

"Saintess, you are indeed the most prudent in your actions."

Her eyes were filled with admiration.

In fact, at this moment, it's almost certainly the Demon Sect, but as a leader, one cannot act rashly. Even the slightest possibility cannot be ignored; only this qualifies as a capable leader.

"If there's a chance to see True Man Tianjian in action, allowing me to observe his essence of power closely, it should affirm things more clearly."

Snake Granny added.

Putting a swordsman and venomous power together seemed bizarre, but it's not unheard of for a swordsman to master using a poison sword. Everything requires personal observation. If she can witness it herself, she'll know whether True Man Tianjian also possesses venomous power.

The Southern Border Saintess slowly stood up, sighed lightly:

"I just hope the cultivation of the Blood Emperor Gu goes smoothly. The world is about to become unstable; my Southern Border must also forge ahead with vigor. Having lost two Blood King Gu this time, we can only hurry to find replacements in the south later. If necessary, we'll go into the mountains..."

"For now, I'll have to trouble Granny to stay with me in Qing State. If this is the Demon Sect's doing, we can't just let it slide."

The Saintess slightly furrowed her brows, hinting at a murderous intent.

...

The Southern Border Alliance finally reacted.

Meanwhile, the True Martial Sect is unaware of all this; Taoist Longshan didn't have anyone keeping watch, as that would seem too conspicuous. Perhaps acting as if nothing happened would be better, and investigating again after some time would be more appropriate.

At this moment in the Seeking Tao Institute.

The atmosphere is lively.

Another year of the True Martial Peach Assembly.

Everyone raised their glasses in celebration:

"Come, let's raise a glass together to welcome Shi's joining!"

"This toast is for Shi!"

Everyone burst into genuine laughter. Zhuang Chen's chubby little face was flushed, partly from drinking and partly from excitement, as a warm feeling filled his heart:

"Dear senior brothers and sisters, I'll drink first as a gesture of respect!"

Everything was spoken through the wine.

Saying more would actually seem pretentious.

Everyone's faces bore smiles. During this period of time spent together, they had come to like Zhuang Chen's character—unpretentious, often silly and smiling. Previously somewhat excessively overweight, but ever since he began cultivating the improved version of Dreaming Gluttony taught by Ning Qi, he had lost quite a bit of weight, though still a little chubby.

Logically speaking, Zhuang Chen shouldn't be overweight; he just loves eating.

His progress in cultivating the Vengeance Stance is rapid. He himself is an unparalleled genius, born with Innate Sword Bone. Now that his sword bone has been broken down and rebuilt, his foundation is stronger than ever.

"Third senior sister's brew is truly remarkable!" Zhuang Chen praised without reservation.

Ye Qinghe laughed heartily:

"Shi really knows how to talk."

Everyone merely smiled, but Ye Qinghe's Peach Blossom Brew had indeed improved this year. Still, it was unclear whether Ye Qinghe's brewing skills had advanced or if the ingredients were simply better.

Everyone munched on the True Martial Peach Fruit in their hands, finding it exceptionally sweet.

Especially Zhuang Chen, now in retraining the Body Tempering Realm. This peach fruit is even more beneficial to him; he devoured several in a row.

This is the second year utilizing the Bright Fruit for cultivation. Plus, Ning Qi relocated the peach tree to activate the Enlightenment Tea tree seed. Now the tea tree has emerged and nourishes back; naturally, the peach fruits surpass their former glory.

Everyone chatted happily.

Zhuang Chen felt the lighthearted atmosphere deeply, never ceasing to smile foolishly.

Ning Qi also listened eagerly as his senior brothers and sisters shared stories.

Ye Qinghe smiled slyly:

"I'll tell you something you're bound to be interested in. I once caught Fifth Brother secretly writing a love letter! This guy probably has a girl he likes, hiding it from us!"

As soon as these words were spoken.

Jiang Baishan's face turned red, while everyone laughed joyfully, showing keen interest.

Speaking of which, many True Disciples are currently single, none of them have dao partners. Although True Martial Sect is Taoism, one can indeed form dao partnerships. Unfortunately, the others haven't done it yet. Hearing that Jiang Baishan is to be a pioneer made everyone's eyes brighten.

Jiang Baishan waved his hands while blushing:

"Don't listen to Third Senior Sister's nonsense; I was writing to a friend!"

"Bah, just tell us if that friend is a girl. Who would secretly pluck a peach blossom in Jiu's courtyard just to write to a friend? Fifth Brother, are you fond of men?"

Luo Wentian timely chimed in:

"Tsk tsk, could it be that fierce girl who once wanted to chop off your shoulder, Fifth Brother? Then you're probably in trouble; she'll have you completely in her grasp in the future!"

Everyone laughed even more heartily.

Jiang Baishan smiled wryly, begging forgiveness, and only after a few more drinks did the teasing cease.

But nobody pursued the matter further. They were just joking. They knew that when the time came for serious talk, Jiang Baishan wouldn't hide it from them.

Ning Qi smiled and listened.

For now, he doesn't have many thoughts on finding a dao partner. He's still young, and he might not in the future. If it ever happens, it'll have to be someone who can truly walk the path of the Dao with him.

Chapter 147: Formless Gang Body, Celestial Being List Update (2-in-1)

The matter of Daoist partners was quickly brushed off by everyone, after all, there were also Ning Qi and Zhuang Chen, two 'little Taoists' here.

The second disciple Xiong Shi brought up another matter:

"Senior brother, when is the next ranking of the world's Taoist sects? How are the preparations going?"

All eyes turned towards them.

Although the True Martial Sect has received a Taoist plaque awarded by the Great Yan imperial court, to truly gain worldwide recognition and become a top-tier Taoist sect, it must participate in the Taoist rankings.

Only nine top-tier Taoist sects are chosen worldwide.

Countless Taoist sects are highly envious of these spots, and many generations strive just to be among them, and the True Martial Sect is no exception.

But it's very challenging, even to be the ninth the last spot requires substantial foundation.

The True Martial Sect may have enough top-end strength with the True Man Tianjian, but its foundation is slightly lacking, having only been established for a few decades. To enter the rankings, they must find some supplements from other places, as those already in the rankings refuse to be squeezed out, inevitably causing friction.

In fact.

Over the years, few top-tier Taoist sects have been squeezed out.

Luo Wentian said:

"The specific time has not been determined yet; it depends on the intentions of those nine Taoist sects. Given our True Martial Sect's foundation, we can compete a bit, but it's just a trial. After the True Martial Peach Assembly, I will go to Tao State to communicate with the True Profound Sect and see the specifics."

Everyone raised their glasses to toast Luo Wentian.

Over the years, Luo Wentian has sacrificed a lot for the development of the True Martial Sect, and recently, Taoist Longshan has been discussing passing the leadership to him, but Luo Wentian is still hesitating, worrying his cultivation isn't high enough and would tarnish the True Martial Sect's prestige.

However, everyone knows that Luo Wentian taking over is inevitable.

He is the most qualified in the entire True Martial Sect.

Ning Qi is aware of this; he has considered some ways to help Luo Wentian break through quickly, but the Martial Path inherently offers few shortcuts. He can only try to make Luo Wentian's cultivation smoother and quicker, but no significant breakthrough is possible in a short period.

Hearing about the True Profound Sect.

Ning Qi's heart was stirred, and he recalled the prior Taoist Baishan.

He laughed and said:

"Senior brother, if you're going to the True Profound Sect, help me check how Taoist Baishan is doing. Is he drawing nearer to the Celestial Human Realm?"

Everyone laughed, having heard the past rumors of Taoist Baishan pestering the junior disciple on True Martial Mountain. The White Ape, upon hearing the name of that shameless old Taoist, rolled his eyes, bearing a grudge against the old Taoist wanting to take him away.

Everyone began discussing the preparations needed for the Taoist rankings.

Inevitably, they mentioned True Man Tianjian.

The fourth disciple He Yan thought for a moment and suddenly brightened:

"Counting the time, the Great Yan Celestial Being List, updated every three years, should be coming out again. If Senior Tianjian can get on the list, our chances in the Taoist rankings will greatly increase."

Everyone's expressions became excited.

"That's right, hopefully, Senior Tianjian can make it on the list."

The Great Yan Celestial Being List ranks only thirty-six.

Sometimes the strengths of thirty-six to thirty-seven or thirty-eight may not differ much, but only those on the list are recognized worldwide, resulting in a significant difference in fame.

Ning Qi smiled slightly, though he was somewhat helpless inside.

If possible, he didn't really want to be on the Celestial Being List, as it would attract some unnecessary trouble, but it wasn't his choice.

Everyone looked forward to the list's update.

During this time, Zhuang Chen also expressed admiration for True Man Tianjian, unabashedly stating he aims to become an unparalleled swordsman like him one day.

Everyone nodded with smiles.

Everyone acknowledged Zhuang Chen's talent, especially in the Sword Dao.

He spontaneously practiced a set of sword techniques with much flair, clearly possessing an inexplicable charm in the same sword technique, and having the demeanor of a master at a young age, prompting even Luo Wentian and others to show admiration, praising the innate Sword Bone's excellence.

Ning Qi chuckled lightly.

If Zhuang Chen perseveres, the Celestial Human Realm will be a natural result; such talent suggests becoming a generation's Sword Saint isn't impossible, especially after the Sword Bone is broken and rebuilt.

Happy times are always short.

Numerous senior and junior brothers gathered well into the night before reluctantly leaving.

Ning Qi saw them off and pointed at the Enlightenment Tea saplings already calf-high:

"If all goes well next year, maybe we can have a taste of Enlightenment Tea."

Everyone's eyes lit up, full of anticipation.

"Rest assured, Jiu, for this cup of Enlightenment Tea, we'll help gather more Martial Saint secrets for you!" everyone pledged confidently, rubbing their hands eagerly.

Ye Qinghe also said:

"I'll go to that small town once again to see if I can gather more information from that blind old gentleman."

Ning Qi didn't dissuade him; he couldn't say he had already been to the small town, and that old gentleman might have departed.

He merely nodded with a smile.

Listening to this, Zhuang Chen also kept it in mind, thinking if he had related information in the future he would definitely inform Ning Qi at once, always remembering Ning Qi's kindness.

Watching everyone leave, Ning Qi's smile broadened, feeling at peace, as spending time with his senior brothers and sisters always made him more relaxed.

The slight impacts from recent killings completely faded away.

...

After the True Martial Peach Assembly.

A few True Disciples set off on their training journeys, which had gradually become a habit for them. Especially Jiang Baishan, who couldn't wait to go down the mountain first, was teased by everyone thoroughly.

Chapter 148: Formless Gang Body, Celestial Being List Update (Two in One)_2

Ning Qi's life continued to return to its previous routine.

Following a structured schedule of cultivation, in addition to reading scriptures and seeking enlightenment, he watered the Enlightenment Tea Tree. Watching the saplings grow day by day was quite a delight.

In this process, Ning Qi also gained a lot of inspiration.

However, currently.

A significant portion of his energy was devoted to the creation of the secret technique to condense the Gang Qi Avatar.

Ever since Ning Qi broke through the Jade Liquid Realm and noticed that the Gang Qi contained more spirituality, he had this idea. In fact, the Gang Qi Avatar that Ning Qi was condensing now was already very strong.

At this moment.

Ning Qi pointed with his finger, and the Gang Qi within his body poured out, instantly condensing into a fierce Thunder Tiger with wings sprouting from its ribs. Lightning crackled on its body, and its wings were like blades, appearing just like the true Thunder Tiger Beast King, only lacking the true Beast King's agility.

The spirituality of the Gang Qi, though present, was ultimately limited.

If used solely for combat, this level would naturally suffice.

But Ning Qi was not satisfied.

"Now, there are many powers keeping an eye on True Martial Mountain. The Demon Sect and the Southern Border Alliance are both vast entities. Even if they only spare a bit of attention, they must be dealt with carefully. True Man Tianjian, hiding in the shadows, will eventually be forced out one day."

"Although I can disguise myself as a substitute, it's ultimately not the most secure plan. If there is a time when I need to be present with 'True Man Tianjian' simultaneously, it would be revealing myself without a fight."

Ning Qi was very clear-headed.

Especially when He Yan mentioned a few days ago that the Celestial Being List was about to be updated, which also reminded him that if True Man Tianjian made the list, it might cause trouble.

"If the Gang Qi Avatar only mimics exotic beasts, it's fine, but if it needs to condense into a human form and convincingly exist for a period of time, more effort is needed."

Brilliant ideas constantly emerged in Ning Qi's mind, flowing like a river.

He pointed a finger, causing the sea surface of the Jade Liquid Sea to collapse halfway.

An incredible amount of Gang Qi condensed in the void, then stretched continually, eventually forming a human shape, transforming rapidly to condense facial features and human characteristics. With Ning Qi's skill in Body Shifting and Bone Changing, this was not difficult; he could even simulate human skin and bones with Gang Qi.

Looking at the elderly man in front of him, dressed in a Taoist robe, exuding an aura like a crane, Ning Qi fell into contemplation.

The old man's pupils were indifferent, without much emotion, but the most important thing was that currently, it was just an empty shell, likely to disintegrate in a fierce battle.

"Perhaps, it's missing a core."

Ning Qi's eyes lit up.

He manipulated the Gang Qi, and a Primordial Core immediately condensed within the body of the 'old man.' With the prior experience of the Virtual Sword Pill Dissolution Technique, achieving this was even easier for Ning Qi.

Ning Qi carefully perceived.

Clearly, after the Primordial Core formed, the Gang Qi Avatar became much more solidified.

"It still seems a bit lacking, but it's not a big problem. If I use the Cyan Profound Body Protection Technique to lock in the Gang Qi, it can both defend and eliminate concerns about the avatar dissipating!"

Sitting beside the Enlightenment Tea Tree, Ning Qi's mind was filled with bursts of inspiration.

Past creations of various secret techniques floated to mind, constantly extracting essence, while previously read Taoist Scriptures offered inspiration. Ning Qi occasionally corrected the shortcomings of the Gang Qi Avatar, which became increasingly strong and stable.

"With Gang Qi Spirituality as the foundation, Body Shifting and Bone Changing as the form, Virtual Sword Pill Dissolution Technique as the core, and Cyan Profound Body Protection Technique to stabilize it, this Formless Gang Body is complete!"

Ning Qi was overjoyed.

A white-haired elder in a Taoist robe sat opposite him, speechless. From a distance, one might think Ning Qi was playing a game with someone.

"Greetings, fellow Taoist!" Ning Qi laughed and saluted.

But the elder remained silent, his gaze extremely indifferent.

Ning Qi was not surprised; he never expected to get a response.

This Gang Qi Avatar was just a condensation of Gang Qi, not a truly intelligent avatar. Ning Qi was merely playing around.

"From the earlier experiment, the Formless Gang Body requires at least twenty percent of my Gang Qi to condense, and at most eighty percent, with varying levels of strength. However, even with twenty percent, it far exceeds what other martial artists can sustain."

There was no doubt.

This was again a secret technique only Ning Qi himself could use. Others simply did not possess such immense Gang Qi; not even those at the Primordial Core Realm.

Ning Qi gently waved his hand.

The Gang Qi Avatar shot off into the distance, and through the connection of the Gang Qi, he could fully sense the avatar's specific condition and exert control over it. Even while sitting in the Seeking Tao Institute, Ning Qi could discreetly control the Gang Qi Avatar to use the Heavenly Sword Technique and various secret techniques.

This was the wonder of the Gang Qi Avatar, sharing the power of heaven and earth that Ning Qi controlled.

A moment later.

The Gang Qi Avatar returned to the Seeking Tao Institute, and Ning Qi had his answer.

"If the avatar is more than ten miles away from me, it becomes challenging to control and will collapse, with the optimal distance being five miles."

Ning Qi smiled as he dispersed the Gang Qi Avatar.

While the avatar might not wield all his power, if it expends more Gang Qi, it could exert at least a significant portion of his strength, which suffices for now.

After all, in a true life-or-death situation, concerns about exposure are irrelevant.

At that time, he would handle it himself.

Having solved a difficult problem, Ning Qi took a deep breath, feeling somewhat satisfied. He lay back in a wicker chair, pleasantly perusing another volume of Taoist Scripture.

...

Time passed.

The summer heat blazed, and Ning Qi had already consumed his third Blood Jade Pill, enhancing his strength by several more degrees.

Under the combined effects of the Blood Jade Pill and the Heaven and Earth Grinding Wheel Quenching Gang Technique, his cultivation speed increased by leaps and bounds. The Jade Liquid Sea expanded steadily, becoming deeper and more solid. Once it reached its peak, he would begin condensing a Primordial Core.

Even Ning Qi himself was a bit eager to see how powerful he would be after stepping into the Primordial Core Realm. Perhaps there would be very few in the Celestial Human Realm who could be his match.

Besides cultivating, Ning Qi also focused on observing the movements of the Blood Rain Tower and those organizations. Previously, there were still some lackeys left, and to avoid exposing too much, Ning Qi had not entirely eliminated them. Keeping them could instead be used to speculate on the movements of the Southern Border Alliance.

But what puzzled him.

After several months passed, there had been no signs of movement from the Southern Border Alliance.

He didn't know if they hadn't discovered that the Skinny Elder had died, or if they had found out but decided to lay low for now.

Ning Qi merely asked Taoist Longshan to keep an eye out, while the rest was left to nature. Actively probing might expose themselves, as they could be waiting for him to fall into their trap.

At present, remaining still was the better choice; he only needed to maintain heightened alertness.

Speaking of Taoist Longshan.

Recently, he has been quite busy.

Not busy with his own cultivation, as progress in the Celestial Human Realm is slow, requiring time to accumulate even with great talent.

Taoist Longshan had been busy teaching Zhuang Chen.

He finally felt the joy of mentoring a prodigy, who grasped concepts swiftly and could infer many things. The satisfaction was indescribable, and more importantly, he could maintain his dignified presence as a teacher, feeling pleased with himself.

This reminded him of the days he taught Ning Qi.

Those memories were almost unbearable to recall.

Back then, Ning Qi constantly frustrated him. Within a short span, he couldn't keep up and felt exhausted, eventually relegating himself to support roles.

Ning Qi wasn't a genius; he was a monster.

Sometimes, disciples with too little talent could be exasperating to teach, but too much talent left no sense of accomplishment. Zhuang Chen, however, was just right.

One time, Ning Qi saw his master so spirited and couldn't help but smile wryly.

He knew his master had been stifled over the years and, having a bright student now, was eager to pass on all his knowledge.

Life at True Martial Mountain was peaceful and comfortable.

If possible, Ning Qi hoped it could continue like this until he became invincible in the world.

But unfortunately, things never stay the same, and they rarely align with one's desires.

His fourth disciple, He Yan, rushed back to True Martial Mountain overnight, bringing back a significant piece of news.

The Great Yan Celestial Being List has been updated!

Chapter 149: Fame Shaking the World, Battle of Blade and Sword (Two-in-One)

The Heavenly Ranking of the Great Yan differs from other martial rankings like the Hidden Dragon List and Primordial Core List; it's the sole ranking issued by the Imperial Court, holding immense credibility. Being listed means becoming famous across the world.

As such, the update that occurs every three years is eagerly anticipated throughout Great Yan.

The announcement of this ranking update was delayed by several days, prompting He Yan to rush back to the True Martial Sect as soon as he heard the news.

Previously, True Martial Sect disciples were interested in the Heavenly Ranking, but it seemed too high and distant from them. However, things are different now as the True Martial Sect has an unparalleled strong person overlooking Great Yan!

True Man Tianjian!

After He Yan brought back news of the Heavenly Ranking, the entire True Martial Sect was in an uproar.

Taoist Longshan was also intensely interested, and Ning Qi and a couple of other true disciples remaining on True Martial Mountain heard the news as well.

Within the Bright Martial Pavilion.

He Yan excitedly opened a book with gilded edges.

"Master, look quickly, Senior Tianjian has made it onto the list!" His face was flushed with excitement as he rushed back to the mountain to share this joyous news immediately, feeling honored by association.

Everyone looked intently.

The last page read:

Heavenly Ranking 36th, True Man Tianjian.

Following that was a series of small characters detailing True Man Tianjian's information and battle achievements, along with some speculation.

"True Man Tianjian, age unknown, past experiences unknown, currently residing on True Martial Mountain. At the time when the Demon Sect's Celestial Being Old Demon Lin sought to annihilate True Martial Mountain, a Celestial Sword soared through the sky, severely injuring Old Demon Lin..."

"Afterward, five Celestial Beings from the Demon Sect gathered at True Martial Mountain, True Man Tianjian once again wielded the sword to block one of them..."

"Based on the comprehensive battle achievements of True Man Tianjian's two appearances and the fact that True Man Tianjian has never shown his face, it is highly likely he has reserved strength, hence ranked 36th on the Heavenly Ranking."

Besides the eloquently written text, a masterful artist had depicted the celestial splendor of True Man Tianjian's sword soaring, instilling admiration in viewers. Regardless of the actual strength, in terms of charisma, few on the Heavenly Ranking surpass this celestial sword in the sky.

Several true disciples were thrilled.

They frequently showed expressions of awe.

Zhuang Chen couldn't help but express:

"If possible, I truly wish Senior Tianjian could offer some guidance."

He was passionately devoted to the Sword Dao, and having such an unparalleled swordsman within his sect was naturally enticing, although he knew True Man Tianjian rarely appeared, and even his master Taoist Longshan seldom met him, leaving him feeling a touch of regret.

Taoist Longshan listened, stroking his beard with a smile, casting a quirky glance at his young disciple.

True Man Tianjian being listed on the Heavenly Ranking delighted him, as it would significantly boost True Martial Sect's reputation, laying the groundwork for future expansion and preparation for Taoism's worldwide ranking.

Though he had some hope of making the Heavenly Ranking, it wasn't a certainty, and now that it's settled, he naturally felt joyous.

But Ning Qi felt a bit helpless.

Honestly, he would prefer not to be on this Heavenly Ranking.

The Martial Realm is a massive arena of fame and fortune, and the Heavenly Ranking is the focal point, prone to cause trouble, especially for him at this somewhat awkward rank, attracting attention and possibly challenges from many.

It might be better to keep a low profile.

But since he's already listed, there's no point in saying this now, he can only try to see the positives.

"For the sect's development, it's definitely more beneficial than harmful, and it serves as a deterrent to the Demon Sect. However, we must be cautious of the Southern Border Alliance; if they suspected us before, being listed might draw more attention."

Nonetheless, Ning Qi wasn't too worried.

His actual strength far exceeds the 36th rank on the Heavenly Ranking, and he had made further progress recently. If he employed all his techniques, he might even stand a chance against Town North King.

Zhuang Chen's curious words caught his attention:

"Senior Tianjian is already so powerful, who are those ranked above him?" His eyes held yearning.

Ning Qi was also somewhat curious.

While the Heavenly Ranking doesn't encompass all experts, it has high reference value. Knowing more now might prove useful in future encounters.

He Yan smiled as he flipped through the Heavenly Ranking, providing a knowledgeable introduction, occasionally sharing unrecorded anecdotes and rumors from the ranking; he had always been intrigued by various miscellaneous studies.

"Heavenly Ranking 35th is a strong person from Lei State, who entered the ranking in the previous edition. Without making a move in the last three years, he slipped down one rank..."

"..."

"This is Cyan Bull Senior, previously ranked 33rd, now moved up to 32nd, thanks to his achievement of destroying the Death Fire Abyss branch. Furthermore, the Demon Sect had attempted to trouble Cyan Bull Senior but were all resolved by him, indirectly propelling him further in the Heavenly Ranking."

Everyone listened, entranced.

The tales of these unparalleled experts always generate immense interest.

But Ning Qi merely paid brief attention; given his current strength, those ranked near the bottom of the Heavenly Ranking hardly catch his Dharma Eye.

He only paused briefly at the Cyan Bull Blade Master's rank, as he was the most familiar.

He mused.

At the previous Celestial Being Grand Ceremony, Cyan Bull Blade Master was at the height of his power, but in no time had been left behind by him. If Cyan Bull Blade Master were to face him now, he would easily be subdued.

Chapter 150: Fame Shakes the World, The Battle of Sword and Blade (Two-in-One)_2

He Yan continued speaking.

The Celestial Being List that updates every three years doesn't see major changes. The further up the list you go, the more frequent the familiar faces are. At most, there are slight adjustments based on actions from recent years. After all, martial artists in the Celestial Human Realm have long lifespans. It's said that the Imperial Court is planning to change the update frequency from every three years to every five or even ten years, but discussions are still ongoing.

Ning Qi was watching the powerful figures on the list.

He started to pay attention mainly to those from rank twenty upwards.

"From rank twenty to rank ten, there are three strong figures from Taoism, two from the Buddhist Sect, and the rest are from various major sects. There are no strong figures among loose cultivators. Seeing this, it seems that loose martial artists lack resources and lineage, living quite difficult lives."

Ning Qi felt a sense of lament.

In the early stages of the martial path, loose martial artists might be able to compete with sect martial artists, relying on fortuitous encounters to keep up. But the later it goes, the harder it becomes. Someone like the Carefree Monarch, who can achieve the Celestial Human Realm by himself, is almost the pinnacle among loose martial artists.

He Yan continued:

"Among the top ten, we have indeed met one."

Everyone reacted instantly.

Town North King!

Ning Qi looked over and immediately showed a look of surprise.

Town North King was not ranked ninth but seventh. He had moved up two ranks, knowing that the Celestial Being List doesn't falsify, its credibility is strong, meaning Town North King has grown stronger, or he had hidden his strength before.

Ning Qi looked carefully at the small descriptive text.

"Rank seven on the Celestial Being List, Town North King, originally named Li Xuanyang, started on the martial path at six, gradually making his mark in the royal family, joined the army at eighteen, fought against the Northern Barbarians, reached the White Mist Realm at thirty and was titled marquis, entered the Primordial Core Realm at fifty, reached the Celestial Human Realm at sixty, and was titled Town North King in the same year... fused his martial arts to create the Heaven-Suppressing Fist, suppressing countless Northern Barbarians, his fame is illustrious..."

Ning Qi commented inwardly.

"Reaching the Celestial Human Realm at sixty? Truly an unparalleled genius, indeed one of the fastest cultivators in the world, no wonder that now, at less than one hundred and fifty years old, he possesses such powerful strength. So that fist technique with profound intent is called Heaven-Suppressing Fist?"

He continued to read and indeed found the latest battle updates.

"Ten powerful Celestial Human warriors from the Northern Barbarians led an army to encircle Town North King, aiming to move south, but Town North King defeated them single-handedly, killing three, causing seven to flee, and the army was annihilated..."

"These ten Celestial Human warriors surely aren't ordinary Celestial Human Realm figures. It seems Town North King's strength is not simple," Ning Qi mused inwardly. He had initially thought that after his progress, he could spar with Town North King, but now it appears there is still a gap. As is widely known, the closer to the top of the Celestial Being List you get, the greater the gaps become.

The gap between every rank within the top ten might be greater than the gap between the subsequent five ranks.

His gaze lingered longer on the top ten experts, remembering what He Yan said.

His gaze finally settled on the top three.

In any field, the top three are unavoidable topics, especially the first rank.

"Rank three on the Celestial Being List, Blade Demon, emerged twenty years ago, his blade techniques are eerie like demons, one slash can sever a mountain, and he directly killed the former third on the Celestial Being List..."

"Rank two on the Celestial Being List, Flame Martial Grand General, commands the entire Great Yan army, with countless years on the battlefield, highly respected within the Great Yan army..."

"Rank one on the Celestial Being List, Wind-listening Old Man, rumored to be blind in youth, yet his martial path possesses spiritual wisdom, appears and disappears without a trace, holding his place unchallenged for a full Jiazi..."

Ning Qi scrutinized the top three strong figures.

The third-ranked Blade Demon has always been the faith of most blademen. Previously, the word was that swordsmen overshadowed blademen, but once Blade Demon emerged, he directly eclipsed all swordsmen's momentum, as the strongest swordsman is just rank fifth the Sun Chasing Sword King.

However, swordsmen on the Celestial Being List overall outnumber blademen, and their quantity has surpassed by two ranks—their numbers used to be equal, but True Man Tianjian has entered the Celestial Being List at thirty-six, just squeezing out Thunder Shock Blade Venerate who was originally thirty-six.

The second is the Flame Martial Grand General of the Great Yan's Imperial Court. With the name Flame Martial, one can understand the stature of this general. Ning Qi originally thought, given it is an Imperial Court issued Celestial Being List, they would arrange the first rank for themselves, but unexpectedly, it is placed second.

Perhaps this also illustrates the credibility of the Great Yan Celestial Being List.

"But it seems this Wind-listening Old Man is extremely formidable, having physical impairments yet can hold the top rank for a full Jiazi."

He was somewhat amazed.

Undoubtedly, these figures are truly at the pinnacle of Great Yan, and without the emergence of a Martial Saint from Great Yan, they are the strongest.

"These individuals ought to have achieved Celestial Being Perfection, possibly gathering the Three Flowers of Essence, Qi, and Spirit to have such powerful combat strength." Ning Qi carefully observed their battle descriptions. Severing mountains, shattering earth, burning rivers, boiling seas—these feats are far beyond the capabilities of ordinary Celestial Human Realm figures.

"I wonder if they have started progressing towards the Martial Saint Realm?"

The number of powerful figures in the world is vast, yet Martial Saints are very few.

Ning Qi felt he gained immensely from consulting the Celestial Being List.

He was comparing his battle strength.

He thought that once he stepped into the Primordial Core Realm, he should not fear these people, and even suppress them.

"Nevertheless, the Great Yan Celestial Being List does not encompass all unparalleled figures, such as those from the Demon Sect, the Southern Border Alliance, strong figures among the Northern Barbarians, strong figures among exotic beasts. Some martial path sects may also have hidden strengths not included. It's possible to be one hundred percent certain that the Great Yan Imperial Court itself has some strong figures hidden and not on the list."