

Doctor 1021

Chapter 1021: Glory of the Strong

Liu Qingqing didn't linger on the Stone Platform, after bowing to Ren Jingbo and other high-level members of the Martial Academy, she leapt down from the platform,

"Big sister, you were amazing!"

"Qingqing, well done!"

"You two siblings have really raised the prestige of our team!"

"Next, it's our turn!"

By the time Liu Qingqing returned to Fang Bai and the others, Liu Liehu, Fang Bai, Huang Miao, and Hou Ziping each gave her a high-five in congratulations.

Their recent venture into the mountains not only yielded abundant Cultivation Resources, but everyone had also made significant progress in strength. After returning to the Martial Academy, each of them decided to challenge higher-ranked disciples in order to receive more Cultivation Resources each month and increase the chances of interacting with the upper echelons.

While Fang Bai didn't care much for the chance to interact with the higher-ups, for Huang Miao, Hou Ziping, and the others, it was something they longed for.

Next, Hou Ziping and Huang Miao each stepped onto the Stone Platform to choose their opponents for the challenge.

Previously, Hou Ziping had defeated Yang Wei, who ranked eighteenth among the Inner Court disciples, quickly rising to fame in the Inner Court. This time, his target was Yang Lin, who ranked third in the Inner Court disciples' combat power list.

Yang Lin, having been defeated by Fang Bai in the past, had been prudent for a while after recovering from his injuries. However, he harbored deep resentment towards Fang Bai and Hou Ziping. Seeing the great gains made by Fang Bai's and Hou Ziping's team, he couldn't help but burn with jealousy.

Yang Lin had planned to lie low for a while and seek revenge against Fang Bai and Hou Ziping when the opportunity arose, but he didn't expect Hou Ziping to actually directly challenge him by name.

"I may not have beaten Fang Bai, but can't I take you down? If I don't leave you crying for your father and mother, begging for mercy, I won't carry the surname Yang! Here on this Stone Platform, with all eyes on us and the high-level members of the Martial Academy watching, even if I beat you to the ground searching for your teeth, Fang Bai can't help you!"

Yang Lin looked at Hou Ziping, who had confidently leapt onto the Stone Platform, and sneered inwardly. Almost simultaneously as Hou Ziping jumped up, he too soared high, lightly landing on the platform.

"Junior Brother Hou, please."

"Senior Brother Yang, please."

As Elder Tie Xing from the Enforcement Hall announced, "Begin," Yang Lin and Hou Ziping exchanged a bow and then both launched their attacks at the same time.

Both men had secretly amassed their True Essence Force, and now they circulated their Cultivation Techniques, Essence Energy wildly surging through the meridians within their bodies, propelling their figures forward in a fierce charge, like two cannonballs blasting out of their barrels, producing a sharp whistling sound as they collided violently in the center of the Stone Platform.

Before their mountain expedition, Hou Ziping was no match for Yang Lin, but after comprehending a set of Desolate Level Martial Arts Techniques in the Stone Forest, Hou Ziping's understanding of the Martial Dao had reached a new plateau, and his strength had surged, already surpassing Yang Lin.

With their strengths not differing much, the duel was much more exciting and intense than Liu Liehu's and Liu Qingqing's earlier challenges, offering better entertainment and occasionally drawing cheers from the disciples below the platform.

Hou Ziping's strength was clearly superior to Yang Lin's, resulting in a more offensive and less defensive battle.

Yang Lin, on the other hand, grew increasingly alarmed as the fight progressed, seeing Hou Ziping, once known in the Inner Court for being timid, now on the verge of an upset, filling him with shock, rage, and desperation.

Martial Artists must avoid being impatient and flustered during a duel, and Hou Ziping was delighted to see Yang Lin lose his footing. Seizing the opportunity, he launched a fierce attack, forcing Yang Lin to retreat step by step, rendering him powerless to turn the tide.

The two tumbled and battled intensely for nearly a hundred moves before Yang Lin was kicked off the Stone Platform by Hou Ziping. Although his injuries were not serious, he suffered a great loss of face.

After Hou Ziping, Huang Miao was about to take the stage, but Tu Hu leaped onto the Stone Platform first.

"Reporting to the Academy Head, during my recent venture into the mountains for cultivation training, I defeated Zhou Tong, who is ranked eighth among the Core Disciples. Zhou Tong himself can testify, as can several cultivation teams. Please, Headmaster, look into this matter."

Upon reaching the Stone Platform, Tu Hu didn't challenge anyone but loudly declared these few sentences.

These brief words prompted an uproar among the thousands of disciples present.

Tu Hu was the top fighter among the Inner Court Disciples, and Zhou Tong was ranked eighth among the Core Disciples. Logically, there was a small realm difference between their strengths, with Zhou Tong possessing the combat power to instantly defeat Tu Hu.

Yet, Tu Hu suddenly announced that he had defeated Zhou Tong, confidently stating that both Zhou Tong and several cultivation teams could testify. Moreover, from the look on Tu Hu's face, he did not appear to be lying.

Could it be that during his recent venture into the mountains, Tu Hu had advanced an entire small realm, gained strength comparable to Zhou Tong's, and even surpassed him in combat power?

Before long, Zhou Tong, who had been seriously injured by Tu Hu in the Bitao Mountain Range and had not yet recovered, was helped onto the Stone Platform by two Martial Academy Disciples, accompanied by members of several teams that had witnessed his duel with Tu Hu.

Upon reaching the platform, Zhou Tong and the others personally confirmed everything Tu Hu had just said was true.

The thousands of disciples at Bitao Martial Academy stirred once again, and everyone looked at Tu Hu with admiration and awe.

For the first time, Tu Hu experienced what it felt like to be the center of attention and quickly grew fond of it.

This was the glory belonging to the powerful!

Without having to lift a finger, Tu Hu had taken Zhou Tong's place, becoming the new number eight powerhouse on the Core Disciples' combat rank list.

Meanwhile, Zhou Tong, after sustaining heavy injuries from Tu Hu during their mountain venture, had to return halfway without gaining any cultivation resources. Furthermore, with Tu Hu entering the ranks of the Core Disciples, he had to face the temporary consequence of being removed from the Core Disciples.

"Now that Tu Hu has become a Core Disciple, doesn't that naturally make me—the former second-ranked fighter of the Inner Court—the top powerhouse of the Inner Court? My challenge target now can only be the Core Disciples."

Thinking this, Huang Miao watched as Tu Hu leaped delightedly from the Stone Platform and then she herself gracefully stepped onto it, declaring crisply, "Inner Court Disciple Huang Miao challenges Core Disciple Qi Dongsheng!"

The thousands of Martial Artists below the stage were again astonished at Huang Miao's words, thinking that the members of this cultivation team seemed to be as mad as hatters. To this point, apart from Fang Bai, everyone else from her team had already defeated their opponents and achieved their goals.

Qi Dongsheng was clearly someone who loved to fight. Hearing someone challenge him, he excitedly howled like a member of the Wolf Clan, his figure turning into a blur as he appeared in front of Huang Miao on the Stone Platform.

"Come on, Junior Sister Huang, show me what you've got! Don't let me down!"

Qi Dongsheng beckoned to Huang Miao with a hook of his hand, grinning as he spoke.

To tell the truth, Huang Miao did not have much confidence in her battle with Qi Dongsheng. She chose to challenge him to gauge just how much she still had to improve to reach the level of a Core Disciple.

Chapter 1022: Do You Dare to Battle?

During this mountain training period, Huang Miao had indeed made significant progress in her strength, but compared to the Core Disciple Qi Dongsheng, who possessed a high-rank Heaven Level cultivation, she was still far behind.

Moreover, Huang Miao didn't possess the ability to challenge those beyond her rank like Liu Qingqing did.

Therefore, in a full-force battle, Huang Miao only lasted about twenty moves against Qi Dongsheng before she was ultimately defeated.

Among the Inner Court disciples, Tu Hu was infamous for his love of fighting.

And among the Core Disciples, Qi Dongsheng was also known as a madman for the Martial Dao.

Such madmen typically invest all their energy into Martial Dao cultivation and rarely show any tenderness toward women.

Qi Dongsheng was exactly that kind of person.

The punch that finally sent Huang Miao off the Stone Platform could have been withheld, but he showed no mercy whatsoever.

In the midst of her pained cries, Huang Miao fell from the Stone Platform, blood spurting repeatedly from her mouth, her chest stained red with her blood, clearly wounded badly.

"Senior Sister Huang!"

Liu Qingqing's face lost its color as she cried out in alarm, leaping forward to support the barely standing Huang Miao, who was swaying as if about to collapse.

Hou Ziping and Liu Liehu also rushed to Huang Miao's side, anxiously inquiring about her injuries.

"I... uh... I'm not seriously hurt..."

Wiping the blood from the corner of her mouth, Huang Miao forced a smile at Liu Qingqing and the others and took out a Healing Pill to swallow.

"Senior Brother Qi, it's customary among fellow disciples to stop at the right moment, your actions were a bit too much!"

Hou Ziping turned and looked up at Qi Dongsheng on the Stone Platform, angrily shouting.

Liu Qingqing and Liu Liehu also glared at Qi Dongsheng with a look of shared animosity on their faces.

Their team of five had formed a deep friendship during their mountain training period, and naturally, they were all furious to see Huang Miao seriously injured.

Even the senior officials of the Martial Academy, like Ren Jingbo sitting on the Stone Platform, frowned slightly and felt discontent.

When Qi Dongsheng unleashed that final punch, he could have held back some strength and still secured the victory without seriously injuring Huang Miao.

"The duel between Martial Artists should be with full effort. What's the point of fighting if we make allowances or hold back? Besides, I have adhered strictly to the rules of the Martial Academy and did not harm junior Sister Huang's life."

Qi Dongsheng sneered, speaking dismissively.

"You..."

Hou Ziping, not good with words, found himself at a loss for what to say in his frustration.

"What 'you'?"

Qi Dongsheng's gaze swept over Hou Ziping, Fang Bai, Liu Qingqing, and Liu Liehu as he said, "I know the four of you and Junior Sister Huang are a team and get along well. If you can't stand it, challenge me! Here's what, I'll give you a chance for revenge. The four of you can all come at me together!"

Common sense dictated that Qi Dongsheng, a Core Disciple with a high-rank Heaven Level cultivation, would have great odds against three Inner Court disciples and one External Courtyard disciple. Hence, he issued such a bold declaration.

And the thousands of disciples watching from all around, except for a very few, did not think Qi Dongsheng was arrogant or conceited.

They too believed that even if Hou Ziping and his three teammates joined forces, they were no match for Qi Dongsheng. The challenge he proposed to them was a display of confidence in his strength, not a sign of disrespect toward Hou Ziping and his team.

"Disciple Qi, confidence is a good thing, but overconfidence often turns bad," said Tu Hu, who had been watching from below the stone platform with a cold eye.

Originally, Tu Hu, as a disciple of the Inner Court, should have addressed Qi Dongsheng as "Senior Brother," but he had just joined the ranks of the Core Disciples, ranking even above Qi Dongsheng, and had become Qi's senior brother in one leap.

Although Qi Dongsheng was inwardly reluctant to accept Tu Hu, he did not dare show disrespect to this freshly promoted senior brother in front of the high-ranking members of the Martial Academy.

"Senior Brother Tu, I don't understand what you mean."

Qi Dongsheng glanced at Tu Hu, bewildered by his comment.

Tu Hu looked at Fang Bai meaningfully and chuckled, "You will understand soon enough."

The arrogance displayed by Qi Dongsheng provoked indignant fury in Hou Ziping, Liu Qingqing, and Liu Liehu, their blood boiling with eagerness.

The three of them were itching to challenge Qi Dongsheng, cracking their knuckles and eager to test themselves on the platform.

The trio, being lower both in status and martial strength within the Martial Academy than Qi Dongsheng, knew that even if they lost, as long as it wasn't a total defeat, there was honor in their attempt.

"It's preposterous, this stone platform is not a place for you to squabble! If you refuse to accept each other, you can settle your differences in private at the Martial Academy's Practice Battle Arena in the future!"

Elder Tie Xing of the Enforcement Hall had a stern face, and his icy gaze swept over Qi Dongsheng and Hou Ziping's group. Seeing that they had all fallen silent, he continued, "Now, let the challenges proceed!"

Disappointed he couldn't fight the four of them, Qi Dongsheng was about to leap off the stone platform and return to his original spot, when suddenly a clear voice rang out.

"Disciple Qi, Inner Court Disciple Fang Bai challenges you! Do you dare to fight?"

"Hmm?"

Qi Dongsheng raised his head at the sound and looked in the direction it had come from, only to see Fang Bai had already leapt onto the stone platform, his eyes as sharp as a blade, coldly staring at him.

"You challenge me? Ha... Hahaha... Hahahaha..."

Qi Dongsheng looked at Fang Bai and then burst into laughter, his laugh filled with scorn and disdain.

Fang Bai ranked below Huang Miao in the Inner Court disciples' battle power list, and since Qi Dongsheng had heavily injured Huang Miao, naturally he could also pummel Fang Bai.

"You are an Inner Court disciple and want to challenge me, beat the top-ranked fighter on your Inner Court disciple battle power list first."

As Qi Dongsheng said this, it suddenly dawned on him that the previously highest-ranked Inner Court disciple, Tu Hu, had been promoted to a Core Disciple, and Huang Miao, now second-ranked, had been seriously injured by him and was unable to fight.

With Tu Hu advancing in rank and Huang Miao injured, Fang Bai, currently ranked third on the battle power list of the Inner Court disciples, was indeed eligible to challenge Qi Dongsheng directly.

"Disciple Qi, I am no match for Senior Brother Fang!"

Huang Miao, who was meditating and healing, suddenly spoke. By calling Fang Bai "Senior Brother," she formally acknowledged that his strength was greater than hers and that he now outranked her.

"During our mountain training, Senior Brother Fang also defeated me!"

Following Huang Miao's admission, Tu Hu also suddenly spoke up.

During their training experience in the Bitao Mountain Range, while vying for the corpse of an Antlered Silver Lion, Tu Hu had a duel with Fang Bai. Even though Tu Hu had tapped into his latent physical potential, he hadn't managed to defeat Fang Bai within fifty moves.

The side effects of Tu Hu's activation of his latent potential later manifested, leaving him exhausted and unconscious. It was only with Fang Bai's assistance that he had recovered. At that time, Tu Hu realized that he was no match for Fang Bai at all. During their duel, Fang Bai had actually been holding back.

Huang Miao's acknowledgment that she was not Fang Bai's equal did not cause much surprise among the crowd, for both were Inner Court disciples with closely ranked positions on the battle strength list.

But the admission of defeat by Tu Hu, a newly advanced Core Disciple, was like a huge stone thrown into calm waters, creating massive ripples.

Chapter 1023: This Kid is Arrogant Enough!

"Hum!"

As soon as Tu Hu's words fell, the thousands of disciples on the square began to whisper amongst themselves, with almost everyone's gaze turning towards Fang Bai on the stone platform.

Tu Hu addressed Fang Bai publicly as "Senior Brother," which was an acknowledgment of Fang Bai's strength surpassing his own, leaving others no choice but to believe.

Tu Hu had already advanced to the status of Core Disciple and had taken the place of Zhou Tong, who was ranked eighth on the Core Disciples' combat power list, by defeating him.

If Fang Bai defeated Tu Hu, then the eighth position on the Core Disciples' combat power list would be occupied by Fang Bai.

Though Tu Hu would have to step back to ninth, he would still remain among the Core Disciples.

This news took the thousands of disciples present quite a while to digest, and even the dozen or so high-ranking officials of the Bitao Martial Academy sitting on the stone platform were dumbfounded.

Before this, apart from causing a sensation in the Inner Court with his battle with Yang Lin and establishing his status, Fang Bai had been very low-profile, so much so that some disciples had almost forgotten about his existence.

Few could have imagined that Fang Bai, after returning from this mountain expedition, suddenly possessed such formidable strength.

Even more astonishing was the fact that Fang Bai was only about twenty years old.

A Heaven Level high-rank martial artist around the age of twenty was not only unprecedented in the history of Bitao Martial Academy but was also extremely rare throughout the entire True Essence Realm.

After a moment of shock, figures like Ren Jingbo, high-ranking officials of the Martial Academy, were filled with boundless joy.

"This is a genius bestowed upon our Bitao Martial Academy by the heavens! With a genius like Fang Bai, our Martial Academy has hope for rising to greatness, hope indeed!"

Ren Jingbo stood up excitedly, raised his head to the sky, and muttered to himself, his eyes brimming with tears of excitement.

"Fang Bai has a Dual Attribute Innate Spiritual Root, and his cultivation level progresses much faster than ordinary martial artists. Now that he has reached the Heaven Level high-rank, if we provide him with ample cultivation resources and guide him without reservation, with such full-fledged training, perhaps it will take only a few years for him to advance to Heaven Level Perfection."

Elixir Hall Elder Ge Feng said with a smile, stroking his beard while watching Fang Bai.

"Within ten years, if Fang Bai can advance to the Desolate Level Realm, then he could be compared with the genius disciples of those super-strong Sects! It's unimaginable to think how far he'll grow with the heaven-defying talent of Dual Attribute Innate Spiritual Root!"

Reception Hall Elder Situ Min was equally excited.

Situ Min knew that Fang Bai and Liu Qingqing came from the same village and had a good relationship, and so had a favorable impression of Fang Bai out of affection for his friend.

"Fang Bai, Liu Qingqing, and Gao Shuxian, all with Innate Spiritual Roots, are the hope for the rise of the Bitao Martial Academy."

"Hopefully, our Bitao Martial Academy will also produce a Vast Level Expert in the future and join the ranks of the third-grade Sects!"

"If we become a third-grade Sect, our Bitao Martial Academy could stand shoulder to shoulder with the Purple Flame Sect. When that time comes, we won't have to pay tribute with a large number of cultivation resources to the Purple Flame Sect every year."

"Whether Liu Qingqing and Gao Shuxian can become Vast Level Experts is uncertain, but Fang Bai, with his Dual Attribute Innate Spiritual Root, is indeed someone to look forward to!"

"Fang Bai possesses the attributes necessary to become a Pharmacist, so why not cultivate him into one?"

"Yes, if Fang Bai could become a Pharmacist, it would be a huge boon for our Bitao Martial Academy!"

"In the True Martial Realm, Pharmacists are very scarce, and if our Bitao Martial Academy had a Pharmacist in residence, we would no longer have to spend large amounts of cultivation resources to entreat other Pharmacists to refine elixirs, thus greatly enhancing the overall strength of our Academy's disciples!"

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Several Stewards of the Martial Academy seated on stone chairs on both sides also showed delight, and they discussed amid murmurs.

Fang Bai had only been at Bitao Martial Academy for a few short months yet had already advanced a minor realm. This speed of growth was terrifying; could this be the miracle brought by the Dual Attribute Innate Spiritual Root?

With Huang Miao, Tu Hu, and others as witnesses, the thousands of disciples of Bitao Martial Academy on-site believed that Fang Bai now had the strength of a Core Disciple.

"Fang Bai beating Senior Brother Tu is not something I witnessed with my own eyes, so I don't believe it! Nor do I accept it!"

Qi Dongsheng shouted loudly, pointing his finger at Fang Bai across the way and added, "Fang Bai, only by defeating me can you prove your strength!"

The Bitao Martial Academy had ten Core Disciples in total. Qi Dongsheng ranked tenth, and although Tu Hu had beaten Zhou Tong in the Bitao Mountain Range to break into the Core Disciples' ranks, Zhou Tong's strength had weakened significantly due to serious injuries, likely to be pushed out of the Core Disciple ranks. Thus, Qi Dongsheng's position in the top ten could still be preserved.

However, if Fang Bai also advanced to the status of Core Disciple, then Qi Dongsheng, ranking at the very bottom, might be squeezed out of the top ten—something he found hard to accept.

Fang Bai knew that to deal with a martial art fanatic like Qi Dongsheng, only by defeating him fair and square could he make him completely convinced.

"Junior Brother Tu himself admits he's no match for me, and you rank lowest among the Core Disciples. How hard would it be for me to defeat you? Come on, let's settle it in three moves. If I can't kick you off the stone platform within three moves, I'll consider it my loss."

Fang Bai, normally very low-profile, was now unexpectedly arrogant, leaving onlookers agape.

"This kid is cocky, but I like it."

Elixir Hall Elder Ge Feng chuckled.

"When it's time to be humble, be humble, when it's time to show off, show off, this youth has the makings of a great master. Good! Very good!"

Reception Hall Elder Situ Min also said, smiling.

Seeing the two Elders interacting in this manner, Elder Lei Li of Classics felt displeased, snorted softly, and without expression said, "To be arrogant, one must have the means to back it up. Empty talk counts for nothing, let's wait until he has really defeated Qi Dongsheng to conclude! Heh, claiming victory within three moves... Isn't he afraid of biting his tongue with such a boast!"

"Let's wait and see!"

Situ Min raised an eyebrow and said coldly.

Ge Feng glanced at Lei Li and said with a smile, "Elder Lei, would you care to make a wager?"

Lei Li was taken aback and asked, "Wager what?"

"Cultivation resources!"

Ge Feng pointed at Fang Bai, "Let's each put up ten thousand Essence Stones and ten Elixirs as the stake. If Fang Bai defeats Qi Dongsheng within three moves, your cultivation resources become mine. Otherwise, mine become yours. Dare you bet?"

Lei Li looked at Fang Bai, sensing the Martial Artist Aura within him was on par with Qi Dongsheng, unsure where such confidence came from to broadcast defeat within three moves, and seeing Ge Feng's provocative look, he laughed and said, "Why not? However, I think the stake is too small. How about fifty thousand Essence Stones and fifty Elixirs for the bet?"

Although the Elders of Bitao Martial Academy received not a few cultivation resources every month, fifty thousand Essence Stones and fifty Elixirs were still a significant sum for them.

Chapter 1024: High Five as a Promise

"Fine, as you wish! Let's bet 50,000 Essence Stones and 50 Elixirs! With the Dean, Deputy Dean, all Elders, and Stewards as witnesses, neither of us can cheat. Whoever loses must accept defeat graciously!"

Ge Feng hesitated slightly but then nodded in agreement to the terms Lei Li had proposed.

"Ha ha, I want in on the fun too! I bet Fang Bai can't defeat Qi Dongsheng in three moves. Yep, my bet is the same as yours!"

Seeing the two Great Elders getting fired up and betting, Ren Jingbo suddenly became interested and laughed heartily.

Ren Jingbo and Lei Li shared the same view, believing that Fang Bai's Martial Artist Aura was no different from Qi Dongsheng's. Not to mention three moves, even in thirty moves, Fang Bai would have a hard time defeating Qi Dongsheng.

It was even unclear who would ultimately emerge victorious.

Fang Bai's declaration of defeating Qi Dongsheng in three moves was perhaps just an impulsive boast due to his youthful vigour.

When Ren Jingbo decided to join, neither Lei Li nor Ge Feng could object. However, this meant that whoever lost among them would pay double, but winning would also mean gaining double the Cultivation Resources.

"I bet Qi Dongsheng can hold his ground for three moves. My wager is the same as yours."

Unexpectedly, Tie Xing, the normally reserved and solemn Elder of the Enforcement Hall, also joined the betting fray.

"Count me in! I bet Fang Bai can defeat Qi Dongsheng in three moves!"

Seeing the Dean and the other three Elders join the gamble, Situ Min thought it over and eventually joined in as well.

Martial Artists typically love to gamble, and upon seeing this, the eight Stewards of the Martial Academy joined in the betting with laughs and chuckles.

Over a dozen of the Martial Academy's higher-ups placed their bets either on Fang Bai or on Qi Dongsheng.

Their bets were all on whether Fang Bai could defeat Qi Dongsheng within three moves.

Clearly, in the eyes of the Martial Academy's upper echelon, Fang Bai defeating Qi Dongsheng in three moves was nearly an impossible feat.

"How many Cultivation Resources do you have?"

Fang Bai, who was confronting Qi Dongsheng, suddenly asked.

"What do you want to know that for?"

Qi Dongsheng, who was secretly gathering his Essence Energy and preparing to give his all against Fang Bai, was baffled by the question.

Fang Bai grinned and said, "Since all the high-level officials of the Martial Academy have placed their bets, why don't we make a wager too?"

Wei Dongsheng said, "Our wager, same as the higher-ups?"

Fang Bai nodded, "Exactly. I bet I can beat you within three moves."

"Think you can beat me in three moves? Heh..."

Qi Dongsheng sneered, "Even Senior Brother Long, who is number one on the Core Disciple strength list, wouldn't dare to claim he can beat me in three moves. And you, not even a Core Disciple, dare to make such a boastful claim, how laughable."

Fang Bai replied, "Let's not talk about whether it's laughable or not. I'm only asking if you dare to bet?"

Qi Dongsheng raised his eyebrows and said, "Bet? Why not? But I'm not interested if the stakes are too low! You've not been at the Martial Academy for long, you probably don't have many Cultivation Resources, right?"

Fang Bai smiled faintly, "Whatever amount of Cultivation Resources you can put up, I can match!"

"Really?"

Qi Dongsheng's eyes brightened, seeing Fang Bai nod seriously, he thought for a moment and said, "My Cultivation Resources, naturally, can't compare to that of the Academy's high officials, but I can bring out 10,000 Essence Stones and 10 Elixirs no problem. Additionally, I can borrow another 10,000 Essence Stones and 10 Elixirs."

Saying this, he looked disdainfully at Fang Bai, "Can you match that?"

Fang Bai replied, "Yes!"

"Let's bet then!"

Qi Dongsheng clapped his hands loudly and stated, "To prevent you from reneging, let's swear an oath in front of everyone here, both onstage and offstage!"

"Brother Fang would never renege!"

"Junior Brother Qi, you must be judging others by your own standards!"

"I bet it's you, Junior Brother Qi, who would renege!"

Hearing the disrespect in Qi Dongsheng's words towards Fang Bai, Hou Ziping, Liu Qingqing, and Liu Liehu, who were standing below the Stone Platform, clamored in dissatisfaction.

Fang Bai, however, was not angered and exchanged three palm strikes with Qi Dongsheng on the spot, sealing their agreement that neither would go back on their word, regardless of the outcome.

Though Qi Dongsheng's offered Cultivation Resources could not compare to those of the Martial Academy's high officials, they were the most he could muster at the moment.

In Qi Dongsheng's view, as Fang Bai had only been at the Bitao Martial Academy for a few months and was always an Inner Court Disciple with limited monthly allocations of Cultivation Resources, aside from what he needed for his own cultivation, it was likely there was not much left.

Therefore, when Fang Bai suddenly produced 20,000 Essence Stones and 20 Elixirs as his wager, Qi Dongsheng found it unlikely and thus proposed they strike palms as an oath, to prevent Fang Bai from possibly reneging if he lost.

Little did Qi Dongsheng know, Fang Bai had amassed substantial Cultivation Resources during his recent mountain expedition; a mere 20,000 Essence Stones and 20 Elixirs were nothing to him.

Seeing the high officials of the Martial Academy betting, thousands of disciples below the Stone Platform, even as Fang Bai and Qi Dongsheng themselves were betting, became highly excited and gathered in small groups, shouting and starting their own wagers.

This way, the duel between Fang Bai and Qi Dongsheng stirred up the nerves of thousands of people throughout the Bitao Martial Academy.

Some would make a fortune, gaining substantial Cultivation Resources, while others might lose all their resources completely.

What frustrated Hou Ziping and others below the Stone Platform was that among the thousands of disciples, only about one-tenth had placed their bets on Fang Bai, betting that he could defeat Qi Dongsheng within three moves.

And the remaining ninety percent were betting that Qi Dongsheng would withstand Fang Bai's attacks for at least three moves.

Those betting on Fang Bai were either close to Huang Miao and others, took a speculative gamble, or saw potential in Fang Bai's future in Martial Dao and wanted to foster a closer relationship with him.

Thus, if Fang Bai indeed managed to defeat Qi Dongsheng within three moves, that tenth of the disciples would make a huge profit, but if Qi Dongsheng wasn't defeated within those three moves, they would suffer significant losses.

For the high officials of the Bitao Martial Academy, a few tens of thousands of Essence Stones and dozens of Elixirs were merely a light gamble for enjoyment, but for many of the Academy's disciples, they were betting all they had—a high-risk gamble.

Seeing the duel between the two disciples spark a gambling frenzy involving thousands of Academy disciples, Ren Jingbo couldn't help but shake his head amusedly. He cleared his throat and said to Fang Bai and Qi Dongsheng, "You both can start now! Show me your true capabilities, don't disappoint me!"

Zhuang Zhi, who had also placed a heavy bet on Qi Dongsheng, quickly chimed in after Ren Jingbo spoke, "Young man surnamed Qi, so many disciples are counting on you to handle three moves without losing. But if you lose within three moves, you're going to make a lot of people hate you. You'd better give it your all!"

Chapter 1025: One Punch

Zhuang Zhi's words were hardly out when Qi Dongsheng, who had been relaxed, suddenly tensed up, feeling an immense pressure bearing down on him.

"Three moves... just hold out for three moves..."

Qi Dongsheng clenched his fists and silently told himself.

He had been somewhat confident about defeating Fang Bai, thinking that at worst he'd manage a draw, but now, feeling such immense pressure, his only wish was to withstand Fang Bai's attacks for three moves.

This significant shift in mindset caused Qi Dongsheng to lose his original confidence, making him hesitant and timid.

Such a mentality is never good for a martial artist.

To mask his inner turmoil, Qi Dongsheng frantically circulated his True Yuan, bolstering his fighting spirit. The martial artist's steely essence morphed into an oppressive force, continuously bearing down on Fang Bai.

Qi Dongsheng had decided to abandon the idea of taking the offensive and instead took up a stance of full defense, thinking that even if Fang Bai was more powerful, it would be impossible for him to defeat him within three moves, as he planned to guard without attacking.

"Junior Brother Qi, take this!"

With a light shout, Fang Bai's figure turned into a blur, shooting towards Qi Dongsheng like an arrow released from a bow.

Whoosh—

Accompanying Fang Bai's approach was a scorching hot gust of air.

The heatwave swept over everything, enveloping Qi Dongsheng completely.

Qi Dongsheng felt the temperature around him soar suddenly, his skin tingling with a burning sensation, and the air seemed to have been sucked away, making it difficult to breathe.

In that moment, Qi Dongsheng felt as though he was in the midst of a sea of fire, about to be grilled to a crisp.

"Such dense Fire Primordial Qi! How can he be this strong?"

Qi Dongsheng was taken aback. As he looked at Fang Bai, who had surged to his front, he saw Fang Bai's right fist hurtling towards his chest, rapidly enlarging in his vision.

A red hue of Essence Energy shrouded Fang Bai's fist, and at first glance, it seemed as if his fist was wrapped in flames, containing a fearsome power of fire.

It then dawned on Qi Dongsheng that Fang Bai possessed a Dual Attribute Innate Spiritual Root of fire and wood; this fierce and powerful punch was the result of his cultivation of Fire-type Martial Arts.

Ironically, Qi Dongsheng's body also leaned towards the fire attribute, which is why he cultivated Fire-based Techniques as well.

What baffled Qi Dongsheng was that the Fire-based Technique Fang Bai used was something he had never seen before.

Qi Dongsheng had worked his way up from an Inner Court disciple, and he knew that the Bitao Martial Academy had only a handful of Fire-based Techniques suitable for Inner Court disciples to cultivate—of which he had practiced all.

However, the Fire-based Technique Fang Bai was using was profound and powerful, far beyond his knowledge.

"Could it be that someone high up in the Martial Academy secretly taught Fang Bai a higher-tier Fire-based Technique?"

Qi Dongsheng thought privately but immediately negated his own idea.

Under normal circumstances, the rank of the Martial Arts Techniques a Martial Artist cultivates is closely related to his realm and Cultivation Level.

If the realm and Cultivation Level of a Martial Artist are too low, he can only cultivate lower-rank Martial Arts Techniques that match him. If he rashly cultivates higher-rank Martial Arts Techniques beyond his own realm and Cultivation Level, it could lead to very serious consequences, with minor cases resulting in damaged meridians and severe cases in the body exploding and dying.

It's like asking a young child to lift a soccer ball, which he might be able to do, but if you ask him to lift an iron ball of the same size, his small body will definitely not be able to bear it and will inevitably be crushed.

In Qi Dongsheng's eyes, Fang Bai was just an Inner Court disciple with an intermediate Heaven Level Cultivation. Logically, the Martial Arts Techniques he cultivated should be low-rank, and their power certainly shouldn't surpass what Qi had cultivated.

However, the punch that Fang Bai was now hurling, enveloped in Fire Primordial Qi, was superior in momentum, power, speed, and temperature to any Fire System Martial Arts Qi had ever cultivated.

To Qi Dongsheng, Fang Bai's punch had already far exceeded the Martial Arts domain that Core disciples could access, not to mention the Personal Transmission Disciples, and it was probably only Martial Artists at the Desolate Level realm who cultivated such techniques.

"The Martial Academy's higher-ups cultivate Desolate Level Martial Arts Techniques. The style of this punch must have been secretly taught to Fang Bai by a high-level Elder, right?"

Qi Dongsheng's thoughts raced, considering that among the dozen or so high-level individuals in the Martial Academy, Elder Ge Feng of the Elixir Hall practiced Fire System Martial Arts Techniques and he held Fang Bai in high regard. Consequently, the most likely person to have imparted such high-rank techniques to Fang Bai must be Ge Feng.

Although the Martial Academy's rules forbid high-level individuals from privately transmitting upper-rank techniques to disciples to avoid forcing their growth, with Ge Feng's status and position, even if he did impart higher-rank Martial Arts Techniques to Fang Bai, no one would punish him.

This thought merely flickered through Qi Dongsheng's mind because Fang Bai's rapidly approaching fist left no room for him to continue thinking further.

"As long as I withstand three moves, I win! I won't clash with him head-on!"

Qi Dongsheng was originally a combat fanatic, especially excited when facing strong opponents. Even knowing he might be defeated, he would dare to clash directly. But now, the enormous pressure on him not only failed to arouse his competitive spirit and courage, it actually made him lose his nerve.

Faced with Fang Bai's incoming punch, his first thought was not to meet it in battle but to evade.

Qi Dongsheng's heels suddenly exerted force, and his figure used the momentum to swiftly retreat, attempting to dodge Fang Bai's violent and powerful punch, filled with high temperatures.

Qi Dongsheng retreated rapidly, so fast that only a few of the thousands of disciples beneath the Stone Platform could make out his figure.

Seeing the distance between himself and Fang Bai grow quickly, Qi Dongsheng couldn't help feeling somewhat smug, thinking, So what if your fist is more powerful than mine, Fang Bai? My movement technique is superior to yours, you can't catch up with me, so what can you do to me?

What Qi Dongsheng never expected was that Fang Bai's figure, which seemed about to lose momentum, suddenly accelerated with a surge, instantly closing the distance between them to about three feet.

And the end of Fang Bai's fist had already touched the clothes on Qi Dongsheng's chest.

The violent and intense Fire Primordial Qi carried a terrifying heat as it burst forth from Fang Bai's fist, directly tearing through the Essence Energy defensive shield that Qi Dongsheng had formed in front of his chest.

Hiss—

With a light sound, accompanied by a scent of charring, the clothes on Qi Dongsheng's chest were shattered by the Fire Primordial Qi from Fang Bai's punch. Immediately after, the skin on his chest sizzled and toasted under the high temperature of the Fire Primordial Qi.

The scent of charring was from Qi Dongsheng's clothes and skin being burnt by the onslaught of the Fire Primordial Qi.

Horried, Qi Dongsheng's soul seemed to leap from his body.

Fang Bai's punch hadn't even landed on his body yet, and already he had suffered greatly. If it had hit him solidly on the chest, the consequences could have been more severe than the injury he had just inflicted on Huang Miao.

Chapter 1026: Compressed Version of Furious Flame Fist

Thinking of Huang Miao, Qi Dongsheng suddenly realized that Fang Bai and Huang Miao already had a good relationship, and now that they belonged to the same Cultivation Team, his challenge against Qi Dongsheng might not have been about competing for a spot among the Core Disciples, but it could have been to stand up for Huang Miao.

Otherwise, why wouldn't Fang Bai have issued his challenge earlier or later? Why did it happen precisely after Huang Miao had been seriously injured by Qi Dongsheng?

Regret suddenly emerged in Qi Dongsheng's heart. Had he known this would happen, he would have shown Huang Miao mercy earlier and it wouldn't have escalated to the current situation.

However, it was too late for regrets now. The only thing to do was to fight with all his might and withstand Fang Bai's assault, because if he were defeated, it would be a small matter for himself, but if it led to thousands of disciples losing a significant amount of Cultivation Resources both on and off the platform, that would be severe.

Thinking of the disdainful and mocking looks from the Martial Academy disciples that would follow his defeat, Qi Dongsheng couldn't help but shudder.

"No, I absolutely cannot lose!"

Qi Dongsheng roared inwardly, decisively bit the tip of his tongue, and sprayed out a mouthful of blood essence to stimulate his body's innate potential.

Qi Dongsheng was someone with a very strong sense of pride. He would rather risk future complications from activating his body's potential than suffer others' scorn and derision.

"He's gone mad... That kid Qi Dongsheng has gone mad..."

Several of the Martial Academy's high-ranking officials seated at the northern end of the Stone Platform frowned with concern and sighed in regret, while others were visibly excited.

Those who were visibly excited were officials who had a favorable view of Fang Bai.

Fang Bai had forced Qi Dongsheng to stimulate his body's innate potential, which far exceeded several of the high-ranking officials' expectations and filled them with joy.

Especially the Fire System Martial Arts that Fang Bai had deployed lit up their eyes.

What Fang Bai had just used was the "Furious Flame Fist," a Fire System Martial Art he had created in his previous life. He had deliberately suppressed his Cultivation Level, resulting in much less power for the Furious Flame Fist.

Nonetheless, to those officials, Fang Bai's condensed version of the Furious Flame Fist appeared exceedingly sophisticated and powerful, and it already fell within the scope of Desolate Level Martial Arts.

They speculated that Fang Bai must have had a significant opportunity during this mountain training session for his strength to have advanced so dramatically.

As for the officials who expressed concern and regret, it was because Qi Dongsheng also had considerable talent. With proper training, he might have ascended to Desolate Level Martial Artist and joined the ranks of the Martial Academy's high officials in a few years. However, Qi Dongsheng's forced activation of his potential cast a shadow over his future path in the Martial Dao. Unless he could overcome the adverse effects of stimulating his potential, it would be difficult for him to achieve great success in his lifetime.

After activating his innate potential, Qi Dongsheng's aura surged, and his strength increased significantly. His aura, once suppressed by Fang Bai, was now overpowering Fang Bai's.

Regaining his confidence, Qi Dongsheng stopped dodging and threw punches to meet the attack.

A dismissive cold smile flashed at the corner of Fang Bai's mouth. His punches became tighter, the Fire Primordial Qi at his fist's edge grew more refined, and the violent and scorching power within the Fire Primordial Qi enhanced subtly.

Two Fire System Martial Artists collided on the Stone Platform, surrounded by Fire Primordial Qi that filled the space and continuously spread outward. This caused the temperature around the Stone Platform to steadily rise, but thankfully, all of the high officials seated on the Stone Platform were Desolate Level Martial Artists; anyone of lesser strength would not have been able to withstand the sauna-like heat and would have fled the platform already.

Boom!

The two fists, brimming with Fire Primordial Qi, violently collided in mid-air. The temperature of the air around the fists reached a flashpoint at that moment and exploded into a brilliant blaze of fire, which quickly extinguished.

A shockwave of Fire Primordial Qi spread out from the center where the two Combatants stood, causing the disciples below the Stone Platform to feel waves of scorching heat assaulting them. It became unbearable, especially for those with weaker strengths, who were forced to quickly retreat.

On the stone platform, amidst the thunderous echoing sound, someone let out a wail, followed by two figures retreating in opposite directions.

Qi Dongsheng was sent flying, while Fang Bai merely stepped back.

It was Qi Dongsheng who had wailed.

Qi Dongsheng, amidst groans, was sent flying off the stone platform, crashing to the ground just like Huang Miao had before, suffering internal injuries and spewing mouthfuls of fresh blood.

The area around the stone platform once more fell into silence.

No one had expected that with just one move, Qi Dongsheng would be blasted off the platform, defeated in such a miserable fashion.

A disciple from the Inner Court powerfully defeating a Core Disciple—this was a true reversal of fortunes!

"I lost... I've lost... with just a single move..."

Qi Dongsheng sat on the ground, Essence Energy churning violently within him, head reeling, as he repeatedly muttered this phrase, fresh blood continually spilling from the corners of his mouth.

Some of the Martial Academy disciples who had good relations with Qi Dongsheng rushed to his side to console him.

Yet, more Martial Academy disciples, after a moment of stunned silence, began to rue the cultivation resources they had gambled on Qi Dongsheng, as accusations and curses started to fill the air.

Those discordant sounds reached Qi Dongsheng's ears, aggravating him to the point of fury. Coupled with the side effects of forcefully unleashing his body's latent potential starting to show, Qi Dongsheng's vision went dark, and he promptly passed out.

"Well fought! Senior Sister Huang, did you see that? Brother Fang taught that guy Qi Dongsheng a lesson for you!"

Liu Liehu watched Qi Dongsheng collapse onto the ground, laughing heartily and rejoicing in his misfortune.

Huang Miao had felt indignant about Qi Dongsheng's heavy-handed move against her, but seeing him now more badly injured than herself, she felt a twinge of pity, sighed, and said with a bitter smile, "Just like that, Junior Brother Fang... I mean, Brother Fang and Brother Qi have become enemies."

She had instinctively wanted to say "Junior Brother Fang," but then remembered that after this battle, Fang Bai would join the ranks of Core Disciples, elevating his status above her, and from now on, she would have to address him as "Brother Fang."

"We've made an enemy? So what? With Brother Fang's strength, should we be afraid of him?"

Liu Liehu dismissed the concern nonchalantly.

Huang Miao thought about it and agreed. With Fang Bai's talent and aptitude, he was bound to leave Qi Dongsheng far behind on the Martial Dao path.

In the True Martial Realm, a world where strength is revered, when Fang Bai's strength becomes so great that Qi Dongsheng can only look up to him, Qi Dongsheng will be no more than an ant in his eyes, not worthy of concern.

Fang Bai had struck Qi Dongsheng with a powerful punch, avenging Huang Miao. However, to conceal his own strength, he also pretended to stagger a few steps backwards before stabilizing himself.

He strode to the edge of the stone platform, looking down high and mighty at the unconscious Qi Dongsheng, the corners of his mouth curling into a slight, mocking smile.

Although Qi Dongsheng had always been arrogant, he had no quarrel with Fang Bai. If he hadn't been harsh on Huang Miao, Fang Bai wouldn't have stepped in to defend her.

But Qi Dongsheng could have shown mercy; instead, he chose to severely injure Huang Miao just to display his own power. Fang Bai couldn't stand by and watch, which is why he stepped in to give Qi Dongsheng a lesson.

Perhaps after this battle, Qi Dongsheng would realize there are always bigger fish in the sea, and he might become more restrained.

Chapter 1027: Well Done!

Soon after, Qi Dongsheng, who was severely injured and unconscious, was carried back to his residence by several Martial Academy disciples for recuperation.

Qi Dongsheng had received grave internal damage this time, and coupled with the side effects from forcibly stimulating his body's latent potential, it would be difficult for him to get out of bed within two to three months.

Even if Qi Dongsheng could recover from his injuries, it would be very hard for his combat power to return to its former peak state.

Qi Dongsheng's defeat by Fang Bai's single move led to the majority of the several thousand Martial Academy disciples present losing a considerable amount of Cultivation Resources, while a minority made a fortune.

Those who lost Cultivation Resources were filled with blame and curse words, saying they had been made to suffer by Qi Dongsheng.

Those who had made a killing were overjoyed and beaming, treating Fang Bai as their lucky star.

Apart from Fang Bai himself, no one at the scene could have guessed that Qi Dongsheng would be defeated in just one move, and in such a tragic manner.

Including Dean Ren Jingbo and other high-ranking members of Bitao Martial Academy, they were all stunned for a moment, then their gazes landed on Fang Bai on the Stone Platform, all showing expressions of astonishment.

"Fang Bai, well done, kid!"

Elder Ge Feng twirled his beard with his fingers, his eyes shining as he looked at Fang Bai with a smiling face, appearing quite pleased.

Elder Ge Feng had just placed a hefty bet on Fang Bai, mainly to show his support for Fang Bai and to back Situ Min, without truly expecting Fang Bai to defeat Qi Dongsheng within three moves.

Because even Elder Ge Feng thought at the time that it was nearly impossible for Fang Bai to defeat Qi Dongsheng within three moves.

Qi Dongsheng was a Core Disciple with a Cultivation Level of Heaven Level High Rank, and to defeat him within three moves, one would at least need to be a Direct Disciple whose Cultivation Level was a minor realm higher than his.

And the Martial Artist Aura revealed by Fang Bai was not much different from Qi Dongsheng's, but it was far inferior to that of a Direct Disciple. To defeat Qi Dongsheng in three moves could only be hoped for by a miracle.

As for possibly losing the wagered Cultivation Resources, Elder Ge Feng didn't care much, thinking that if he lost, he would just slowly accumulate them again in the future.

In short, before Fang Bai made his move, aside from those like Liu Liehu and Liu Qingqing, Fang Bai's "diehard" supporters, no one else believed that Fang Bai could defeat Qi Dongsheng in three moves.

Thus, when Qi Dongsheng was blasted off the Stone Platform by Fang Bai's punch, it shocked almost everyone present, and many people still hadn't recovered from their surprise even after Qi Dongsheng was carried away from the scene.

"I knew it, this kid Fang Bai is no ordinary fellow! Hehe, someone lost a lot of Cultivation Resources this time, they must be hurting quite a bit, huh?"

Situ Min said excitedly as she got up, her gaze turning to Elder Lei Li of the Classics Hall, whose face was dark and incredibly displeased, making her feel exceptionally content.

Elder Lei Li knew that the "someone" Situ Min referred to was himself and couldn't help but snort coldly, then his gaze swept over Fang Bai like lightning and he asked sternly, "Fang Bai, the technique you just used, was it a Desolate Level Martial Arts Technique?"

Before Fang Bai could answer, Situ Min had already interrupted, "Elder Lei, why do you ask? Surely you don't suspect that someone among our Martial Academy's senior ranks secretly taught Fang Bai a Desolate Level Martial Arts Technique?"

"I wouldn't dare claim that!"

Lei Li glanced at Ge Feng meaningfully, his tone both mocking and strange, "If no one had taught him secretly, how could Fang Bai understand Desolate Level Martial Arts?"

Ge Feng replied with a smile, "Among the upper ranks of the Martial Academy, only I practice Fire-based Techniques, and I also think highly of Fang Bai. If someone were to secretly teach Fang Bai Fire System Techniques, I would likely be the only suspect. So, Elder Lei, are you suspecting me?"

Lei Li chuckled, neither confirming nor denying the accusation, effectively admitting it.

Situ Min retorted angrily, "I trust Elder Ge. Without Dean Ren's consent, he would not take it upon himself to impart our Academy's Desolate Level Martial Arts Techniques to Fang Bai! Furthermore, Elder Lei, please use your brain for once. The technique Fang Bai just used, is it one of our Bitao Martial Academy's Fire System Techniques?"

Lei Li, taken aback, frowned and thought for a moment. Indeed, among Bitao Martial Academy's Desolate Level Martial Arts, there was no Fire System Technique like the one Fang Bai had used.

Situ Min, with a cold gaze, looked at Lei Li and, seeing his embarrassed expression, couldn't help but mock, "Elder Lei, what do you have to say for yourself now? Next time, before you falsely accuse someone, could you trouble yourself to think first?"

"You..."

"Enough! Enough! Hold your tongues, I have some questions for Fang Bai..."

Ren Jingbo knew that the Martial Academy's Elders had divided into two clearly opposing factions, often bickering over various reasons. If he didn't intervene, they could continue their quarrel for quite some time, and things could escalate into an uncontrollable situation, so he had no choice but to raise his hand to interrupt them.

"Fang Bai, let me ask you, where did you learn the Martial Arts you just displayed?"

After waiting for the several thousand Disciples on the Stone Platform to quiet down a bit, Ren Jingbo gestured to Fang Bai to come forward, asking with a pleasant expression.

Situ Min also said with a smile, "Fang Bai, don't worry. As you should know, according to the rules of the Martial Academy, if you learn any powerful Martial Arts Techniques during your mountain training, all you need to do is copy them and submit them to the 'Classics Hall.' The Academy will not only spare you any trouble but will also award you additional Cultivation Resources."

Fang Bai thought for a moment before speaking, "This Fire System Fist Technique is called Furious Flame Fist, a truly Desolate Level Martial Arts. I learned it in the core area of a mountain range, within a Stone Forest during my training expedition..."

Fang Bai recounted the ordeal his Cultivation Team encountered, how they were attacked by Antlered Silver Lions, took refuge in the Stone Forest, and inadvertently came across the carved Desolate Level Martial Arts Techniques on the stone pillars of the Stone Forest.

Seeing that the upper echelons of the Martial Academy were listening intently, Fang Bai paused, then added, "The five of us stumbled into the center of the Stone Forest, and then somehow found our way out again... Well, I think that Stone Forest was like a huge maze, making it impossible to discern directions once inside. To be honest, if you asked me to find that Stone Forest now, it would be very difficult for me to locate it."

The core area of the Stone Forest was where the fallen Desolate Level powerhouse was buried, and Fang Bai had reset a large formation there; even Desolate Level experts like Ren Jingbo would not be able to enter.

After hearing what Fang Bai had to say, the dozen or so Martial Academy higher-ups looked as if they had found a treasure. Their eyes lit up with excitement.

If what Fang Bai said was true, then the Desolate Level Martial Arts Techniques carved on the pillars of that Stone Forest would indeed be exhilarating.

At present, despite Bitao Martial Academy being established for nearly ten thousand years, its collection of Desolate Level Martial Arts Techniques was exceedingly rare, particularly after the Classics Hall experienced a theft years ago. The disappearance of several Desolate Level Martial Arts Techniques passed down from ancestors was truly heartbreaking.

After taking over as Dean, Ren Jingbo had sent Disciples to investigate multiple times. He had also frequently sought clues outside the Academy, hoping to recover the stolen Desolate Level Martial Arts Techniques to compensate for the shortage in the higher-ups' Cultivation. Unfortunately, there had been no progress over the years, leaving Dean Ren feeling disheartened.

Chapter 1028: Three Things

Fang Bai's punch defeated Qi Dongsheng, shocking many of the Martial Academy disciples, including Tu Hu.

Tu Hu gazed at Fang Bai, who stood proud like a spear on the Stone Platform, and let out a sigh tinged with a hint of shame.

It was only then that Tu Hu realized that Fang Bai had never shown his true strength before this moment.

Recalling the period during mountain training when he had vied with Fang Bai and others for the carcasses of several dozen Antlered Silver Lions and how he had boasted about defeating Fang Bai within fifty moves, Tu Hu now found it truly laughable.

Tu Hu also knew that although he was slightly stronger than Qi Dongsheng, if Fang Bai could severely injure Qi Dongsheng in one move, he could defeat Tu Hu within a few moves. Moreover, with Fang Bai's natural talent, he was destined to leave Tu Hu far behind on the path of the Martial Dao.

"This experience has undoubtedly highlighted this Fang Bai. It's certain that the Martial Academy's management will make great efforts to cultivate Fang Bai, who in the future is very likely to replace Gao Shuxian as the new successor to the head of the Bitao Martial Academy. It seems that from now on, I will need to maintain a good relationship with Fang Bai. Even if we can't be friends, I absolutely must not become enemies."

Tu Hu secretly thought to himself.

After this battle, Qi Dongsheng lost his status as a Core Disciple, while Fang Bai was promoted to the ranks of Core Disciple, ranking above Tu Hu.

The gazes of the other Core Disciples towards Fang Bai were somewhat complicated. Just now, Fang Bai's single move that severely injured Qi Dongsheng had shocked them greatly, and they well knew that if Fang Bai so wished, he certainly had the strength to claim a top position on the Core Disciple combat power list.

However, after seriously injuring Qi Dongsheng, Fang Bai seemed to have no interest in challenging the other strong disciples, which made them secretly breathe a sigh of relief.

"Fang Bai, this young man, is unrestrained when he should be, and knows when to pull back. Rare indeed!"

The Martial Academy's higher-ups raised their estimation of Fang Bai considerably.

The challenges continued after the battle between Fang Bai and Qi Dongsheng, lasting until dusk, with many Martial Academy disciples rising or falling in the combat rankings, some filled with joy, others with sorrow.

"Core Disciple Fang Bai, follow the elders of the Martial Academy to Lingtian Hall. The rest of the disciples, return to your residences!"

After the Elder of the Enforcement Hall, Tie Xing, announced this news, he set off towards Lingtian Peak's Lingtian Hall with Ren Jingbo and other higher-ups of the Martial Academy.

Fang Bai waved his hand to Liu Liehu and others, signaling them to go back first. Then he turned, glanced at the retreating figures of Ren Jingbo and the others, pondered for a moment, and slowly followed them.

Martial Academy higher-ups collectively summoning a disciple to Lingtian Hall was an event unprecedented in decades. Fang Bai should indeed be proud to receive such an honor, which also made thousands of Martial Academy disciples extremely envious, knowing that Fang Bai had already garnered favor with the higher-ups and was sure to be a key candidate for cultivation in the future.

"That Fang Bai, what kind of damn luck has he stumbled upon that his strength keeps increasing? It's infuriating!"

Gao Shuxian clenched her fists tightly, seething inwardly.

She looked towards the departing figure of Zhuang Zhi, thinking to herself that she needed to hurry and gain control over this Martial Academy Steward with an initial-stage Desolate Level cultivation, and persuade him to make a move against Fang Bai and the others.

"Junior Sister Gao, that Fang Bai is getting more and more attention from the higher-ups of the Martial Academy! If this continues, it's going to be even harder for us to deal with him! Ah, look at that smug look on his face, it's so infuriating!"

At that moment, the cousins Yang Lin and Yang Wei approached Gao Shuxian and spoke.

Yang Lin and Yang Wei, both among the top ranking disciples in the combat power list of the Inner Court, had once been arrogant and overbearing, but after being incited by Gao Shuxian to provoke Hou Ziping and Fang Bai, they were defeated miserably not long before.

Ever since then, they had hated Fang Bai and Hou Ziping. However, due to the formidable strength of Fang Bai and Hou Ziping, they found it impossible to take revenge. Knowing Gao Shuxian had connections with Direct Disciples and even the higher-ups of the Martial Academy, they could only pin their hopes of revenge on Gao Shuxian.

Although Yang Lin and Yang Wei were much stronger than Gao Shuxian, firstly, they had been utterly bewitched by her, and secondly, with powerful backers supporting her, they did not dare to provoke her. Therefore, in front of Gao Shuxian, they acted in a compliant and obedient manner.

Gao Shuxian glanced at them disdainfully and then snorted coldly, "Just watch, it won't be long before Fang Bai disappears from this world... Hmph, as long as Fang Bai is out of the picture, Liu Qingqing, Liu Liehu, Hou Ziping, and the others, they are nothing to fear; they can easily be taken care of! Hmph, anyone who opposes me, Gao Shuxian, will never end well!"

Seeing the spiteful intent and sinister murderousness in Gao Shuxian's eyes, Yang Lin and Yang Wei exchanged glances, feeling a chill down their spines. They thought to themselves that indeed, a woman's malice could be deadly; they better keep their distance from her in the future.

What the three did not know was that their whispered conversation had been detected by Fang Bai's Divine Sense, which he had spread out thousands of meters away.

As for the little tricks the three might pull off behind his back, Fang Bai only sneered in his heart.

In Fang Bai's eyes, Gao Shuxian, Yang Lin, and Yang Wei were merely three clowns. If they behaved themselves, he wouldn't bother them again, but if they tried to provoke him, he wouldn't hesitate to completely erase them from this world.

Fang Bai of the past had been the Immortal Emperor, who feared neither heaven nor earth; he dared to confront anyone who angered him, let alone the three Inner Court disciples who were like ants in his eyes.

Moments later, Fang Bai followed Ren Jingbo and other higher-ups of the Martial Academy and arrived at the hall on the summit of Lingtian Peak, Lingtian Hall.

Ren Jingbo and the others took their seats in the stone chairs of the grand hall, and as a disciple, Fang Bai only had the stand to speak.

"Fang Bai, there are three main things I wanted to discuss with you this time..."

Ren Jingbo looked at Fang Bai with a smile and pleasure, saying, "The first thing is about the set of Fire System Martial Arts you learned during your training period... You know the rules of the Martial Academy, so you should know what to do, right?"

Fang Bai had already thought of his response on the way to Lingtian Hall and nodded, saying, "I understand. I will transcribe a copy of the Fire System Martial Arts to be kept in the Classics Hall of the Martial Academy."

"Good! Very good!"

Ren Jingbo was delighted and nodded toward Lei Li, the Elder of the Classics Hall, who sat beside him.

Lei Li stood up, personally handed paper and ink to Fang Bai, then patted Fang Bai on the shoulder, speaking a few words of encouragement. He left Fang Bai with a meaningful smile and then retook his seat.

Lei Li had always been at odds with Ge Feng and Situ Min, and he was subconsciously resistant to Fang Bai, whom Ge Feng and Situ Min highly admired. However, given Fang Bai's exceptional talent and rarity in the Martial Academy over tens of thousands of years, Lei Li still needed to display some amiability on the surface.

As to how Lei Li felt or what he thought, Fang Bai couldn't care less. He spread the paper on the stone table in the hall, took up his brush and, miming deep thought, began to write fluidly.

Chapter 1029: The Devoted Fist Technique

Within Lingtian Hall, silence reigned so profound one could hear a pin drop; over a dozen high-ranking members of the Martial Academy held their breaths and focused their energies, quietly watching Fang Bai furiously penning away, fearful of interrupting his contemplation.

Zhuang Zhi's eyes were glued to the sheet of paper beneath Fang Bai's pen, his Adam's apple bobbing, his gaze betraying a barely perceptible fervor and greed.

Lei Li's eyes narrowed slightly, his gaze flitting ceaselessly between Fang Bai and the paper, occasionally a streak of intimidating sharpness flashed through; although he maintained a calm exterior, waves surged in his heart, but what he truly thought, only he knew.

"Finished!"

After writing the last character, Fang Bai tossed the paper aside and exhaled softly, intently reviewing the Furious Flame Fist technique he had written down, a trace of a smile appearing on his lips.

In his previous life, Fang Bai was an extraordinary talent, having invented the Fire System Martial Arts technique known as Furious Flame Fist; if executed at the peak of his strength, it could burn the heavens and devastate the earth, swallowing rivers and seas, its power boundless.

Yet now, the Furious Flame Fist technique written by Fang Bai was a greatly simplified version; even if one fully comprehended it, the power it wielded when executed was only equivalent to the Desolate Level Martial Arts; compared to the true Furious Flame Fist, it was simply incomparable.

However, even the significantly weakened Furious Flame Fist was still a priceless treasure to the upper echelons of Bitao Martial Academy.

Ren Jingbo and others, filled with excitement, gathered around the Furious Flame Fist technique penned by Fang Bai, their eyes wide, concentrating intently on the text.

Ren Jingbo and the others were all Desolate Level Martial Artists, with exceptional vision; they could see at a glance the breadth and depth of the technique Fang Bai had written, its power remarkable; even among the Desolate Level Martial Arts, it could be considered top-tier.

"This really is Desolate Level Martial Arts!"

"Furious Flame Fist... such a domineering name!"

"This technique is vast and profound, there are many parts I actually can't understand..."

"What a pity, I don't cultivate the Fire System Martial Arts, otherwise studying this Furious Flame Fist could perhaps take my strength to a new level!"

"Elder Ge, you're in luck!"

...

After seeing the Furious Flame Fist written by Fang Bai, some expressed endless admiration, others wore looks of regret, and yet others were overwhelmed with excitement.

"Kid Fang Bai, you're my lucky star!"

Ge Feng had always been a composed and stable person, but after seeing the Furious Flame Fist penned by Fang Bai, his emotions seemed unusually exuberant.

Ge Feng practiced Fire System Martial Arts as well, but the technique he had been cultivating was an inheritance of Bitao Martial Academy and paled in comparison to the Furious Flame Fist before him, though both were of the Desolate Level category.

Ge Feng had long reached a bottleneck in his Cultivation Level, unable to break through; he had thought he would be stuck here for life. Although he carried himself with outward nonchalance, there was always a hint of melancholy within.

However, upon seeing the Furious Flame Fist written by Fang Bai, Ge Feng's tranquil heart was stirred once again, revealing a glimpse of hope for advancement.

In Ge Feng's eyes, although the text of Furious Flame Fist was not long, every word and sentence contained extremely profound essences of Martial Arts Techniques. If he practiced it himself, given time, his strength could very well achieve a new breakthrough.

Although Furious Flame Fist would later be kept in the Classics Hall of Bitao Martial Academy for close protection, as one of the high-ranking officials of the Martial Academy, he could peruse it at any time.

"This Martial Art is most suitable for Elder Ge to cultivate, so let Elder Ge hold onto it for now! Once Elder Ge has finished researching it, we can then store it in the Classics Hall," Dean Ren said with a smile after casting a glance at an excited Ge Feng.

"But... Doesn't this seem against the rules?" Lei Li frowned and said, "Since the founding of Bitao Martial Academy, anyone, including past deans, who wishes to consult Martial Arts Techniques has to come to the Classics Hall. If we make an exception for Elder Ge today, and everyone follows suit in the future, what kind of precedent will that set?"

Lei Li, who had managed the Classics Hall for many years and had always been diligent without mistakes, spoke in such a manner that Dean Ren found it hard to rebut, and with a wry smile, said, "Lei Elder, this Fire System technique, within the entire Bitao Martial Academy, currently only Elder Ge is able to cultivate it. If by chance Elder Ge achieves a breakthrough and significantly increases his strength, wouldn't that be advantageous for our Bitao Martial Academy?"

Situ Min nodded and said, "That's right, if Elder Ge becomes stronger, the overall strength of our Martial Academy will also grow stronger!"

Tie Xing stood there with a taut face, neither expressing support nor opposition, leaving everyone guessing about his thoughts.

Lei Li continued solemnly, "Without rules, there is no square! Breaking rules leads to chaos! Thus, rules should not be abandoned!"

Seeing Lei Li's unwavering opinion, Dean Ren, feeling helpless, could only say to Ge Feng, "Lei Elder has a point... for the good of our Martial Academy. Since it's like this, Elder Ge, please make frequent visits to the Classics Hall to consult."

Even though Lei Li's words were faultless, Ge Feng could feel a strong sense of jealousy and knew Lei Li was obstructing him because he couldn't bear to see his strength grow. Ge Feng scoffed at this internally.

Ge Feng sighed deeply, suppressed the displeasure in his heart, and nodded to Dean Ren, saying, "Alright, I'll follow the Dean's instructions."

Relieved that no argument had erupted between the two Elders, Dean Ren asked Lei Li to collect Fang Bai's Furious Flame Fist technique and lock it away in the Classics Hall.

"Fang Bai, by selflessly offering a Desolate Level Martial Arts text, you have contributed greatly to the Academy! On behalf of all the disciples at the Martial Academy, I thank you! Of course, the Academy will not treat you unfairly, and you will be given Cultivation Resources as a reward. Tomorrow, Elder Ge will send someone to deliver the Cultivation Resources you deserve to your residence."

Fang Bai, having offered the Furious Flame Fist technique, did not show even the slightest sign of regret or annoyance. Dean Ren was very pleased by this and his face was filled with smiles.

"Thank you, Dean! Thank you to all the Elders and Stewards!" Fang Bai replied with a light smile, clasping his hands in a salute and bowing slightly to express his gratitude. His humble and respectful demeanor won the favor of the majority of the high-ranking officials of the Martial Academy, who began to praise him for understanding the situation and knowing the greater good.

"As for the second matter... it concerns yourself." Dean Ren's expression became serious as he spoke to Fang Bai, "Although you are now a Core Disciple, you have outstanding talent and immense potential. Therefore, I and the other high-ranking officials of the Martial Academy have decided to grant you the treatment of a Direct Disciple. You may choose any one of the four Elders or me to guide and explain the

Martial Dao to you... Of course, since you have a Dual Attribute Innate Spiritual Root with Wood and Fire attributes, I recommend you choose either Elder Lei or Elder Ge."

Lei Li's constitution leaned towards the Wood Attribute, and Ge Feng's leaned towards the Fire Attribute; for Fang Bai, choosing between them would be most suitable.

Ge Feng was very admiring of Fang Bai, and being able to explain and guide him was almost like being a quasi-master. If Fang Bai became successful and famous in the future, it would reflect well on him too.

Therefore, as soon as Dean Ren finished speaking, Ge Feng looked eagerly at Fang Bai, hoping Fang Bai would choose him.

Chapter 1030: This Man Lei Li

As for Lei Li, his attitude towards mentoring Fang Bai was actually not so enthusiastic. In fact, his gaze towards Fang Bai was rather cold.

Ren Jingbo and the others felt puzzled by this but didn't mind. They believed that since Fang Bai had cultivated the Furious Flame Fist, a Fire System Martial Art, it clearly made more sense for Ge Feng to guide Fang Bai.

What they didn't know was that Fang Bai was himself a vast treasury of Martial Arts Techniques. He not only had a thorough understanding of thousands of Cultivation Techniques of various attributes but also had insights and comprehension of the Martial Dao that few could match. He didn't need anyone's guidance at all.

However, Fang Bai also understood that Ren Jingbo's actions were well-intentioned; he wanted to nurture and cultivate him greatly, and Fang Bai simply couldn't refuse his kindness.

A Core Disciple at the high rank of the Heaven Level realm, being offered guidance by an Elder of the middle rank of the Desolate Level realm, would normally react with extreme excitement and overwhelming joy.

Even a disciple who was calm, composed, and had strong self-control would show joy on their face before gladly choosing an Elder to mentor them.

If Fang Bai refused Ren Jingbo's kindness, the higher-ups present from the Martial Academy would certainly think there was something wrong with his head - either he was mad or foolish.

Because a normal disciple of the Bitao Martial Academy would never turn down the guidance of an Elder, nor would there be any reason to refuse.

If Fang Bai didn't want to become an oddity among the academy's disciples, subject to their pointing and whispering, he had to make a choice between Ge Feng and Lei Li.

"I choose Elder Ge."

Fang Bai's gaze swept past Lei Li without hesitation and chose Ge Feng.

Fang Bai's choice of not choosing Lei Li was not because Lei Li had always been cold to him but because he had keenly sensed a killing intent towards him from Lei Li ever since their first encounter, and this intent grew even stronger after Fang Bai was recently promoted to a Core Disciple.

Although Lei Li concealed the killing intent deeply, it could not escape Fang Bai's pervasive scrutiny with Divine Sense.

Fang Bai found it strange; there had been no interaction, let alone grudges, between him and Lei Li, so why would Lei Li want him dead?

Since Fang Bai could not figure it out, he simply stopped thinking about it. Although Lei Li was an Elder of immense prestige with the strength of the middle rank of the Desolate Level realm, Fang Bai did not fear him.

If Lei Li dared to harm Fang Bai, Fang Bai had many ways to put him to death.

In the eyes of Fang Bai, whose realm and Cultivation Level equated to Vast Level Perfection, and whose combat power could contend with a Cosmic Level Expert, Lei Li, with only the middle rank Desolate Level realm Cultivation Level, was no different from an ant.

On the other hand, Ge Feng was an open-hearted, amiable Elder who had always been warm to Fang Bai, and his words also contained protection. Fang Bai had a good impression of him.

Fang Bai could tell that Ge Feng had been stuck at a bottleneck in his realm for a long time. If there was a chance, Fang Bai wouldn't mind secretly giving him some pointers to help him break through.

"Haha... Fang Bai, you made the right choice by choosing me. Rest assured, I will guide you wholeheartedly in the future and will not withhold any secrets!"

Seeing Fang Bai make his choice, a hopeful Ge Feng finally sighed with relief and said to Fang Bai with a beaming smile.

Fang Bai humbly said a few words, then performed a disciple's salute, cupping one fist in the other hand, and bowed to the elated Ge Feng.

In terms of cultivation realm, Fang Bai was more than qualified to be Ge Feng's mentor, but now he had to pretend and consider himself as the junior.

In his previous life, although Fang Bai was the revered Immortal Emperor, he never acted high-and-mighty or used his status to oppress others. Regardless of whether the other party was strong or weak, of noble or humble status, as long as they could get along, Fang Bai was willing to make friends.

Sometimes, Fang Bai would intentionally conceal his identity, wandering among the nine Heavenly Domains of the Immortal Realm, befriending kindred spirits. He would sometimes act as an elder, or treat others as equals, and had also acted as the "junior" on numerous occasions.

Thus, Fang Bai now paying respects to Ge Feng as a junior did not feel awkward to him.

In fact, since the day Fang Bai entered the Bitao Martial Academy, he had already made the mental preparation for this; otherwise, he would not have stayed at the academy for so long.

For Fang Bai, who had been given a new lease on life, the current situation was also a mental challenge, a necessary path on his journey back to the pinnacle.

By accepting guidance from Ge Feng, Fang Bai would be tagged with Ge Feng's influence, and from henceforth would represent Ge Feng's interests.

In other words, the current relationship between Fang Bai and Ge Feng was not that of mentor and disciple but was even more significant than that. They had become linked by shared glory and shared losses.

Besides Lei Li, Zhuang Zhi, and a few other high-level academy officials who were on relatively good terms with them, most of the other high-level academy officials congratulated Ge Feng, who responded to each with a hearty laugh.

"Look how smug that old fellow Ge Feng is... Elder Lei, are we really going to let that Fang Bai continue to grow? This is detrimental to our plan!"

Zhuang Zhi cautiously glanced at the others, then stealthily moved closer to Lei Li and whispered his worries through voice transmission.

"Let the old fool Ge Feng be proud. Let the young brat Fang Bai live a few more days! Once we get our hands on that thing, we'll take the opportunity to wipe out this Bitao Martial Academy!"

Lei Li stood in the shadow of a stone pillar inside the great hall, his face twisting into a vile and hideous expression as he watched Ge Feng and Fang Bai being surrounded by the academy's high officials. This sent a chill through Zhuang Zhi before Lei Li's face returned to normal.

The two were using a voice transmission technique similar to Fang Bai's Thread Condensation Sound Transmission, which should have been difficult for others to detect.

Of course, this did not include Fang Bai.

Fang Bai's Divine Sense diffused, enveloping the entire hall, easily intercepting the faint sound waves produced by the voice transmission between Zhuang Zhi and Lei Li. These sound waves were then conveyed through his Divine Sense back to Fang Bai's brain, allowing him to learn the content of their conversation.

"Wipe out Bitao Martial Academy? What nonsense is Lei Li the old man talking about? He himself is part of the academy! Could it be..."

Fang Bai frowned slightly, suddenly considering a possibility, and pondered, "If Lei Li truly isn't a member of Bitao Martial Academy, then he wouldn't care about the academy's rise and fall, or the lives of its thousands of disciples. But if Lei Li isn't a disciple of Bitao Martial Academy, then what is his true identity?"

Fang Bai kept this discovery to himself, telling no one, thinking that when the time came for Lei Li to reveal his true colors, it would be the moment of his downfall.

As for Zhuang Zhi, Fang Bai knew he had some connection with Gao Shuxian but had not expected him to be in cahoots with Lei Li. Moreover, from their recent conversation, it seemed that they were plotting a conspiracy against Bitao Martial Academy.

"After discussing the second matter, let's talk about the third... In a few days, the biennial Sect Conference will take place in Purple Flame City, the capital of Thousand Lakes Country. At that time, dozens of sects, large and small, from within the boundaries of Thousand Lakes Country will send disciples to participate. Naturally, Bitao Martial Academy is no exception..."

Ren Jingbo briefly introduced the details of the Sect Conference to Fang Bai and then said, "Each sect is limited to ten members, and you have one spot! Participating in the Sect Conference is not only an opportunity to broaden your experience but also a trial. I won't say much more; just be careful in everything!"