

Doctor 1551

Chapter 1551: Bad News

"Ahead is the Flower Pavilion."

After flying all night, as dawn broke, Lu Liyu pointed forward, her face filled with joy.

Fang Bai lightly pressed down with his toes, and the Blood-Drinking Mad Blade pierced through layers of clouds, flying obliquely downward.

After flying for dozens of miles, they reached a large lake, and from afar they saw over a dozen islands of various sizes scattered in the lake's center.

The islands varied, some spanning hundred miles in circumference, while others were just over ten miles, all covered in flowers with a fragrance pervading the air.

Amid the sea of flowers stood tower after tower, so engulfed in flowers that even the buildings seemed wrapped in them.

"Is your Sect called 'Flower Pavilion' because of this abundance of flora?"

Fang Bai asked Lu Liyu with a smile.

"I suppose that's part of the reason."

Lu Liyu was about to continue speaking when suddenly a dull, urgent bell toll echoed from the largest island, changing her expression dramatically.

"Fang Bai, this is a summon for urgent council, suggesting something very critical has occurred in our Sect! We must hurry to see!"

Lu Liyu urged anxiously.

The two propelled themselves on the Blood-Drinking Mad Blade toward the largest island.

As they were about to reach the island's airspace, several figures flew up, blocking their path.

"Junior Sister Liyu, why have you returned?"

A middle-aged female Martial Artist, dressed in the garb of a Flower Pavilion Core Disciple, first glanced at Fang Bai, then focused on Lu Liyu, asking in surprise and curiosity.

Lu Liyu clasped her fists in respect to the female Martial Artist, humbly saying, "Senior Sister Li, I've returned at my foster mother's order to seek assistance... By the way, what happened in the Sect?"

Senior Sister Li wore a grave expression and sighed sorrowfully before transmitting, "This morning, both Supreme Elders failed in their attempt to reach Nascent Soul Perfection, sustaining severe injuries and now in a coma..."

"Ah!"

Upon hearing this, Lu Liyu could not help but be dumbfounded.

The two Supreme Elders of Flower Pavilion were both high-rank Nascent Soul experts, over three hundred years old, and had been attempting to breach the Nascent Soul Perfection realm. Who would have expected not only failure but also backlash from the spiritual energy, both falling short.

This news was nothing short of a bolt from the blue for Lu Liyu, who had hurried back seeking help.

The two Supreme Elders were the Sea-Calming Divine Needle of Flower Pavilion. Now their severe injury and coma posed near-catastrophic implications for Flower Pavilion, surrounded by powerful foes.

Lu Liyu dared not imagine how Flower Pavilion would handle the situation if Zixia Manor, triggered by the death of Qiu Jianren and Qiu Guangxuan father and son, mounted a massive offense to hold them accountable.

If the two Supreme Elders were unharmed, they could exert strong deterrence against Zixia Manor, affording Flower Pavilion the confidence to confront Zixia Manor, likely avoiding a significant conflict, with Flower Pavilion at most compensating Zixia Manor with some cultivation resources.

But now, allowing Zixia Manor to learn about the severe injuries and comas of the two Supreme Elders due to cultivation could lead to unimaginable consequences.

With the two Supreme Elders in trouble, apart from the few high ranks and ten core disciples, everyone else in Flower Pavilion remained unaware.

Fan Luoying, the Tower Master of Flower Pavilion, immediately sealed the news and called together the high ranks for countermeasures.

Senior Sister Li transmitted the matter to Lu Liyu because of her status as the foster daughter of Elder Lu Hongyun, otherwise, as an External Courtyard Disciple, Lu Liyu wouldn't have the right to know.

Senior Sister Li Muyun was one of the ten core disciples of Flower Pavilion. While the high ranks were in council, she was tasked with vigilance, intercepting those entering the Sect's airspace, unexpectedly encountering her fellow junior sister.

In Flower Pavilion, Li Muyun and Lu Liyu had always had a good relationship. Yet at this critical moment for the Sect, Lu Liyu bringing a stranger made Li Muyun somewhat displeased.

But for the camaraderie, Li Muyun would have already driven off the stranger.

"Junior Sister Lu, who is this..."

Li Muyun scrutinized Fang Bai malevolently, her tone icy.

"He..."

Lu Liyu blushed, momentarily at a loss for words.

Fang Bai, perceiving Li Muyun's hostility, cupped his fists with a smile, saying, "I am Fang Bai, ordered by Elder Lu of your tower, accompanying Liyu to seek aid."

"Elder Lu? Elder Lu Hongyun?"

Li Muyun frowned, uncertainly asking.

Lu Liyu quickly replied, "Yes, my foster mother! Senior Sister Li, we encountered some troubles on Zixia Mountain, intending to request the Supreme Elders' help, but unexpectedly... Senior Sister Li, I must see the Tower Master!"

Recognizing that Lu Liyu wouldn't lie and Elder Lu assigning tasks ensured importance, and given Fang Bai was also ordered along, Elder Lu must value him highly.

"Alright, follow me, both of you!"

Li Muyun hesitated slightly before nodding.

After quietly instructing the surrounding fellow disciples, she led Fang Bai and Lu Liyu to land on the largest island, then walked along a wide straight avenue lined with flowers towards the tallest building at the avenue's end.

The building stood eighteen stories high, not only majestic but also exquisite, each floor adorned with numerous flowers, making it appear from afar as if woven from blossoms.

"This building, called the Myriad Flowers Tower, is where our Tower Master resides. Normally, high-rank councils are also held here."

Lu Liyu quietly explained to Fang Bai as they walked.

Leading from the front, Li Muyun, witnessing her junior sister treating Fang Bai so well, was secretly curious, speculating Fang Bai's identity.

Lu Liyu was Flower Pavilion's prodigy, possessing top-tier talent, physique, and appearance among the tens of thousands of female disciples in Flower Pavilion. Consequently, male martial artists from sects, clans, and loose cultivators within a hundred-thousand-mile radius admired and pursued Lu Liyu tirelessly.

Yet whether due to high standards or not meeting a favored male, Lu Liyu remained indifferent to the multitude of admirers, distant and cold.

However, this time, upon returning from her training excursion, Lu Liyu brought back a stranger, and judging by their demeanor, their relationship seemed deep, prompting Li Muyun to think more.

"This man's handsome appearance and his cultivation level, at Foundation Establishment perfection, indicate decent talent. Standing with Junior Sister Lu, they match well. Perhaps besides seeking aid, Elder Lu also intended for the Tower Master to evaluate?"

Li Muyun mused, increasingly considering it possible.

Reaching 'Myriad Flowers Tower', Li Muyun stood solemnly, bending slightly, announcing, "Reporting to the Tower Master, Junior Sister Lu Liyu requests an audience."

Chapter 1552: Flower Pavilion Crisis

The aura of over a dozen Nascent Soul experts emanated from the Myriad Flowers Tower, carrying a faint pressure.

Fang Bai knew that those auras represented the most powerful executives of the Flower Pavilion.

After Li Muyun's voice fell, the Myriad Flowers Tower was silent for a few moments, then a weathered voice spoke up: "Li Yu has returned? Come in quickly!"

The voice paused for a moment, then continued with a "hmm": "Li Yu, who is that young man who came with you?"

Lu Liyu recognized the weathered voice as that of Tower Master Fan Luoying, and the "young man" she referred to was Fang Bai, so she quickly said, "Tower Master, his name is Fang Bai..."

Lu Liyu dared not conceal anything and recounted Fang Bai's background and how he came to know herself and others.

Fan Luoying, who had lived for nearly three hundred years, possessed rich life experience and could discern many different things from Lu Liyu's words with just a few exchanges.

"Since Elder Lu allowed Fang Bai to come with you, then you both may enter!"

Fan Luoying spoke in a calm tone.

"Yes."

Lu Liyu gave Fang Bai a look, and the two of them walked side by side into the first-floor hall of the Myriad Flowers Tower.

The first-floor hall of the Myriad Flowers Tower was very spacious, decorated in an ancient style, with tens of thousands of colorful flowers embellishing the space.

The Myriad Flowers Tower was where past tower masters resided, and every time Lu Liyu entered, she would slightly bend her back, feeling a sense of awe, not daring to take a single deep breath.

But Fang Bai entered with his head held high, looking straight ahead, maintaining only a few respects on his face, without any sign of subservience.

Upon entering the hall, Fang Bai immediately saw a long flower chair placed on a high platform at the far end, where a noble and charming middle-aged woman sat solemnly, examining him with a scrutinizing gaze.

The middle-aged woman remained silent, merely sitting there, yet she exuded an immense pressure that unwittingly made people tense.

"A formidable Nascent Soul middle-stage expert indeed!"

Fang Bai sensed the pressure from the middle-aged woman and realized she might be testing his strength on purpose, so he pretended to barely withstand it, his face turning pale and his figure swaying slightly.

The middle-aged beauty was none other than Fan Luoying, the current tower master of the Flower Pavilion.

Although Fan Luoying appeared to be only in her forties, she was actually nearly three hundred years old, well-maintained, coupled with profound cultivation, which made her appear much younger.

Experts at Fan Luoying's realm often had techniques to retain their youthful looks, and they only revealed their true aged faces at the moment of their fall.

This situation was something many older female Martial Artists tried hard to avoid.

Many older female Martial Artists preferred to die quietly alone rather than let others see their aged appearance before their fall.

They hoped others would remember their peak appearances.

On the dozen or so flower chairs flanking Fan Luoying, sat the top executives of the Flower Pavilion.

Those dozen executives included, apart from the three elders stationed at Zixia Mountain, eight stewards.

The executives of the Flower Pavilion would gather here to discuss and devise countermeasures whenever there was an emergency.

"Li Yu, tell us about why Elder Lu wanted you two to return!"

Fan Luoying didn't beat around the bush and asked directly.

Lu Liyu didn't dare to slack off, and immediately recounted in detail about how Zixia Manor's disciple Qiu Guangxuan insulted her, Fang Bai stood up and killed him, among other things. She concluded, "My adoptive mother said that it's highly possible people from Zixia Manor will send experts for revenge, so she asked the Tower Master to please dispatch a Supreme Elder to oversee the situation..."

She abruptly stopped in the middle of her last sentence, recalling what her senior sister Li Muyun had mentioned earlier. Instantly, she fell into silence, her expression darkening.

The two Supreme Elders were gravely injured and unconscious, making it impossible to support her adoptive mother over there, and the Tower Master couldn't leave either. As things stood, she and Fang Bai could only immediately return to Zixia Mountain to inform her adoptive mother and others to withdraw from the competition for the Wind Roc's egg to avoid the retaliation from Zixia Manor.

"Ah, the Supreme Elders..."

Fan Luoying sighed bitterly, shaking her head, "Li Muyun already spoke to you about the two Supreme Elders, hoping to gain support from the two senior elders is unrealistic! Li Yu, you and Fang Bai must swiftly return to Zixia Mountain, report this matter to Elder Lu, then request her to promptly return to the Flower Pavilion. Soon, we may face a severe battle that concerns the life or death fate of our Sect!"

As Fan Luoying spoke, her expression turned unprecedentedly serious.

The other high-ranking members of the Flower Pavilion also shook their heads and sighed, causing the atmosphere in the great hall to become depressing and oppressive.

"Tower Master, what happened?"

Lu Liyu asked cautiously.

Fan Luoying replied, "This matter is also related to Zixia Manor..."

She paused, glancing at Fang Bai, seeing him listening with a smile, hesitated for a moment, then continued: "The news of the two Supreme Elders being gravely injured and unconscious has most likely been leaked to Zixia Manor by Liu Changfeng and Wu Jinfeng..."

"Ah!"

Lu Liyu was startled, exclaiming, "How could Senior Brother Liu and Senior Sister Wu... how could they do such a thing?"

Fan Luoying's face showed anger, her words filled with killing intent, "I only just found out that the two of them are actually spies from Zixia Manor infiltrated into our Flower Pavilion! It's one thing for Wu Jinfeng, but Liu Changfeng was one of our Flower Pavilion's core disciples, and he knows many of our confidential matters."

After Fan Luoying finished speaking, an elder sitting to her left showed anger and chimed in: "This morning, a disciple discovered Liu and Wu had suddenly disappeared together, and then reported it to me. After I led people to search their rooms, we found a lot of evidence of their communication with Zixia Manor, confirming they were undercover spies planted by Zixia Manor."

"They went missing neither early nor late, but right after the two Supreme Elders were in trouble. Without a doubt, they must have escaped back to Zixia Manor to report. Manor Master Chao Gaishi of Zixia Manor would surely be overjoyed to receive this news. I bet, once they relay the report, Zixia Manor will send their elite disciples in full force to wipe out our Flower Pavilion while seizing the opportunity!"

Upon hearing this, Lu Liyu couldn't help but sway, her face turning somewhat pale.

As the saying goes, "Two tigers cannot coexist on one mountain."

Although outwardly harmonious, Flower Pavilion and Zixia Manor have always been in all-round competition to overshadow or even annex each other. Each is the strongest Sect within a hundred thousand miles.

Simply due to their equal strengths and having two high-ranking Nascent Soul Supreme Elders holding fort in both, they both dared not act rashly, maintaining a harmonious and tranquil situation.

But with the Flower Pavilion no longer having the two Supreme Elders to hold the line, this balance was instantly broken. There is no way Zixia Manor would let such an excellent opportunity pass?

Chapter 1553: Groom-Recruiting Event

Compared to the battle for the Wind Roc egg, the crisis of the Flower Pavilion's sect is naturally more important.

Therefore, that day, Fan Luoying let Lu Liyu and Fang Bai stay at the Flower Pavilion to rest. She dispatched another elder to rush to Zixia Mountain immediately, instructing her to recall Lu Hongyun and also to make sure to invite back He Wujie and Zhao Wanqing, Fang Bai's master and mistress.

Fan Luoying heard from Lu Liyu that Fang Bai's mistress, Zhao Wanqing, is a strong Nascent Soul initial stage expert, and his master He Wujie even has a Nascent Soul Realm Puppet Corpse, who once easily slew Zixia Manor's elder Qiu Jianren.

If both of them could be invited back to assist, even if they couldn't help the Flower Pavilion turn the tide, they would at least add some level of self-protection.

As for how much help He Wujie and Zhao Wanqing would be willing to provide, it all depended on the influence Fang Bai had on the two of them.

Regarding the relationship between Fang Bai and Lu Liyu, Fan Luoying had privately asked Lu Liyu, who candidly admitted to the relationship between them.

"Liyu, I do not object to you becoming martial dao partners with Fang Bai. But before that, I want to test him to see whether his character, cultivation level, and potentials are worthy of you. Otherwise, how could I be at ease entrusting you to him?"

Fan Luoying solemnly said to Lu Liyu.

Lu Liyu was full of confidence in Fang Bai and nodded in agreement, saying, "The Tower Master can test him as much as you want. I believe I am not wrong in my judgment of people."

Fan Luoying said sternly, "However, we must agree in advance that you cannot secretly tell Fang Bai about my testing of him, otherwise the test would be meaningless. Do you understand?"

Lu Liyu saw the Tower Master looking serious and inexplicably felt a wave of nervousness but still nodded.

Fan Luoying smiled contentedly, waved her hand, and said, "Alright, there's nothing else. You can go rest now!"

Lu Liyu saluted Fan Luoying and left with a mind full of thoughts.

Fan Luoying watched Lu Liyu's figure recede into the distance, then turned around to gaze across the lake at a tall building on another island a dozen miles away. A gleam flashed in her eyes as she muttered to herself, "Fang Bai, oh Fang Bai, whether you can become a martial dao partner with Liyu will depend on whether you can withstand the several tests I set up for you next."

After a pause, she sighed lightly and continued talking to herself, "I can tell Liyu really likes you, but if you cannot satisfy me, I will mercilessly tear you apart! Liyu has an Innate Spiritual Root, is intelligent and wise, of unparalleled talent, and her future martial dao path will surely be bright. I hope you can be a helper on her martial dao path and not a stumbling block!"

The building Fan Luoying was looking at was the guest house specially used by the Flower Pavilion to entertain guests.

The dozen islands belonging to the Flower Pavilion are all named after flowers.

For example, the main island where the Myriad Flowers Tower is located is named "Peony Island".

And the guest house where Fang Bai was staying was built on Purple Gauze Island, adjacent to Peony Island.

As the name suggests, the flowers on Purple Gauze Island are primarily violets.

Fang Bai lived on the ninth floor of the guest house. After moving in, he found out that there were not only male guests like himself but also dozens of disciples from other sects' prominent clans or individual cultivation martial artists.

Most of these male martial artists were young, and upon inquiry, he found that many of them came for Lu Liyu, while a few were here for other female disciples of the Flower Pavilion.

Towards evening, while Fang Bai wandered around the square beneath the guest house, he stopped a Loose Cultivator martial artist of similar age and cultivation level, inquiring about the reason and couldn't help but smile wryly and shake his head.

It turned out that the martial artists in the guest house had arrived even earlier than himself. They stayed here because of the Flower Pavilion's triennial "Groom-Recruiting Event."

Every three years, the Flower Pavilion hosts a "Groom-Recruiting Event", during which they extend invitations to some disciples of reputable sects or well-reputed young Loose Cultivator martial artists, inviting them to the Flower Pavilion to meet eligible female disciples. If they take a liking to someone, by passing several tests and standing out from competitors, they have the hope of becoming martial dao partners with the female disciple of their choice.

The tens of thousands of disciples of the Flower Pavilion are all females, each with remarkable beauty, and among the numerous young female disciples, Lu Liyu is known as the most beautiful, with the reputation of being the "number one beauty" of the Flower Pavilion.

Therefore, the previous "Groom-Recruiting Event" coincided with Lu Liyu being eighteen years old, and out of the martial artists who came to the Flower Pavilion, seven or eight out of ten aimed to win her favor.

However, as the first among the young disciples of the Flower Pavilion, forming a martial dao partnership with her is certainly no easy task.

In the last "Groom-Recruiting Event", hundreds of martial artists came for Lu Liyu and engaged in fierce competition, but ultimately none passed the tests and returned empty-handed.

The upcoming "Groom-Recruiting Event" was imminent, and according to the Loose Cultivator martial artist Fang Bai spoke to, even more martial artists than last time were coming for Liyu.

"There are still ten days until the 'Groom-Recruiting Event', and these people rushed over so early, evidently eager to gain the beauty's favor! However, Lu Liyu belongs to me now, so if you want to win someone's favor, you'd better aim for another beauty!"

Fang Bai thought of this, a smile tugging at the corner of his mouth.

"Brother Fang, which woman from the Flower Pavilion have your eyes set on? Could you share with me?"

The Loose Cultivator martial artist, whom Fang Bai stopped and who had explained the situation of the "Groom-Recruiting Event", turned around and jokingly inquired Fang Bai.

That Loose Cultivator martial artist was named Lu Dong, also a handsome young man, slightly older than Fang Bai, and his cultivation was at the high level of the Foundation Establishment. Although he did not possess an Innate Spiritual Root, among martial artists, his talent was considered quite good.

Fang Bai chatted with Lu Dong for a while, knowing he was a cheerful person and easy to get along with, he laughed and said:

"Me? Naturally, my target is Lu Liyu. What about you, Brother Lu?"

Lu Dong clicked his tongue in admiration: "Brother Fang, you're impressive! Lu Liyu is truly outstanding; I don't dare even dream of her! My love interest is Shui Mo, a menial servant disciple at the Flower Pavilion. Her cultivation level is a Foundation Establishment perfection martial artist."

Fang Bai laughed and said, "Then let me congratulate Brother Lu in advance on winning the beauty!"

Lu Dong, however, didn't seem pleased at all. He sighed and wore a distressed face, saying, "I want to win the beauty too, but the other three competitors vying for her are slightly stronger than me. Defeating them in competition is not going to be easy!"

He became somewhat downcast, looked up to the sky, beat his chest and stomped his feet, saying, "I love Shui Mo more than my life. If she is taken by another martial artist, what will I do?"

Fang Bai patted his shoulder with sincere sympathy and said, "Brother Lu, don't get discouraged until the end! I believe you can do it!"

Lu Dong revitalized himself, saying, "You're right! I can definitely do it! Brother Fang, if I can become martial dao partners with Shui Mo, I'll invite you to have Snow Spirit Chicken!"

The Snow Spirit Chicken Lu Dong mentioned is one of the most favored small spirit beasts among martial artists in the Three Thousand Minor Worlds. Its meat is tender and aromatic, with excellent taste, and is beneficial for martial artists' cultivation.

Chapter 1554: Twin Sisters

In the three thousand great worlds, a wild adult Snow Spirit Chicken usually has a beast age of over a thousand years, and is of considerable value.

Eating a wild adult Snow Spirit Chicken would likely cost over a million pieces of low-grade Holy Essence Stone, hence ordinary Martial Artists simply can't afford it.

Yet Lu Dong proclaimed he wanted to invite Fang Bai to eat Snow Spirit Chicken, which shows his deep love for that menial servant disciple Shui Mo from the Flower Pavilion, willing to pay a high price for Shui Mo.

After chatting with Fang Bai for a moment, Lu Dong ran to the side to inquire news about Shui Mo from a friend of his.

Fang Bai, having nothing to do, strolled one by one around the plaza surrounding the guest pavilion.

Walking to a quiet spot, he sat cross-legged on a large stone, recalling the time Lu Hongyun asked him to accompany Lu Liyu back to the Flower Pavilion, and couldn't help but smile wryly, feeling a bit touched.

Only now did Fang Bai realize that Lu Hongyun's action was partly to protect the two of them, and possibly related to this "Groom-Recruiting Event."

Lu Hongyun probably wants him to participate in this "Groom-Recruiting Event" and then conquer the Flower Pavilion's upper echelon with his strength, thus allowing him to openly marry Lu Liyu as his martial dao partner.

It seems Lu Hongyun has great confidence in him!

However, Lu Hongyun likely never imagined that Flower Pavilion would actually experience the occurrence of two Supreme Elders being simultaneously severely injured and unconscious.

The current situation at Flower Pavilion is even more dangerous than over at Zixia Mountain. Once Zixia Mountain learns about the two Supreme Elders at Flower Pavilion being severely injured and unconscious, they are certain to dispatch numerous elite disciples to attack.

Understanding the risk at Flower Pavilion and still holding this "Groom-Recruiting Event," Fang Bai understands the thoughts of Flower Pavilion's Tower Master, Fan Luoying.

Participants in the "Groom-Recruiting Event" come from various sects and prominent clans, including elite disciples of the younger generation, and some are even disciples from Zixia Manor. If they could all

be kept at Flower Pavilion, then when Zixia Manor attacks, they would hesitate and dare not launch a full-scale attack on Flower Pavilion.

Fan Luoying's greatest hope is for the two Supreme Elders to awaken from their unconscious state before Zixia Manor launches its attack, recovering some of their power to deter Zixia Manor.

With such a strategy of stalling for change, things might take a different turn.

If Qiu Guangxuan hadn't been killed by him, he might have also rushed to Flower Pavilion to participate in the "Groom-Recruiting Event" after the Wind Roc's egg-laying ended, as that guy had always coveted Lu Liyu.

As night reached its peak, the Martial Artists lingering outside the guest pavilion dwindled, and Fang Bai also returned to his residence to rest.

The next day, Fang Bai intended to find Lu Liyu to talk and exchange ideas about things he had thought of last night, but he received the reply that Lu Liyu was in seclusion cultivating, not seeing anyone until the "Groom-Recruiting Event" started.

Fang Bai was helpless and had to turn around and leave, thinking to himself that since the "Groom-Recruiting Event" was just a few days away, he might as well wait patiently.

As for He Wujie, Zhao Wanqing, and Lu Hongyun, a Flower Pavilion elder personally went to invite them, believing they would arrive at Flower Pavilion soon.

In the following days, the sociable Lu Dong would come to talk to Fang Bai whenever he was free. If they chatted well, they would exchange insights on cultivation techniques and martial dao experiences.

The things Lu Dong spoke of naturally held nothing for Fang Bai to learn from.

But the things Fang Bai spoke of greatly benefited Lu Dong, like receiving guidance from a famed teacher.

After a few days of exchanging ideas with Fang Bai, Lu Dong felt the spiritual energy in his body swell, his aura surging, faintly indicating signs of a breakthrough, which made him brim with joy, so he sought Fang Bai even more, temporarily not seeking information about his beloved Shui Mo.

Five days later, Lu Dong successfully broke through and advanced atop a cultivation stone at the side of the guest pavilion plaza, reaching the Foundation Establishment perfection realm, equal to Fang Bai, and catching up to the Flower Pavilion menial servant disciple Shui Mo whom he wanted to pursue.

"Brother Fang, I owe my breakthrough to you! Without the exchanges with you over these days, I would definitely still be lingering at the high-rank Foundation Establishment. For this matter alone, I, Lu Dong, owe you a treat of Snow Spirit Chicken. Remember, once the 'Groom-Recruiting Event' ends, I'll invite you to eat!"

After his breakthrough, Lu Dong immediately sought out Fang Bai to express his excitement and gratitude.

Lu Dong's words were true. If Fang Bai hadn't thought he had a good character and intentionally helped him, he might have continued lingering at the high-rank Foundation Establishment for a few more years before having hope for a breakthrough.

Fang Bai smiled and nodded to accept Lu Dong's generous offer.

And soon after Lu Dong's advancement, Fang Bai received good news: He Wujie and Zhao Wanqing had returned to the Flower Pavilion, accompanied by Flower Pavilion elder Lu Hongyun.

Upon arriving at Flower Pavilion, He Wujie and Zhao Wanqing first went to the guest pavilion to visit Fang Bai, from whom Fang Bai learned that the Zixia Manor elder named Duan Donghai had returned to Zixia Mountain with his men, seemingly not wanting to give up the contest for the Wind Roc's egg.

Subsequently, He Wujie and Zhao Wanqing were invited by Fan Luoying to Myriad Flowers Tower and temporarily stayed there, promising to assist Flower Pavilion in resisting Zixia Manor, which made Fan Luoying extremely delighted.

Fan Luoying knew that He Wujie and Zhao Wanqing did this for the marriage between disciple Fang Bai and Lu Liyu as martial dao partners, claiming that as long as Fang Bai passes the trial, she would not set any obstacles between them.

Zhao Wanqing had some remarks about the "trial," while He Wujie, fully aware of Fang Bai's abilities, agreed confidently.

Of course, all these matters were privately discussed between Fan Luoying, He Wujie, and Zhao Wanqing, of which Fang Bai was unaware.

Three days before the "Groom-Recruiting Event," Fang Bai found that some guests were being driven out from Flower Pavilion one after another, each leaving with faces full of shame, as if they had done something disgraceful.

Fang Bai intended to probe the commotion with his divine sense but discovered that every room in the guest pavilion was isolated by formations blocking divine sense, making it inappropriate for him to damage the formations here, thus preventing his divine sense from detecting the commotion inside other rooms.

That night, while Fang Bai was in his room meditating, a knock on the door suddenly sounded. Opening it, he discovered a pair of radiant twin sisters.

The twin sisters, aged no more than sixteen or seventeen, looked bashful, like two of the freshest and most vibrant flowers awaiting someone to pluck.

"You all..."

Fang Bai was just about to ask who they were when one of the girls suddenly lunged into his arms, while the other gently closed the door, then the sisters embraced him tightly from each side, as if they wanted to meld their delicate bodies into Fang Bai's physique.

"...What are you trying to do?"

Only when soft beauty filled his arms did Fang Bai manage to ask a complete question.

Chapter 1555: I'm about to get angry!

"My name is Jiang Lianlian! You can call me Lianlian!"

"My name is Jiang Xixi! You can call me Xixi!"

The twin sisters were as passionate as fire, one on the left and one on the right, their arms snaking tightly around Fang Bai, nestling in his embrace, introducing themselves in soft and sweet voices.

Fang Bai could sense that these twin sisters harbored no malice towards him. It wouldn't do to rudely push them away or use strong spiritual energy to force them aside. So, with a wry smile, he replied, "Uh, can you two loosen your grip first? We're not familiar with each other, and this hugging thing isn't quite appropriate, don't you think?"

"No way!"

The two sisters spoke in unison, as if with one mind, "If we let go, what if you run away?"

Fang Bai asked, "So, can you tell me what you're here for?"

The older sister, Jiang Lianlian, who had a small mole on her forehead, looked up at Fang Bai's face with an infatuated expression and said, "We came here to become your martial arts partners!"

"Yes!"

The younger sister, Jiang Xixi, nodded vigorously, wearing the same infatuated look.

Fang Bai smiled wryly and said, "We're complete strangers, and you want to become my martial arts partners? You've startled me a bit!"

Jiang Lianlian said with a hint of grievance, "Who says we're strangers? We got to know you the day you arrived. It's just that... you didn't notice us."

Jiang Xixi chimed in playfully, "Exactly! At that time, all your attention was on Lu Liyu, Junior Sister Lu. You didn't even look at us."

Fang Bai lowered his head, let his gaze sweep across the sisters' faces, and suddenly realized, "Oh... I remember now. On the day I first arrived at the Flower Pavilion, when Senior Sister Li Muyun intercepted me and Lu Liyu in midair, you two were standing beside her, right? Could it be that, like Senior Sister Li, you're both core disciples of the Flower Pavilion?"

Li Muyun was Lu Liyu's senior sister and held a high status in the Flower Pavilion, so Fang Bai followed suit in calling her so.

Jiang Lianlian replied, "We are not core disciples. My cultivation level is mid-Golden Core, just like Xixi; we are both Inner Court disciples."

Jiang Xixi nodded.

Fang Bai said, "You're both Inner Court disciples, far more powerful than I am! So I can't understand why you would want to become my martial arts partners. With your looks and talents, there must be many male martial artists admiring and pursuing you!"

Jiang Lianlian raised her arm to stroke Fang Bai's face and gently said, "Junior Sister Lu has very high standards. Over the years, countless talented martial artists have been turned away by her, but she took a liking to you, Fang Bai! This shows that you are more outstanding than those martial artists!"

Jiang Xixi said, "Actually, my sister and I liked you from the moment we first saw you! But we know that with our qualifications, we can't compete with Junior Sister Lu. So..."

Jiang Lianlian continued, "So we can only use this method to become your martial arts partners before the 'Groom-Recruiting Event.' Even if it's just one night of pleasure, we two sisters would be satisfied."

"Fang Bai, don't refuse us!"

Jiang Lianlian pleaded pitifully.

"Just let us serve you tonight!"

Jiang Xixi said enticingly.

As they spoke, their bodies continued to rub against Fang Bai, emitting whispers soft enough to drive anyone mad, and then, to Fang Bai's stunned surprise, they began to unbutton his clothes.

At this moment, it would be hard for any martial artist to reject such temptation.

Jiang Lianlian and Jiang Xixi's eyes quickly met, a mischievous smile appearing at the corners of their mouths.

"Stop!"

Fang Bai suddenly spoke out, then looked at the startled Jiang Lianlian and Jiang Xixi sisters, smiling wryly, "You should leave! I cannot afford nor do I wish to indulge in your affection. With the 'Groom-Recruiting Event' about to commence, I'm sure you'll meet someone you truly like! If you continue to act like this, I'll get angry!"

Jiang Lianlian and Jiang Xixi paused their wandering hands, looked at Fang Bai a few times, confirmed the seriousness in his words, and only then did they disengage from his embrace.

"Fang Bai, do you dislike us sisters?"

Jiang Lianlian asked pitifully, tears welling up in her eyes.

Fang Bai simply turned around, ignoring them.

"Fine, it is we sisters who were shameless and asked for humiliation. Farewell, Fang Bai!"

Jiang Lianlian and Jiang Xixi looked at each other, leaving with faces full of unwillingness and grievance.

"To remain unmoved by beauty... he has passed this test! Let's go report to the Tower Master!"

After leaving the guest building, Jiang Lianlian and Jiang Xixi exchanged a glance, then giggled, each summoning their spiritual artifact and flying towards Peony Island.

"Such little tricks may seem childish, but for many martial artists, they're fatal! Those martial artists who were expelled from the Flower Pavilion probably couldn't resist this sort of temptation, right?"

Fang Bai went to the window, watching the streaks of light in the night sky as Jiang Lianlian and Jiang Xixi left, shaking his head with a smile.

Fang Bai knew that this little episode was likely just one of Fan Luoying's tests for him; who knows what other tricks she might pull out next.

However, Fang Bai wasn't worried at all; although he was the Romantic Immortal Emperor in his previous life, he wasn't someone who fell for every beauty he saw. For women he had no feelings for, no matter how stunningly beautiful they were like heavenly immortals, he would never engage in any intimate relationship beyond friendship.

On the tenth day, Purple Gauze Island suddenly became lively, with hundreds of martial artists emerging from the guest building, gathering in the plaza below, led by Li Muyun and other top ten core disciples of the Flower Pavilion, flying towards the main island, Peony Island, to attend the 'Groom-Recruiting Event.'

Each 'Groom-Recruiting Event' is held on the plaza in front of the Myriad Flowers Tower on Peony Island, hosted by the Flower Pavilion's Elder Zhike, with Fan Luoying and the top leaders of the Flower Pavilion attending, as well as guests including high-level members of friendly sects and prominent clans, or powerful loose cultivators, invited to observe the event.

Lu Dong and Fang Bai flew together, shoulder to shoulder, following the crowd.

Over several days of interaction, the two had become close friends who could talk about anything, not only often discussing martial arts techniques but also encouraging each other, hoping the other could become martial arts partners with the female martial artist they fancied.

However, Lu Dong believed that Fang Bai's challenge to become martial arts partners with Lu Liyu was far more difficult than his own hopes with Shui Mo.

Lu Dong's cultivation level was now equivalent to Shui Mo's, and with only three competitors, he had a big hope.

In contrast, Fang Bai faced hundreds of competitors, including Golden Pill Experts, making it nearly impossible to stand out.

Despite this, Lu Dong sincerely hoped that his very congenial friend could get his wish.

At the plaza in front of the Myriad Flowers Tower, thousands of powerful individuals had gathered, most of them disciples of the Flower Pavilion.

Those observant would notice that two Elders of the Flower Pavilion and many elite disciples were not present, instead dispatched to guard around the great lake. If any external threat was detected approaching, the news would be quickly relayed to Fan Luoying.

This 'external threat' naturally referred to Zixia Mountain.

Chapter 1556: I'll wait for you

At the "Groom-Recruiting Event" site, the most popular and eye-catching were not the high-ranking members of Flower Pavilion, nor the guests who came to watch the ceremony, but the one hundred female disciples of Flower Pavilion.

Those one hundred female disciples were specially selected by the high-ranking members of Flower Pavilion from tens of thousands of female disciples based on the preferences of the martial artists

participating in the "Groom-Recruiting Event", ranging from menial servants to core disciples, each one as beautiful as a flower with outstanding aptitude.

For the martial artists to win the beauty's favor, they must undergo numerous challenges, the most important of which is the strength test.

According to previous procedures, if a sect's disciple likes Lu Liyu and wants to become a Martial Dao partner with her, he must first withstand one move under the attack of a high-ranking member of Flower Pavilion before being qualified to compete with other opponents.

The final winner of the competition could hope to meet Lu Liyu, and if the two of them take a liking to each other, the matter is considered settled.

Fang Bai and Lu Dong sat among nearly a thousand martial artists, their gaze sweeping through the densely packed martial artists present, discovering Lu Liyu sitting behind Lu Hongyun, her beautiful eyes gazing in their direction.

Although there was a hundred-yard distance between them, they could each see the other clearly, and after their eyes met, joy filled their brows and hearts.

Fang Bai winked at Lu Liyu, mouthing the words "wait for me".

Lu Liyu seemed to understand his meaning, pursed her lips in a smile, nodded gently, and also mouthed back "I'm waiting for you".

The subtle exchange of glances between the two was noticed by the observant He Wujie.

He Wujie chuckled and transmitted to Zhao Wanqing beside him, "That Fang Bai kid and the girl from the Lu Family are exchanging flirtatious glances, the two of them look affectionate, could it be that they have already accomplished the good deed?"

What he meant by "accomplished the good deed" was that Fang Bai and Lu Liyu had already had the most intimate relationship, becoming true Martial Dao partners.

Zhao Wanqing rolled her eyes and said, "You idiot, what nonsense are you talking about? Miss Lu is still a virgin!"

"It shouldn't be!"

He Wujie scratched his head, muttering to himself, "This kid is too indecisive! Nothing like me back in the day, I would immediately make a move when I saw someone I liked... ouch..."

Zhao Wanqing had fallen for He Wujie at first sight and was tricked into giving her body to him. Now hearing him speak nonsense here, she blushed and, taking advantage of the moment when no one was watching, pinched him hard.

He Wujie realized he had misspoken. Although he grimaced in pain and his eyes looked askew, he dared not make a sound, and his expression appeared odd and comical.

As the sun rose, the "Groom-Recruiting Event" officially began.

The first to step forward among the one hundred female disciples of Flower Pavilion was a sixteen-year-old girl named Sang Yun, while among the nearly a thousand martial artists from various sides, several Foundation Establishment Experts who fancied her also stood forward.

"I'll use ten percent of my strength. Those who can withstand one move from my attack may enter the final competition. Who will go first?"

Lu Hongyun stood up slowly, standing at the center of the square, smiling as she looked at several Foundation Establishment Experts.

"I'll go first!"

A Martial Artist, at the peak of Foundation Establishment and as thin as a stick, stepped forward in front of Lu Hongyun, cupping his fists and bowing, "I am Zhu Yunying, an External Courtyard Disciple of Flying Crane Manor."

Lu Hongyun nodded, "Your courage is commendable! You may receive the move!"

She lightly waved her right palm, and a surge of Wood Spirit Qi swept out, transforming into a fierce wave enveloping Zhu Yunying.

Zhu Yunying performed the Thousand Catty Drop, anchoring his feet firmly on the ground, then let out a loud shout, both fists simultaneously striking out, two powerful forces erupting from his frail body, clashing against the incoming fierce wave.

"This Zhu Yunying is very strong, he should be able to pass!"

Lu Dong murmured.

Fang Bai nodded, "I think so too."

"Boom!"

A loud explosion erupted, the atmosphere scattered, and a large dust cloud was stirred up on site.

Zhu Yunying's figure flew out from the dust cloud, tumbling several times in mid-air. Although he staggered seven or eight steps backward upon landing, he managed to stand firm, managing to take one move.

When Lu Hongyun spoke the words "pass", the originally calm expression of Zhu Yunying turned to excitement, his gaze filled with emotion as he looked at the girl named Sang Yun from Flower Pavilion, murmuring, "Yun'er, you're mine... you're mine..."

A hint of joy appeared at the corner of Sang Yun's mouth, as she continuously winked at Zhu Yunying.

"This pair probably hooked up long ago. I just wonder if Zhu Yunying can defeat other competitors and be with Sang Yun as he wishes. Let's bless them!"

Lu Dong, watching the flirtatious exchange between Zhu Yunying and Sang Yun, was envious in his heart, speaking softly to Fang Bai.

Fang Bai smiled and said, "Brother Lu, I don't know if others can fulfill their wishes, but I know you definitely can!"

"Brother Fang, with your words, my confidence has increased a lot! Thanks!"

Lu Dong patted Fang Bai's shoulder, his originally tense mood slightly relaxed.

After Zhu Yunying, other martial artists interested in Sang Yun also stepped forward one by one to face Lu Hongyun's attack, with four ultimately not being knocked down, successfully passing this round's test.

Then Zhu Yunying and four others went on to compete individually.

Although Zhu Yunying was strong enough, there are always stronger opponents; during the final decisive stage, he was defeated by his opponent, losing control of his emotions and pounding the ground crying.

The girl Sang Yun also appeared downcast, but when Zhu Yunying looked towards her, she gave him a reassuring look, mouthing repeatedly, "I will wait for you."

The final winner cheered joyously, but he forgot that during the subsequent meeting with Sang Yun, if he couldn't gain her approval, it would also be difficult to form a Martial Dao partnership with her.

Zhu Yunying also realized this, and his initially dejected mood improved significantly after stabilizing his emotions. He silently vowed, "Yun'er, wait for me! I will return in three years!"

Zhu Yunying's defeat clearly impacted Lu Dong, who became nervous again, his hands clenching and releasing repeatedly as he muttered prayers to himself.

Soon, the menial servant named Shui Mo stood at the forefront of the ten menial servants, and the six male martial artists, including Lu Dong, who fancied Shui Mo, also appeared opposite Lu Hongyun.

When Lu Dong got up to enter the stage, Fang Bai lightly patted him on the shoulder, saying, "Good luck," and Lu Dong, upon stepping into the square, felt a tiny yet powerful stream of energy flowing within him, and the whole person seemed to become much stronger.

Lu Dong believed this was love giving him strength, not realizing it was Fang Bai secretly lending him a helping hand.

With Fang Bai's secret assistance, Lu Dong easily passed Lu Hongyun's test, then went on to win successive victories, defeating his five competitors one by one.

Chapter 1557: Favoritism or Going Easy?

When Lu Dong defeated his last opponent, he was so moved that tears filled his eyes. He ran over to Fang Bai for a big hug and then laughed, "Brother Fang, I made it! You must succeed too! Next, I'll be cheering for you!"

"Congratulations, Brother Lu, for embracing the beautiful woman as you wished! I believe I will succeed too!"

Fang Bai said with a slight smile.

Fang Bai had already secretly observed that his opponents numbered in the hundreds, all of whom were Golden Core Realm experts, with the strongest among them being mid-level Golden Core experts.

As for these experts, Fang Bai was not afraid at all. Even without using the Puppet Corpse, he was confident he could easily defeat them.

In the following few hours, hundreds of martial artists fiercely competed, and ultimately, dozens emerged successful, managing to embrace their beauties. The others who failed secretly vowed to return in three years.

As the most beautiful woman of the Flower Pavilion and simultaneously the top genius among the younger generation of disciples, Lu Liyu was scheduled to appear last among the hundred Flower Pavilion disciples.

Since meeting Fang Bai, Lu Liyu had felt more resistant to the Groom-Recruiting Event, but she dared not defy her master's orders and had to comply.

Moreover, Fang Bai was also among those participating in the event, which gave Lu Liyu peace of mind.

Although Lu Liyu did not know Fang Bai's true strength yet, she knew Fang Bai had a Nascent Soul expert as his master and a similarly strong mistress. When she saw Fang Bai's confident demeanor, she felt convinced Fang Bai was sure to win, defeat the other competitors, walk up to her, gently hold her hand, and take her away.

"The last female disciple of the Groom-Recruiting Event, I'm sure everyone knows who she is. Yes, she is our Flower Pavilion's most beautiful woman and the first genius martial artist among the younger generation of disciples, Lu Liyu!"

Lu Hongyun introduced Lu Liyu with a smile, then said, "Everyone, there are hundreds of martial artists here who fancy Lu Liyu, so your competition will be very fierce. Due to the large number, we will have Elder Qiu on stage to speed up the test of martial artists' strength."

After Lu Hongyun finished speaking, another elder of the Flower Pavilion, Qiu Huyue, slowly stood up and took a position ten feet away from her.

Thus, hundreds of martial artists whose names were called took the stage one by one, facing and enduring the attacks from Lu Hongyun and Qiu Huyue.

More than an hour later, only dozens of people passed the strength test, while the rest couldn't withstand a single strike from the two elders of the Flower Pavilion.

Among the dozens who passed the test, Fang Bai showed average performance, without fully showcasing his strength, yet this already left many amazed.

After all, among the hundreds participating in this round, only Fang Bai was a Foundation Establishment Realm expert, and most of those present hadn't expected him to pass the strength test.

Fang Bai withstood a strike from Qiu Huyue, simply retreated five or six steps, and stood firm, causing a stir on the scene. Many martial artists widened their eyes in disbelief.

Some martial artists even believed Qiu Huyue showed favoritism, intentionally held back, or else why couldn't so many early-stage Golden Core experts withstand even one strike, and how could Fang Bai, a Foundation Establishment full realm martial artist, possibly pass?

"My Brother Fang is just that strong! Talking about favoritism or holding back, you're just jealous!"

Lu Dong stood up and defended Fang Bai loudly, supporting his friend in this way.

Qiu Huyue also sneered and said, "Whether I showed favoritism, you can find out for yourselves when you face him in a duel!"

In fact, Qiu Huyue herself was surprised by Fang Bai's strength.

When Qiu Huyue struck Fang Bai earlier, not only did he withstand it, but he seemed to do so effortlessly, which made Qiu Huyue marvel secretly, thinking, "No wonder Elder Lu said this kid is extraordinary; it truly is so."

However, just like most of the experts present, Qiu Huyue didn't think Fang Bai would ultimately prevail.

The final contenders included not only dozens of early-stage Golden Core experts but also several mid-level Golden Core experts.

Those few mid-level Golden Core experts were like towering mountains in front of Fang Bai, shaking them wouldn't be easy.

Lu Hongyun was unaware that Fang Bai had a Puppet Corpse of the Nascent Soul Realm and felt a bit worried. Looking at He Wujie and Zhao Wanqing, she found the two of them acting calm and composed, seemingly not anxious at all. She couldn't help but wonder, "Fang Bai is your disciple, and you're not worried at all?"

This thought suddenly struck her: "Could it be that they gave Fang Bai some powerful artifact that could be useful at a critical moment? Oh, they are both Nascent Soul Realm experts, so it's quite possible!"

The spiritual artifacts used by Nascent Soul experts are mostly medium to high-grade Holy Grade. If Fang Bai had a Holy Grade spiritual artifact, he might be able to rely on its power to defeat other opponents and break through.

"Hmm, it must be so!"

Thinking of this, Lu Hongyun relaxed her brows, smiled and glanced at Fang Bai, then turned to give her adopted daughter Lu Liyu a reassuring look.

Due to the large number of final contenders, the dozens of martial artists drew lots to determine the order of the duels.

Fang Bai was the fifteenth to take the stage, and his opponent was a burly and tall early-stage Golden Core expert.

"I am Pang Shi, a disciple of the External Courtyard of the Golden Lion Sect!"

The tall martial artist gave Fang Bai a haughty fist salute as he arrogantly announced his name.

Pang Shi lived up to his name; he was a head taller than Fang Bai and was much bigger, with slightly yellowish and long thick hair, a full beard, and he looked quite formidable.

Standing face to face with Fang Bai, he had an imposing aura that instantly overwhelmed Fang Bai.

"I am Fang Bai, a mere Loose Cultivator."

Fang Bai remained calm, casually fist saluting Pang Shi with an indifferent demeanor, as if he couldn't care less.

Fang Bai's way of interacting with others always followed the maxim that respect begets respect.

Pang Shi's arrogant and condescending attitude made Fang Bai unwilling to engage with him.

You don't show me respect, so why should I show you a good face?

Pang Shi showed a furious expression, sneering, "Heh, Brother Fang, quite the arrogance!"

"No, no, I wouldn't dare! It's still you, Brother Pang, who has the big ego! Your physique is much larger than mine!"

Fang Bai replied expressionlessly.

His words elicited a burst of laughter from the martial artists below.

Pang Shi bared his teeth, his fists clenching with a "crackling" sound, and sneered, "A mere Foundation Establishment brat, dare to act so arrogant! Soon, you'll see!"

Fang Bai curled his lips, saying, "A mere early-stage Golden Core big fool, dare to be so arrogant! Soon, you'll see your bright shining glory!"

Chapter 1558: Shameless Child, How Dare You!

When it comes to verbal sparring, even ten Pang Shis are no match for Fang Bai, so after just a few exchanges, Pang Shi was thoroughly enraged.

"You're asking for death, brat! Golden Lion Roaring Fist!"

Pang Shi, like a raging lion, charged at Fang Bai with a force of ten thousand pounds, causing spiderweb cracks in the ground as his feet stomped along.

When he got within fifty feet of Fang Bai, Pang Shi swung his fist, enveloped in a mass of golden energy with astonishing power, striking towards Fang Bai's chest with an unstoppable momentum.

Pang Shi cultivated a Golden System Technique, known for its formidable attack power. As he threw this punch, many experts watching from the sidelines showed subtle changes in their expressions, pondering whether they could withstand such a blow themselves.

"This guy actually used such a deadly attack on my disciple! Damn him! Hmph, I've got my eye on him!"

Seeing Pang Shi putting in all his effort from the very start, as if intending to kill Fang Bai, He Wujie's expression turned cold as he spoke grimly.

In martial artist duels, injuries or death are inevitable. However, at this Groom-Recruiting Event, to prevent disrupting the joyful atmosphere, an elder from Flower Pavilion would keep an eye on both sides. If someone were to make a lethal move and the other party couldn't resist, they'd step in promptly to stop it.

The Flower Pavilion elder watching was Lu Hongyun.

At the sight of Pang Shi intending to kill Fang Bai at the slightest provocation, she couldn't help but feel secretly annoyed. She was just about to intervene when she noticed a strange smile appearing on Fang Bai's face, and his aura suddenly surged, with a blaze of fire appearing at his fist's end.

"The power contained within that blaze is far stronger than Pang Shi's punch! That Fang Bai kid is really something!"

Lu Hongyun marveled silently, thinking that perhaps Fang Bai was using some powerful martial arts technique taught by He Wujie.

If the martial arts technique used by a martial artist is of a high enough rank, it can, to some extent, compensate for their lack of cultivation level, resulting in a significant power increase.

Lu Hongyun thought that Fang Bai's situation must be like this.

"The Nine Revolutions True Fire Art... this kid seems to use it even more skillfully than I do. Well, this round, he's bound to win!"

He Wujie's eyes lit up and he grinned.

Zhao Wanqing's eyes sparkled, and she praised, "What rank of technique is that Nine Revolutions True Fire Art? It's so impressive! Right, didn't that kid teach it to you as well? So... not counting those two puppet corpses, your strength now should be much greater than mine, right?"

He Wujie proudly said, "Of course... ouch!"

Before he could finish speaking, Zhao Wanqing pinched his ear, causing him to inhale sharply in pain and to plead, "Wanqing, there are lots of people around here watching! Can't you give me a little face?"

Only then did Zhao Wanqing release her grip, glancing around as she chuckled, "Hmph, so if you become stronger than me, does that mean you won't listen to me anymore?"

He Wujie straightened up, patting his chest and assured, "That's absolutely impossible! No matter how strong I become, I will always follow your lead! If you tell me to go east, I'll never go west! If you tell me to go south, I'll never go north! Honey, you are my guiding light!"

Zhao Wanqing laughed with a snort, "Flatterer!"

As they spoke, the duel on the plaza was already over.

As expected by He Wujie, Lu Hongyun, and others, Fang Bai, using the Nine Revolutions True Fire Art, delivered a Furious Flame Fist, sending Pang Shi flying and causing him to pass out on the spot.

Seeing Pang Shi collapsed and unresponsive, the entire audience was in an uproar, the majority of martial artists finding it hard to believe.

And those Golden Pill Experts who were to face Fang Bai later, their gazes filled with respect, except for a few mid-level Golden Pill Experts.

"Brother Fang, amazing! Haha... I knew it, that big oaf was no match for you; you would definitely take him down! Haha..."

Lu Dong, seeing his friend win, was so excited he waved his arms and laughed heartily.

Several disciples from the Golden Lion Sect glared at Lu Dong hearing him refer to Pang Shi as a "big oaf."

Fang Bai's second duel opponent was a young man of slender build with a somewhat feminine appearance.

The young man's name was Li Ning, like Fang Bai, a loose cultivator martial artist, also with an initial-stage Golden Pill cultivation level.

Although Li Ning wasn't as arrogant and overbearing as Pang Shi, his eyes were sharp and cold, making one shiver uncomfortably.

"Loose cultivator martial artist, Li Ning!"

After Li Ning took the stage, he announced his name to Fang Bai but said no more, immediately launching his attack.

"Turned out to be a poison expert! Hah, doesn't he know that my body fears no poison!"

Fang Bai, as soon as Li Ning appeared, caught a whiff of a peculiar floral scent and instantly recognized it as the toxic pollen from the Soul Severing Flower.

The pollen from the Soul Severing Flower is extremely poisonous, colorless and shapeless, regarded as one of the deadliest flora in the world. If an ordinary Golden Pill Expert inhaled it, they might lose most of their combat ability.

When Li Ning first went onstage, he secretly released the Soul Severing Flower poison, a disgraceful tactic that, if known, would bring shame upon him.

However, Li Ning knew Fang Bai was a formidable opponent, and in order to win and have the opportunity to become a martial dao partner with Lu Liyu, he was willing to risk it all.

"Shameless whelp! How dare you!"

He Wujie, being a Nascent Soul Expert with an Innate Spiritual Root, had a keen perception and detected the Soul Severing Flower poison the moment Li Ning took action, which infuriated him.

It was considered an underhanded move to use poison before an official duel started, a non-standard competitive tactic, and even in victory, it would be a tainted one.

Though He Wujie knew his disciple had numerous ways, even fearing not the dark and sinister energy within Nether Corpse Land, the Soul Severing Flower poison is pervasive and extraordinary. Should Fang Bai lose because of it, he would have to wait another three years to become Lu Liyu's martial dao partner.

He Wujie was protective of his disciples, and seeing Fang Bai about to suffer, he couldn't tolerate it.

He was ready to intervene when he saw Fang Bai casually wave his hand, sending a tumultuous wave of fire spirit energy rolling towards Li Ning.

The fire spirit energy launched by Fang Bai contained a trace of weak Red Silkworm Spirit Fire, of terrifyingly high temperature, which produced a sizzling sound and emitted white smoke upon encountering the invisible Soul Severing Flower poison.

The white smoke quickly spread to the surroundings of the plaza, releasing an extremely foul stench that made people nauseous.

"It's the Soul Severing Flower poison!"

"Hold your breath!"

"Damn it, that guy named Li Ning actually used such a despicable trick!"

"Damn! Luckily, I reacted quickly, or I would've inhaled a wisp of the poison smoke!"

"If one inhales the Soul Severing Flower poison, at worst it leads to temporary delirium, at worst permanent madness!"

"This poison doesn't kill, but it's more insidious than death!"

...

The martial artists around were in an uproar, quickly circulating their cultivation techniques to form protective spiritual energy around themselves to fend off the invasive poison smoke.

Chapter 1559: You have the Soul Severing Flower, I have the Skeleton Grass.

Li Ning's use of underhanded tactics not only failed to cause any trouble for Fang Bai but instead incited the wrath of the crowd, leaving him in a panic.

"It's rude not to reciprocate! Why don't you taste the flavor of my 'Skeleton Grass'!"

Fang Bai made a barely noticeable movement with his hands and then said this with a smile, looking towards Li Ning.

Li Ning was an expert in poison, possessing much more knowledge about many poisonous flowers and herbs in the Immortal Realm than ordinary martial artists. When he heard the words "Skeleton Grass," his body involuntarily shuddered, dread rising in his eyes as he swiftly stepped back five feet.

Li Ning's Soul Severing Flower was poisonous, but compared to Skeleton Grass, it was nothing.

If one were to rank the poisonous flowers and herbs in the world, the Soul Severing Flower would not even make it into the top ten, whereas the Skeleton Grass could easily be in the top three.

Poison smoke and powder refined from Skeleton Grass are equally invisible and colorless, and even tasteless, able to penetrate a martial artist's body unnoticed.

Once a martial artist is tainted with the poison of Skeleton Grass, it's almost incurable, and within just a few breaths, their flesh will dissolve and melt away, leaving only bare bones behind.

Thus, Skeleton Grass is a poison that many martial artists in the world fear.

"You can't escape it!"

Fang Bai watched Li Ning retreat ten feet, as if avoiding the plague, and said with a hint of a smile, "Now, do you feel a bit itchy on your left arm's skin? Do you want to scratch it?"

Li Ning did not speak, but the corners of his eyes twitched rapidly.

Fang Bai chuckled and added, "If you're itchy, then scratch it!"

Li Ning, driven by an uncanny impulse, raised his right hand and lightly scratched his left arm.

The result was unexpected; the itch didn't stop, but instead, he scratched off a piece of flesh with blood.

"Ah..."

Seeing the bloody flesh he scratched off from his left arm, Li Ning's pupils contracted with terror in his eyes, a shrill scream akin to a pig being slaughtered erupted from his mouth.

This scratch marked only the beginning of Li Ning's nightmare.

Following this, no matter how Li Ning endured, even though he gritted hard enough to shatter his teeth, he still couldn't withstand the unbearable itch on his left arm and started to scratch madly.

With each scratch, a piece of flesh fell off, accompanied by a scream that sent chills down the spine.

In just a few breaths, amid the shocked and stupefied gazes of martial artists around the square, Li Ning's entire left arm was reduced to a blood-stained bone.

"This..."

Lu Hongyun frowned slightly at Li Ning's miserable state.

Even though Li Ning was the first to use underhanded tactics and thus deserved his fate, the Groom-Recruiting Event was supposed to be a joyous occasion. This scene somewhat destroyed the celebratory atmosphere, so Lu Hongyun turned his attention to Fang Bai and asked, "Fang Bai, can this poison... be neutralized?"

Generally speaking, the more potent the poison in the world, the harder it is to neutralize. Lu Hongyun inquired Fang Bai only out of a glimmer of hope; otherwise, Li Ning would die a terrible death on the spot today.

Fortunately, Li Ning was just a Loose Cultivator, and even if he fell, it wouldn't bring trouble to Flower Pavilion.

Fang Bai nodded, approached Li Ning, and wielding the Blood-Drinking Mad Blade, he made a swift chop downward.

Crimson light dazzled like lightning, and amid the splattering blood, when everyone looked at Li Ning again, his entire left arm had been severed at the shoulder.

Though losing the left arm would greatly hamper his path in cultivation, Li Ning let out a sigh of relief.

If Fang Bai hadn't severed his left arm, the unspeakable itch would soon spread throughout his body with unimaginable consequences.

Li Ning, thinking of himself turning into a skeleton, couldn't help but sweat like rain, trembling with fear.

"For Elder Lu's sake, I'll spare your life! Get lost!"

Fang Bai said indifferently.

Li Ning knew Fang Bai had shown mercy, so he dared not linger any longer. He stemmed the blood flow from his severed arm using his meridian, stopping the bleeding, and left in defeat.

Throughout it all, he dared not look Fang Bai in the eyes, afraid Fang Bai might see the deep-seated resentment hidden there, leading him to kill.

"Fang Bai, you're quite impressive."

Seeing Fang Bai leave him some dignity, Lu Hongyun felt deeply gratified.

This duel barely started before it ended, with Fang Bai effectively countering poison with poison, winning cleanly and efficiently, rendering other opponents more apprehensive of him.

Twice defeating Golden Pill Experts, severely injuring one of them, this boy with only a Foundation Establishment perfection realm was extraordinarily strong!

Lu Liyu watched Fang Bai with a proud and joyful smile, filled with pride.

He Wujie also beamed with pride, continually boasting to Flower Pavilion's Tower Master Fan Luoying about how remarkable his disciple was, as if his disciple were an immortal child from the Immortal Realm, while Zhao Wanqing next to them rolled her eyes incessantly.

"This old fellow, openly boasting about his disciple, while secretly embellishing his own image! Truly thick-skinned!"

Zhao Wanqing thought to herself, and watching He Wujie's exuberant rambling, she couldn't help but laugh.

After several rounds of duels, only four contenders remained, including Fang Bai, among the hundreds of experts who admired Lu Liyu.

This time, Fang Bai's opponent was a mid-stage Golden Core expert. As long as Fang Bai defeated him, he could engage the winner of another match in the ultimate duel.

"You're strong, but still not my match! So, you might as well give up yourself!"

Standing opposite Fang Bai, the mid-stage Golden Core expert named Zhang Yang spoke these words as soon as he arrived.

Zhang Yang with an ordinary face, neither tall nor short, not fat nor thin, belonged to the kind who was hard to find in a crowd.

Yet, precisely this seemingly ordinary strong man ranked among the top in the hundreds of martial artists who admired Lu Liyu, Fang Bai even felt this guy might have some secret techniques hidden up his sleeve, and unless he used Puppet Corpse or Spiritual Artifact assistance, he might not be able to defeat him.

"Until we fight, who can know the outcome?"

Unperturbed by Zhang Yang's boastful words, Fang Bai responded placidly.

Zhang Yang raised his eyebrows and laughed, "Sounds like you're quite confident! Alright then, let's fight!"

He extended his hand toward Fang Bai, "Five moves, if I can't strike you down in five moves, I'll consider it my loss!"

Before Fang Bai could speak, the amused He Wujie already whispered to Zhao Wanqing, "That freaky-looking guy thinks who he is? If he can defeat my disciple in five moves, I'll yank off my head and give it to him as a chamber pot!"

Zhao Wanqing was also inflamed, saying, "That guy, just like his name, is indeed somewhat arrogant!"

He Wujie nodded in agreement, loudly instructing Fang Bai, "Disciple, beat him hard! Let him know that my disciple isn't one to mess with!"

Everyone only realized that Fang Bai was actually the disciple of the Nascent Soul expert sitting next to the Flower Pavilion's Tower Master.

Having a Nascent Soul expert as his teacher offering guidance, it's no wonder Fang Bai's prowess was so formidable.

Zhang Yang's heart skipped a beat, growing a bit more apprehensive toward Fang Bai.

Chapter 1560: Nether Spirit Fire

"Don't worry, in the duel between you and me, regardless of the outcome, I can guarantee that my master won't trouble you."

Fang Bai seemed to notice Zhang Yang's apprehension and said with a smile.

Only then did Zhang Yang feel relieved. He nodded and said, "Then I can also guarantee that within five moves, I will only knock you down without seriously injuring you."

Listening to Zhang Yang continuously speaking boastfully, Fang Bai couldn't help but find it amusing, as Zhang Yang seemed very confident in defeating him.

"In the three-thousand great worlds, there really are many outstanding individuals with innate spiritual roots, far more than the ordinary. Although Zhang Yang looks unassuming, he is actually born with a Fire Spirit Root, and the fire spirit energy inside him is exceptionally intense and powerful. Could it be that, like me, he also possesses some kind of spiritual fire within?"

Although Fang Bai did not fear Zhang Yang, he definitely did not underestimate him. Upon careful observation, Fang Bai discovered that Zhang Yang indeed had an innate Fire Spirit Root, and seemed to have had significant opportunities, making his strength notably superior to many martial artists of the same realm.

"If it weren't for him meeting me, Zhang Yang might have laughed his way to the end in this fierce competition," Fang Bai thought to himself.

Zhang Yang's claim to defeat Fang Bai in five moves showed his strong confidence, yet when it actually came to the duel, he was not in a hurry to attack, but instead circled Fang Bai slowly, seemingly observing something.

Fang Bai discreetly released a wisp of Red Silkworm Spirit Fire, purposely letting Zhang Yang sense it. Zhang Yang indeed sensed it, and the excitement in his gaze was barely concealed.

"This guy actually has spiritual fire within him. If I can kill him and devour his spiritual fire, then combining the two fires would surely double my power. By then, I would be unmatched within the Golden Core Realm!"

Thinking of this, Zhang Yang almost danced with joy, his eyes turning somewhat red, like a starving wolf discovering a delicious prey.

Fang Bai had the same thought.

Fang Bai thought that if Zhang Yang truly possessed spiritual fire, and he could subdue it himself, then he could smoothly advance to the Golden Core Realm. At that time, he would be able to contend with ordinary Nascent Soul Realm experts on his own, without needing to use the Nascent Soul Puppet Corpse.

"Fire Dragon Claw!"

Zhang Yang stretched the five fingers of his right hand open, clawing towards Fang Bai through the void.

A gigantic dragon claw made of fire spirit energy suddenly appeared in mid-air above Fang Bai, descending with a thunderous roar and a faint dragon's cry towards Fang Bai.

The glaring brilliance emitted by the dragon claw turned the area several miles around into a fiery red, with the space within a hundred feet filled with scorching heat waves.

Except for the few Foundation Establishment experts, as well as those at Golden Pill Perfection and higher ranks, other Golden Core experts had to use spiritual energy to form a defense qi shield against the onslaught of the searing heat.

Meanwhile, the Foundation Establishment experts on site, except for Fang Bai who was dueling Zhang Yang, all retreated to avoid the range of the scorching heat waves.

Zhang Yang's first move was merely to test Fang Bai and was not done with full strength, yet his momentum was still astonishing, signifying extraordinary strength indeed.

"Scram!"

Fang Bai yelled softly, raised his head to the sky, and struck out with a Furious Flame Fist, scattering the Fire Dragon Claw.

As the Furious Flame Fist was unleashed, the heat on site peaked, causing many Golden Core experts to perspire heavily from the suffocating heat wave.

However, with the simultaneous disappearance of both the Furious Flame Fist and the Fire Dragon Claw, the temperature finally returned to normal within a hundred-foot radius centered on the square.

"Impressive indeed!"

Many martial artists breathed a sigh of relief while looking at Fang Bai and Zhang Yang with newfound respect.

The first move was mutual probing, as neither side had exerted full strength, making it unclear what each's true strength was.

In the second move, although Zhang Yang used the same attack method, he increased his power to sixty percent, thinking it would force Fang Bai to fully resist. Yet, he did not expect Fang Bai to easily defuse it once more.

Zhang Yang finally looked at Fang Bai with new eyes.

Despite being a high-ranking Golden Core expert, Zhang Yang's sixty percent strength was enough to easily defeat a beginner Golden Core expert. Yet, Fang Bai, merely a Foundation Establishment perfection martial artist, not only took his sixty percent strength attack effortlessly but also appeared unfazed, proving he had a strong trump card and had not exerted his true strength either.

Zhang Yang had boasted in front of many martial artists surrounding the square saying he would defeat Fang Bai in five moves, but with two moves passed without gaining any advantage, it drew quite a number of jeers from the surrounding martial artists.

"The third move... let's see how you handle it!"

Zhang Yang muttered as he raised his right palm again. In his palm, a cluster of dimly lit, yellowish flame appeared.

The dim flame was no larger than half a thumb, flickering unsteadily, moving without wind, like a dying candle in the wind, seemingly ready to extinguish at any moment.

The flame appeared ghostly and desolate, emitting a yellowish glow as if it were the Nether Spirit Fire from hell.

"It's the Nether Spirit Fire!"

Fang Bai's eyes focused, almost crying out.

It's no wonder Fang Bai was so excited. The Nether Spirit Fire, like the Red Silkworm Spirit Fire subdued by Fang Bai previously, was a spiritual fire of the three-thousand great worlds, but if the former's power were fully unleashed, it would be even stronger than the latter.

What reassured Fang Bai was that Zhang Yang seemed somewhat struggling to wield the Nether Spirit Fire, indicating he only barely subdued it and probably couldn't fully utilize its power. Otherwise, defeating him wouldn't be so easy.

"That little flame can't be his trump card, right? Haha, he can't possibly think of using this to defeat an opponent, can he?"

Seeing the Nether Spirit Fire in Zhang Yang's palm, a Golden Pill martial artist laughed disdainfully.

However, He Wujie and other Nascent Soul experts thought deeply while looking at the Nether Spirit Fire, feeling that the dim flame hid some formidable energy that made one's heart shudder.

After summoning the Nether Spirit Fire, seeing the reactions of the surrounding martial artists, Zhang Yang's gaze carried a hint of mockery. He thought to himself that these vulgar people knew nothing, and given time, once he had familiarized himself with this spiritual fire, even if he could only harness a tenth of its power, he could burn these people to ashes.

Yet, Fang Bai's reaction made Zhang Yang even more excited and delighted, thinking, "Judging by his reaction, it seems he's seen similar spiritual fires. In that case, he might have the same kind of spiritual fire in his body! Hehe, after today's battle, I must find a way to get rid of him and seize the spiritual fire within him for myself!"

Fang Bai sensed a fleeting killing intent from Zhang Yang, which made him inwardly happy.

Originally, if he wanted to devour and subdue the spiritual fire within Zhang Yang, he would have to kill him to have a chance. But since he had no deep enmity with Zhang Yang, suddenly killing him would leave Fang Bai feeling somewhat guilty.

However, upon sensing Zhang Yang's murderous intent towards him, he secretly let out a sigh of relief, thinking that now he had no reservations about killing him.