

Doctor 1391

Chapter 1391: Enter

On Fang Bai's journey forward, at least dozens of Innate Spirit Beasts had fallen under his fists and kicks, their bloodthirsty scent permeating the surrounding space.

More than a dozen disciples of the Divine Fire Sect followed Fang Bai with faces full of excitement. Each time Fang Bai killed an Innate Spirit Beast, they would extract its Beast Core and divide it among themselves.

"To kill dozens of Innate Spirit Beasts in one breath without even expending much Essence Energy—Senior Fang's strength is truly astonishing!"

"In such a short time, to slaughter this many Innate Spirit Beasts... even our Sect Master wouldn't be capable of this! Looks like I've been underestimating Senior Fang all along!"

"Haha, Senior Fang doesn't care about those Innate Spirit Beasts' Spirit Cores, which ends up benefiting those little fellows!"

"Elder Gu, you said earlier that Senior Fang's strength was extraordinary, and I had my doubts. But now, I'm utterly convinced!"

"Elder Liu, you have no idea—if Senior Fang were to summon his Spiritual Artifact, his strength would surpass this level by several degrees!"

"Going by that, Senior Fang could absolutely be regarded as the strongest in the world today!"

"That's why Senior Fang agreeing to join forces with us is truly our blessing!"

Gu Yan and Liu Che, two elders from the Divine Fire Sect, stood on either side of Fang Bai, brandishing their own Spiritual Artifacts to ward off Innate Spirit Beasts attacking them from the flanks, all while conversing using the Thread Condensation Sound Transmission Technique.

The two were astonished and filled with admiration for Fang Bai's impressive display of overwhelming power, completely in awe of him.

After paying a devastating price, the idea those Innate Spirit Beasts had of feasting on Fang Bai and the others was utterly annihilated, and they fled in droves.

From then on, as they continued their journey, no Spirit Beast dared to target Fang Bai and his companions. Sensing their presence, they would immediately steer clear from afar.

After smoothly crossing a vast expanse of primeval forest, they found themselves on a wide grassland that stretched for several miles. Looking ahead, what entered their view was the majestic, boundless Heaven-Reaching Mountain Range.

From here, under the radiance of the sunlight, the golden hues of the mountains seemed to shimmer, resembling a massive dragon coiled but prepared to soar into the heavens.

Even from a great distance, the dense and abundant Essence Energy from within the Heaven-Reaching Mountain Range could already be perceived.

Surrounded by the Essence Energy, Fang Bai and the others felt as though every pore in their bodies had opened, greedily absorbing the Essence Energy suffusing their surroundings, their spirits soaring.

Closing his eyes briefly to regulate his breathing, Fang Bai then sighed and said, "Indeed, this Heaven-Reaching Mountain Range is a paradise for Martial Artists to cultivate!"

"Absolutely,"

Gu Yan replied with a smile, "Ever since the Lotus Pool Secret Realm was discovered, countless Innate Sects have entertained the idea of relocating their base to the Heaven-Reaching Mountain Range. However, the heritage of any Innate Sect spans thousands or even tens of thousands of years—relocating in the short term would be no easy task."

"Moreover," Liu Che added, "there are countless Innate Spirit Beasts within the Heaven-Reaching Mountain Range. Any Innate Sect that does move here would have to expend tremendous effort dealing with their constant disturbances."

The three chatted and laughed as they continued onward, heading toward the "head" of the Heaven-Reaching Mountain Range—the vast region spanning a thousand miles with the highest elevation. To the east lay the towering Heaven-Reaching Peak, reaching into the clouds and situated near the ocean.

Without first entering the Lotus Pool Secret Realm, Heaven-Reaching Peak would remain unseen.

Likewise, if one didn't climb Heaven-Reaching Peak itself, they wouldn't be able to witness the legendary Heavenly Ladder at its summit.

Only by ascending the Heavenly Ladder could the myriad wonders associated with it be experienced.

Upon entering the Heaven-Reaching Mountain Range, the meandering mountain paths twisted like a labyrinth, enough to cause confusion to newcomers and make it exceedingly difficult to locate the Lotus Pool Secret Realm.

Fortunately, both Gu Yan and Liu Che had participated in the "Heaven's Chosen Ranking" battles multiple times, and thus were familiar with the paths. Leading Fang Bai and more than a dozen Divine Fire Sect disciples, they crossed ridges and streams for approximately three to four hundred miles before arriving at their destination.

"Senior Fang, once we pass through the narrow crevice between those two mountain peaks ahead, we'll reach the entrance to the Lotus Pool Secret Realm,"

Gu Yan pointed toward the two adjacent peaks before continuing, "At dawn three days from now, the Lotus Pool Secret Realm will open. Until then, representatives from various Innate Sects will compete in Martial Arts Techniques to determine the hundred slots available for entering the secret realm."

Between the two thousand-foot-high peaks lay a passage less than three feet wide. Walking through this narrow gorge, one could only see a sky as thin as a thread above when looking up.

This mountain crevice extended for four to five miles. Upon exiting, the view expanded into an enormous elliptical valley.

By now, the valley had already gathered between one to two thousand elite experts.

Among these experts, Universe Level High Rank and Universe Level perfection-level experts constituted the majority, while hundreds of Innate experts were present as well.

These Innate experts represented the leadership from various major Innate Sects and were the guides for the "Heaven's Chosen Ranking" battle.

As for the Universe Level experts, they were naturally the core disciples and direct disciples of the major Innate Sects.

Expressions on the faces of the gathered elites displayed varying degrees of nervousness, but predominantly excitement and exhilaration.

For the Universe Level experts, securing a slot to enter the Lotus Pool Secret Realm meant a chance to rise above their current status and become Innate experts.

For the Innate experts, entering the Lotus Pool Secret Realm would provide an opportunity to ascend the Heavenly Ladder of Heaven-Reaching Peak, thereby striving to join the ranks of the top-tier experts of their era.

Yet, with only one hundred slots available to enter the Lotus Pool Secret Realm, while the valley held up to two thousand competitors, the upcoming conflict was bound to be fiercely intense.

Experts from various Innate Sects occupied different areas of the valley—some sat cross-legged to cultivate and prepare for the battle in three days, others engaged in lively conversations about the Lotus Pool Secret Realm and the Heavenly Ladder, while some observed the competition and rivals around them. Many wandered the valley, greeting friends or acquaintances.

The Divine Fire Sect ranked among the lowest in overall power among the Innate Sects in the True Martial Realm, so Fang Bai's presence did not draw much attention.

Just like any other Innate Sect, the Divine Fire Sect had a few allied sects. Thus, when disciples of the Divine Fire Sect entered the valley, two groups of experts from other low-ranking Innate Sects swiftly approached to exchange greetings with Gu Yan and Liu Che.

"Allow me to introduce—this is Fang..."

Gu Yan was just about to introduce Fang Bai to the elders of the other two sects when he noticed Fang Bai's figure darting forward like lightning toward a particular hillside.

Seated on that hillside were twenty-two elite experts.

These twenty-two stood out in the valley from the moment they arrived.

Not only were they all female Martial Artists, but each possessed an extraordinary aura, striking figures, and exceptional beauty.

Among them, two young female Martial Artists, barely in their twenties, stood out like celestial beings of unmatched elegance and beauty.

All of the women wore flowing black dresses, wielding sword-type Spirit Weapons, surrounded by a swirl of Water Element Qi.

Chapter 1392: The Two Girls, Too Bold!

The group of black-skirted female martial artists on the hill were the disciples representing Ruoshui Palace in the battle for the "Martial Arts Tournament".

Among them, the two young female disciples of Ruoshui Palace who possessed an ethereal temperament and unparalleled beauty were naturally Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue.

Ruoshui Palace was one of the top Innate Sects in the True Martial Realm, boasting a legacy of over ten thousand years. Its reputation resounded far and wide, and many Innate Sects in the valley were on friendly terms with it.

At this moment, the area around the hill where Ruoshui Palace's disciples stood was already gathering many high-ranking members from other Innate Sects, who proactively struck up conversations with Ruoshui Palace's two senior members, their faces showing hints of flattery.

As for the younger disciples of these Innate Sects, they lingered near the hill, their gazes fixated on the female disciples of Ruoshui Palace.

The female disciples of Ruoshui Palace were known for their graceful figures and remarkable beauty, standing out among the female martial artists of the True Martial Realm like rare gems. Coupled with the fact that the hill they occupied was the highest point in the valley, they could hardly avoid drawing attention.

"Graceful women, admired by noble men."

Though the martial artists of the True Martial Realm were well aware that Ruoshui Palace had extraordinarily strict palace regulations forbidding female disciples from privately forming martial dao partnerships with male martial artists outside its ranks, this did not deter the admiration these male martial artists felt for Ruoshui Palace's female disciples.

That said, the majority of those gazes concentrated on the two women, Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue.

In their eyes, although the two female disciples of Ruoshui Palace wore no makeup and displayed their natural appearances, they still radiated brilliance. Merely casting a glance at them made it difficult to look away.

Standing alongside the two women were over a dozen Ruoshui Palace disciples, each beautiful in her own right. However, whether in terms of figure, appearance, or temperament, they paled significantly in comparison to the two.

The only regret these Innate Sects' disciples felt was the lack of even a trace of a smile on the faces of the two women, their expressions as cold as snow and as distant as frost. Otherwise, they could have been described as perfect.

One could only imagine that even a fleeting smile from them would be enough to take one's breath away.

Beyond these two women, among the twenty younger disciples of Ruoshui Palace, four identical quadruplet girls also drew considerable attention from disciples of various Innate Sects.

The quadruplets had snow-white skin, rosy cheeks, almond-shaped eyes, and cherry-red lips. Their smiles bloomed like flowers, making them irresistibly adorable.

These quadruplet girls, of course, were the Fortune's Blessing sisters.

If Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue epitomized cold and elegant ice queens, then the Fortune's Blessing sisters were undeniably the embodiment of cute and charming beauty.

The responses of Dongfang Rushi and the other five women to the gazes sent their way were entirely different.

Dongfang Rushi bore a look of indifference and ignored them altogether.

Baili Mingyue would open her wide eyes, and upon noticing someone looking at her, she would glare back with an icy cold gaze.

As for the Fortune's Blessing sisters, faced with all the attention, they giggled quietly, betraying a playful demeanor. Occasionally, they even huddled together to comment on some disciples from the Innate Sects.

The other female disciples of Ruoshui Palace, though secretly enjoying the admiration surrounding them, maintained a cold and serious facade under the strict palace regulations, lest they be reprimanded by the elders.

The upheaval in Ruoshui Palace had occurred only after these disciples departed for the Heaven-Reaching Mountain Range, and thus they were unaware of it.

Otherwise, had these female disciples known that Ruoshui Palace's rigorous regulations were no longer in place, some more extroverted disciples might have already engaged in cheerful banter with the disciples of surrounding Innate Sects.

Among Ruoshui Palace's two senior members and twenty younger disciples, the majority maintained an air of detached calm, causing the disciples from other Innate Sects to dare not disrespect them and only observe from afar.

The disciples secretly observing Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue suddenly noticed a transformative change on their frost-covered faces. First, their expressions turned to disbelief, then to intense excitement, as though they had seen something incredibly joyous.

What left those Innate Sect disciples utterly speechless was the sight of the two women lifting their skirts and rushing toward the valley entrance, completely disregarding the ladylike image they had meticulously maintained.

"Ah, it's Brother Fang!"

In Ruoshui Palace, the Fortune's Blessing sisters shared an excellent relationship with Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue. Seeing the two of them suddenly dash off, they followed their gazes and noticed a figure speeding toward the valley. Unable to suppress their excitement, they called out loudly.

But under the stern gazes of the two elders, the Fortune's Blessing sisters lacked the courage of Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue to rush out and greet Brother Fang from the Eternal Death Zone.

Helpless, the sisters could only stay in place, standing on tiptoes and frantically waving toward Fang Bai, regardless of whether he could see them.

"Junior Sister Rushi and Junior Sister Mingyue must be very close friends with Brother Fang; otherwise, how could they dare to disregard the presence of two elders and run to greet him so openly?"

As they watched Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue grow distant, the Fortune's Blessing sisters quietly speculated on their relationship with Fang Bai, feeling a faint sense of loss, as if something they cherished was being taken away.

"Those two girls are unbelievably bold!"

The two senior members of Ruoshui Palace were utterly shocked that Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue, who usually showed no interest in other men, had suddenly dashed toward this unfamiliar young man.

However, the two women moved far too quickly and gave no prior indication, leaving the senior members unable to stop them, stomping their feet in frustration and sighing in helplessness.

It was clear to them that Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue not only knew the man but shared an extraordinary bond with him. Otherwise, their reaction wouldn't have been so impassioned.

"If word of this reaches the Palace Master, they will likely face severe punishment!"

The two elders thought this to themselves, their furrowed brows filled with worry.

These two elders deeply cared for Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue, the young talents of the current generation in Ruoshui Palace. Unable to bear the thought of them being punished upon returning, they exchanged a look and made a decision in their hearts.

"Consider what you have witnessed here today as never having happened. When we return, you are forbidden to speak of it to anyone. Is that clear?"

One of the elders turned to the group of younger disciples, sweeping a stern gaze over them as they spoke with a heavy tone.

"Understood!"

The younger disciples lowered their voices in response, a wave of warmth and gratitude surging in their hearts.

They all understood that the two elders were saying this to protect Junior Sisters Rushi and Mingyue from being punished.

If they were to encounter a similar situation in the future, perhaps these same elders would extend their protection, too. Thus, by helping conceal this incident today, they were effectively helping their future selves.

Chapter 1393: It's So Good to See You Again!

Under the gaze of nearly two thousand pairs of eyes in the valley, Fang Bai, Dongfang Rushi, and Baili Mingyue's figures streaked forward like fleeting shadows, rapidly closing the distance.

The two women looked at Fang Bai's increasingly clear face, unable to restrain themselves and bursting into tears of joy. Their snowy-white, delicate faces were already streaked with tears.

A faint smile at the corner of Fang Bai's lips widened, spreading across his handsome visage.

When only a hundred meters remained between them, Fang Bai's figure suddenly accelerated, appearing in an instant before Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue.

He halted his step, arms outstretched, and began to approach the two women at a slow pace.

"Fang Bai!"

The two women, their emotions surging, called out together, then flew into Fang Bai's arms—one on the left, one on the right, like swallows returning to their nest.

"It's so good to see you both again!"

Fang Bai whispered softly in their ears, his arms tightening as he pulled the two women close against him.

"Fang Bai, I missed you... I missed you so much..."

Always maintaining an aloof demeanor in the Ruoshui Palace, Baili Mingyue finally let her guard down in this moment, revealing her true emotions.

Her soft, serpentine arms wrapped around Fang Bai's right arm, her head nuzzling gently beneath Fang Bai's chin, as she continuously murmured the sorrows of longing and separation.

Dongfang Rushi, more reserved by nature, was unlike Baili Mingyue in her ability to articulate her feelings. She simply turned her face to rest her cheek against Fang Bai's beating left chest, quietly listening to the rhythm of his heartbeat.

"Who is that guy?"

"Two women as stunning as fairies—looking at them even once feels like sacrilege, yet that guy dares to hold them both in his arms! This infuriates me!"

"Judging by his attire, he seems to be a rogue cultivator with no sect affiliation!"

"How dare a mere loose cultivator act so arrogantly? I'll kill him!"

"He came here with the disciples of the Divine Fire Sect. If you kill him, the Divine Fire Sect will not stand by idly."

"I can't sense this man's Martial Artist Aura at all. Could he be an Innate Expert?"

"Innate Expert or not—so what? With so many of us here, are we supposed to fear him alone?"

"The regulations of Ruoshui Palace are strict. Those involved in improper relationships between male Martial Artists will both be punished. Just watch—there's no need for us to intervene; the two elders of Ruoshui Palace will surely take that man's life!"

"It's such a pity, though. Those two female disciples of Ruoshui Palace, who possess such remarkable beauty and poise, will be implicated as well. Once they return to Ruoshui Palace, I fear they'll rarely be allowed out again. Such a waste!"

...

The thousands of disciples from the various Innate Sects in the valley watched Fang Bai embrace the two beauties. Some were envious, others jealous, but most felt a mixture of humiliation and frustration over desiring something unattainable and watching it fall into another's hands.

If not for the consideration of Divine Fire Sect, Martial Artists might have already stepped forward to challenge Fang Bai.

"What now?"

Two elders of Ruoshui Palace stared, dazed and slack-jawed, at the man and two women locked in an intimate embrace. They exchanged glances but felt a deep bitterness in their mouths.

Initially, they thought Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue merely had a somewhat close relationship with that young Martial Artist, and that their reunion would involve no more than polite conversation.

But what they never expected was that, upon meeting him, the three would openly embrace in full view of everyone, exchanging intimate words without a shred of hesitation.

The scene had already far exceeded the two Ruoshui Palace elders' threshold for tolerance.

For a moment, the elders felt both shock and anger, filled with resentment.

They were angry because Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue knew full well the stringent regulations of Ruoshui Palace and yet dared to brazenly challenge them publicly.

They felt hatred because the young Martial Artist was simply too audacious, displaying such intimate actions with Ruoshui Palace's female disciples in front of the valley's Innate Sect disciples, completely disregarding the authority of the two Ruoshui Palace elders.

Meanwhile, standing behind the two elders were more than a dozen younger disciples of Ruoshui Palace, casting their gaze at their junior sisters, Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue.

Unlike the elders' shock, anger, and resentment, the younger disciples felt a stronger sense of envy and admiration.

They envied their junior sisters' close relationship with the young, dashing, and carefree Martial Artist.

They admired their junior sisters' immense courage in breaking the stringent sect regulations and embracing the man they loved, sharing whispered affections.

If it were them, they certainly wouldn't dare to do so.

"It seems Brother Fang and Junior Sisters Rushi and Mingyue have known each other for a long time."

"Looking at their intimacy and familiarity, could it be they are Dao Companions?"

"Junior Sisters Rushi and Mingyue are both prodigies of the heavens. Are they really going to serve Brother Fang together?"

"What's wrong with serving one man together? Although Junior Sisters Rushi and Mingyue are prodigies of the heavens, Brother Fang is even more extraordinary! Becoming Dao Companions with Brother Fang is their fortune!"

"True! I'm so envious of them..."

The "Fortune's Blessing" four sisters stood at the back of the crowd of Ruoshui Palace disciples, wide-eyed with wonder as they watched Fang Bai embracing Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue. They exchanged whispers, their youthful faces filled with envy.

However, the four siblings were careful, using the Thread Condensation Sound Transmission Technique to avoid the two elders at the front overhearing.

"Rushi, Mingyue—you two are too unruly! Come back here immediately!"

Seeing Fang Bai, Dongfang Rushi, and Baili Mingyue locked in their embrace, sharing private words for a long time without separating, the two Ruoshui Palace elders finally lost their patience and shouted sternly.

During their time in Ruoshui Palace, Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue had been particularly cared for by the two elders, who gave them numerous insights on the Martial Dao. Out of gratitude, the two women had always been respectful to them.

Under normal circumstances, a stern reprimand from the elders would have been enough to make Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue obediently comply.

But at this moment, finally reunited with Fang Bai, their hearts brimmed with unspoken words. Moreover, they had long resolved that upon seeing Fang Bai, they would leave Ruoshui Palace and follow him. How could they possibly return to the Ruoshui Palace side?

Thus, though the elders were visibly furious and spoke harshly, the two women did not act accordingly.

However, they did step away from Fang Bai's arms and, as if in silent agreement, faced the two Ruoshui Palace elders with deep bows, speaking in unison, "Elder Qiu, Elder Mo, our apologies! We wish to leave Ruoshui Palace and stay with Brother Fang."

From their gazes and expressions, Elder Qiu and Elder Mo could see the resolute determination in the two women, and they were taken aback, beginning to offer counsel.

The two women possessed Innate Spiritual Roots, nurtured with great care by Ruoshui Palace as leading figures of the younger generation. They had already shown promising results, and the elders could not bear to let them depart.

"Ruoshui Palace regulations are strict. You should know the consequences of leaving Ruoshui Palace without permission. To be honest, I don't wish to see you captured by the enforcement disciples and sentenced to lifelong imprisonment back at Ruoshui Palace."

Elder Qiu advised earnestly, her words tinged with a trace of threat.

Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue's expressions changed slightly as they turned to look at Fang Bai.

They understood Ruoshui Palace's immense strength and doubted whether Fang Bai could handle it.

Chapter 1394: The Elder Actually Smiled!

"Elder Qiu, is that right?"

Fang Bai stepped forward, standing protectively in front of Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue. He casually flicked out a palm-sized black Water Element Stone and said with a faint smile, "Take a look at this first."

"The Palace Master Token?!"

Elder Qiu's complexion shifted slightly as she saw the black Water Element Stone floating steadily in front of her. She blurted out her words in surprise.

Elder Mo also wore an expression of astonishment, her gaze towards Fang Bai tinged with confusion and disbelief.

That black Essence Stone was none other than the only Palace Master Token of Ruoshui Palace. It was only issued by the Palace Master herself when faced with an emergency or a critical situation.

Seeing the Palace Master Token was equivalent to the Palace Master herself being present.

"Greetings, Palace Master!"

After a brief moment of hesitation, under the leadership of Elder Qiu and Elder Mo, the disciples of Ruoshui Palace adopted solemn expressions and bowed deeply to Fang Bai in reverence.

"Alright, get up so we can talk!"

Fang Bai waved his hand, and a boundless surge of Essence Energy lifted the bowing figures of Elder Qiu, Elder Mo, and the dozen or so younger disciples of Ruoshui Palace effortlessly.

Elder Qiu and Elder Mo straightened their bodies, exchanging glances with each other, their hearts filled with shock.

When Fang Bai used his Essence Energy to lift them, they had attempted to test his strength by gathering all their power to resist the upward force he exerted.

Unfortunately, their combined effort was utterly crushed in an instant by Fang Bai's immense force, leaving them incapable of resistance.

Elders Qiu and Mo were both High Rank Innate experts, their strength not to be underestimated. Even Palace Master Zhou Qingyan would find it nearly impossible to dissolve their joint resistance so effortlessly, yet Fang Bai had done so with ease.

This clarity demonstrated that the strength of this young Martial Artist before them far surpassed that of Palace Master Zhou Qingyan, leaving them inwardly bewildered.

"Within this token, there's a letter written by Ruoshui Palace's higher-ups. Perhaps you should retrieve it and take a look."

Fang Bai smiled as he addressed Elder Qiu, "Of course, if Elder Qiu has doubts about the authenticity of this token, feel free to inspect it more closely."

"Has something happened to Ruoshui Palace?"

Elder Mo, ever perceptive, keenly picked up on an unusual undertone in Fang Bai's words. Her expression turned grave as she posed the question.

Under normal circumstances, the letter within the Palace Master Token would be personally written by the Palace Master. However, Fang Bai had clearly indicated that the letter was penned by the elders, implying that something significant must have occurred at Ruoshui Palace after their departure.

Elder Qiu also realized this point, instinctively linking Ruoshui Palace's upheaval to Fang Bai. Her face grew increasingly grim.

Fang Bai sensed the growing hostility from Elders Qiu and Mo but remained composed, offering only a serene smile without a single word of explanation.

"Let's read the letter first."

After carefully examining the Palace Master Token and confirming its authenticity, Elder Qiu retrieved the letter from within the token's spatial compartment and began reading its contents alongside Elder Mo.

The Palace Master Token of Ruoshui Palace was itself a Spatial Spirit Device. Each directive issued by the Ruoshui Palace Master was placed within its internal space.

The token bore a miniature sealing Formation that only the Ruoshui Palace Master or the elders could unlock to retrieve its contents.

"The letter is written by Elder Li."

Upon opening the letter and recognizing the familiar handwriting imbued with traces of Elder Li's unique Martial Artist Aura, Elder Qiu and Elder Mo met each other's gaze and nodded, confirming the letter's authenticity.

At the letter's conclusion, the fingerprints of more than a dozen other high-ranking members of Ruoshui Palace were pressed into the parchment, each imprint bearing an unmistakable trace of their unique Martial Artist Aura.

Although the Palace Master Token and the letter could theoretically be forged, the distinct aura of these Martial Artists was irreplicable.

That Fang Bai had managed to bring the Palace Master Token proved that he was a friend to Ruoshui Palace, not a foe. Only at this point did Elder Qiu and Elder Mo completely lower their guard against him.

The two elders read the letter slowly and in detail, their expressions shifting continuously as they did so. By the end, they let out long sighs of relief, as though released from a heavy burden.

Though Fang Bai hadn't read the letter's contents, he could roughly guess its essence—it likely documented for Elders Qiu and Mo the series of events that had unfolded at Ruoshui Palace after their departure.

His guess was accurate. The letter recounted precisely these events but contained an additional detail that Fang Bai hadn't anticipated. At the very end, Ruoshui Palace's high-ranking members explicitly instructed Elders Qiu and Mo to treat Fang Bai with the utmost respect, as though they were addressing a senior.

Moreover, any requests Fang Bai made were not to be refused and were to be met with full cooperation.

This included allowing Fang Bai to take Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue with him without hindrance.

What most piqued the interest of Elder Qiu and Elder Mo, however, was not Fang Bai's desire to take Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue, but the revelation that following Zhou Qingyan's tenure as Palace

Master, Ruoshui Palace's previously inflexible and unreasonable rules had all been revised during this upheaval, becoming more lenient and open-minded than ever before.

Elder Qiu and Elder Mo wholeheartedly approved of these changes. They were genuinely overjoyed.

Although they had long harbored grievances about Zhou Qingyan's harsh policies, they had never dared voice their opposition due to the oppressive palace regulations and the authoritative presence of the Palace Master.

Yet now, this young, formidable figure named Fang Bai had single-handedly brought about these transformative changes in Ruoshui Palace.

After finishing the letter, Elder Qiu and Elder Mo's gazes toward Fang Bai carried an added hint of reverence.

"Elders, what's written in the letter?"

The youngest of the "Fortune's Blessing" sisters, Rou Ling, had the boldest personality. Upon noticing the lightened, joyful expressions on the faces of the two elders after reading the letter, her curiosity got the better of her, and she approached to inquire boldly.

Elders Qiu and Mo had always cared deeply for the clever and talented Fortune's Blessing sisters, often indulging their harmless antics. As a result, the sisters regarded the elders with fond respect but without fear. This was unlike other disciples who wouldn't dare to venture such a question.

"The letter says all the unreasonable rules of Ruoshui Palace have been revoked. Even the one forbidding female disciples from forming Martial Dao partnerships with male Martial Artists has been abolished. So, starting today, you little girls with budding crushes can freely pursue your love interests!"

Having just read the letter, Elder Qiu was in high spirits. She couldn't resist making a light-hearted joke.

"Ah, Elder Qiu—you smiled!"

Rou Ling's eyes widened in amazement, her tone filled with disbelief.

To her, Elder Qiu had always been a stern and serious figure, never once showing a smile. Yet now, not only was Elder Qiu smiling but even making a playful joke—something utterly inconceivable before now.

"Elder Qiu, is this true? Have Ruoshui Palace's... strict rules all been revised?"

Rou Fu's eyes sparkled, excitement evident on her face as she hesitantly asked for confirmation.

Other disciples of Ruoshui Palace also gathered around the two elders, their eyes filled with interest and concern.

Chapter 1395: Too Charming, What Can I Do?

"Elder Qiu is absolutely right. From now on, Ruoshui Palace will no longer restrict you as it did before. If you wish to make friends, go ahead boldly and freely... Hehe, whether male or female friends, you don't have to fear the penalties of palace regulations anymore."

Amid the concerned gazes of a dozen young disciples from Ruoshui Palace, Elder Mo said with a cheerful smile.

"Wow, that's fantastic!"

The dozen Ruoshui Palace disciples, including the "Fortune's Blessing" four sisters, instantly erupted into jubilant cheers upon hearing the news.

The talented disciples from Ruoshui Palace participating in the "Tianjiao Ranking" battle this time ranged in age from sixteen or seventeen to thirty years old—truly the golden years of life.

They yearned for the world beyond, but most of the time they were confined to the small realm of Ruoshui Palace, enduring monotonous cultivation day after day, year after year.

Even during rare journeys outside for training, they were accompanied by senior members of the palace, and the solemn rules of the palace loomed like an inescapable deterrent, leaving them too afraid to actively interact with martial artists from the outside world.

The oppressive atmosphere and the rigid palace regulations weighed heavily on the disciples of Ruoshui Palace like a mountain, making them feel stifled and depressed, with smiles rarely seen on anyone's face.

They had resigned themselves to the thought that their lives would always be this way—yet unexpectedly, the two elders announced that the palace's rules had changed, and the crushing mountain weighing on their spirits had been removed. This gave them a feeling of clouds dispersing to reveal sunlight, as if their long-endured hardship had finally come to an end.

The dozen Ruoshui Palace female disciples cheered and jumped for joy as if no one were around, fully unleashing emotions that had been suppressed for years. Some even laughed through tears.

Suddenly, Rou Zhi walked toward Fang Bai, stopping in front of him. Her large eyes, black and white in striking contrast, blinked as she bit her rosy lip and spoke in a tender voice, "Brother Fang, do you still remember me?"

"You are... Rou Zhi?"

Fang Bai scrutinized Rou Zhi for a few moments before finally discerning her identity among the "Fortune's Blessing" four sisters by the slightly unique martial artist aura she emitted.

"Yes, I'm Rou Zhi!"

Rou Zhi nodded enthusiastically, her joy palpable as she felt flattered that Fang Bai still remembered her.

At this moment, Rou Fu, Rou Xin, and Rou Ling also gathered around, giggling as they called out "Brother Fang" one after another. Their voices varied between lilting and ethereal, sweet and playful.

Dongfang Rushi, Baili Mingyue, and the "Fortune's Blessing" four sisters were among the most strikingly beautiful and elegant female disciples from all the Innate Sects participating in the "Tianjiao Ranking" battle. As they encircled Fang Bai, they appeared exceedingly familiar with him, drawing countless envious stares from onlookers and kindling jealousy in many martial artists who admired them.

"Fang Bai, when did you get to know our four sisters?"

Baili Mingyue glanced at Fang Bai, then at the "Fortune's Blessing" four sisters, asking with a mischievous smile.

Dongfang Rushi's lips held a trace of a smile as she looked thoughtfully at Fang Bai.

Being perceptive women, Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue easily noticed the overt affection the four sisters displayed toward Fang Bai. The sisters, unable to conceal their emotions, made their feelings glaringly obvious to Rushi and Mingyue.

In truth, the "Fortune's Blessing" four sisters admired and revered Fang Bai, leading them to develop fondness toward him. However, their feelings were not the same as those shared between Dongfang Rushi, Baili Mingyue, and Fang Bai.

Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue wished to become martial dao companions with Fang Bai, while the "Fortune's Blessing" sisters merely hoped to follow Fang Bai closely, feeling content with just that.

It could be said that, in the hearts of the "Fortune's Blessing" four sisters, Fang Bai now held the role of both mentor and friend, with a touch of youthful affection budding between them.

Seeing the slightly "mischievous" smiles on Baili Mingyue and Dongfang Rushi's faces, Fang Bai immediately guessed what they were thinking. He pointed at them with his finger and grinned, "You two... As for Rou Fu and her sisters, we met by chance in the Eternal Death Zone. It was just a brief acquaintance."

"It's obvious those four young girls like you quite a lot! What's your plan? Are you going to accept them all?"

Baili Mingyue secretly transmitted her voice to Fang Bai.

On the surface, Baili Mingyue and Dongfang Rushi treated the "Fortune's Blessing" sisters as senior sisters, but inwardly, they viewed them as younger siblings, hence their casual reference to the sisters as "young girls" during the private exchange.

Fang Bai rolled his eyes and replied, "My charm is too great—what can I do?"

Baili Mingyue scoffed with a "Hmph!" and teased, "You narcissist!"

Dongfang Rushi observed the interplay between Baili Mingyue and Fang Bai with a subtle smile, occasionally glancing at the "Fortune's Blessing" sisters. She could easily guess that their private conversation revolved around the four sisters, but she held her thoughts, merely pressing her cherry lips together in silent amusement.

"Senior Fang, this Palace Master Token—please accept it."

Elder Qiu approached Fang Bai, holding the Palace Master Token with both hands, and respectfully addressed him.

Fang Bai nonchalantly waved his hand and said, "After the Tianjiao Ranking concludes, I still have other matters to attend to. I won't be visiting Ruoshui Palace in the short term. Take this token back and hand it over to your Palace Master."

After a pause, he swept his gaze across the valley filled with nearly two thousand disciples from various Innate Sects and remarked, "A hundred slots to enter the Lotus Pool Secret Realm, yet nearly two thousand participants—it's quite fierce competition. How many slots does Ruoshui Palace typically secure in previous years?"

Elder Qiu replied, "Under usual circumstances, we manage to secure three or four slots. That's already considered an outstanding achievement among the dozens of Innate Sects."

Elder Mo's thoughts turned to the contents of the letter, and her heart stirred. She said earnestly, "Senior Fang has deep ties with our Ruoshui Palace. If you could generously assist us in securing more slots to enter the Lotus Pool Secret Realm, all of our disciples from Ruoshui Palace would be infinitely grateful!"

After saying this, she exchanged meaningful glances with Dongfang Rushi, Baili Mingyue, and the "Fortune's Blessing" four sisters, signaling them to speak on her behalf.

Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue exchanged glances, both feeling somewhat conflicted.

While Ruoshui Palace had indeed saved their lives, they were keenly aware that Fang Bai was a man of firm resolve—if he intended to help, no persuasion would be necessary; if he didn't, no amount of persuasion would sway him.

Yet, seeing the hopeful expressions of Elder Qiu and Elder Mo, the two women couldn't bear to refuse outright. They were just about to speak when Fang Bai smiled at Elder Mo and said, "Helping, naturally, won't be a problem! You've brought twenty disciples with you, correct? Alright then, let's secure twenty slots!"

"..."

The Ruoshui Palace disciples, including Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue, stared at Fang Bai in stunned silence for quite some time.

In the Tianjiao Ranking battles of previous years, the top hundred slots were invariably claimed by Universe Level perfection-stage martial artists.

For martial artists like Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue, who were at the Universe Level high rank, their primary goal in coming was to gain experience, not to strive for entry slots into the Lotus Pool Secret Realm.

Yet for Fang Bai to declare that all twenty Ruoshui Palace disciples would secure entry slots seemed an impossible target to everyone present.

Even Dongfang Rushi and Baili Riyue, who placed the utmost confidence in Fang Bai, found themselves doubting the feasibility of his statement.

After all, even if Fang Bai could miraculously elevate all twenty Ruoshui Palace disciples to perfection-stage Universe Level overnight, there still wouldn't be a guarantee that each of them could break into the top hundred.

Chapter 1396: This is a miracle!

When Fang Bai spoke, he did not deliberately lower his voice, so the disciples of the surrounding Innate Sects all heard him clearly.

"Twenty Ruoshui Palace disciples participating in the Tianjiao Ranking Battle, dreaming of securing twenty spots to enter the Lotus Pool Secret Realm? Is that guy an idiot?"

"Haha, he must be talking nonsense!"

"Ruoshui Palace may be strong, but it's not powerful enough to sweep away all the other Innate Sects!"

"That guy doesn't seem like a Ruoshui Palace disciple!"

"Who cares if he is or isn't? For him to make such a proclamation, he's clearly not putting us in his eyes!"

...

As soon as Fang Bai finished speaking, he was met with hundreds of mocking and hostile gazes.

In the eyes of the disciples from the Innate Sects, Fang Bai's words were not just "bold proclamations," but outright arrogant folly.

Even Divine Fire Sect's elders Gu Yan and Liu Che felt that Fang Bai's words were overly ambitious, enough to provoke public resentment.

Fang Bai ignored the skeptical gazes directed at him from all sides, glanced at the twenty Ruoshui Palace disciples surrounding him, and asked Elder Qiu, "When does the Tianjiao Ranking Battle begin?"

Elder Qiu replied, "The morning after tomorrow, at sunrise."

Fang Bai said, "One day and two nights... Hmm, that should be about enough time."

"Enough time for what?"

Elder Qiu was taken aback.

Fang Bai smiled mysteriously and said, "Let's find a quiet place first, and I'll tell you in detail."

Thinking of the letter inside the Ruoshui Palace Master Token, and recalling how the palace's leadership repeatedly emphasized cooperation with Fang Bai, Elder Qiu didn't overthink and nodded, "Alright. Let's leave this area for now."

Under the watchful eyes of nearly two thousand people in the valley, with Fang Bai, Elder Qiu, and Elder Mo leading the group, the twenty-plus members of Ruoshui Palace left the valley and arrived at a low hill several miles away.

"Take a seat!"

Fang Bai sat on a flat rock atop the hill, pressed his palms downward, signaling Elder Qiu and the Ruoshui Palace disciples to sit as well, and then said, "Starting now, I will explain cultivation techniques and martial arts to you. We will strive to elevate all of you to the Half-Step Innate Realm within this one day and two nights!"

"How is that even possible?"

Elder Mo's eyes widened in disbelief as he blurted out the question.

The other Ruoshui Palace disciples exchanged perplexed looks, equally stunned.

Their purpose in coming to the Heaven-Reaching Mountain range to participate in the Tianjiao Ranking Battle was to gain access to the Lotus Pool Secret Realm, where they could cultivate within the Seven-Colored Lotus Pool and use the water's mystical power to advance their realm.

However, even with forty-nine days of immersion in the pool and favorable fortune, they could only hope to advance by one minor level, daring not to dream of more.

Yet now, Fang Bai claimed he could make them reach the Half-Step Innate Realm within one day and two nights. How could they believe that?

"Brother Fang, is what you're saying true? Can our cultivation levels really reach the Half-Step Innate Realm?"

Rou Ling's face flushed with excitement, and she rubbed her hands together as she asked.

Rou Ling was currently at the High Universe Level; if she advanced to the Half-Step Innate Realm, it would be equivalent to advancing not just one minor level but beyond that in such a short time.

Fang Bai smirked and said, "If I say you can, then you can! Without achieving the Half-Step Innate Realm, do you think you can secure twenty spots to enter the Lotus Pool Secret Realm?"

Rou Ling chuckled and replied, "Of course not! Other Innate Sects have plenty of Universe Level Perfection experts!"

Fang Bai said, "That's why you should listen to me obediently! Now calm yourself and pay attention... Elder Qiu, Elder Mo, you should listen carefully too; it'll benefit you as well."

With that, Fang Bai assumed a solemn and dignified posture, sweeping his gaze across the Ruoshui Palace disciples before him.

Strangely enough, his gaze seemed to carry a mystical power. Even Elders Qiu and Mo, formidable experts of High Innate Realm, found their turbulent thoughts suddenly calming upon being swept over by his eyes.

"You disciples of Ruoshui Palace practice Water System Martial Arts Techniques, so next, I will teach you a specific set of Water System techniques," Fang Bai said with a faint smile.

"These Water System techniques, if you can comprehend even one or two percent, will make you unrivaled within the True Martial Realm. However, within such a short period of one day and two nights, I don't expect you to comprehend one or two percent. Even if you grasp half a percent, you'll be able to secure spots in the top hundred during the Tianjiao Ranking Battle. Pay close attention!"

Fang Bai's last sentence struck the hearts of the Ruoshui Palace disciples like a resounding bell. Their minds buzzed for several breaths before becoming completely serene, entering a marvelous cultivation state.

Fang Bai then began to slowly explain the Water Element Art and the Stacking Waves Palm.

Both the Water Element Art and the Stacking Waves Palm were Holy Rank techniques. Although they were among the most basic teachings Fang Bai had learned in his past life,

to martial artists in the True Martial Realm, Holy Rank techniques were unheard of, the pinnacle of cultivation methods and martial arts.

Each word and each sentence Fang Bai spoke appeared infinitely profound to the surrounding Ruoshui Palace disciples, filled with the essence of martial truths.

Anyone who could glean the martial dao arcane hidden within those words would experience an Ambrosia Baptism—a sudden realization that felt like stepping into an entirely new martial dao domain.

Even Elders Qiu and Mo, highly accomplished martial artists, greatly benefited from Fang Bai's teachings.

Fang Bai only lectured for less than two hours, leaving the remaining time for the Ruoshui Palace disciples to ponder and comprehend his teachings on their own.

Inclusively of Elders Qiu and Mo, all twenty-two Ruoshui Palace disciples fell into a deep cultivation state. None of them noticed as Fang Bai swiftly set up a defensive array around them and silently departed.

At dawn on the third day, as the sky transitioned between darkness and light, the twenty-two Ruoshui Palace disciples emerged from their cultivation state one after another. Minutes later, the younger disciples like Rou Fu could no longer contain their joyful exclamations.

Even the experienced and composed Elders Qiu and Mo couldn't suppress the delight glowing on their faces.

Their exhilarated cheers stemmed from the fact that fifteen Ruoshui Palace disciples, upon exiting their cultivation state, discovered they had truly advanced to the Half-Step Innate Realm.

Of the remaining five disciples who hadn't yet reached the Half-Step Innate Realm, their strength had greatly improved, placing them at the upper echelons within the Universe Level Perfection stage.

Elder Qiu and Elder Mo, feeling the surging essence energy coursing through their bodies, realized they had already touched the barrier of the Innate Perfection Realm. With a bit more opportunity, they could break through, ascending into the ranks of the world's most powerful beings.

"A miracle! This is a genuine miracle!"

"Senior Fang... he's an extraordinary man!"

The two Ruoshui Palace elders exclaimed, their hearts filled with admiration for Fang Bai.

Chapter 1397: The Grace of Support

The five disciples of Ruoshui Palace who failed to advance to the Half-Step Innate Realm looked at their ecstatic fellow sect members celebrating and clapping, feeling somewhat dejected.

One of the female disciples, her face darkened and sighing, lamented, "Senior Fang, only the five of us failed to advance to the Half-Step Innate Realm. Is it because our aptitude is poor and our Wuxing is too low?"

Fang Bai smiled and shook his head, offering no comment.

In truth, the five female disciples of Ruoshui Palace who failed to advance were indeed slightly inferior in terms of aptitude and Wuxing compared to their peers. However, Fang Bai would never state this outright, lest he crush their morale.

"I promised you all would advance to the Half-Step Innate Realm, so naturally, I will make it happen. Take these elixirs!"

As Fang Bai spoke, he flicked his fingers lightly, sending ten pills toward the five female disciples who had not managed to advance.

"Each of you will receive one Gathering Yuan Pill and one Creation Pill. Consume them now, then sit cross-legged to absorb the medicinal energy. With their aid, you should be able to advance."

Seeing the five female disciples take the elixirs and look at him puzzled, Fang Bai smiled and provided an explanation.

Fang Bai knew that forcing this step was akin to pulling a sapling to make it grow faster, which could lead to unstable realms after advancement. However, with the Heavenly Talent List battle about to begin, securing all twenty Ruoshui Palace disciples their spots in the Lotus Pool Secret Realm was a necessity, even if it meant taking this measure.

The issue of unstable realms could be addressed after the Heaven-Reaching Mountain journey, through cultivation to gradually stabilize their breakthroughs.

"Such pure and dense Essence Energy!"

"Are these... high-grade superior elixirs?"

At the exact moment Fang Bai released the ten elixirs, Elders Qiu and Mo immediately sensed their extraordinary nature, their eyes lighting up in astonishment.

The finest elixirs in the True Martial Realm were high-grade superior elixirs, and only a handful of alchemists could refine such pills, with the success rate being exceptionally low. This demonstrated their rarity and value.

Even though Elders Qiu and Mo were high-rank Innate experts, the elixirs they usually consumed during cultivation were merely high-grade inferior pills, with occasional access to high-grade middle-tier elixirs. High-grade superior elixirs were the dream cultivation resource for them.

Even Ruoshui Palace Master Zhou Qingyan, an Innate Perfection Realm expert, had only a limited supply of high-grade superior elixirs for her cultivation.

Now, seeing Fang Bai casually handing out such elixirs, both Elders Qiu and Mo couldn't help but feel envious.

The five younger disciples of Ruoshui Palace, whose cultivation levels were merely at the Universe Level Realm, typically had access to middle-grade elixirs. Although they understood that high-grade elixirs offered far superior enhancement for martial artists' cultivation, they lacked a full grasp of their true worth and effects.

Thus, when they received the elixirs from Fang Bai, they didn't exhibit the same intense excitement and astonishment as Elders Qiu and Mo.

After hearing Fang Bai's explanation, the five female disciples consumed the pills in hand and sat cross-legged on the ground, once again entering a cultivation state.

The Gathering Yuan Pill could condense Heaven and Earth Origin Energy.

The Creation Pill dramatically increased the chances of martial artists advancing to higher realms.

The effects of the two types of high-grade superior elixirs Fang Bai provided began manifesting within mere dozens of breaths after the disciples ingested them.

Centered on the five disciples, the Heaven and Earth Origin Energy within several miles rushed madly toward them like a giant funnel.

Even the nearly two thousand martial artists in the nearby massive valley dozens of miles away felt the astounding anomaly occurring in the environment.

However, with the Heavenly Talent List battle imminent, those martial artists were vigorously seizing their last moments to rest and prepare for the grueling, day-and-night battles ahead. None paid much attention to the disturbances elsewhere.

Within moments, the anomaly disappeared, and the five disciples of Ruoshui Palace entered a state of ethereal and tranquil cultivation.

However, all the Ruoshui Palace disciples present knew that, while the five appeared silent on the surface, their bodies were brewing a powerful surge. Soon, their strengths would receive a significant breakthrough.

As a result, everyone present, including Fang Bai, Elder Qiu, and Elder Mo, maintained absolute silence to avoid disturbing them.

Finally, just before sunrise, and less than ten breaths apart, the five meditating disciples of Ruoshui Palace exited their cultivation state one after another, standing up with faces full of excitement.

The aura pressure emanating from the five was indistinguishable from that of their fellow sect members who had already achieved the Half-Step Innate Realm.

"They've succeeded!"

Elder Qiu and Elder Mo exchanged glances, clenching their fists tightly, unable to contain their excitement.

Now, all twenty disciples of Ruoshui Palace had reached the Half-Step Innate Realm. Securing twenty spots to enter the Lotus Pool Secret Realm was no longer in question.

Since the Lotus Pool Secret Realm's discovery, no Innate Sect had ever obtained more than ten entry spots at once.

It appeared that this year's Heavenly Talent List would witness Ruoshui Palace creating an unprecedented miracle!

Elder Qiu and Elder Mo even speculated that perhaps, after the twenty disciples experienced trials in the Lotus Pool Secret Realm, some might advance to the Innate Realm, further enhancing Ruoshui Palace's ranks of Innate experts.

Moreover, Elder Qiu and Elder Mo had benefited greatly from Fang Bai's previous explanations of martial arts techniques, with their own strength improving substantially.

The twenty younger disciples of Ruoshui Palace were striving to ultimately enter the Seven-Colored Lotus Pool.

Meanwhile, Elder Qiu and Elder Mo were also vying for the chance to climb the Heavenly Ladder.

Previously, the two felt little confidence in defeating other Innate Sect elites to secure one of the few available entry spots into the Lotus Pool Secret Realm.

But now, their cultivation levels had reached the zenith of high-rank Innate Realm, just shy of Innate Perfection. Securing two spots would now be an effortless task.

"Many thanks to Senior Fang for elevating the cultivation levels of our Ruoshui Palace disciples!"

In their excitement, Elder Qiu and Elder Mo did not forget who had enabled the miraculous progress of the Ruoshui Palace disciples' strength and cultivation in such a short time.

Hence, led by the two, all the Ruoshui Palace disciples present respectfully bowed to Fang Bai, as if facing their own Palace Master.

"Enough, there's no need for such formalities,"

Fang Bai waved his hand dismissively and glanced toward the eastern horizon. "The Heavenly Talent List battle—it's about time for it to begin, isn't it?"

Elder Qiu replied, "Yes, it should start in about half an hour."

"Then let's head over now,"

Fang Bai said, taking the lead.

Elder Qiu and Elder Mo followed closely behind.

Then came Dongfang Rushi, Baili Mingyue, and the twenty Ruoshui Palace disciples.

At the massive valley outside the entrance to the Lotus Pool Secret Realm, as Fang Bai and the Ruoshui Palace disciples appeared before nearly two thousand disciples from other Innate Sects, almost everyone couldn't help but draw in a sharp breath.

Chapter 1398: Battle of the Heaven's Pride List

Previously, when Fang Bai led the disciples of Ruoshui Palace out of the valley, the disciples of the various Innate Sects had no idea what they were going to do.

Some even speculated that there might have been a significant upheaval at Ruoshui Palace, leading to all the disciples participating in the "Heaven's Chosen List" battle to withdraw.

As a result, many disciples from the Innate Sects were secretly pleased, thinking that with Ruoshui Palace, a formidable competitor, out of the way, their chances of securing a spot in the "Lotus Pond Secret Realm" had greatly increased.

But no one expected that when Fang Bai returned to the valley with the Ruoshui Palace disciples after leaving for a day and two nights, it would shock almost everyone in the valley.

The high-ranking members of the various Innate Sects could sense that the twenty younger disciples of Ruoshui Palace had all advanced to the Half-Step Innate Realm.

Even Elder Qiu and Elder Mo, the two high-ranking members of Ruoshui Palace, seemed unfathomable in their eyes, clearly having surpassed them in cultivation level.

"In just a day and two nights, all twenty-two members of Ruoshui Palace had a significant advancement in cultivation... Am I seeing things?"

"You're not mistaken! The twenty younger disciples of Ruoshui Palace have all reached the Half-Step Innate Realm; even Qiu Hanyan and Mo Chunlan, the two elders of Ruoshui Palace, have surpassed us high-rank Innate realmists!"

"It's really unimaginable!"

"What exactly happened during the day and two-night absence?"

"Could it be related to that individual cultivation martial artist?"

"It's possible... considering he's so young yet an Innate Perfection expert..."

"Amazing..."

Among the nearly two thousand disciples from the various uninvolved sects, opinions varied as they looked at Fang Bai and the members of Ruoshui Palace filing into the valley, filled with envy, jealousy, awe, and apprehension...

Ruoshui Palace had always been strong in the past battles of the "Heaven's Chosen List," and now, returning with the momentum of advancement, once the "Heaven's Chosen List" battle begins shortly, who among the other Innate sects can stop them?

This time, in the battle for the "Heaven's Chosen List," it is foreseeable that Ruoshui Palace is destined to create an unprecedented miracle!

The number of places allowed into the "Lotus Pond Secret Realm" is only one hundred, and if Ruoshui Palace secures more, then the other Innate sects will inevitably get fewer.

Those Innate sects with overall strength comparable to Ruoshui Palace are fine; a stronger Ruoshui Palace won't greatly affect the number of places they can secure.

It's the relatively weaker Innate sects that suffer; the more spots Ruoshui Palace takes, the more their disciples will be squeezed out of the top hundred.

The most miserable Innate sects might end up with nothing in this "Heaven's Chosen List" battle, running a fool's errand.

"Congratulations, Elder Qiu and Elder Mo!"

"Ruoshui Palace is going to shine brightly in this 'Heaven's Chosen List' battle!"

Elders Gu Yan and Liu Che of the Divine Fire Sect approached quickly, speaking enviously.

"All thanks to Senior Fang!"

Elders Qiu and Mo expressed their gratitude to Fang Bai without reservation.

Originally, Ruoshui Palace and the Divine Fire Sect were separated by a vast distance, with little interaction, but with Fang Bai as the "bridge," the two sects came to know each other.

The disciples of Ruoshui Palace knew that Fang Bai and the Divine Fire Sect were in a cooperative relationship, preparing to join forces to climb the Mysterious Heavenly Ladder on the Heaven-Reaching Peak.

The disciples of the Divine Fire Sect, on the other hand, were aware of Fang Bai's close relationship with the two unrivaled beauties of Ruoshui Palace.

Gu Yan was full of envy for Fang Bai's assistance in enhancing the cultivation of the Ruoshui Palace disciples but could only be envious.

After all, his relationship with Fang Bai was only superficial, far from being able to request favors from him.

Gu Yan now only hoped that Fang Bai could assist him and Elder Liu Che in securing places in the "Lotus Pond Secret Realm," and upon ascending the Heavenly Ladder, they could join forces to strive for higher steps.

As the sun was rising, the battle for the "Heaven's Chosen List" officially commenced.

In the central area of this enormous valley, one hundred adjacent platforms were erected using Essence Stones, for the disciples of the various major Innate sects of the True Martial Realm to compete on.

The rules of the competition were quite simple.

First, the top hundred martial artists from the previous "Heaven's Chosen List" take the stage, and the martial artists below can freely challenge those on stage.

The winner remains on stage, while the loser leaves in desolation.

In this way, the martial artists on stage continuously change, and the one hundred martial artists ultimately standing on stage become the top hundred of the "Heaven's Chosen List."

The Lotus Pond Secret Realm opens only once every five years, making the opportunity exceptionally precious, resulting in fierce competition for the top hundred on the Heaven's Chosen List.

As soon as the "Heaven's Chosen List" battle officially began, martial artists began leaping onto the platforms, challenging those on stage.

The clashes involved collisions of Spiritual Artifacts and eruptions of Essence Energy, each collision resounding with deafening booms.

The major Innate sects had an agreement not to deal lethal blows on stage, but severe injuries were inevitable during fierce fights, leading to frequent scenes of bloodied, bone-broken martial artists being carried off by their comrades.

As expected by the crowd, the disciples of Ruoshui Palace, led by Elders Qiu and Mo, swept through their opponents, firmly securing twenty platforms. Eventually, no one dared to challenge them, securing twenty places in the "Lotus Pond Secret Realm."

The Divine Fire Sect, as always, maintained consistency, with two disciples successfully securing places in the "Lotus Pond Secret Realm."

By dusk, the list of the top martial artists of the Heaven's Chosen List settled, with the names carved into the cliff face on one side of the valley.

Immediately following this was the competition among the high-ranking members of the various Innate Sects for ten places on the Heavenly Ladder.

Though the number of high-ranking members from each sect was not large, the competition was even fiercer than before.

The battles of high-rank Innate experts were the most thrilling segment before entering the "Lotus Pond Secret Realm" for the junior disciples of the various major Innate Sects.

Every high-rank Innate expert participating poured in all their efforts and resorted to outstanding moves for a chance at the Heavenly Ladder. Observing with keen insight, some younger martial artists with exceptional talent and high Wuxing could infer quite a few Martial Dao Arcane, beneficial for enhancing their own strength.

Gu Yan and Liu Che, two elders of the Divine Fire Sect, initially had no absolute confidence in defeating their opponents to squeeze into the top ten. However, before they fought, Fang Bai embedded a strand of Chaos Essence Qi into their bodies.

This strand of Chaos Essence Qi was enough to increase their combat power by thirty percent in a short time.

The enhancement of thirty percent combat power was more than sufficient for Gu Yan and Liu Che to sweep through their opponents in the intense battles to come, outshining their peers.

As for Elder Mo and Elder Qiu, they naturally secured two of the slots without any suspense.

While Fang Bai, the fake "Divine Fire Sect" elder, easily secured one of the slots as well.

The ten opportunities to ascend the Heavenly Ladder were extremely precious. With the Divine Fire Sect and Ruoshui Palace taking five of them, the other high-ranking members of Innate sects could only sigh in disappointment, acknowledging their inferiority.

After the battle for the "Heaven's Chosen List" ended, night had already fallen.

"Tomorrow morning, the entrance to the Lotus Pond Secret Realm will open. I'm really looking forward to it!"

Gazing at the dense mist lingering around the entrance to the Lotus Pond Secret Realm, many disciples from various major Innate Sects, who had secured a place to enter, spoke with anticipation and excitement.

Chapter 1399: Entering the Lotus Pool Secret Realm!

The once-every-five-years "Heavenly Pride Rankings" competition concluded, leaving nearly two thousand disciples from dozens of Innate Sects across the True Martial Realm departing in disappointment without securing a spot to enter the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm."

Meanwhile, the martial artists who ranked within the top one hundred on the "Heavenly Pride Rankings," along with their sect elders, stayed in the valley to conserve their energy, waiting for the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm" to open early the next morning.

Additionally, a handful of martial artists who failed to secure entry to the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm" refused to leave in resignation.

They lingered along the perimeter of the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm," shrouded by a mysterious barrier that spanned hundreds of miles, hoping to find a flaw in the barrier and gain entrance.

That night, the valley outside the entrance of the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm" was eerily silent. Hundreds of martial artists each chose a spot to sit cross-legged and conserve their energy, making their final preparations for entering the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm" the next day.

The members of Ruoshui Palace did the same.

Except for one person—Fang Bai.

At that moment, Fang Bai stood quietly at the entrance to the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm," gazing at the dense mist so impenetrable even his Divine Sense could not pierce it. His eyes shone brightly.

In his previous life as the Supreme Immortal Emperor, Fang Bai had already discerned that the so-called "Lotus Pool Secret Realm" was, in fact, a barrier created by an immensely powerful being using Supreme Immortal Power.

If the True Martial Realm itself was an enormous, expansive barrier, then the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm," spanning several hundred miles, was a miniature barrier nestled within it.

"It seems the Celestial Ladder atop Heaven-Reaching Peak might very well be the entrance from the True Martial Realm to the Three Thousand Great Worlds! This must be the deliberate design of the powerful being who created the 'Lotus Pool Secret Realm,' providing an opportunity for the top-tier experts of the True Martial Realm to ascend the ladder, enter the Three Thousand Great Worlds, and pursue even higher realms of Martial Dao!"

Fang Bai murmured.

Fang Bai had long suspected that the True Martial Realm had multiple passages to the Three Thousand Great Worlds, but locating them was no easy task. Now, having discovered that the Celestial Ladder in the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm" was one such passage, his heart naturally brimmed with joy.

As long as he could return to the Three Thousand Great Worlds, Fang Bai would be standing once more at the starting line of his Martial Dao from his previous life. With the memories of his past stored in his mind, he was confident he could propel his cultivation and power into rapid growth.

However, Fang Bai was uncertain if his current strength would be sufficient to conquer the highest eighty-one steps of the Celestial Ladder.

A surge of impulsiveness arose in Fang Bai's heart—he wanted to try.

Only by attempting it would he know what cultivation level and strength he would need to return to the Three Thousand Great Worlds via the Celestial Ladder.

Then he would devote himself to cultivation, striving for the day he possessed the power required to ascend the highest steps of the ladder.

In his previous life, Fang Bai had been capable of using his Supreme Immortal Power to create miniature barriers. And as for the method to break through the barrier of the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm," he already knew it well.

But unfortunately, given his current weak state, he was powerless to break the barrier.

It was akin to discovering a mountain of gold but lacking the ability to mine it—a helpless lamentation.

Thus, Fang Bai could only resign himself to waiting until early the next morning when the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm" would open, entering alongside the hundred martial artists from various Innate Sects.

To ordinary people, one night might feel interminably long.

But for martial artists accustomed to seclusion lasting ten days, half a month, or even longer, a single night passed in the blink of an eye.

The next morning, at dawn, as the first rays of sunlight illuminated the valley, disciples from various Innate Sects rose one by one, their expressions filled with excitement as they flocked to the entrance of the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm."

"When sunlight falls upon the mist between the two peaks, the entrance to the 'Lotus Pool Secret Realm' will open. About a hundred breaths later, it will close automatically. So we mustn't delay and should enter quickly, or we'll have to wait another five years. Mm, after completing our forty-nine days of training inside, we will be able to exit during the next opening of the entrance."

Gu Yan said softly to Fang Bai.

Fang Bai nodded, indicating he understood.

Under the anticipation-filled gazes of over a hundred martial artists, several dozen breaths later, just as Gu Yan had said, when the morning sunlight pierced the mist ahead, the dense fog dissipated as though swept away by a strong wind.

Subsequently, a massive Essence Energy Gate, shimmering like rippling water, appeared before the crowd.

Under the sustained illumination of the morning sunlight, the Essence Energy Gate began to tremble violently. Then, near its base, a fissure roughly one zhang wide opened up.

"The 'Lotus Pool Secret Realm' is open!"

"We need to hurry inside!"

"Move faster up front!"

...

As the fissure emerged, the over-a-hundred martial artists outside the Essence Energy Gate stirred into chaos. Those farther back began shouting loudly, jostling and urging those ahead to move inside without delay.

"After entering, I'll head to Heaven-Reaching Peak to ascend the Celestial Ladder along with Elders Qiu, Mo, Gu, and Liu. You two should proceed to the Seven-Colored Lotus Pool for your cultivation. Once forty-nine days have passed, we will reunite outside the Lotus Pool Secret Realm."

Fang Bai instructed Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue beside him before joining Divine Fire Sect's Gu Yan and Liu Che, as well as Ruoshui Palace's Qiu Hanyan and Mo Chunlan, in heading toward Heaven-Reaching Peak—the highest summit of the Heaven-Reaching Mountains within the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm."

For Universe Level martial artists like Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue, the aim of entering the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm" was to immerse themselves in the Seven-Colored Lotus Pool, striving to break through to the next rank.

But Fang Bai, together with elders Qiu, Mo, Gu, and Liu—all Innate Experts—had their sights set on the Celestial Ladder atop Heaven-Reaching Peak.

Though the Seven-Colored Lotus Pool held wonders, it could do little to advance the cultivation of Innate Experts like them. Only the enigmatic and awe-inspiring Celestial Ladder, brimming with boundless pressure, could ignite their passion.

"Be careful!"

Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue each uttered a reminder to Fang Bai before departing with nearly a hundred disciples from various Innate Sects toward the Seven-Colored Lotus Pool.

As they moved, a peculiar anxiety and reluctance unexpectedly welled within the two women's hearts.

The reason for these feelings was unclear, but the women's innate instinct told them that during the forty-nine days spent within the "Lotus Pool Secret Realm," something unforeseen might occur.

"Let's go too!"

Watching Dongfang Rushi and Baili Mingyue leave, Fang Bai glanced at Heaven-Reaching Peak several miles away, took a deep breath, and quickened his pace.

The four elders from Divine Fire Sect and Ruoshui Palace followed closely behind, their faces alight with eager excitement.

The four elders could not help but envision the possibility that, with Fang Bai's participation, they might ascend to higher levels of the Celestial Ladder this time—perhaps even reaching the Innate Perfection Realm and standing atop the Martial Dao pinnacle of this world.

Chapter 1400: The Oppression of the Heavenly Ladder

The Heaven-Reaching Peak stood like a colossal giant reaching the sky, towering in the central region of the Lotus Pool Secret Realm, exuding a powerful oppressive force.

The closer one got to the mountain mass of Heaven-Reaching Peak, the stronger that oppression became.

The peak of Heaven-Reaching Peak rose up ten thousand zhang, piercing through the clouds. Enveloped in mist, from a distance, only the mountain waist below the clouds could be seen.

The body of Heaven-Reaching Peak was almost vertically ninety degrees, with virtually no place to gain leverage. Unless one was an Innate Expert who could form Essence Energy Wings, it was utterly impossible to reach the summit.

The legendary Heavenly Ladder was something even a strong presence like Fang Bai couldn't see, nor could his Divine Sense detect its existence.

"What a grand and perilous mountain peak!"

Upon reaching the foot of the mountain, Fang Bai looked up, exclaiming with awe.

This was the highest, largest, most unusual, and perilous mountain peak Fang Bai had seen since his rebirth after seizing a body.

However, in his past life, Fang Bai had seen countless peaks even grander and more treacherous than Heaven-Reaching Peak, so standing at the base of the mountain led him to only a slight sentiment of amazement, quite unlike the four individuals led by Gu Yan, who were filled with expressions of reverence.

Gu Yan and the other three had visited Heaven-Reaching Peak more than once, and each time they stood at the foot of this giant mountain, they felt a sense of awe, as if facing a supreme power capable of eradicating them with a flick of its fingers.

"Let's go, let's ascend the Heavenly Ladder!"

As Fang Bai spoke, Essence Energy surged behind him, instantly forming a pair of Wind Wings.

With a light tap of his toes, his figure soared into the sky like a swift swallow, aiming for the summit of Heaven-Reaching Peak.

For Fang Bai, the 'Lotus Pool Secret Realm' was open for only forty-nine days, a span as fleeting as seven sevens. Delaying even a breath was an immense waste.

Thus, he couldn't spare a moment to admire Heaven-Reaching Peak in front of him. Upon reaching the foot, he directly surged toward the summit.

Gu Yan and the other four shared the same idea as Fang Bai.

The Lotus Pool Secret Realm only opened once every five years with limited entry slots, so they hoped to seize this rare opportunity to make the most of every breath and improve their cultivation levels.

Creating True Essence Wings for flight consumed an extreme amount of True Yuan, so Innate Experts usually avoided using it unless necessary.

Although Fang Bai's cultivation level had surpassed Innate perfection, reaching the Half-Step Foundation Establishment Realm, his internal True Yuan hadn't reached an inexhaustible flow, thus flying still consumed considerable True Yuan.

Every time he ascended about two to three thousand zhang, Fang Bai would summon the Blood-Drinking Mad Blade to stab into the mountain body, retract the True Essence Wings to hover and rest for a while, and then once his True Yuan recovered, he would form the wings again to continue flying upward.

As for the four Innate Experts like Gu Yan, they couldn't fly even a thousand zhang without needing to rest before they could continue ascending.

In this fashion, Fang Bai led the race, reaching the summit of Heaven-Reaching Peak first.

Upon landing on the summit of Heaven-Reaching Peak, Fang Bai's first sight was of the legendary Heavenly Ladder.

The Heavenly Ladder was built in the center of the summit, made from Spirit Stones found only in the thirty thousand Great Worlds or the Cultivation World. Each stone step was a hundred zhang wide, layer upon layer, reaching straight to the skies, appearing immensely majestic and grand.

Ordinary Martial Artists might not understand how those huge and seemingly heavy stone steps were suspended in mid-air.

Only Fang Bai knew that supporting the Heavenly Ladder was a kind of Supreme Immortal Power. As long as the Heavenly Ladder wasn't subjected to damage exceeding that Immortal Power, it could eternally exist at Heaven-Reaching Peak.

A flood-like oppressive force, seemingly from ancient times, emanated from the Heavenly Ladder, enveloping the entire summit of Heaven-Reaching Peak.

Under this oppressive force, unless one was an Innate Expert, even if they somehow managed to reach Heaven-Reaching Peak, they couldn't stand atop it.

Fang Bai's Divine Sense diffused, extending upward along the Heavenly Ladder.

He wanted to try and probe whether the top of the Heavenly Ladder was, as he imagined, a Teleportation Array leading to the thirty thousand Great Worlds or if it concealed some other secret.

Unfortunately, when his Divine Sense ascended the Heavenly Ladder to several steps, it encountered formidable resistance, and his Divine Sense was entirely blocked, unable to progress.

"Let's first regulate our breaths. Once our True Yuan fully recovers, we'll attempt to ascend the Heavenly Ladder again!"

After several unsuccessful attempts, Fang Bai finally gave up, tossing this to Gu Yan and the others. He sat cross-legged beneath the Heavenly Ladder, entering a cultivation state.

Having formed Essence Energy Wings to fly up Heaven-Reaching Peak, Fang Bai had expended considerable Essence Energy, and the overwhelming oppressive force from the Heavenly Ladder made him aware that without ascending the Heavenly Ladder in a peak state, he might fall short and fail halfway.

As for Gu Yan and Liu Che from the Divine Fire Sect, and Qiu Hanyan and Mo Chunlan from Ruoshui Palace, they weren't ascending the Heavenly Ladder for the first time. Compared to Fang Bai, they had more experience and knew that regaining a bit more strength meant possibly climbing one more step, so they each sat down to regulate their breaths.

Innate Experts expended Essence Energy quickly, but they also recovered quickly. Within a mere hundred breaths, Fang Bai and the others successively rose, gathering in front of the first step of the Heavenly Ladder.

"How many steps did you all reach the previous times climbing the Heavenly Ladder? Oh, Elder Gu previously mentioned climbing to the fortieth step, right?"

Fang Bai suddenly turned his head to inquire of Gu Yan and the other four beside him.

"Yes, my highest was only to the fortieth step... quite shameful!"

Gu Yan sighed and said.

Liu Che said with a wry smile, "I reached the thirty-eighth step, not even as far as Elder Gu!"

"I reached the thirty-ninth step."

"The forty-first step."

Qiu Hanyan and Mo Chunlan of Ruoshui Palace respectively said.

The steps they reached on the Heavenly Ladder indicated the differences in their strength levels.

Ascending a higher step meant superior skills.

The reverse was also true.

"This time, you will have major breakthroughs!"

Fang Bai stepped onto the first step of the Heavenly Ladder, continuing as he said, "At the very least, you will reach the fiftieth step... well, whether you can climb higher steps depends on your own fate!"

Gu Yan and the other four, coming to climb the Heavenly Ladder this time, aimed to ascend four to five more steps than the last time. While they had pondered over ten steps, they also had self-awareness, knowing it was somewhat improbable.

But with Fang Bai's words, they fully believed it, their faces showing uncontrollable joy.

The incident of Fang Bai elevating all the disciples of Ruoshui Palace within two days and nights was regarded as a miracle by Gu Yan and others, leading them to a point of near-worship of Fang Bai.

"Senior Fang, please lead the way, and we'll follow!"

"If we encounter resistance along the way, all five of us will counter it together!"

"With Senior Fang's blessing, hopefully, we can reach the fiftieth step of the Heavenly Ladder this time!"

"Everything relies on Senior Fang's full support!"

Gu Yan and the others were greatly encouraged, each wielding a Spiritual Artifact in their hands, following closely behind Fang Bai, almost stepping one step at a time toward the top of the Heavenly Ladder.

"Just as the legends said, the Essence Energy on this Heavenly Ladder becomes richer with each step! Judging by this, the Essence Energy at the top of the Heavenly Ladder might approach the Spiritual Energy in the thirty thousand Great Worlds, right?"

Fang Bai rushed up over a dozen steps of the Heavenly Ladder, feeling the increasingly dense Heaven and Earth Origin Energy around him, his mood turning remarkably good.