

Divine King 101

Chapter 101 Gathering of Geniuses

Late at night, in the room where Xu Nian stayed.

Xu Nian didn't fall asleep peacefully, but instead entered into arduous training.

After exchanging punches with that Nine-star Star Realm Body Cultivator today, he clearly felt how the iron hammer influenced his strength.

At this moment, Xu Nian, with the iron hammer on his back, supported himself on one hand on the floor, standing upside down in the room.

Veins popped out all over his body, his muscles swelled up like a cage, and powerful Gang Qi roamed within him, moving beneath his skin like a mouse scurrying back and forth.

Xu Nian's face reddened, drenched in sweat, obviously struggling to maintain such a pose, but he gritted his teeth and persevered.

Every second of this upside-down stance was incredibly difficult; during this process, he had to absorb Gang Qi through every cell in his body, and ultimately concentrate it all in his arms to maintain his balance.

Of course, as painful as it was, the effects were tremendously significant.

Now, two hours of Xu Nian's cultivation was equivalent to a usual day's training, showing the rare effectiveness of this training method.

This way, Xu Nian persisted through the night.

By morning, he felt that his Cultivation had significantly advanced, the Eight-star Body Cultivation, which was supposed to break through in several months, seemed to loosen a bit, as if he was close to breaking into the Nine-star Realm.

Once Xu Nian's Divine Demon Cultivation truly broke through to Nine-star, there would be no rival left in the Star Realm.

Xu Nian changed into a clean set of clothes and walked out of his room, only to find Chen Xifeng already in the courtyard, holding something in his hand, with a troubled expression.

"What's wrong?" Xu Nian walked over and asked.

"This academy's grand competition is really a gathering of geniuses, getting a place seems not as easy as imagined; here is the list of participating colleges for this time," Chen Xifeng replied, and then handed a beast skin scroll to Xu Nian.

Xu Nian took the scroll and found there were thirty names on it, each associated with a corresponding academy.

However, these participants were not listed by academy, but rather ranked according to some system.

"How are they ranked before the competition has even started?" Xu Nian asked puzzled.

"Before every major academy competition, the Governor Mansion ranks participants based on intelligence from the Ten Great Colleges, and these ranks largely represent the competitors' standings," Chen Xifeng replied.

Xu Nian nodded in realization.

However, Xu Nian soon smiled, because he found his own name was ranked twenty-ninth.

To think out of thirty competitors, he was ranked twenty-ninth, which made Xu Nian quite bemused—was his strength really that weak?

Looking at Chen Xifeng, who was at least ranked ninth, Xu Nian couldn't believe he was worse than Chen Xifeng.

"It must be that the Prefectural Governor doesn't have your information, and the Dean purposely concealed your details, hence your ranking so low," Chen Xifeng explained.

Xu Nian nodded; he didn't mind this pre-determined ranking as it didn't hold much significance for the actual competition.

But soon, Xu Nian frowned because he found that Dugu Jingcheng was ranked fourth.

This surprised Xu Nian because Dugu Jingcheng enjoyed considerable fame in East Field County, known across the Ten Great Colleges for mastering Man and Sword as One, and now he was only ranked fourth.

"You noticed too, huh? Dugu Jingcheng is fourth, and the top three are not simple," Chen Xifeng remarked.

"Oh?" Xu Nian glanced again at the top three.

The first place was Ji Yun from Tianhen Academy.

The second was Zhao Yan from Beihai Academy.

The third was Feng Rain from Chengfeng Academy.

Xu Nian didn't recognize the top two, but the third he had met yesterday at the city gate.

Xu Nian was surprised; that girl's rank was even above Dugu Jingcheng.

"I've inquired already, this Ji Yun is the leading genius of Tianhen Academy, twenty-four years old, and reached the Peak of Ninth level Star Realm Body Cultivation two years ago. His strength is extraordinary,

especially his Spear Technique, which has reached Man and Spear as One. He's bound to break through during this competition," Chen Xifeng said.

Xu Nian was astounded; to think Ji Yun had reached the peak two years ago and mastered Man and Spear as One, he indeed seemed a formidable opponent.

While the contest only allowed Star Realm powerhouses to register, there was no restriction against breaking through after registering, so many who've suppressed their peak for a long cultivate during the competition—a common occurrence in previous tournaments.

"And this Zhao Yan?" Xu Nian inquired further.

"This Zhao Yan is also extremely remarkable. Like Ji Yun, he too reached Star Realm Peak two years ago, but he also has another identity as an Artifact Master. It's said he's reached the Five-star Apprentice Weapon Master and controls an incredibly fearsome flame," Chen Xifeng answered.

"Artifact Master? Interesting!" Xu Nian's face showed surprise.

He hadn't expected to encounter a Five-star Artifact Master Apprentice in this grand academy competition.

Considering his own Artifact Refining level might have reached a Four-star Apprentice Weapon Master by now!

With that thought, Xu Nian really wanted to meet this Zhao Yan.

"And this Feng Rain?" Xu Nian continued asking.

"This Feng Rain, the one we met yesterday, I just found out today she's only twenty-two years old, at Nine-star Peak, but most importantly, she possesses an Innate Sword Spirit Body," Chen Xifeng revealed.

"Innate Sword Spirit Body?" Xu Nian appeared stunned.

Innate Sword Spirit Body was indeed a special Physique, whether for Body Cultivators or Spirit Cultivators, having a unique body.

Like the legendary Four Supreme Bodies among Body Cultivators and the Nine Innate Attribute Battle Bodies among Spirit Cultivators.

Xu Nian's Nine Dragons Supreme Body too, could be considered an extremely powerful Divine Demon Physique.

"Innate Sword Spirit Body, no wonder she was so targeted towards Dugu Jingcheng," Xu Nian thought to himself.

Xu Nian glanced over the list again; perhaps aside from these top three, there might be more hidden dragons and crouching tigers among the rest.

As Chen Xifeng said earlier, securing a ranking seemed not so easy this time.

"Wait, he's also on it!" Xu Nian suddenly focused on one name.

Qin Tian!

His nominal big brother, the once most brilliant talent of the Qin Family, who also cultivated at Tianhen Academy, who Xu Nian once looked up to.

"He's actually ranked seventh! I wonder what his expression will be when he sees me again," Xu Nian mused to himself with a slight smile on his lips.

Chapter 102 The Mysterious Woman

As Xu Nian and Chen Xifeng were analyzing the contestant information for this session's Academy competition, the Governor Mansion at the center of Tianfeng City unexpectedly welcomed an unanticipated guest.

This person rode on a majestic black leopard, with a somewhat chubby figure and a youthful appearance—who else could it be but Chen Wudi.

The people on the streets retreated in fright upon seeing the formidable leopard, each of them exclaiming in admiration.

Seeing the young man, the faces of the guards at the Governor Mansion revealed expressions of utmost surprise and joy.

"Quick... go inform the young lady, tell her the young master has returned," one guard said to another, and the other immediately dashed inside the mansion.

Chen Wudi paid no attention to the two guards; instead, he was gnawing on a beast leg he had procured from who knows where and lamented as he looked at the grand gates of the Governor Mansion, "Ah, flying on Flying Demon Beasts really is faster. It's incredible I arrived a whole night later than them, but at least I didn't miss the opportunity."

Chen Wudi chuckled, leaped off the black leopard, and marched straight into the mansion.

The guard followed behind Chen Wudi, brimming with respect and beaming with smiles.

Onlookers in the distance couldn't help but inwardly sigh with wonder; the guards at the Governor Mansion were usually icy and fierce, ready to draw their blades at anyone who approached, extremely stern. This pleasing and smiling demeanor was a sight they had never seen before.

In the guard's mind, however, nothing was amiss. The young man before him was the only son of the Lord Governor, the future sole heir of the Governor Mansion. Who else should he curry favor with, if not him?

"Chen Wudi, you actually know to come back!" Just then, an extremely pleasant voice called out from afar.

Following that, a stunningly beautiful figure walked up next to Chen Wudi, grabbed his ear, and scolded sternly, "Humph, tell me where you've been these past months, do you know how hard it was for me to find you?"

"Ow... it hurts, sis, let go, please let go!" Chen Wudi quickly begged for mercy.

He knew his sister was someone who was more responsive to a soft approach rather than a hard one, so he immediately resorted to pleading.

Sure enough, the stunningly beautiful woman loosened Chen Wudi's ear and demanded sternly, "Tell me, where have you been these past months? Do you realize how worried dad and I were?"

Chen Wudi rubbed his ear and laughed, "Heh heh, sister, don't be angry right away, I did it all for you, that's why I left home."

"For me, for me what?" The beautiful woman was stunned, but what Chen Wudi said next made her absolutely livid.

"I went to find a husband for you, of course. Sis, you're so violent, I obviously had to find a brother-in-law to manage you, to save me from your bullying," Chen Wudi shamelessly retorted.

"I'll smack you!" The beautiful woman was instantly enraged and kicked Chen Wudi's backside.

Chen Wudi howled in pain, rubbing his backside and looking at the beautiful woman with a look of pitiful grievance.

"Tell me, where did you actually go?" the beautiful woman demanded sternly.

Chen Wudi dared not conceal any longer and said, "I didn't go anywhere dangerous. I've been staying at Qinglin Academy this whole time."

"Really?" The beautiful woman was somewhat incredulous.

"Of course it's true. If you don't believe me, you can go ask the Dean of Qinglin Academy. They are now at Tianhen Academy," Chen Wudi hurriedly said.

The breathtakingly beautiful woman, upon hearing Chen Wudi speak without any hint of deception, finally nodded and said, "What are you doing at Qinglin Academy? If you want to study at an academy, I can arrange for you to enter Tianhen Academy. Why go so far away?"

"Didn't I just say? I'm looking for a brother-in-law for myself, Sister, and I tell you, I've found one. He's very suitable for you. Although he's four years younger than you, he's a really good person with an exceptional talent. You'll definitely like him... Ah... Sister, you're kicking my butt again!" Chen Wudi exclaimed.

"Hmph, not only do I want to kick your butt, but I also want to smack your mouth for spouting such nonsense. Don't you run away!" The stunning woman chased after Chen Wudi.

If Xu Nian were here, he would be extremely surprised.

Because he actually knew this ravishing woman; who else could she be if not Chen Yao, whom he had encountered by the waterfall in the Demon Beast Forest?

...

Xu Nian was unaware that the woman he had seen undressed in the Demon Beast Forest was the daughter of the Prefectural Governor, nor did he expect her to be Chen Wudi's sister.

At this moment, he seemed to have run into a bit of trouble, or rather, a situation that others might view as exceedingly tantalizing.

When Xu Nian and Chen Xifeng walked out of the courtyard gate, planning to visit Tianhen Academy, it just so happened that two young women also walked out from the courtyard across from them.

Both of the young women were around twenty years old. One of them was strikingly attractive, draped in a pale red dress, seductively charming, someone who could easily make it onto the Beauty List at Qinglin Academy, and rank quite high at that.

However, Xu Nian's gaze lingered more on the other woman, who was clad in a simple white dress, her face veiled, revealing only a pair of eyes. Her aura was ethereal, like that of a celestial being, evoking a sense that she was beyond the mundane world.

Xu Nian's surprise stemmed from his inability to discern this woman's cultivation level; moreover, his Spiritual Sense couldn't penetrate her veil, a predicament he had never encountered before.

The veiled woman seemed to sense Xu Nian's probing, as her bright eyes turned to look at him.

In that moment, Xu Nian felt a trace of bewilderment but quickly regained his composure.

"Spiritual Sense Attack!" Xu Nian's heart jolted, and he looked at the veiled woman in shock.

However, the veiled woman seemed to ignore Xu Nian, leaving him behind as she walked away with the seductive woman in pale red.

Xu Nian stood there, dumbfounded, feeling somewhat perplexed.

"What's the matter? Got mesmerized? They are the Tianlan Academy students that group from Donglin College was coveting earlier. The one in the white dress is said to be Lin Ruolan, the top beauty of Tianlan Academy. Doesn't she enchant you?" Chen Xifeng joked, noticing Xu Nian's stunned expression.

Xu Nian shook his head nonchalantly but his gaze towards the white-dressed woman's departing figure became more solemn.

If the move that woman had just used was indeed a Spiritual Sense Attack, then she must have, like him, unlocked the Mud Ball Palace.

...

Xu Nian's heart raced with excitement, whereas the white-dressed woman also felt a flicker of astonishment.

"Interesting, she is into Spirit Body Dual Cultivation and her constitution seems quite remarkable too. It seems that this time, apart from Zhao Yan, there's another appealing prey. I wonder what the taste would be like?" The woman, who initially appeared ethereal, now had a hint of seduction and greed in her eyes.

If anyone could see her face under the veil at that moment, they would be shocked, for her skin was wrinkled like that of an eighty-year-old crone.

Chapter 103 Academy Tournament

At dawn, the entire Tianhen Academy became thoroughly bustling.

Apart from the students of Tianhen Academy, a large number of the citizens of Tianfeng City also poured into the Giant Sword Square of Tianhen Academy.

Giant Sword Square is the largest square in Tianhen Academy and can accommodate up to one hundred thousand people; thus, the next four days of the Academy competition would all be held here.

Since the Academy competition was open to the public, the square was already full of people early in the morning.

"So many people? The draw of this Academy competition is too strong, isn't it?" Xu Nian, standing in the Qinglin Academy's preparation area, couldn't help but exclaim as he looked around at the crowded scene.

"That's right, the Academy competition is a rare grand spectacle in the whole of East Field County, gathering the top talents from the Ten Great Colleges. It's naturally very popular, and many people have even come from other places," Chen Xifeng remarked.

Xu Nian nodded. The Tianhen Empire had always revered martial arts.

Although many people could not cultivate, their admiration for the strong and talented was exceptionally intense, which could be seen from the enthusiasm of the people in the square today.

Xu Nian didn't say much more, nor did he look around, but closed his eyes and focused his mind.

There was still some time before the start of the competition, and the Prefectural Governor, who was hosting this grand event, had not yet arrived.

As for the other contestants, Chen Xifeng had analyzed them for him yesterday. Looking again would be pointless, and there were only a few he needed to pay serious attention to.

The square was noisy, with all the spectators discussing the prodigies they knew.

Ji Yun, Zhao Yan, Feng Rain, and Dugu Jingcheng's names were naturally mentioned many times. As for Xu Nian, the spectators probably hadn't even heard of him, let alone mentioned him.

"Haha, this year's Academy competition is even more exciting than previous years!"

Just then, an incredibly loud voice resounded across the sky, followed by a figure appearing in the air.

"Look, Lord Governor, Lord Governor is here!"

As soon as this figure appeared, the audience immediately exclaimed, their eyes filled with immense reverence as they looked at the figure.

Not only them, but the deans of the Ten Great Colleges who were sitting on the high platform also stood up, respectfully looking towards the figure and said in unison, "Greetings to Lord Governor!"

"Is that Lord Governor? A Nine-star Peak Marquis Level powerhouse?"

Xu Nian also opened his eyes at this moment, looking towards the figure in the sky, his eyes showing a look of surprise.

The Prefectural Governor in front of him was nothing like what he had imagined. In his imagination, Lord Governor should be a very stern and cold middle-aged man. However, the figure floating in the air was extremely overweight, roughly five feet six inches tall, but likely weighed over 660 pounds.

Despite wearing a purple python robe, his face bore no hint of authority, instead wearing a warm smile. When he smiled, the flesh on his face squeezed together, giving him the appearance of a Maitreya Buddha.

However, the audience did not take him lightly because of his smiling face; the peak Marquis-level aura that naturally emitted from him still made everyone's heart tremble involuntarily.

Moreover, Xu Nian was somewhat puzzled. He always felt that the Governor looked somewhat familiar. However, he was very certain he had never met this Governor before, which made him puzzled about where this sense of familiarity came from.

"No need for much courtesy. Let us begin quickly. I've heard that this year's Ten Great Colleges have produced quite a few prodigies. I am very much looking forward to it!" the Governor flashed and appeared on the main seat above the high platform.

The deans of the Ten Great Colleges saw this and also took their seats; the dean of Tianhen Academy shot a look at an elder behind him.

The elder quickly turned into a streak of light and swept out, hovering in the middle of the square. He addressed the audience, "Everyone, quiet down!"

His voice was powerful, instantly drowning out all the noise in the noisy square, and the whole square fell silent in a moment.

"A Marquis Level powerhouse! Tianhen Academy truly has formidable strength. Aside from the dean, there is actually a second Marquis Level," Xu Nian thought in surprise.

Marquis Level powerhouses were rare. Only a few academy deans among the Ten Great Colleges had reached Marquis Level.

For example, the dean of Chengfeng Academy was only a Seven Stars Profound Sky Battle General.

That Tianhen Academy had a second Marquis Level powerhouse aside from the dean showed just how formidable the academy's strength was.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am Elder Song Heng from Tianhen Academy. I will be fully in charge of this academy competition, so I hope everyone can quietly enjoy a visual feast. Now, without further ado, let me discuss the rules and rewards of this competition," Elder Song Heng began.

Excitement secretly surged in the hearts of the audience members. Each year, the rules of the academy competition were different, and the rewards were extremely lavish. What could it be this year?

Xu Nian and others pricked up their ears too, very curious about what the rules and rewards of this academy competition would be.

"First, let us discuss the rules of the competition. There are ten colleges, thirty contestants, and the competition will be divided into the preliminary, quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals, held over four days. Today is the preliminary round, where we will have a thirty-person melee elimination, narrowing it down to sixteen," Elder Song Heng said.

"A thirty-person melee?" the audience exclaimed in surprise.

Xu Nian and others were also somewhat astonished. A thirty-person melee?

This was unexpected; in previous years, it was either a small group duel or combat against Demon Beasts, but this year it was a thirty-person melee.

"A thirty-person melee, interesting!" the Prefectural Governor on the high platform laughed heartily.

Beside him, the dean of Tianhen Academy smiled ceaselessly; naturally, this method was his idea.

This method emphasized team strength and was especially advantageous for strong academies like theirs. Conversely, it was very disadvantageous for the slightly weaker academies, as could be seen from the unhappy expressions on the faces of several deans from weaker academies.

"Alright, I'll stop here about the rules, and now let me talk about the rewards," Elder Song Heng said.

The audience immediately perked up, their eyes filled with excitement.

The rewards each year were especially generous, and this year would likely be no exception.

"First, let me talk about the rewards for the top eight. The students who place in the top eight will directly qualify to enter the Battle Mansion, an old rule, which I assume needs no explanation," continued Elder Song Heng.

The audience all nodded; the reward for the top eight was always the same in each competition.

"Next, let me talk about the rewards for the top three. The third place, apart from having the qualification to enter the Battle Mansion, will also receive a Heavenly Rank Low Grade Battle Technique," Elder Song Heng announced.

"Good heavens, a Heavenly Rank Technique! The third place gets a Heavenly Rank Low Grade Battle Technique; isn't that reward a bit too lavish?" the audience suddenly exclaimed.

Xu Nian was also somewhat surprised; he hadn't expected such a huge reward for the third place.

Although these four grades of battle techniques were only useful below the Saint Realm and saints afterward would have their own created combat skills, a Heavenly Rank Technique was something many Marquis Level powerhouses might not even obtain.

Chapter 104 A Different Entrance

"The reward for second place is a Heavenly Rank Low Grade Battle Technique and a Meteorite Iron Weapon personally crafted by a Great Refiner," Song Heng announced once more.

Everyone's eyes widened.

A weapon crafted personally by a Great Refiner—wasn't that reward a bit too generous?

Let's not even talk about how precious the material of a Meteorite Iron Weapon is, just the involvement of a Great Refiner itself speaks volumes of its value, and such custom-made weapons are sought after, to say the least.

Contestants from the Ten Great Colleges also grew excited, their eyes gleaming with eagerness.

Such rewards held tremendous appeal for them.

Xu Nian, on the other hand, was indifferent. As for Meteorite Iron Weapons, what he bore on his back right now was precisely that, and in his storage ring lay a Xuan Iron Sword.

But for others, even a Xuan Iron Sword was a coveted treasure, something only powerful factions within the Star Battle Sect could afford.

As for Meteorite Iron Weapons, not to mention Xuantian-level Battle Generals, even Marquis Level powerhouses seldom had them.

"The reward for first place is a Heavenly Rank Low Grade Battle Technique, a piece of mysterious metal, and personal cultivation instruction from the Lord Governor for three days," Song Heng declared.

At these words, the venue erupted in uproar.

Mysterious metal!

That was material used for weapons by Saint Level warriors—utterly priceless. The Governor Mansion was really offering such a precious treasure to the first-place winner this time.

Of course, what shocked people the most was the last reward: personal cultivation guidance from the Lord Governor for three days, a blessing one could hardly ask for.

Being personally instructed by the Lord Governor meant, in some sense, becoming the Lord Governor's disciple, and naturally, one's relationship with the Lord Governor would be extraordinary. In the future, one's status in the whole East Field County would be incomparable to others.

"Haha, I enjoy interacting with young talents the most. I wonder which genius will have the opportunity to spend three days with me?" the Lord Governor laughed heartily.

With these words, competitors clenched their fists, their gazes burning with passion.

Sharing three days with the Lord Governor was undoubtedly a colossal opportunity, richer than any material reward.

Xu Nian, however, just smiled wryly. The Lord Governor's personal guidance didn't concern him; even if the Governor were formidable, could he be as powerful as Emperor Ye Tian?

But that mysterious metal did catch his fancy; it would be the perfect gift for Leng Yanran.

In fact, Xu Nian could've told Leng Yanran that he already possessed the Spiritual Sense Cultivation Method. But he didn't want to disappoint her, so he pretended to accept the gesture.

Since he had accepted it, he naturally had to reciprocate, and so he must secure first place.

Yet it seemed not so easy to clinch first place, but challenges were what made things interesting.

"Hum!"

In that moment, there was a commotion again in the center of the plaza.

A massive circular Battle Platform appeared in the center of the plaza, about fifty meters in diameter.

"Ladies and gentlemen, as I've already stated, this preliminary competition will be a free-for-all among thirty contestants, and this Battle Platform will be where they fight. The rule is simple—if you fall off the platform and touch the ground, you are eliminated, until only sixteen remain," Song Heng announced again.

The audience erupted in excited cheers.

A free-for-all meant thirty geniuses clashing together, an extremely rare sight that was stirring just to think about.

Xu Nian and Chen Xifeng exchanged a glance, both looking resigned.

Still, such rules also brought them great convenience.

"Now, the students I call will enter the arena! The first one is Ji Yun!" Song Heng declared.

"Whoosh!"

As soon as Song Heng's voice faded, a figure swiftly leaped from a preparation area, landing on the plaza with the force of a meteor, shaking the entire venue.

"Wow, how cool is that, is that Ji Yun?" Immediately, a tumult of voices filled the air, as the audience looked on at the imposing figure on the battlefield, their excitement palpable.

Especially the students of Tianhen Academy were shouting frenziedly, their eyes filled with admiration.

Ji Yun's mouth corner carried a light smile, and his gaze was lofty as he looked around, thoroughly enjoying the shouts from the surroundings.

"Quite a show of grandeur on entry, huh!" Chen Xifeng teased.

"You could try it too," Xu Nian replied with a smile.

Chen Xifeng just laughed without saying anything.

"Zhao Yan!" Song Heng announced once more.

Following that, a man dressed in a red robe flew out, stepping on flames, actually skipping over a hundred meters distance to leap onto the battle platform.

The audience was all in awe. How strong must his control over fire be?

"Feng Rain!" Song Heng muttered.

A delicate and pretty figure soared out like a swallow, gently landing on the platform at last.

"Feng Rain? Is she the one with the Innate Sword Spirit Body? She seems quite formidable!" the audience discussed amongst themselves.

However, Feng Rain just ignored everyone's gaze and stood to one side with arrogance.

"Dugu Jingcheng!" Song Heng called out again.

"I'll take my leave first!" Dugu Jingcheng turned his head to Xu Nian and Chen Xifeng and said, then transformed into an afterimage and appeared on the plaza.

"What incredible speed!"

Not only were the audience surprised, but the few people on the battle platforms also paused for a moment, then their gaze towards Dugu Jingcheng filled with seriousness.

Next, Song Heng continued to call out names one by one, naturally following the order of the rankings from the Governor Mansion previously.

When he called out the seventh name, Qin Tian rushed onto the battle platform.

Xu Nian looked at the once-admired figure, the past reverence was completely gone, replaced more with emotion.

"Xu Nian!"

Soon, the twenty-ninth name was called out.

With a slow pace, Xu Nian walked towards the battle platform. He didn't have the same ability as others; carrying such a heavy Tie Chui, he couldn't show off if he wanted to. Better to just take it step by step.

Xu Nian's movements left the whole audience of 100,000 dumbfounded.

As Xu Nian walked slowly, the gaze of those 100,000 spectators also followed his figure, speechless to the extreme.

Even Song Heng in the sky paused to look at the slowly walking Xu Nian.

Wait, wait!

It took Xu Nian a full two minutes to get onto the battle platform.

When Xu Nian stepped onto the platform, the whole audience started cursing out loud.

Damn it, others leap onto the platform in three to four seconds, and it took him an entire minute.

"Show-off!"

"Acting all high and mighty, wasting our time!"

"Trash, get off the stage!"

...

The jeers continued endlessly.

The competitors on the battle platforms also looked at Xu Nian with disdain and mockery.

Chen Xifeng in the crowd couldn't help but feel both amused and exasperated at this scene.

Others received applause when they entered, but this guy managed to draw the ire of 100,000 spectators the moment he showed up. It really made one wonder if he was naturally inclined to attract hatred.

But then, thinking of the Tie Chui on Xu Nian's back, Chen Xifeng couldn't laugh anymore. If it were him, let alone walking, he probably would have to crawl his way up step by step.

Chapter 105 Tactical Confrontation

Xu Nian couldn't help but feel speechless; he originally thought he was the most low-key person in the entire venue, but now it seemed he was actually the most ostentatious.

While everyone else made their grand entrances, his step-by-step approach made him the most abnormal one there.

Jeers and curses were incessant, to the point that the last contestant used all his strength to run, fearing that a slower pace would earn the crowd's scorn.

Thirty contestants had already ascended the Battle Platform, gathering in small groups of three, organized by Academy.

Xu Nian naturally stood with Dugu Jingcheng and Chen Xifeng. In a melee with thirty people, teamwork was essential, so he wouldn't be foolish enough to take on several opponents alone.

"Qin Tian, do you recognize that person?" Ji Yun, curious, asked as he noticed Qin Tian's gaze had been fixed on Xu Nian all along.

Qin Tian, looking towards Xu Nian and frowning, said, "He's my younger brother, named Qin Nian, but I didn't expect him to have changed his surname."

"Oh? Your brother? So do you want to..." Ji Yun's face showed a look of surprise.

Qin Tian seemed to understand Ji Yun's hesitance, interrupting him, "There's no need, though he is my brother, we do not share the same mother, and I've heard that my father has expelled him from the family. I just didn't expect him to show up here, so don't hold back later."

"That's fine then. Dugu Jingcheng is our primary target; since your brother is from his Academy, I feared you might have reservations," Ji Yun said, nodding.

"Senior Brother Qin Tian, if I accidentally injure your brother later, you won't blame me, will you?" another lean young man from Tianhen Academy said with a smile.

"Wei Yun, just go ahead and make your move. Even if you kill him, I won't blame you," Qin Tian replied with a cold laugh.

"Then I'm relieved. I find that guy very annoying; I'll make sure he loses miserably later," Wei Yun responded.

Ji Yun, hearing their conversation, also smiled slightly, looking towards Zhao Yan not far away.

Zhao Yan, at that moment, looked back, and they shared a smile.

Ji Yun had already known the rules of the preliminary contest, so he had approached Zhao Yan the night before, and the two decided to join forces to eliminate Dugu Jingcheng in the preliminaries, with Feng Rain as their second target.

Teaming up in a melee to eliminate the stronger contestants first meant that the remaining weaker ones wouldn't pose a threat to them, even if they made it to the semifinals.

Therefore, Zhao Yan and Ji Yun's secret alliance aimed to take down the top-ranked contestants; they considered Feng Rain, being a woman, a secondary target because it wouldn't look good for them to team up against her. So they prioritized Dugu Jingcheng as their first target.

That was their strategy!

However, they thought their secret cooperation was flawless, unaware that Xu Nian possessed Spiritual Sense.

Xu Nian had observed every bit of Ji Yun's conversation with Qin Yun and the exchange of glances with Zhao Yan, making no errors in his perceptions. With Xu Nian's intelligence, how could he not deduce the intricate plots behind their actions?

"Be careful later, especially with Ji Yun and Zhao Yan; they are likely to team up against us," Xu Nian whispered to Dugu Jingcheng.

"Teaming up? Shouldn't they be eliminating the weaker Academies first?" Chen Xifeng asked, surprised.

Dugu Jingcheng's brows furrowed slightly as he seemed to grasp Xu Nian's meaning and nodded.

Chen Xifeng thought for a moment and quickly understood the situation.

They were all smart; a hint was all they needed to comprehend.

"So what should we do? Should we look for allies?" Chen Xifeng asked Xu Nian.

Now, Xu Nian was undeniably their leader, in both strength and cunning, surpassing them.

"Brother Dugu, how long can you withstand a combined attack from Zhao Yan and Ji Yun?" Xu Nian pondered for a moment before looking at Dugu Jingcheng.

"If you hadn't informed me earlier, without being prepared, it would be hard to say. But now, I can last at least 15 minutes," Dugu Jingcheng answered.

Xu Nian nodded, "15 minutes is enough!"

"What do you mean?" Chen Xifeng understood that Xu Nian already had an idea and hurriedly asked.

"They like to play tactics, right? Then we'll play tactics with them. If they join forces to attack, we'll execute an 'Encircle Wei to Rescue Zhao'," Xu Nian said with a smile.

"Encircle Wei to Rescue Zhao?" Chen Xifeng and Dugu Jingcheng both revealed puzzled expressions.

Xu Nian patiently explained, "Tianhen Academy and Beihai Academy only have three really strong contenders, namely Ji Yun, Zhao Yan, and Qin Tian. The remaining three are our targets. When the time comes, Senior Brother Chen, you and I will team up to eliminate those three as quickly as possible. Consider this: we only need to eliminate fourteen people. If we take out three in one go, that leaves eleven. 15 minutes should be enough to deal with them. Moreover, by doing so, Tianhen Academy and Beihai Academy will lose three members in one fell swoop."

Chen Xifeng and Dugu Jingcheng's eyes lit up, inwardly praising Xu Nian's brilliance.

The Academy rankings were not only based on individual performance but also on the cumulative performance of the top three contenders from each academy. The Academy with the lowest cumulative rank was considered first.

If a student was eliminated in the preliminaries, their rank would naturally be quite low.

"But what about Qin Tian? With you alone, it might be difficult to take out those three," Chen Xifeng expressed his concern.

Xu Nian might have easily handled those three without the burden of his hammer, but now he was still carrying such a heavy weapon.

"Don't worry, you just need to hold off Qin Tian, and leave the rest to me," Xu Nian said with a smile, radiating confidence.

Chen Xifeng nodded, asking no more questions.

However, Xu Nian turned to look at the veiled woman in the corner of the Battle Platform, feeling that there was something extraordinary about her.

"Alright, now that everyone is here, I hereby announce that the competition officially begins!" Song Heng declared loudly from the sky.

The field erupted into a wave of loud cheers, and the previously still competitors instantly sprang into action, moving against their preselected targets.

Ji Yun and Zhao Yan were quite shrewd; they did not head straight for Dugu Jingcheng at the start but used two academy members to either side of him as cover to approach Dugu Jingcheng.

Without Xu Nian's warning, Dugu Jingcheng might have actually been deceived, but now he was already on guard.

Qin Tian naturally engaged in battle with Chen Xifeng, while Feng Rain and others were fighting with another academy.

Meanwhile, in front of Xu Nian appeared Wei Yun's figure, who looked at Xu Nian with a sneer, "Heh, kid, I was really annoyed watching you strut your stuff just now. Now I'm going to send you packing."

As he finished speaking, he reached out to strike Xu Nian, aiming to eliminate him directly.

In his opinion, he was a Ninth-star Warrior of the Star Realm, ranked sixteenth in the rankings. It should be easy peasy for him to deal with Xu Nian, ranked twenty-ninth.

However, just as he was about to make his move, Xu Nian pointed behind Wei Yun with a look of triumph and called out, "Senior Brother Chen, quick, help me take him down!"

Wei Yun was startled; he knew he was no match for Chen Xifeng if he made a move.

Consequently, he instinctively looked back, but there wasn't a trace of Chen Xifeng behind him.

"You tricked me!" Wei Yun bellowed in anger.

But as soon as he turned his head back around, he saw Xu Nian in front of him, holding up a white, thick bone.

"Scram!"

Before Wei Yun could react, Xu Nian's bone came crashing down hard on his head.

With a "thud!"

Wei Yun felt the world spin around him, and then Xu Nian kicked him squarely in the chest, sending him flying out of the arena.

Poor Wei Yun thus became the first to be eliminated, ranking thirtieth.

The audience, witnessing this scene, was first stunned, then burst into cursing, "Shameless!"

Chapter 106 Preliminary Results

"Shameless!"

"Despicable!"

The students of Tianhen Academy cursed one by one, wishing they could rush down and tear Xu Nian into pieces.

The commotion also caught the attention of the people around, who turned their heads to look.

When they saw Wei Yun being eliminated, their faces also showed surprise.

Especially Ji Yun and Qin Tian were also taken aback, but when they heard the swearing from the audience outside the arena, they instantly realized what had happened and became even more ferocious in their attacks on Dugu Jingcheng and Chen Xifeng.

However, just as the outside audience was cursing, Xu Nian's figure had already appeared behind another student from Beihai Academy.

This student was Qian He, ranked eighteenth.

At that moment, he was preparing to launch a sneak attack on Chen Xifeng, who was standing with Qin Tian.

Xu Nian swung a bone and struck Qian He on the back of the head, knocking him unconscious to the ground.

After the strike, Xu Nian cursed loudly, "And you dare to sneak attack from behind! Shameless!"

Then he kicked Qian He out of the arena.

The outside audience was completely in uproar.

Damn it, I've seen shameless people but never someone as shameless as this. You've been hitting people from behind all this time, and now you have the nerve to accuse others.

"Beihai Academy's Qian He is eliminated, ranked twenty-sixth," announced Song Heng.

Xu Nian smiled slightly, two of his three targets had been eliminated, and he guessed that both Tianhen Academy and Beihai Academy must hate him to the bone by now.

Indeed, at this moment, Ji Yun and Zhao Yan were furious. They nearly gave up dealing with Dugu Jingcheng and rushed to kill Dugu Jingcheng.

Moreover, they did not expect Dugu Jingcheng to be so tough to deal with; without using their ultimate moves, they were actually unable to defeat him.

But to use their ultimate moves in the preliminaries, how would they compete in the following matches?

They were now caught in a dilemma.

Meanwhile, Xu Nian was now facing off against Beihai Academy's last student, Wang Hu.

It was not Xu Nian who sought him out, but he who actively rushed towards Xu Nian.

Xu Nian hitting his comrade from behind with a muffled strike was something he could not stand no matter what.

"Clang!"

The man swung a heavy battle saber directly at Xu Nian—a Nine-star Body Cultivator at the Peak of Star Realm—his strength terrifyingly formidable.

The heavy battle saber created a tiger-like roar as it rubbed against the air.

The audience on the field, seeing this, were gloating with expectation on their faces.

Wang Hu was ranked thirteenth after all, and his strength was not weak; they were eager to see how Xu Nian would manage a sneak attack this time.

Seeing Wang Hu killing his way towards him, Xu Nian revealed a slight smirk.

Although Wang Hu's strength was not weak, he was still somewhat lacking in front of him.

"Buzz!"

Just as Wang Hu's heavy battle saber was about to strike Xu Nian.

Xu Nian executed the Gale Dragon Step, stirred a gust of wind with a swift move, and dodged to the side, deftly avoiding Wang Hu's battle saber.

With a swing that cut through only air, Wang Hu immediately lost some balance.

At that moment, Xu Nian reached behind Wang Hu, swung his bone, and fiercely struck him on the back of the head.

By now, Xu Nian had adapted quite well to the heavy hammer, maintaining considerable speed even while performing the Gale Dragon Step.

"Boom!"

Wang Hu was directly thrown out of the arena, falling face-first to the ground with a lump on the back of his head.

"Beihai Academy's Wang Hu is eliminated, ranked twentieth!" Song Heng announced once again.

The audience outside the arena was stunned—wasn't Xu Nian supposed to be blown away by that strike?

Why is Wang Hu the one appearing?

Wang Hu also felt quite depressed at the moment, his headache was so severe that tears almost fell from his eyes. Looking at Xu Nian on the battle platform, he felt a surge of murderous intent.

"Haha, using such a heavy weapon, you can't even keep your balance, and you still want to fight me? You should see what kind of strength I have!" Xu Nian laughed heartily.

The audience outside the arena, initially puzzled if Xu Nian was hiding his strength, had now understood what was happening upon hearing his words.

"So it was just good luck, Wang Hu lost his balance, and that's why he succeeded."

"Yes, this guy is really lucky, managing to escape yet another disaster."

...

The onlookers outside the arena discussed fervently, feeling pity for Wang Hu and marveling at Xu Nian's good fortune.

Was it really just good luck?

Xu Nian sneered, knowing very well that his previous remark was deliberately made to make others believe it was just luck that he managed to defeat Wang Hu.

Wang Hu was ranked twentieth, and now, only three spots remained for elimination.

"Bang!"

On the other side, Feng Rain attacked, sending a Nine-star Warrior flying out of the arena with one palm strike.

Similarly, a veiled woman performed a mysterious palm strike, ejecting a Nine-star Body Cultivator from the arena.

With only one more spot for elimination left, the battle raged on continuously.

Zhao Yan and Ji Yun both looked embarrassed.

They had originally planned to force Qinglin Academy to suffer a complete defeat first.

However, now not a single person from Qinglin Academy had been eliminated, and instead, three participants from their own academies had been eliminated.

"Forget it, I'll go eliminate Xu Nian first!"

Zhao Yan grit his teeth and decided to give up targeting Dugu Jingcheng, charging towards Xu Nian instead.

Xu Nian had eliminated two of his companions, causing their Beihai Academy to lose face, and that was a grudge Zhao Yan could not tolerate whatsoever.

"Fiery Fire Palm!"

A terrifying blaze burst forth from his palm, fiercely striking towards Xu Nian with a scorching aura.

Xu Nian's expression changed; he hadn't expected Zhao Yan to give up on Dugu Jingcheng at the last moment and come after him instead.

Watching the Fiery Fire Palm getting closer, Xu Nian's eyes gradually sharpened.

"Forget it! Even if I expose my strength, so be it!" Xu Nian thought resolutely, preparing to reveal his true strength against Zhao Yan's attack.

"Hold on, the competition is over!"

However, just then, Elder Song Heng in the sky suddenly announced.

Zhao Yan was stunned, stopping abruptly, and begrudgingly looked at Xu Nian.

It turned out that the last contestant had just been eliminated.

The audience, too, felt pity; Zhao Yan was so close to knocking the detestable Xu Nian out of the ring.

Xu Nian also heaved a sigh of relief, and the Dragon Energy surging within him calmed down instantly. Seeing Zhao Yan's frustrated and resentful face, he shamelessly made a triumphant face.

Zhao Yan was furious, glaring at the smug Xu Nian, he huffed, "Consider yourself lucky this time, don't let me run into you again, or I'll make sure you lose miserably!"

"Likewise!" Xu Nian answered with a laugh and then walked off the battle platform on his own accord.

Zhao Yan watched Xu Nian's retreating figure, seething with even more irritation.

"The competition is over; Tianhen Academy advances with two members, Beihai Academy with one, Donglin College with two, Chengfeng Academy with two, and Qinglin Academy with all three members advancing, whereas the other five academies, Heavenly Dragon Academy with two, and each of the other four academies advancing one member."

When Elder Song Heng announced the preliminary results, everyone was notably moved by the results.

Qinglin Academy had all its members advance, but thinking of Xu Nian's actions, they couldn't help but internally curse at how such a shameless person came from Qinglin Academy.

...

Chapter 107 Three-Forging Hammer

The moon shone dimly among sparse stars!

In the small cabin where Xu Nian was, he was constantly practicing with a hammer.

The immensely heavy hammer created a roaring sound like crashing waves with his swings, its power far surpassing Wang Hu's heavy battle saber.

Just the gust of wind from the hammer was enough to shake the ground and floor around him, showing signs of fracturing.

"The power of heavy weapons is indeed great. If only I had a hammer technique Gang Skill." Xu Nian expressed with slight regret.

Although the Ten Thousand Divine Hammer was extremely powerful, it was after all a Spiritual Sense Attack, which could be lethal with a single strike.

It was generally used in life-or-death battles and was simply not suitable for the Academy competition.

"Kid, I knew what you were thinking, so these past few days, I've created a Basic Hammer Technique especially for you," the figure of Emperor Ye Tian suddenly appeared in the room.

"Really? What grade is the hammer technique?" Xu Nian immediately became excited.

A hammer technique created by Emperor Ye Tian, even if basic, was bound to be extraordinary.

"This hammer technique consists of three moves; the grades of the three moves differ. The first move, Collapse Thunder, is equivalent to Middle Earth Level. The second move, Meteor, is equivalent to Earth-grade Top-quality. The third move, Heavenly Gang, is comparable to Heavenly Rank Low Grade," Emperor Ye Tian explained.

"Collapse Thunder, Meteor, Heavenly Gang? What domineering names!" Xu Nian couldn't help but exclaim, his eyes filled with barely concealed excitement—especially when he heard that the last move was comparable to a Heavenly Rank Low Grade, knowing that the top three prizes of this Academy competition were just that.

"Hmph, it's just a Heavenly Rank Gang Skill. These so-called Heaven and Earth Xuanhuang four grades are nothing but the most basic attacks, merely a simple operation of Spiritual Energy and Gang Qi. The truly powerful moves are those that combine the natural forces of Heaven and Earth, which is why your so-called Saints are so powerful," Emperor Ye Tian said with a cold snort, clearly disdainful of Heavenly Rank Gang Skills.

Xu Nian simply smiled sheepishly, still feeling joyful inside.

Yes, reaching the Saint Realm would allow one to achieve Unity of Heaven and Man and harness the power of Heaven and Earth, but that was still far too distant for him.

At the moment, he had just barely entered the state of Man and Sword as One. Beyond that was the comprehension of the power of Heaven and Earth, followed by Unity of Heaven and Man and the understanding of nature.

Besides, achieving Unity of Heaven and Man was not so easy to grasp. There were many Marquis Level Battle Kings and Body Kings, but very few Saints.

The title Body King referred to Marquis Level Body Cultivators. Similarly, Star Realm Body Cultivators could be called Body Cultivators, Silver Moon Body Cultivators could be termed Body Sect, and Xuantian-level Body Cultivators could be called Body Generals.

However, such titles were not commonly used, unlike for Spiritual Cultivators.

"Hurry, teach me!" Xu Nian said, unable to wait any longer.

Emperor Ye Tian shook his head helplessly and transferred the method to exercise Gang Qi for the Basic Hammer Technique into Xu Nian's brain.

After receiving this information, Xu Nian's eyes filled with even more delight.

He immediately picked up the hammer and began to practice, but when Xu Nian attempted the first strike, he realized that the technique was not as simple as it seemed.

"I named this Basic Hammer Technique the Three-Forging Hammer. These three moves may seem simple, but they contain profound mysteries. The first move is the ultimate usage of Gang Qi within the body, the second move is about the comprehension of Man and Hammer as One. Especially the last move, Heavenly Gang, it even involves the manipulation of the Heaven and Earth Power, so mastering these three moves is not as simple as you think," Emperor Ye Tian said.

"Heavenly Gang actually involves the use of the power of Heaven and Earth." Xu Nian said, astonished.

Typical Heavenly Rank Techniques and Gang Skills were only ordinary applications of internal strength, but clearly, the Gang Skill created by Emperor Ye Tian was different from ordinary Gang Skills.

"Alright, from now on, keep practicing; to grasp the essence of this first hammer strike, I'm guessing it will take no less than three months," Emperor Ye Tian said, before returning inside Xu Nian's Dantian.

"Three months just to get the first hammer strike? Isn't that underestimating me a bit?" Xu Nian quipped with a curl of his lip.

He then began practicing the first of the Three-Forging Hammer Technique, but soon realized that it was more difficult than he had expected.

The movements of the hammer technique itself were not particularly special; the difficulty lay in the flow of Gang Qi within the body.

To maximize the power of the hammer technique, the movement of the hammer and the perfect integration of the Gang Qi inside the body were essential, reaching a degree of natural and extreme fluidity.

Moreover, the secret of Collapse Thunder lay in the moment the hammer hit the enemy, where the Gang Qi inside the body was completely compressed at one point and then burst out suddenly, unleashing boundless power.

Yet, Xu Nian couldn't manage to integrate his internal Gang Qi with the hammer technique to attain the most perfect state.

He originally thought he was quite adept at controlling the Gang Qi within his body, but now he realized his usage of Gang Qi was still very much insufficient.

Inside Xu Nian's room.

Xu Nian, with his upper body bare, was continuously swinging his fists.

With each hammer strike, there seemed to be a faint sound of thunder, and the thunder seemed to grow louder and louder.

"Boom!"

On the thousandth hammer swing, Xu Nian was already drenched in sweat, his arms trembling and breathing heavily.

His well-defined muscles hinted at an explosive power beneath.

Being able to swing a hammer weighing 4,800 jin a thousand times demonstrated the immense strength contained within those muscles.

"Still not right, I can only bring forth one percent of the Collapse Thunder's power," Xu Nian sighed inwardly.

A night of cultivation only brought him to one percent efficacy in understanding Collapse Thunder, far from unleashing its true might.

However, that night's cultivation deepened his understanding of the flow of Gang Qi.

Continued use of the Divine Demon Gang Qi made his Gang Qi even more abundant, and he had reached the pinnacle of an Eight-star Body Cultivator, on the verge of breaking through at any moment.

"Take it slow, after all, Emperor Ye Tian said it would take me three months to comprehend this first hammer strike, there's plenty of time," Xu Nian murmured to himself.

Although he felt somewhat unconvinced by Emperor Ye Tian's previous words, he was not so arrogant as to disregard them; if Emperor Ye Tian said it would take three months, it wasn't something that could be resolved quickly.

"Today is the battle for the top eight in the round of sixteen; I wonder who my opponent will be," Xu Nian said with a slight smile. After freshening up a bit and changing into clean clothes, he left his room.

As he stepped out, he happened to run into Dugu Jingcheng and noticed that Dugu had not changed clothes, clearly also having cultivated through the night.

Xu Nian was curious how much Dugu Jingcheng's strength had improved after the battle that day.

Afterward, Xu Nian and Chen Xifeng, along with Dugu Jingcheng, headed towards Giant Sword Square.

When they arrived at Giant Sword Square, they found it once again filled with people, who were clearly more excited than the day before.

Reaching the top eight from the top sixteen was indeed an exciting prospect.

Chapter 108 Exciting Match

"Swoosh!"

Elder Song Heng reappeared in the skies above the square and the originally noisy crowd instantly quieted down.

"I'm sure everyone is very excited about the sixteenth-to-eighth round after watching yesterday's preliminaries. Those who made it here are the geniuses of East Field County, and making it to the top sixteen means they possess potential beyond ordinary people. To advance to the top eight signifies direct entrance to the Battle Mansion," Elder Song Heng said.

As soon as these words came out, the atmosphere in the entire venue ignited to an unprecedented peak.

The Battle Mansion!

That was the highest institution in East Field County, dedicated to cultivating elite talents. Anyone who entered the Battle Mansion held a status second only to a city's lord, and after coming out, they wielded high authority—even control over life and death.

The Battle Mansion had a limited intake each year, just thirty-six people.

Just think, in a whole county, only thirty-six people were chosen—can you imagine how tough it was to get into the Battle Mansion?

Now, to be able to enter the Battle Mansion directly without selection as one of the top eight, such a reward was indeed incredibly tempting.

Chen Xifeng and the others were also extremely excited, clearly, the Battle Mansion held great allure for him.

"Alright, I won't say much more. Let's get straight to the sixteen-to-eight competition. It's simple, we will have eight matches with pairs facing off, and your opponents will be determined by draw by the Lord Governor," Elder Song Heng announced.

Everyone shifted their gaze to the high platform where the Lord Governor stood, who would draw the lots, ensuring absolute fairness since the governor wouldn't favor anyone.

"Ha-ha, then let me draw the first pair of contestants."

The Lord Governor laughed and walked to a previously prepared iron box at the front. There was a hole on the top of the box, inside which were sixteen wooden plaques with the names of the participants. The two names drawn would face each other in combat.

The Lord Governor reached into the iron box, took out two plaques, and read aloud, "Qing Feng Academy's Luo Chen versus Tianhen Academy's Ji Yun."

Ji Yun?

The crowd was instantly abuzz—no one expected Ji Yun to be the first to compete.

"Please enter the arena, both contestants!" Elder Song Heng announced.

"Swoosh, swoosh!"

Two figures swept onto the Battle Platform from opposite sides of the preparation areas, one of whom was Ji Yun.

However, this time Ji Yun wasn't carrying his Long Spear, clearly thinking that the opponent before him wasn't even worthy of it.

"I am Luo Chen from Qing Feng Academy, it's an honor to meet Brother Ji Yun!" Luo Chen said with a wry smile, being the only one from Qing Feng Academy to advance. He had hoped to face a weaker opponent and break into the top eight, but he had such bad luck to encounter Ji Yun in the first round.

"Do you concede voluntarily, or shall I make a move?" Ji Yun didn't respond to Luo Chen's introduction, instead, he coldly said.

The audience burst into a commotion.

The female students, in particular, went wild, feeling that Ji Yun's words were overwhelmingly domineering.

Luo Chen's face flushed, and after a moment's hesitation, he clenched his teeth and said, "I will not concede easily. Since I'm here, let me witness Brother Ji Yun's strength."

"Good, then don't blame me for not being polite!" Ji Yun snorted coldly.

He immediately took a step, and like a thunderbolt, he charged across the Battle Platform, stirring up a fierce wind.

Luo Chen's expression changed on the spot, and he immediately tried to draw his Battle Saber to attack Ji Yun.

"Too slow!"

However, by this time, Ji Yun had already reached Luo Chen. With a thunderous punch, Luo Chen was hit hard, flying out like a kite with its string cut, finally crashing into the distant stands and tumbling out of the arena, vomiting blood profusely.

"So powerful, settled the fight with just one punch!"

The audience in the arena all wore expressions of surprise, looking up at the figure standing proudly on the stage, their eyes filled with admiration.

This Luo Chen might have been a Nine-star Peak Fighter, but against Ji Yun, he didn't have the slightest ability to fight back.

"Ji Yun!"

"Ji Yun!"

Tianhen Academy's students were shouting Ji Yun's name, and Ji Yun himself flicked his sleeve before drifting back to the ready area.

This scene caused the female students of Tianhen Academy to cheer even louder.

Xu Nian, however, slightly furrowed his brow, clearly dissatisfied with Ji Yun's merciless approach.

At the same time, in a corner of the eastern stands, a stunning beauty snorted and said, "Tsk, he could have won easily without having to injure Luo Chen so severely. This Ji Yun is clearly not a good person."

"Sister, you used to be a student of Tianhen Academy too. Why aren't you speaking in favor of Tianhen Academy?" Chen Wudi said with a smile beside her.

"I'm just being objective. Ji Yun has decent strength, but his character is absolutely terrible," the stunning beauty said.

"That's true, but sister, I must tell you, the brother-in-law I want to introduce to you not only has strength surpassing Ji Yun, but his character is also impeccable. You'll see him when he shows up later," Chen Wudi said with a grin.

"Are you asking for a beating?" the stunning beauty said with feigned anger.

Chen Wudi shrank his neck and said, "Let's watch the match, the next one is starting."

"The second match, Tianshui Academy's Xie Yu versus Beihai Academy's Zhao Yan," the Prefectural Governor announced.

"I forfeit!" However, before the contestants even took the stage, the student from Tianshui Academy immediately declared.

The crowd was abuzz with astonishment. This Zhao Yan was indeed formidable, to make an opponent forfeit without even making an appearance.

In the ready area of Beihai Academy, Zhao Yan wore a cold smirk, not surprised by this turn of events.

However, he still felt a tinge of regret for not having the chance to face Xu Nian. If given the opportunity, he would have taught the young man a lesson on the Battle Platform as revenge for his comrade.

Xu Nian was somewhat surprised at the moment; he hadn't expected Zhao Yan to be so powerful that people would forfeit without him having to appear.

"The third match, Donglin College's Zhao Yan versus Qinglin Academy's Dugu Jingcheng!" the Prefectural Governor announced.

The audience erupted into cheers, Dugu Jingcheng!

He was the genius known as the Little Sword Saint. They had already glimpsed the tip of his strength iceberg in the preliminary rounds, and now it was finally his turn to appear.

"Whoosh!"

Zhao Yan swooped onto the Battle Platform, gazing at Dugu Jingcheng.

After giving Xu Nian a glance, Dugu Jingcheng lightly tapped his foot and soared onto the Battle Platform.

"Dugu Jingcheng, I told you before that I wanted a head-on fight with you, and I didn't expect the chance to come so quickly. Since that's the case, let's have a good, clean fight today," Zhao Yan said to Dugu Jingcheng.

Previously, in the small courtyard, Dugu Jingcheng had forced him back with a single sword stroke. Now, he wanted to reclaim all the humiliation he had suffered.

The audience, hearing Zhao Yan's words, also began excitedly exclaiming. After all, Zhao Yan was ranked fifth on the leaderboard, just behind Dugu Jingcheng. This was definitely the most highly anticipated match yet.

"You are not my match. I will only strike once. If you can withstand it, consider it my loss!" Dugu Jingcheng said indifferently.

"What, just one stroke? This Dugu Jingcheng is really too arrogant!"

The entire place was thrown into an uproar, finding it hard to believe that Dugu Jingcheng would say such a thing to Zhao Yan.

Zhao Yan was also surprised, and then a wave of anger followed.

Chapter 109 Destiny Showdown

He was, after all, fifth on the rankings, just one place below you, Dugu Jingcheng.

You claim to defeat me with a single sword stroke; isn't that a bit too arrogant?

"With one sword stroke, I'd love to see how you could defeat me with one sword stroke," Zhao Yan angrily said to Dugu Jingcheng, his heart filled with strong unwillingness.

Dugu Jingcheng wasted no words, gesturing with his hand, a Xuan Iron Sword flew out from his Storage Bag and appeared in his hand.

Seeing this, Zhao Yan also drew his Battle Saber, readying himself with solemnity.

Regardless, since Dugu Jingcheng dared to make such a bold statement, the power of this sword stroke must be extraordinary, so he dared not underestimate it, for fear of capsizing in the gutter.

"Buzz!"

The long sword in Dugu Jingcheng's hand started to tremble, emitting a proud Sword Intent from his body, the powerful Sword Intent like a sharp lethal sword, instilling fear in people.

"Man and Sword as One, is this Dugu Jingcheng's Man and Sword as One?" Everyone in the audience showed a look of surprise.

To say nothing else, just this move alone was enough to make him a dazzling star.

Zhao Yan's expression also turned solemn, Spiritual Energy surged within his body, preparing to face this sword stroke from Dugu Jingcheng.

"Buzz!"

Dugu Jingcheng swung his sword, and a terrifying sword light instantly transformed into a crescent arc slashing towards Zhao Yan.

The aura on the crescent arc was fiercely terrifying, and its speed was extraordinarily fast, reaching Zhao Yan's face in the blink of an eye.

Zhao Yan was startled and immediately swung his saber in defense.

"Clang!"

There was a loud noise, and Zhao Yan's Battle Saber immediately flew out of his hand, his figure was also thrown forward by the terrifying rebound force, eventually falling outside the Battle Platform, with a trickle of blood from the corner of his mouth.

Defeated!

Truly defeated by a single sword stroke!

The audience was stunned, followed by a burst of frenzied exclamations, their eyes filled with admiration as they looked at Dugu Jingcheng.

Zhao Yan, down below, looked at Dugu Jingcheng with astonishment, the unwillingness in his eyes also disappearing.

The gap was too big!

This sword stroke said it all; the Dugu Jingcheng before him was far more formidable than he had imagined.

"Qinglin Academy, Dugu Jingcheng wins!" Elder Song Heng announced.

The crowd cheered even louder, the women gazing at Dugu Jingcheng's figure began to look admiringly.

Dugu Jingcheng, however, remained as cold as ever, swiftly returning to the ready area.

...

"Dugu Jingcheng is not weak; he should be able to compete with Ji Yun and Zhao Yan," Chen Yao said to Chen Wudi beside her.

"That's for sure, Dugu Jingcheng is the third talent of our Qinglin Academy, naturally very powerful," Chen Wudi proudly said.

"Only third? Then who are the first and second?" Chen Yao curiously asked.

Considering Dugu Jingcheng's strength, he would be one of the top talents at Tianhen Academy, so why is he only ranked third at Qinglin Academy?

"The second is, of course, me. Do you think I would be inferior to Dugu Jingcheng, sis? As for the first, it's naturally my brother-in-law Xu Nian!" Chen Wudi blurted out.

Chen Yao immediately glared at Chen Wudi in anger, but her curiosity about Xu Nian, whom Chen Wudi had mentioned, also piqued.

She was aware of Chen Wudi's talent; his potential had not yet been fully tapped, but the person who could make him admit defeat was unheard of before.

Chen Wudi was now content to rank himself behind him, sufficient to indicate there was something extraordinary about Xu Nian.

"Sister, don't disbelieve me, once you meet your brother-in-law, you'll definitely like him," Chen Wudi laughed.

"If you spout nonsense again, I'll tear your mouth apart," Chen Yao huffed.

Chen Wudi grinned foolishly, yet he was not afraid at all.

...

As the siblings bantered, the fourth group of the competition had already begun on the stage.

This group featured a duel between women, with Chengfeng Academy's Feng Rain battling Heavenly Dragon Academy's Zhao Si.

The outcome was predictable; possessing the Innate Sword Spirit Body, Feng Rain didn't even draw her sword but defeated Zhao Si of Heavenly Dragon Academy with a single palm strike.

At the end of the match, she boldly claimed that only Dugu Jingcheng was worthy of making her draw her sword, stirring up a furor among the crowd.

The fifth match was Heavenly Dragon Academy's Wang Dong against Donglin Major Luo Yu.

Originally, everyone thought that the strengths of these two were quite comparable.

However, Wang Dong suddenly unleashed a formidable strength, overwhelming Luo Yu and becoming the dark horse of this match, winning the fifth group.

The sixth group saw Lin Ruolan against City West College's Li Yun.

Xu Nian had always been very interested in Lin Ruolan, sensing something unusual about her.

Indeed, during the match, the result shocked Xu Nian.

The Nine-star Peak Level Li Yun couldn't even touch the hem of Lin Ruolan's robe before being flung out by a single palm strike from her, ending up unconscious.

Meanwhile, Xu Nian also noticed that the Spiritual Energy Lin Ruolan used was blood-red, suffused with a repulsive, bloody stench.

A woman with a celestial demeanor possessing such repulsive Spiritual Energy was definitely not normal.

However, Xu Nian couldn't probe too much. To truly investigate Lin Ruolan, it would likely require the intervention of Emperor Ye Tian.

Yet, Emperor Ye Tian was usually asleep during the day, and Xu Nian felt it improper to disturb him, so he could only suppress his curiosity.

Now six groups had finished their matches, leaving only the last two groups. This meant that besides him and Chen Xifeng, only Chengfeng Academy's Chen Han and Tianhen Academy's Qin Tian had not competed.

Xu Nian couldn't possibly fight Chen Xifeng, leaving only Chen Han and Qin Tian as possible opponents.

"The seventh group, Chengfeng Academy's Chen Han against Qinglin Academy's Chen Xifeng!" the Prefectural Governor declared loudly.

Chen Xifeng looked at Xu Nian with a slight smile and said, "It seems our fates are quite similar! Both battling against our own brothers!"

Xu Nian smiled helplessly, "Good luck!"

Chen Xifeng nodded, then darted out.

Chen Han was Chen Xifeng's nominal older cousin, while Qin Tian was Xu Nian's half-brother. With Chen Han battling Chen Xifeng, the remaining match would naturally be Qin Tian against Xu Nian.

Sometimes fate loved to play tricks on people!

Suddenly, Xu Nian felt a gaze directed at him, coming from the preparation area of Tianhen Academy where Qin Tian was stationed.

Qin Tian's gaze was icy cold, with a hint of disdain deep within, just as it had always been back at the Qin Family—aloof, condescending, with not a hint of brotherly affection.

Although he had never actively bullied Xu Nian in the past, he had never had any liking for him, and his restraint was solely out of disdain.

Now as opponents, he would certainly show no mercy.

Whoever dared obstruct him, he would kill without hesitation.

Separated by the battle zone, Xu Nian met Qin Tian's gaze, understanding all too well the meaning behind it.

"I originally had a sliver of reluctance about pushing you out of the top eight. But now seeing this look in your eyes, I am reassured, Qin Family, don't blame me," Xu Nian's fists clenched behind his back, and his eyes hardened in an instant.

Chapter 110 Chen Xifeng's Strength

"Hmph, Chen Xifeng, I was defeated by your sword back then, and today is the time to get my revenge," Chen Han said proudly to Chen Xifeng.

"Do you really think you can defeat me?" Chen Xifeng asked mockingly.

Chen Han sneered, "These past two years, I have been tirelessly practicing with my heavy sword. Today, I will let you see just how powerful my heavy sword really is."

With that, Chen Han drew a large broadsword from behind him. The broadsword hit the ground, causing a thunderous boom as the floor trembled.

The audience all showed surprised expressions, the sword seemed extraordinarily heavy.

"Ha ha, my heavy sword weighs eight hundred pounds. One strike can shatter even the hardest bluestones. What about that, Chen Xifeng, are you scared?" Chen Han laughed arrogantly.

Chen Xifeng simply smiled.

After experiencing Xu Nian's Meteorite Iron Hammer, he was no longer surprised by any heavy weapons.

Eight hundred pounds?

Compared to Xu Nian's four thousand eight hundred pounds, Chen Han was like a child playing house, hardly worth mentioning.

"Only eight hundred pounds and you dare show off?" Chen Xifeng mocked.

"You dare underestimate my heavy sword," Chen Han shouted angrily, raising his heavy sword suddenly and leaping toward Chen Xifeng with a crushing blow.

The sword strike was as formidable as a mountain, smashing down toward Chen Xifeng with an immensely heavy aura.

In an instant, Chen Xifeng's eyes became sharp, and he reached to his waist, drawing a soft sword into his hand.

"A soft sword?"

The audience all showed their surprise.

Chen Han was using a heavy sword, but Chen Xifeng unexpectedly chose a soft sword, a complete contrast!

Xu Nian was also astonished. During their last hurried encounter in Jade Cave Heaven, he hadn't noticed Chen Xifeng's choice of weapon; it was actually a soft sword.

In group battles, a soft sword's light and elegant form has a great advantage, but in single combat, heavy weapons unquestionably have the upper hand.

After all, heavy weapons can exert the greatest force.

"Whoosh!"

Chen Xifeng moved swiftly, skillfully dodging Chen Han's heavy sword strike while his soft sword aimed straight for Chen Han's chest.

Powered by Spiritual Energy, the soft sword became incredibly agile and unpredictable.

In the blink of an eye, the light blade approached Chen Han, slashing directly toward his arm.

Chen Han's expression changed, and he quickly repositioned his heavy sword, swinging it horizontally toward Chen Xifeng.

The heavy sword swept across, bringing a terrifying gust.

Chen Xifeng's eyes narrowed, and he retracted the thrusting sword, grabbing the tip with one hand and the hilt with the other, blocking the oncoming heavy strike.

"Clang!"

The soft sword flexed to an extreme curve, yet it did not snap; the force from the heavy sword was completely dissipated.

"Huh?" Chen Han was clearly stunned, not expecting his strike to be blocked.

Chen Xifeng snickered coldly, his finger flicking hard on the blade.

"Clang!"

A piercing ringing sound erupted, and the sword Qi exploded.

Chen Han's heavy sword was immediately sent flying, and at the same time, Chen Xifeng leaped up, kicking Chen Han in the abdomen and sending him flying.

Chen Han skidded ten or so meters back before he could stabilize himself, a trickle of blood leaking from the corner of his mouth.

The audience cheered, impressed by Chen Xifeng's finger flicking technique.

Even the Prefectural Governor, sitting in the high stand, brightened up, marveling at the exquisite finger skill of Chen Xifeng.

Xu Nian gave a slight chuckle at that moment. He was all too familiar with that Finger Skill, naturally, it was the same move he had used when he battled Ouyang Chengfeng, and he hadn't expected Chen Xifeng to have learned it.

Using the finger to tap the sword released Sword Qi in one burst, achieving an effect similar to Collapse Thunder.

This bore some resemblance to the Collapse Thunder Hammer Technique that Xu Nian was currently practicing, but there were differences; after all, the Collapse Thunder Hammer Technique was a hundred times more difficult than the Finger Sword.

Chen Xifeng held his Soft Sword, moved his foot, and once again pressed straight toward Chen Han.

"GodsLevel Slash!"

Seeing this, Chen Han immediately became furious, roared, and swung his Heavy Sword again at Chen Xifeng.

Chen Xifeng's eyes turned cold in an instant, and a hint of a cold smile flashed across his lips as his arm trembled and his Soft Sword surged out like a spirit snake.

"Clang!"

Chen Xifeng's Soft Sword struck Chen Han's Heavy Sword and instantly sent it flying out of Chen Han's grip and falling outside the Battle Platform.

"How... how is this possible?" Chen Han grasped his right hand, his face a picture of shock.

Just that instant, he had felt as if his tiger's mouth was struck by lightning, rendering his whole arm completely numb.

Knowing that he was using a Heavy Sword, how could he have let his opponent knock the sword out of his hand?

"You've lost!"

Chen Xifeng's sword tip rested on Chen Han's neck as he said coldly with a smirk.

Chen Han collapsed dejectedly onto the Battle Platform.

"Qinglin Academy's Chen Xifeng wins!" Elder Song Heng announced.

The crowd was stunned, their exclamations unceasing.

Chen Xifeng's swordsmanship had been incredibly exquisite, to actually shake off the opponent's Heavy Sword with a Soft Sword; they deemed such a feat impossible.

Even Xu Nian in the preparatory area was mildly surprised, not expecting Chen Xifeng to have taken this step.

That moment, Chen Xifeng had not randomly shaken his Soft Sword into the shape of a spirit snake.

The layers upon layers of folds, like wave upon wave, accumulating all the force to be finally unleashed through the sword tip—that was why the power was so immense.

This move should be a distinctive sword technique created by Chen Xifeng based on the fundamentals of using the fingertips.

Xu Nian hadn't thought Chen Xifeng could exploit his Finger Sword to this extent; he was somewhat taken aback.

"Swoosh!"

Chen Xifeng swept across to Xu Nian's side and said with a smile, "How was it? I didn't disappoint you, did I? However, I'm looking forward to your next performance. Just a hint, will you be using that hammer soon?"

Beside them, Dugu Jingcheng also looked at Xu Nian, curious about when he would use his Meteorite Iron Hammer, given that they had witnessed its weight.

Just thinking about that terrifying weight smashing down on someone gave them all a shiver.

Xu Nian smiled and said, "Why don't you just watch and see?"

Chen Xifeng didn't expect Xu Nian to keep such a tight lid on his secrets, and could only suppress his curiosity.

Xu Nian, however, could not help but chuckle. Deal with Qin Tian?

Would he even need his Meteorite Iron Hammer?

A single sword would suffice!

"The final match, Tianhen Academy's Qin Tian versus Qinglin Academy's Xu Nian! Please both contestants enter the Battle Platform," Elder Song Heng announced.

"Swoosh!"

As soon as Elder Song Heng's voice fell, Qin Tian directly swept up onto the Battle Platform.

With Qin Tian's appearance, the crowd also burst into cheers.

Although Qin Tian was not as famed as Ji Yun, he still enjoyed considerable renown at Tianhen Academy; coupled with Xu Nian's role in the preliminary rounds eliciting widespread dislike, the entire crowd almost unanimously chanted: "Defeat Xu Nian, victory to Qin Tian!"

The shouts echoed through the venue, lingering on and on.