

Doctor 451

Chapter 451: Canceling the Wedding

"Eighteen!"

Wen Xiangxin, seeing his son's vacant gaze as if he had fallen into a trance, grew very anxious. He quickly walked over to him and forcefully patted him on the shoulder.

"Ah?"

Wen Shiba shivered all over, turned his head to look at his father, and then suddenly clasped his head in agony, muttering, "I lost... I lost..."

Wen Xiangxin thought his son was in pain because he couldn't marry Qin Yaorao and loudly said, "Losing is losing, what great man has never lost his wife? Let's go!"

Wen Xiangxin hadn't expected his son to be so psychologically fragile that he would become like this after losing to Ghost Hand. He thought he must quickly take his son away from here and provide some psychological guidance.

Otherwise, just as Fang Bai had said earlier, his son's state of mind in cultivation was not enough, and his path in the Martial Dao could very well come to an end right here.

Wen Xiangxin took his son's hand and said to Qin Ling, "Family Head Qin, I keep my word. The marriage arrangement between Shiba and Yaorao shall be canceled! I have urgent matters to attend to and must not stay long. Farewell!"

Saying this, he took a deep look at Fang Bai and Ghost Hand, slightly tightened his grip, and, leading his son, strode briskly towards the edge of the bamboo forest.

The icy and murderous glances of two Wen Family Elders swept over Fang Bai and Ghost Hand before they quickly followed after Wen Xiangxin and his son.

"Wen..."

Yang Yun opened her mouth, wanting to call Wen Xiangxin back, but her husband waved his hand to stop her.

"Old Qin, what should we do now? With the Wen Family leaving, the business cooperation between our two families might encounter some problems."

Yang Yun said anxiously.

There was extensive cooperation between the Qin and Wen Families, with the Wen Family holding a dominant position. If relations between the two families grew strained, it wouldn't be good news for the Qin Family.

What was even more worrisome was that the Wen Family was a powerful sect that far surpassed the Qin Family in the world of Ancient Martial Arts. If the Wen Family were to use some underhanded tactics against the Qin Family, the problems could become even more complicated.

"Don't worry; the situation might not be as bad as you think!"

Qin Ling attempted to calm his visibly anxious wife, took a few deep breaths, and then stepped toward the pavilion, only to find his beloved daughter embracing Fang Bai.

The embrace between Fang Bai and Qin Yaorao wasn't one of romantic affection but a celebration of the Wen Family's cancellation of their marriage arrangement.

It was Qin Yaorao who had initiated the embrace.

She had just heard Wen Xiangxin tell her father that her marriage to Wen Shiba was "canceled" and was so excited she almost cried. Without thinking, she turned around, opened her arms wide, and unreservedly hugged Fang Bai, continuously saying, "Thank you... thank you..."

And this scene was precisely what her parents saw.

"Cough cough... cough cough..."

Although the Qin Family cultivated both the literary and martial arts, prioritizing the former and holding traditional views, seeing their daughter openly embracing a man under the broad daylight was considered indecent. Qin Ling couldn't help but cough vigorously a few times as a warning.

Hearing the cough from her father, Qin Yaorao realized she had gotten a little too carried away, hurriedly released her arms from around Fang Bai's neck, blushed as she straightened her somewhat disheveled clothes, and stepped out of the pavilion.

"Dad..."

Seeing her father looking from her to Fang Bai with a peculiar expression, Qin Yaorao's face grew even redder, and she called out softly.

Qin Ling sighed and said sternly, "Let's sit down inside the pavilion! There are some things I need to discuss with the two of you."

At this moment, Yang Yun also walked over. She was already somewhat hostile toward Fang Bai, and now, with the Wen Family having canceled the marriage due to Fang Bai's disciple and left in anger, her perception of Fang Bai worsened.

"Young man, would you also please come and sit down in the pavilion?"

Qin Ling cupped his hands in a salute to Ghost Hand, who was standing outside the pavilion.

Although Ghost Hand was Fang Bai's disciple, his defeat of Wen Shiba with a single punch had made Qin Ling take notice; such a young and promising individual was precisely what the Qin Family wanted to befriend.

As for Fang Bai, Qin Ling and his wife Yang Yun had different thoughts. Yang Yun was focused on immediate benefits, while Qin Ling was looking much further ahead.

As Ghost Hand's master, Fang Bai's strength was undoubtedly greater. Even though he was but a loose cultivator and currently not able to contend with Ancient Martial Sects like Misty Rain Tower, who could guarantee that in ten or twenty years' time, his strength would not advance further, becoming even more formidable?

Both Fang Bai and Ghost Hand were still young, possessing tremendous potential and infinite possibilities. Just one more level in their cultivation realm would make them untouchable by even the likes of the Wen Family of Misty Rain Tower.

If the Qin Family could forge a good relationship with this master and disciple now, it would undoubtedly be a great support for them once they rose to prominence.

Hearing Qin Ling speak to him, Ghost Hand smiled and shook his head, still standing outside the pavilion.

Qin Ling knew that Ghost Hand's refusal to enter the pavilion was because of Fang Bai. He grew even more curious about Fang Bai's true strength. How formidable was Fang Bai to command such respect from Ghost Hand, a martial artist at the early Profound Level?

Qin Ling and Yang Yun seated themselves on the northern side of the pavilion, and at her mother's gesture, Qin Yaorao took a seat next to her. Thus, the three members of the Qin family were all seated opposite Fang Bai.

With a smile on his lips, Fang Bai faced the scrutinizing gaze of the Qin couple calmly and naturally, without showing any inferiority or arrogance. He also remained silent, patiently waiting for the Qin couple to speak.

"Fang Bai, how old are you this year?"

Qin Ling sized up Fang Bai for a moment, feeling more and more that he could not see through the young man, and could not help but ask.

Fang Bai said, "Twenty."

Qin Ling sighed, "Three years younger than Yaorao, then..."

Fang Bai laughed, "I think three years is not a problem at all! Uncle, can you see the age difference between me and Yaorao when we stand together?"

Qin Ling also smiled, "I actually don't care much about the age either... What do your parents do?"

"They run a traditional Chinese medicine clinic in Zhongzhou City."

"A traditional Chinese medicine clinic? With the decline of traditional medicine, can a clinic make any money?"

Upon hearing that Fang Bai's family ran a traditional Chinese medicine clinic, Yang Yun's expression turned a shade uglier.

In her mind, since her family was a prominent clan and her daughter was exceptionally talented and beautiful, she ought to marry someone of equal status, like Wen Shiba of the Wen Family of Misty Rain Tower. That way, her daughter wouldn't suffer hardships and it would also be advantageous for the Qin Family.

Though Fang Bai was a strong martial artist, he had no sect or clan backing and was just a loose cultivator, with apparently ordinary family backgrounds. How could she rest easy letting her daughter follow such a man?

"Actually, if managed well, a traditional Chinese medicine clinic can earn some money too... Our 'Fang's Traditional Chinese Medicine Clinic' has made several million since opening a few months ago."

"Oh? That's quite good!"

Qin Ling nodded; for a traditional Chinese medicine clinic to earn such revenue, it seemed it must be quite large.

"Are you currently studying, or doing something else?"

Qin Ling asked again.

"I'm a student at Zhongzhou Medical Practice Institute, currently doing an internship at Yanjing Hospital."

"Zhongzhou Medical College?"

Upon hearing Fang Bai mention this, the looks on the Qin couple's faces turned odd, their gaze shifting towards their daughter.

Chapter 452: Let Her Choose Her Other Half by Herself!

They knew their daughter had taught cultural courses at Zhongzhou Medical College before taking up a teaching position at Yanjing University. Fang Bai was a student at Zhongzhou Medical College; could it be that the two of them had already become involved back then?

"I never thought our daughter, who is a bit traditional and conservative, would get involved in a teacher-student relationship!"

Mr. and Mrs. Qin Ling exchanged glances, both finding it somewhat unbelievable.

"What major did you study?"

Qin Ling took a sip of tea and continued to ask.

"Traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture, and tuina massage!"

"What? Traditional Chinese medicine? Acupuncture and tuina massage?"

Qin Ling's face fell with disappointment, and Yang Yun's expression also soured once more.

In the couple's view, pursuing traditional Chinese medicine was already a path without much prospect, and acupuncture and tuina massage had even less of a future. In the long run, one could either work in the acupuncture room of some traditional Chinese medicine hospital or take over the family's traditional clinic, serving a variety of patients every day, without status or position.

That was not something Mr. and Mrs. Qin Ling wanted to see.

"Dad, Mom, don't underestimate Fang Bai. Although he studies traditional Chinese medicine, his medical skills are very impressive!"

Qin Yaorao, fearing that Fang Bai would be angered by her parents' attitude, hurriedly said, "You know about the Su Family in Zhongzhou, right? Su Linglong, the granddaughter most beloved by Old Master Su Hongyuan, had a brain tumor half a year ago and was declared terminal by the doctors, yet it was Fang Bai who cured her!"

"A brain tumor? He managed to cure that?"

Yang Yun looked incredulous. Brain tumors were conditions that even Western medicine struggled to treat effectively, let alone the already declining field of traditional Chinese medicine?

Moreover, those who studied traditional Chinese medicine were not truly capable without decades of medical experience. With Fang Bai's age, not having completed his training yet, how could he possibly treat people?

Seeing that her mother did not believe her, Qin Yaorao became anxious and said, "Mom, if you don't believe me, you can go ask Old Master Su himself! When Su Linglong was hospitalized with a brain tumor, I was still teaching at the medical college and even went to visit her in the hospital!"

Seeing that Fang Bai remained smiling and did not appear upset, Qin Ling did not jump to conclusions and said, "I've heard that some in the Ancient Martial World are dual practitioners of medicine and martial arts, using their own True Yuan to help treat patients. Is that the case for you too, Fang Bai?"

Fang Bai nodded and said, "Yes. In fact, if a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine doesn't have the support of True Yuan, many conditions are impossible to treat. Not to mention, among the four great National Doctors of our time, aren't Qian Haoduo and Hua Tianhe both martial artists?"

"That is true... National Doctor Qian and National Doctor Hua are both at the initial stages of the Profound Level, their strength is comparable to mine..."

After hearing what Fang Bai said, Qin Ling started to believe a bit in what his daughter had said earlier.

"Since Yaorao praises your medical skills, why don't you take a look and see if there's anything wrong with my body?"

Qin Ling said cheerfully, clearly intending to test Fang Bai's medical expertise.

"Uncle, as a martial artist, you have True Yuan flowing throughout your body, so naturally, you shouldn't have much wrong with you. It's auntie, on the other hand..."

Fang Bai glanced at Yang Yun, about to continue, when Qin Yaorao, already nervous, quickly interjected, "Fang Bai, what's wrong with my mom?"

Qin Ling's eyes brightened, his gaze fixed on Fang Bai's face, and he said excitedly, "What did you find?"

Yang Yun knew her own body best, and upon hearing Fang Bai's comment, her heart leapt to her throat.

Fang Bai smiled at Yang Yun and said, "Auntie, your heart condition isn't very good, you likely have a family history of it, right?"

Upon hearing this, Yang Yun's eyes suddenly widened with a look that contained both astonishment and joy.

She was astonished that Fang Bai could discern her issue without using the "Four Diagnostics" method of traditional Chinese medicine.

The joy came from the fact that if Fang Bai could tell at a glance that she had a heart problem, then it was very likely he had a way to cure it.

Many people in Yang Yun's family had died young because of heart problems. Although Yang Yun's condition was somewhat better, as she aged, she began to experience occasional heart discomfort. Despite maintaining her health with medication, it had always been a concern.

Qin Ling, of course, was aware of his wife's illness. Over the years, he had sought many famous doctors and remedies for her, but none had found a cure. Fang Bai's arrival finally gave him a glimmer of hope.

While treating heart disease with traditional Chinese medicine might sound unbelievable, Fang Bai had cured brain tumors before. Perhaps he could cure heart disease as well?

"Fang Bai, about Auntie's illness... using traditional Chinese medicine, do you see any chance of curing it?"

Yang Yun's voice trembled as she asked this question.

In this world, few people are not afraid of death, and Yang Yun is no exception.

Yang Yun was only in her forties this year, with many good years ahead of her. She truly didn't want to suddenly succumb to her heart condition and say goodbye to her family and to this world.

Yang Yun had thought that if someone could cure her heart disease, no matter how much money it cost or what the price, she would be willing to pay it.

"Fang Bai... do you have a way?"

Qin Yaorao was also looking at Fang Bai, her face full of expectation.

"There is a way!"

Fang Bai nodded with certainty, then said solemnly, "But please, Uncle and Auntie, promise me one thing..."

"I'm sorry, Fang Bai, I can't give you a definite answer right now regarding what's between you and Yaorao. However, I will consider it carefully... I hope you can understand a mother's feelings!"

Yang Yun thought Fang Bai was going to take advantage of the situation to "blackmail" her into accepting him and her daughter being together, and she spoke with a troubled expression.

Seeing Yang Yun measure others by her own yardstick, Fang Bai was unfazed. He smiled lightly and said, "I understand Auntie's feelings, but you might have misunderstood my intention. What I want to ask Uncle and Auntie to promise is that you not deprive Yaorao of her right to choose her own happiness. Let her decide on her other half by herself!"

After a pause, he added, "That Wen Shiba from the Wen Family is really not a good match for Yaorao! If she marries him, she will definitely regret it for the rest of her life!"

Fang Bai and Ghost Hand were planning to attack the Wen Family soon after. Although they wouldn't engage in a bloodbath devoid of humanity, as long as they found out who from the Wen Family was involved in the attack on Myriad Medicine Valley, they would certainly mete out punishment.

If Wen Shiba were involved in that incident, then Ghost Hand would surely not let him get away with it.

Wouldn't Qin Yaorao regret it for the rest of her life if she married Wen Shiba?

"Oh, by the way, just to add one more thing, actually, between me and Yaorao... heh, I guess I can start calling her Teacher Qin now. Actually, Teacher Qin and I are not boyfriend and girlfriend; it was just to disrupt the arranged marriage with the Wen Family that I helped Teacher Qin and temporarily played the role of her boyfriend..."

Since the Wen Family had already called off the marriage between Qin Yaorao and Wen Shiba, Fang Bai's mission was over, and there was no need to keep up the act with Qin Yaorao.

Posing as Qin Yaorao's boyfriend, being scrutinized by Qin Ling and his wife as if undergoing an interrogation at the police station, Fang Bai felt awkward and emotionally drained.

Now that he had spoken out and shed the identity of the fake boyfriend, returning to his true self, Fang Bai felt a great sense of relief and lightness.

Chapter 453: Misty Rain Tower in Jiangnan

"What? You...you..."

As Fang Bai rambled on, the Qin couple were left dumbstruck.

"Dad, Mom, I'm sorry!"

Qin Yaorao apologized with a look of remorse, "I really opposed the arrangements you made for me, and I extremely dislike that Wen Shiba, so I had no choice but to come up with this method... Now that the Wen Family has already taken the initiative to cancel the engagement, you can't possibly go and reconcile with them again, right?"

"This child... what a mess you've made!"

Qin Ling and his wife exchanged looks and shared a bitter smile, a face of helplessness between them, realizing after all this fuss that the boyfriend their daughter had brought home was just a fake to get the Wen Family to cancel the engagement.

"By doing this, although you don't have to marry Wen Shiba, we have offended the Wen Family! If the Wen Family seeks revenge out of spite, our Qin Family's interests will definitely suffer some damage!"

Yang Yun sighed as she spoke.

By now, the relationship between the Qin and Wen families was surely beyond repair, likely to hit rock bottom.

"The Wen Family..."

Fang Bai gave a silent smile. In a few days, whether the Wen Family would even continue to exist was the question, let alone them seeking revenge.

However, seeking revenge on Misty Rain Tower was a matter he and Ghost Hand planned to keep secret, intending not to tell a third person to avoid unnecessary trouble.

An hour later, Qin Ling, Yang Yun, and Qin Yaorao as a family of three saw Fang Bai and his disciple Ghost Hand out of the Qin Family Manor's main gate. They watched them drive away before returning side by side.

"For decades I couldn't resolve the heart problem, yet he cured it in less than an hour... If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, it would be hard to believe!"

Yang Yun gently caressed the area over her heart, feeling an unprecedented comfort there, her face alight with indescribable excitement and joy.

Previously, she had received acupuncture treatment from Fang Bai. Those tiny silver needles did not cause her any pain; she merely felt streams of cold and warm air wandering around her chest for half an hour. After that, Fang Bai removed the needles and declared it done.

Because Yang Yun had a weak heart, the Qin Family Manor was specially equipped with relevant medical equipment and highly paid medical staff on standby. After Fang Bai's acupuncture treatment, Yang Yun underwent a heart examination which showed her heart was completely healthy with no issues.

From walking out of the examination room to this moment, Yang Yun was immersed in boundless joy, feeling as though she had been in a dream.

"A Martial Dao genius! A medical prodigy! This Fang Bai, he's really quite something... It's a pity though!"

Qin Ling turned his head to glance at his daughter beside him and sighed.

Understanding her husband's regretful sighs for the nonexistent romantic relationship between her daughter and Fang Bai, Yang Yun chuckled, "What's there to regret? Fang Bai is outstanding, but our daughter is not lacking either. Are you worried she can't marry a good man?"

"You don't understand, it's easy to marry a good man, but to marry a man like Fang Bai, who excels in both medicine and martial arts, that's extremely difficult! Not to mention others, with Fang Bai's miraculous medical skills alone, wouldn't becoming a billionaire be effortless?"

"You have a point there... Why don't... we find a time and I'll have a word with Fang Bai to matchmake the two of them?"

Thinking of Fang Bai surpassing the medical skills of the four great National Doctors and later having both status and identity at his fingertips, Yang Yun also felt a bit tempted.

"Dad, Mom, what are you talking about?"

Qin Yaorao, upon hearing her parents actually considering setting her up with Fang Bai, stamped her foot and said irritably, "Between Fang Bai and me, it's purely a friendship. I see him as a student and a younger brother, and he respects me as he would a teacher or an older sister. Anything between us... is impossible..."

Yang Yun said, "You're not much different in age, and I think you're quite a good match. If you spend more time together, who knows, feelings might develop?"

Qin Yaorao covered her ears and said, "Enough, enough, I don't want to hear it! You promised me, I would decide my own marriage when the time comes!"

Suddenly remembering something, she added, "Su Linglong from the Su Family in Zhongzhou is about the same age as Fang Bai, and they're classmates. They have a very good relationship and are probably... dating... So you see, there's no need for you to worry anymore!"

After saying this, she couldn't help but turn her head to look outside the main gate, not knowing why, but a sudden sense of inexplicable regret and melancholy arose in her heart.

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"Misty Rain Tower" refers not only to a thousand-year-old ancient tower in Suhang but also to the leading Ancient Martial Sect in Jiangnan.

In the ranking of Ancient Martial Sects in Huaxia, "Misty Rain Tower" holds a position because of its abundance of talents and numerous experts, standing shoulder to shoulder with prestigious sects like Shaolin, Wudang, Qingcheng Temple, Myriad Medicine Valley, and the five great Ancient Medicine Sects of Huaxia.

However, "Myriad Medicine Valley" was annihilated overnight a few months ago and was removed from the rankings of Ancient Martial Sects. Shaolin, Qingcheng Temple, and Misty Rain Tower, the three major sects involved in the massacre, kept the incident confidential, and very few people knew about it.

After the destruction of "Myriad Medicine Valley," "Misty Rain Tower" obtained a coveted Heaven Rank Technique as they had wished.

But for ordinary martial artists with too low a Cultivation Level, the Heaven Rank Technique is too high a level and too profound. If one does not measure their ability correctly and forcibly attempts to understand and cultivate it, they might not withstand the impact of the True Yuan from the Heaven Rank Technique, leading to ruptured meridians and becoming crippled.

In "Misty Rain Tower," the Tower Master Wen Xiangxin had the strongest power, reaching the High Rank of the Profound Level. Therefore, the Heaven Rank Technique is temporarily in his possession for study

and cultivation, until someday when a disciple of "Misty Rain Tower" advances to a realm equivalent to his, he will pass on the technique.

Wen Xiangxin, holding the Heaven Rank Technique, has recently been full of confidence and overflowing with vitality. He believed that soon, his strength would greatly increase, and he would lead "Misty Rain Tower" to surpass the longstanding Ancient Martial Sects such as Shaolin, Wudang, and Qingcheng Temple, becoming the leader of the Ancient Martial World of Huaxia.

But an incident that happened yesterday at the Qin Family Manor in Jinling filled Wen Xiangxin with uncontrollable anger and murderous intent.

Yesterday, Wen Xiangxin, accompanied by his son and two Elders, went to propose a marriage to the Qin Family in Jinling, intending for his son Wen Shiba to marry the Qin Family's daughter, Qin Yaorao. However, he had never expected a change of plans to occur along the way.

The youngster known as Ghost Hand, who seemed to have appeared out of nowhere, possessed such formidable strength that with a single punch, he defeated Wen's son, forcing the Wen Family to call off the marriage with the Qin Family.

Although Ghost Hand is merely a Martial Artist at the initial Profound Level, Wen Xiangxin was certain that the Cultivation Technique practiced by Ghost Hand was anything but ordinary. If Ghost Hand were to unleash his true combat power, he might even be able to challenge someone at the Mid Profound Level.

If Ghost Hand's power was a surprise to Wen Xiangxin, then Fang Bai made him feel somewhat uneasy.

Although, like Ghost Hand, Fang Bai appeared to be a Martial Artist at the initial Profound Level, judging by the respectful way Ghost Hand treated Fang Bai, it was clear that Bai, as his master, was much stronger than Ghost Hand.

In Wen Xiangxin's eyes, there seemed to be a veil of mist shrouding Fang Bai, making him difficult to discern and fathom. Such a person was the most fearsome of all.

Chapter 454: Challenge to a Duel

The most critical point was that both Ghost Hand and Fang Bai were very young, and given ten or twenty years, who could say they wouldn't grow into powerful figures that dominate a region? By then, even if the two of them were merely Loose Cultivators without any Sect affiliation, absolutely no one would dare to underestimate them.

Originally, Wen Xiangxin's own son, Wen Shiba, was considered a dazzling genius in the Secular Ancient Martial World. However, the unexpected emergence of the young Martial Artists Fang Bai and Ghost Hand was destined to completely overshadow his son's brilliance.

The existence of Fang Bai and Ghost Hand was like a fishbone stuck in Wen Xiangxin's throat.

Previously, at the Qin Family in Jinling, Fang Bai and Ghost Hand's disdain and provocation toward Misty Rain Tower of the Wen Family was something Wen Xiangxin could not tolerate!

So, the first thing that Wen Xiangxin did after returning to the Wen Family was to immediately mobilize the power of Misty Rain Tower to investigate the identities and backgrounds of Fang Bai and Ghost Hand.

However, what Wen Xiangxin hadn't expected was, before the people he had sent out had even set off, Fang Bai and Ghost Hand were already en route to Suhang City.

Their target, pointed directly at Misty Rain Tower of the Wen Family.

Lead-gray clouds hung low, the north wind raged, and large snowflakes scattered down.

The first snow before the New Year finally arrived in Suhang City on this early morning.

The snow fell heavily, and within a mere two hours, Suhang City, known as "Paradise on Earth," had become a silver-clad snow country.

Tower Master Wen Xiangxin sat alone atop the three-story Misty Rain Tower. His gaze swept over the disciples of Misty Rain Tower who were painstakingly practicing their swordsmanship in the snow below and then looked off into the distance toward Jinling.

At that moment, the coldness in his eyes was even several degrees colder than the weather.

Not long ago, he had received a report from the disciples stationed over at Jinling. After Fang Bai and Ghost Hand left the Qin Family, they checked into a hotel in Jinling. However, by dawn, the disciples who were following them found that although their car was still parked at the hotel, the two men had vanished without a trace and their whereabouts were unknown.

"Can't even keep track of two people, a bunch of useless trash!"

Wen Xiangxin muttered to himself. His fingers tightened, and the porcelain cup in his hand shattered with a snap.

"Two Loose Cultivators, so young, yet so strong, they must have inherited some powerful Cultivation Technique..."

Wen Xiangxin calmed the rage in his chest, his fingers gently tapping on the tabletop as a strange gleam flashed in his eyes.

"Go invite Elders Wen Xiangshan and Wen Xianghai over."

Wen Xiangxin turned his head to instruct a trusted disciple standing at the door.

The trusted disciple took the order and left. After a short while, he returned, leading Wen Xiangshan and Wen Xianghai into the room.

Wen Xiangshan and Wen Xianghai were the two middle-aged men who had accompanied Wen Xiangxin to Jinling the day before.

Both of them were Profound Level Mid-Rank Martial Artists, only second in strength to Wen Xiangxin. As Elders of Misty Rain Tower and Wen Xiangxin's cousins, they were regarded as his right-hand men and held a pivotal position within Misty Rain Tower.

"Tower Master, calling us over so early in the morning, what are your orders?"

Wen Xiangshan's chubby face was full of smiles as he sat down and immediately asked.

Wen Xianghai had a solemn and stern expression, not prone to laughter or jokes, but his gaze also turned to Wen Xiangxin, waiting for his response.

Wen Xiangxin said, "I want you to kill two people."

"Kill someone?"

Wen Xiangshan and Wen Xianghai looked at each other and asked in unison, "Who?"

"Ghost Hand! Fang Bai!"

Wen Xiangxin enunciated each name, and then said, "Tell me, why do you think those two young people, mere Loose Cultivators without any Sect inheritance, are so powerful?"

The Wen Xiangshan brothers thought for a moment, and then their eyes simultaneously lit up as they said, "High rank cultivation techniques!"

"Exactly!"

Wen Xiangxin nodded and said, "They must have high-rank cultivation techniques in their hands, otherwise it would be impossible for them to have such a high cultivation level!"

"Does the Tower Master mean... murder for treasure?"

Wen Xiangshan's face bore an even broader smile, his layers of fat overlapping like folds.

"Strike first to gain the advantage; hesitate and suffer the consequences. These two young men carry treasures with them, yet instead of laying low, they act arrogantly and brazenly. It won't take long before numerous high-rank martial artists from the Ancient Martial World set their sights on them... heh, instead of letting others benefit, we should take the lead!"

Wen Xiangxin's eyes gleamed with fiery greed.

"Good! Let's go now!"

Wen Xianghai wasted no time in idle chatter; he got up and marched outside. Since the Tower Master had decided on murder for treasure, he would carry it out resolutely.

Murder and robbery were actions the two had performed more than once or twice, and they bore no psychological burden whatsoever.

Wen Xiangshan said, "Not so fast, we should at least figure out where those two are right now, shouldn't we? It would be in vain if we rushed to Jinling only to find that we've missed them!"

"Those two are no longer in Jinling! Their current whereabouts are unclear to me too... Scatter more people to search, and we will definitely find out! Once there's definite news, act immediately to avoid any complications."

Wen Xiangxin's eyes flashed sharply, his killing Qi soared high, and the pressure of a high-rank Profound Level martial artist instantly enveloped the entire room.

Though the Wen brothers were powerful themselves, under this overwhelming pressure, they couldn't help but feel an instinctive urge to kneel in submission.

A layer of snow on the "Misty Rain Tower" began to fall in flurries under the impact of the murderous aura.

Not far away, a group of disciples practicing swordsmanship also sensed the pervasive killing Qi and were greatly alarmed; they turned their heads and looked up towards the higher floors of the tower.

Just then, a "Misty Rain Tower" disciple with a letter in hand, hastened over and, upon reaching the tower, stood still and looked up at Wen Xiangxin, who was drinking tea on the third floor, and said in a clear voice, "Reporting to the Tower Master, someone has just delivered a challenge letter! It specifically names you and several Elders for a duel!"

"Oh? Who is the challenger? Did you find out?"

Wen Xiangxin's eyebrows rose as he asked sternly.

As a well-known Ancient Martial Sect in Huaxia, every year there are numerous martial artists from the Secular Ancient Martial World who challenge the disciples of "Misty Rain Tower," merely to gain fame by capitalizing on the Tower's reputation.

Therefore, the disciples of "Misty Rain Tower" had grown accustomed to challenges and no longer found them surprising.

However, it was unprecedented for someone to simultaneously challenge the Tower Master and several Elders. Judging by this, the person initiating the challenge either had immense confidence in their own strength or was an audacious and arrogant individual who didn't understand the gravity of the situation.

"After passing the challenge letter to the gatekeeper, the person only said that the Tower Master must personally read it, and then turned and left! Oh, that's right, he also said... also said..."

"What else did he say?"

Seeing the disciple hesitate, Wen Xiangxin asked impatiently.

"He also said that if you don't want your son to run into trouble, you must go to the time and place specified in the letter for the duel!"

"What?"

Wen Xiangxin stood up abruptly, leapt from the third floor down to the snow-covered ground, grabbed the collar of the disciple, widened his eyes, and demanded fiercely, "Repeat what you just said!"

Chapter 455: Lend Me Your Son for a Moment!

The disciple spoke with fear and trepidation, "That person said... said that if you, Tower Master, do not wish for your son to come to harm, you must go to the time and place agreed upon in the letter for a battle..."

"Where is Eighteen? Call Eighteen here for me!"

A sense of unease began to rise in Wen Xiangxin's heart. He turned around and spoke loudly to the trusted disciple beside him.

That trusted disciple did not dare to delay, left as if flying, and approximately a dozen minutes later, he returned to Wen Xiangxin's side with a face full of panic, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and said with a trembling voice, "Tower Master, the young master... he is not in his room..."

"Did you look for him elsewhere?"

Wen Xiangxin's sense of unease grew stronger and stronger.

"We have sent people to look for him. However... there are words written in red paint on the wall of the young master's room..."

"What does it say?"

"It says 'Borrowing your son for a bit'!"

Wen Xiangxin gasped sharply, his figure swayed, and he flashed towards the residence of his son, Wen Shiba.

Wen Xiangshan and Wen Xianghai, the two brothers, exchanged glances and followed closely behind Wen Xiangxin.

Half an hour later, in Misty Rain Tower's council hall, Tower Master Wen Xiangxin, two Elders, and ten Core Disciples gathered together, with each person's face grave and the atmosphere oppressive.

"Two arrogant and presumptuous juniors! They are courting death!"

Wen Xiangxin held up the challenge letter in his hand, his voice roaring like an angry lion.

He had intended to send someone to kill Ghost Hand but had not expected that Ghost Hand and Fang Bai would instead take the initiative to come knocking on the door, and their purpose in coming to Misty Rain Tower was to challenge all the Profound Level Experts of Misty Rain Tower.

To achieve this goal, they had gone so far as to enrage Misty Rain Tower completely, abducting Wen Xiangxin's son, Wen Shiba, and using this as leverage to force Wen Xiangxin to definitely bring all Misty Rain Tower disciples above the Profound Level to the foot of Feilai Peak in Xishan for a battle at six o'clock tonight.

The fact that his own son was abducted quietly from Misty Rain Tower's stronghold – if this incident were to spread, it would bring disgrace upon Wen Xiangxin and tarnish Misty Rain Tower's reputation. How could Wen Xiangxin not be infuriated?

"Tower Master, to deal with two juniors, just let the two of us brothers make a trip!"

Wen Xianghai said coldly.

"Xiang Hai is right, two juniors are not worth mobilizing our forces for full battle readiness!"

Wen Xiangshan's face also lacked its usual smiles; he looked ready to kill.

"No, those two managed to abduct Eighteen right under our noses, they must be extraordinarily powerful. Moreover, in the challenge letter, they also stated that if we are missing anyone, Eighteen's life would be in danger! Let's all go together! Remember, seize any opportunity to kill the two, no need for mercy!"

After some thought, Wen Xiangxin made his final decision.

He casually picked up the challenge letter, infused True Yuan into his palms, and squeezed it tightly.

As he opened his hands again, the challenge letter was reduced to shreds, drifting away with the bitter northern wind.

.....

Feilai Peak, located thirty miles west of Suhang City, originally a tourist attraction, but now that winter had come and heavy snow sealed off the mountains, not a single human footprint could be seen for tens of miles around.

On the sunny southern side of Feilai Peak was a flat area of about one square kilometer, with several stone pillars, each over one person tall, standing in the center.

At this moment, two young men about twenty years old were sitting cross-legged atop two stone pillars, deep in discussion about something.

Not far from them, in the snowy ground, a man clad in white was crawling forward as if mad, screaming "Save me" at the top of his lungs.

The man in white was about thirty years old; his originally handsome features were twisted in pain, his normally neat hair was now a messy tangle, and his once pristine white garment was covered in filth, torn and ragged, presenting an utterly wretched sight.

As the man in white wriggled along, he would occasionally turn to look back at the two young men seated on the stone pillars, his eyes filled with terror, as if those two were demons from hell itself.

Judging from the way the man in white was crawling, it was clear that he could not use his limbs at all; they had obviously been broken.

"Wen Shiba, if your family doesn't show up by six this evening, your life is as good as over,"

said the younger man, sitting on the stone pillar and clad in casual attire, as he cast a glance at the struggling man in white. His voice was indifferent, devoid of any pity.

"Don't kill me... my family will come... they will definitely come... please, don't kill me..."

the man known as Wen Shiba howled desperately.

"Master, will the people from 'Misty Rain Tower' renege on their promise and fail to appear?"

The other, an older man in black, glanced impatiently toward the distant mountain path and asked.

"Unless Wen Xiangxin no longer cares about his son's life or the reputation of 'Misty Rain Tower,' he is bound to come!"

the younger man replied.

The three men at the base of Feilai Peak were none other than Fang Bai, Ghost Hand, and Wen Shiba.

Fang Bai and Ghost Hand had shaken off the disciples of "Misty Rain Tower" in Jinling the day before and had traveled overnight to Suhang City, where Fang Bai infiltrated "Misty Rain Tower" and kidnapped Wen Shiba to this location.

Fang Bai had two main objectives in abducting Wen Shiba.

One was to coerce from him the names of the "Misty Rain Tower" disciples involved in the massacre at Myriad Medicine Valley.

The second was to use Wen Shiba to force Wen Xiangxin and others to meet the appointed time, thus allowing Ghost Hand to obtain retribution for the dead of his sect.

Wen Shiba was a proud man, also one with much backbone; ordinary means would hardly make him reveal anything.

But Fang Bai had his methods and techniques; he simply tapped a few times on Wen Shiba's body with his fingers, after which Wen Shiba's pride and spirit were crushed, quickly leading him to weepingly confess everything he knew.

With the names provided by Wen Shiba, Fang Bai challenged the "Misty Rain Tower" disciples who participated in the Myriad Medicine Valley slaughter to a confrontation.

Before issuing the challenge, Fang Bai specifically sought Ghost Hand's opinion on whether he intended to retaliate with blood for blood, slaughtering all the "Misty Rain Tower" disciples, or only to hold accountable those directly involved in the massacre at Myriad Medicine Valley.

Ghost Hand was not a ruthless killer of the innocent; he only wished for the perpetrators of the massacre to pay for their crimes with their blood, without involving other "Misty Rain Tower" disciples.

When Ghost Hand made such a decision, Fang Bai nodded in approval.

What Fang Bai had been most concerned about before was that Ghost Hand would be consumed by hatred, lose his rationality, and engage in mass slaughter, which would certainly relieve his vendetta but would also hurt the way of Heaven and have a profound impact on his future cultivation, something Fang Bai did not wish to see.

At this moment, Ghost Hand's ability to remain calm and in control showed that his mental cultivation was keeping pace with his increase in strength.

For martial artists undertaking cultivation, both mental state and physical prowess are equally important and mutually reinforcing; only when both are well-managed will the path of the Martial Dao proceed smoothly and shine with unlimited light.

Chapter 456: Who Are You?

"They're coming... Hmm, quite a number of them. Have they emptied their nest?"

Fang Bai's divine sense spread out at full force, and he could detect movements nearly a kilometer away. From afar, he noticed over a hundred martial artists swiftly approaching; they were the disciples of "Misty Rain Tower" led by Wen Xiangxin.

To Fang Bai, the movement of so many disciples from "Misty Rain Tower" indicated that Wen Xiangxin harbored murderous intentions, aiming to end the lives of both master and disciple at the Western Mountains.

Fang Bai scoffed inwardly; Wen Xiangxin was greatly overestimating the strength of "Misty Rain Tower".

Although "Misty Rain Tower" had the absolute advantage in numbers, aside from Wen Xiangxin and a few profound level martial artists, what difference was there between the rest of the "Misty Rain Tower" disciples and a disorganized mob?

When the hundred-plus martial artists from "Misty Rain Tower" were almost a kilometer away from Feilai Peak, they split into two groups. One, led by Wen Xiangxin, continued to rush towards Feilai Peak, while the others scattered in all directions.

Wen Xiangxin's intention was to lay down a Heaven's Net around Feilai Peak, leaving no chance for Fang Bai and Ghost Hand to escape.

Ghost Hand stood up and looked down the mountain path in the direction of Fang Bai's gaze.

Although Ghost Hand could not yet sense the fluctuations of martial artists, he knew his master Fang Bai was far stronger than him, so he had no doubt about Fang Bai's words.

The arrival of the "Misty Rain Tower" disciples meant that a great battle was imminent. And his master had said he would watch the battle from the sidelines, leaving him as the main actor.

Remembering the tragic slaughter of his sect, Ghost Hand's blood began to boil and roar, his fighting spirit rapidly climbing, and his whole being reached its peak state in that moment.

"I'll take care of those shrimp soldiers and crab generals trying to surround us; leave this area to you! The 'Misty Rain Tower' disciples who will appear before you later should be the ones who participated in the slaughter of your sect. You don't have to be merciful towards them!"

As Fang Bai spoke, he stood up, lightly tapped his foot on a stone pillar, and leaped into the air like a swallow. He then proceeded to stride through the air, crossing over a low peak in the distance, and disappeared without a trace.

"Master's strength is truly unfathomable!"

Ghost Hand watched Fang Bai, who drifted away like a celestial being, with envy and admiration in his gaze. He then straightened his expression and solemnly faced the mountain path ahead.

At that time, he finally sensed a dozen or so martial artist auras rapidly approaching, and all of them were profound level martial artists.

Wen Shiba, who was struggling to move through the snow, had crawled to a distant place and hid behind a rock, poking out half of his head and watching Ghost Hand with terror, fearing that he might suddenly rush over to claim his life.

Ghost Hand scoffed in ridicule; by now, he was too lazy to bother with Wen Shiba, who had already been reduced to a cripple.

Wen Shiba was one of the participants when "Myriad Medicine Valley" was annihilated. Although he only guarded the exit of "Myriad Medicine Valley" to prevent disciples from escaping and did not personally kill anyone, Ghost Hand still did not spare him.

Wen Shiba's life was spared; however, his meridians and limbs were destroyed by Ghost Hand, condemning him to spend the rest of his life bedridden.

For a martial artist, this was a fate worse than death.

Swoosh—

Swoosh—

Swoosh—

The sounds of clothing ripping through the air followed in quick succession as a dozen white figures appeared in Ghost Hand's view, instantly arriving in the open area in front of the stone pillars. They were the core disciples of "Misty Rain Tower" led by Wen Xiangxin.

These dozen people, all profound level martial artists, were the central force of "Misty Rain Tower". They, alongside the great Ancient Martial Sects of Qingcheng Temple and Shaolin, had joined forces to annihilate "Myriad Medicine Valley".

"Dad!"

Crumpled behind a distant rock in the snowy ground, Wen Shiba saw Wen Xiangxin standing among a group of men in white and immediately burst into heart-wrenching sobs and wails.

"Eighteen!"

Wen Xiangxin turned his head at the sound and was startled to see his son in such a disheveled state. He leaped over immediately.

"Eighteen, what's... what happened to you?"

Wen Xiangxin tried to help his son up from the snowy ground, but discovered that his limbs were limp and he couldn't stand at all. He asked in shock.

"Dad, my meridians... my arms and legs... they've been crippled... I'm finished... finished..."

Wen Shiba pressed his head against his father's legs, crying loudly and smearing his father's pants with snot and tears.

Wen Xiangxin, upon hearing this, was shaken to his core, standing there dumbfounded.

Wen Shiba was not only his only son but also a Martial Dao genius that the Wen Family hadn't seen in a hundred years, and the person Wen Xiangxin had in mind to be the next Tower Master of Misty Rain Tower.

One could say that Wen Xiangxin had placed great hopes on his son, hoping that in the near future, Wen Shiba would inherit his cultivation technique, leading the Wen Family and the Misty Rain Tower to rise as the number one Sect in the Secular Ancient Martial World, becoming a presence revered by all.

But now, his son, upon whom he had placed such high hopes, had been crippled, turning all his expectations into nothing more than bubbles. The blow to Wen Xiangxin was undoubtedly enormous.

In an instant, rage flooded Wen Xiangxin, and hate filled the sky.

"Beast! You beast!"

Wen Xiangxin suddenly turned around, his eyes blazing with fury as he glared at Ghost Hand, pointing at him and bellowing, "I followed your requirements and brought people here on time as agreed, so why did you still harm my son?"

"Why?"

Ghost Hand stood tall, looking down with arrogance, and laughed coldly, "That question, you should ask the spirits of the hundreds from Myriad Medicine Valley!"

"You... who are you?"

Wen Xiangxin's body trembled, he involuntarily stepped back, staring at Ghost Hand in astonishment.

"Who I am... heh, I am the only disciple who escaped the annihilation of Myriad Medicine Valley! I am also the fish that slipped through the net in the eyes of the three major Sects! Wen Xiangxin, you didn't expect this, did you?"

Ghost Hand's voice grew louder, like rolling thunder exploding in the ears of Wen Xiangxin and the others.

"Myriad Medicine Valley had one hundred and eight disciples; on that day, we found only one hundred and seven bodies. So the one who miraculously escaped was you! Very well... very well..."

Wen Xiangxin's eyes widened as he scrutinized Ghost Hand, and then suddenly burst into long laughter, but within that laughter, there was a strong undertone of hatred and intent to kill.

"On that day, the three major Sects jointly attacked Myriad Medicine Valley, vowing to eradicate every last one, leaving no troubles for the future. But the Shaolin disciples thought we were committing too many killings and stopped halfway, withdrawing. Otherwise, how could you have escaped? Afterwards, Misty Rain Tower and Qingcheng Temple sent disciples to chase after you, the fish that slipped through the net, yet we never managed to catch you. And now, you've come right to our doorstep!"

As Wen Xiangxin spoke, his eyes suddenly shot out a fierce light, and he approached Ghost Hand like an unsheathed sharp sword, carrying an aura of unparalleled sharpness, step by step toward the stone pillar where Ghost Hand stood.

Chapter 457: You're Unfit to Be Human!

"Today, even if you grow three heads and six arms, you can't escape death! You harmed my son, and I won't rest until I tear you into ten thousand pieces!"

As Wen Xiangxin spoke, a flexible sword was already in his hand, the tip pointing directly at Ghost Hand, an endless killing Qi encompassing him like an invisible net.

"You don't deserve to be human!"

Ghost Hand, wearing a mocking smile, coldly laughed and circulated the True Essence inside his body, his fighting spirit boiling as he shouted, "I will send you to hell, where you can repent for your sins!"

"You think you, a mere Profound Level initial-stage martial artist, can kill me? Wishful thinking!"

Wen Xiangxin laughed wildly towards the sky.

He had no desire to stoop to personally dealing with Ghost Hand, but Ghost Hand had crippled his son, Wen Shiba, and completely enraged him; he could not quell the hatred in his heart without taking his life.

"Is that so?"

Ghost Hand proudly smiled, rapidly circulating his True Essence with the "Buddha's Fury Golden Staff Technique," his aura climbing higher with each passing second, instantly dispelling the pressure Wen Xiangxin had placed on him.

Although Ghost Hand's cultivation level was far from Wen Xiangxin's, the rank of the cultivation technique he practiced far surpassed Wen Xiangxin's. As True Essence flowed rapidly, his desire to fight crazily soared, and it seemed as if he might even surpass Wen Xiangxin in might.

"Heaven Rank Technique... The one you're practicing must undoubtedly be a Heaven Rank Technique..."

Wen Xiangxin, looking into Ghost Hand's eyes, spoke with a fervent and greedy gleam.

After obtaining a Heaven Rank Technique from Myriad Medicine Valley, despite pondering and meditating on it day and night, the profound and mysterious Heaven Rank Technique eluded his grasp.

Seeing Ghost Hand's fighting spirit rise madly under his own pressure, to the point of standing on equal footing with him, Wen Xiangxin surmised that Ghost Hand was practicing a Heaven Rank Technique, and one he understood more deeply no less.

The gap in their realms could be compensated with a higher-ranked cultivation technique; this was one reason some martial artists had the ability to challenge opponents beyond their level.

If he could subdue Ghost Hand and force him to reveal his Heaven Rank Technique and insights on cultivation, wouldn't that be a shortcut?

"Come and meet your end!"

Wen Xiangxin surged forward, striding over snow. After a few steps, his feet left the ground, turning into a white streak of light that swept across the air. At the same time, his long sword trembled, conjuring countless sword flowers en route to the steadfast Ghost Hand atop the stone pillar.

He knew that Ghost Hand was an extremely proud person and that forcing Ghost Hand to divulge the secrets of the Heaven Rank Technique would not be easy. He must first defeat him with absolute strength, instilling fear in him, to have any hope of learning what he wanted to know.

The same "Rapid Wind, Sudden Rain Eighteen Swords," when executed by Wen Xiangxin, possessed a power far surpassing that of Wen Shiba,

When Wen Shiba wielded the "Rapid Wind, Sudden Rain Eighteen Swords," it was a combination of six layers released in an instant, whereas Wen Xiangxin stacked nine layers into one explosive strike, with a sword momentum beyond comparison.

Full of confidence, Wen Xiangxin believed that while Ghost Hand could handle his son's full-powered strike, he would struggle to withstand his own sword technique.

An ordinary Profound Level initial-stage martial artist, facing Wen Xiangxin's ultimate strike that brought the speed, ferocity, and precision of swordplay to their pinnacle, would surely despair, close their eyes, and await death, but Ghost Hand remained undaunted.

In Ghost Hand's chest burned a blazing desire for battle, and his right fist, already filled with Golden Attribute True Essence, swung forward just as Wen Xiangxin's flexible sword neared.

Whoosh—

The punch roared through the air, True Essence churning, its speed seemingly surpassing that of Wen Xiangxin's sword, on the verge of breaking the sound barrier, emitting a faint rumbling noise.

"You're asking for death!"

Seeing Ghost Hand counter his sword's tip with a bare fist was recklessly arrogant in the extreme, and Wen Xiangxin's eyes grew cold.

The flexible sword in his hand was crafted from a special material, much more pliable and sharp than ordinary long swords. Not to mention flesh and blood, it could easily pierce through a thin sheet of iron once he infused it with True Essence Force.

Wen Xiangxin eagerly anticipated that his thrust would tear through Ghost Hand's fist and pierce his entire arm.

The moment the fist met the sword tip, Wen Xiangxin seemed to see a faint glint of gold shine from Ghost Hand's fist, causing a dazzle in his eyes.

Immediately after, an illusion appeared before him—Ghost Hand transformed into a Buddha, and his punch seemed to be a golden Zen staff wielded by the Buddha.

The Buddha, with a stern and angry brow, struck directly with the Zen staff, carrying the forceful pressure of a mountain, smashing heavily against his sword tip.

Clang—

The sound of metal clashing rang out as a force imbued with a strong attacking aura traveled along the blade, like a massive wave sweeping over, crashing against the shore, surging into Wen Xiangxin's body, shaking him so violently that his chest heaved tumultuously.

Wen Xiangxin struggled to suppress it, yet a trickle of fresh blood still slowly seeped from the corner of his mouth.

In this exchange, Wen Xiangxin had actually sustained injuries from the rebound force of Ghost Hand's punch.

Wen Xiangxin rapidly retreated, landing on the ground. His right hand suddenly clenched tightly, barely managing to hold onto the flexible sword; otherwise, it would have flown from his grasp.

Wen Xiangxin was greatly alarmed. Only now did he understand why, back in Jinling, his son Wen Shiba, during his bout with Ghost Hand, had his long sword flung from his hand and the web between his thumb and index finger torn.

It wasn't that his son was too weak, but that Ghost Hand's boxing technique was too formidable.

The power of Ghost Hand's punch just now had far surpassed the limit of a Profound Level beginner martial artist.

The greed and frenzy in Wen Xiangxin's eyes became even more intense. He became increasingly convinced that Ghost Hand must be cultivating a Heaven Rank Technique.

Otherwise, with just Ghost Hand's cultivation level at his realm, how could he possess such incredible combat power? How could he withstand his sharp flexible sword with just his bare hands?

Standing atop a stone pillar, Ghost Hand was also filled with astonishment.

Although his punch had resolved Wen Xiangxin's attack, he hadn't gained any advantage.

The "Buddha's Fury Golden Staff Technique" he cultivated was a Golden System Technique. Cultivating such a technique meant that the Golden Attribute True Essence born within his Dantian's Qi Sea was more destructive and had greater annihilative power than True Essence of other attributes; and his physical body would also be stronger than martial artists of the same level.

He had thought his full-powered punch could break Wen Xiangxin's flexible sword and cause Wen Xiangxin to vomit blood and fly backward. However, the outcome was somewhat disappointing.

While Wen Xiangxin had blood spilling from his mouth, it seemed he was not severely injured. On the contrary, his own fist had been pierced through by the sword's tip, which Wen Xiangxin had infused with True Essence, but fortunately, the wound was minor and would not affect his combat power.

Ghost Hand's targets for revenge were the three major Sects: Shaolin, Qingcheng Temple, and Misty Rain Tower. And among those, Misty Rain Tower was relatively weaker. If he couldn't even handle Misty Rain Tower, how could he possibly confront the other two great Sects?

Ghost Hand took a deep breath, calming his anxious emotions, then leapt down from the stone pillar and rushed towards Wen Xiangxin with great speed.

He decided he would no longer be on the defensive but would take the initiative to attack.

Off to the side, more than a dozen Profound Level martial artists from Misty Rain Tower were watching him like tigers eyeing their prey. If he couldn't quickly kill Wen Xiangxin, and should the disciples of Misty Rain Tower break the rules of the Ancient Martial World and swarm him in a group assault, he would have difficulty coping alone.

Chapter 458: Rod of Buddha's Fury

Ghost Hand's figure shot toward Wen Xiangxin like an arrow released from its bowstring, the speed so swift it made Wen's heart jolt. The scene before his eyes blurred, and suddenly, Ghost Hand was in front of him, a fist glowing with a faint golden light, hammering towards his chest.

"Rod of Buddha's Fury!"

Upon hearing Ghost Hand's explosive shout, Wen Xiangxin once again saw the angry Buddha and the Buddha's Zen Staff, whirling towards him in a golden fury.

This time, the power of the Zen Staff was greater, the pressure heavier, and the momentum more ferocious; it was as though a mountain collapsed upon him, pressing down.

Wen Xiangxin's pupils constricted; he sensed that the power behind Ghost Hand's punch exceeded his limit of endurance.

He simply could not comprehend how a mere Profound Level initial stage Martial Artist could unleash a battle force comparable to that of a Profound Level Perfection Martial Artist.

Even though he had deciphered a portion of the mysteries within a Heaven Rank Technique, it was impossible to assimilate and utilize it freely in such a short time.

Seeing Ghost Hand's unstoppable punch bearing down, Wen Xiangxin's instinct was to dodge, but he found himself completely enveloped by Ghost Hand's fist's trajectory, with no chance to avoid it, a wave of despair washing over him.

"I'll stake everything!"

Unwilling to be captured without a fight, Wen Xiangxin let out a hoarse roar, his eyes bloodshot as he thrust his sword straight forward, piercing towards Ghost Hand's incoming fist.

He was prepared to harness his body's potential to the extreme and gamble on both suffering serious injuries, and then count on his disciples to join forces and kill Ghost Hand, removing this formidable enemy once and for all.

The wind from Ghost Hand's punch and Wen Xiangxin's sword thrust, the force of True Essence they released, swept up the snow within a ten-foot radius, forming a curtain that cut off the spectators' view.

Lead by Wen Xiangshan and Wen Xianghai, the disciples of Misty Rain Tower widened their eyes at the curtain of snow, anxious and unsure of their Tower Master's victory or defeat.

Bang——

"Ah——"

A muffled sound was followed by a scream; a white figure was sent flying, tumbling into the snow several zhang away and lay motionless, clearly having died on the spot.

"Tower Master!"

Upon seeing Wen Xiangxin being struck away, Wen Xiangshan, Wen Xianghai, and the others cried out in shock and rushed forward to see. When they glimpsed their master's state in death, they all inhaled sharply.

Wen Xiangxin lay on his back, blood seeping from all seven orifices, with his chest almost completely collapsed, his death a particularly gruesome sight.

The hilt of his flexible sword was still gripped in his hand, but the blade itself had snapped off, its location unknown.

Ghost Hand's punch had not only shattered Wen Xiangxin's flexible sword but had also caved in his chest, completely pulverizing his internal organs, leaving him undeniably dead.

As the snow curtain dissipated, Ghost Hand's figure was revealed.

His right fist remained clenched tight, but it appeared to have been pierced, the flesh mangled. The broken piece of Wen Xiangxin's sword protruded from beneath his armpit, having shot through his clothing; had it been slightly off, it would have impaled him through.

Ghost Hand, who had been holding his posture erect, now bent slightly at the waist, taking labored, heaving breaths, his clothes soaked with sweat.

That punch had drained him completely; after killing Wen Xiangxin, he felt utterly empty.

Seeing the dozen or so Misty Rain Tower disciples gather around Wen Xiangxin's body then turn their heads in shared hostility towards him, he knew another fight was imminent. Knowing he couldn't afford to relax, he reached for a White Essence Stone and grasped it in his palm, silently circulating his cultivation technique to rapidly absorb the Golden Essence Energy from the White Essence Stone.

White Essence Stones are low-grade Golden Essence Stones; they were what Fang Bai first obtained on his way to Yanjing in a cave dwelling left by a Heaven Level Martial Artist. Later, when Fang Bai took Ghost Hand as his disciple and discovered that Ghost Hand possessed a Metal Spirit Root, he gave Ghost Hand several pieces to aid his cultivation.

Essence Stones could assist in cultivation and also rapidly replenish depleted Essence Energy. Fortunately, Ghost Hand still had a few Golden Essence Stones on him, or else facing over a dozen Profound Level Martial Artists from Misty Rain Tower, he would have had a hard time coping.

"Dead... haha... dead..."

After Wen Shiba was captured by Fang Bai, he was brutally tortured and later had his limbs crippled by Ghost Hand, rendering him unable to further cultivate Ancient Martial arts; this drove him nearly to the brink of mental breakdown. Now, seeing his father killed, he was further traumatized and suddenly became crazed, bursting into a mix of loud laughter and weeping.

"Form the Sword Array!"

Wen Xiangshan and Wen Xianghai, seeing that the strongest in Misty Rain Tower, Wen Xiangxin, was no match for Ghost Hand in a few exchanges, their faces dramatically changed. Realizing they needed to join forces, or they might be defeated one by one, immediately shouted out.

Including them, eighteen Profound Level Martial Artists from Misty Rain Tower drew their flexible swords from their waists, moved swiftly into position, and encircled Ghost Hand.

The "Swiftwind Torrential Rain Sword Formation" is derived from the "Swiftwind Torrential Rain Eighteen Swords" and is the signature secret technique of Misty Rain Tower. The legacy of this sword array has been passed down for a long time and wouldn't be easily revealed unless Misty Rain Tower was facing life and death peril.

The eighteen Profound Level disciples of Misty Rain Tower that comprised the sword array usually only practiced one sword technique each. In combat, the eighteen would join the array to strike together with eighteen swords simultaneously, with a combined force many times more powerful than a single person's technique, capable of contending even against a martial artist at Profound Level Perfection.

Ghost Hand, surrounded by the eighteen Profound Level disciples of Misty Rain Tower, with eighteen flexible swords pointing at him, felt the sharp and incomparable sword energy permeating around him and couldn't help but feel nervous.

If he was at his peak strength, Ghost Hand would dare to fight in this sword array; even if he couldn't break the formation, he was confident he could escape. However, in the battle with Wen Xiangxin, he had expended a great deal of True Essence, and his combat strength was less than half of his peak, making it impossible for him to last long in this sword array.

"Rod of Buddha's Fury! Break for me!"

Seizing the moment when the opponent's sword array had just formed and hadn't yet launched a joint attack, Ghost Hand bellowed and made the first move, hoping to disrupt their formation and break through.

He launched a punch with both fists, targeting the two disciples of Misty Rain Tower with the weakest martial artist aura, aiming to create an opening through them.

"Strike!"

As Ghost Hand launched his attack, Wen Xiangshan shouted and was the first to thrust his sword.

As this sword array was interconnected, Wen Xiangshan's thrust set off a chain reaction among the other seventeen disciples of Misty Rain Tower, whose swords almost simultaneously lunged forward.

Eighteen different sword techniques interweaved, delivering combined strikes from above and below, enveloping true essence with the force of a fierce storm, sweeping towards Ghost Hand in the center of the formation, sealing off all his avenues of escape.

Ghost Hand's "Rod of Buddha's Fury" was immensely powerful; even if his True Essence was significantly expended, if he were to face an enemy alone, a mid-stage Profound Level martial artist would not stand a chance against his punch.

But within this sword array, though he launched punches with both fists, the punches felt as if they were thrown into the sea, barely causing the sword array's operation to pause for an instant, without achieving any significant effect.

Seeing the eighteen flashes of sword light stabbing towards him, Ghost Hand's eyes suddenly bulged, his aura exploded in an instant, and he prepared to use a secret technique to stimulate his body's potential.

Although stimulating one's potential came with significant side effects and could even impact future cultivation, at this moment, for the sake of survival, Ghost Hand could not care less.

"Ghost Hand, don't be rash!"

At the crucial moment, the voice of Fang Bai exploded like thunder beside Ghost Hand's ears.

Chapter 459: Slaughter the Experts

Hearing his master's voice, Ghost Hand felt a huge burden lift from his heart, and the violent aura that had been escalating on him disappeared in an instant.

Like many friends and relatives close to Fang Bai, Ghost Hand also held a near-fanatical veneration and blind confidence in Fang Bai. He believed that as long as Fang Bai arrived, the sword array would no longer be able to do anything to him.

Ah—

Hey yo—

Two screams rang out simultaneously from the mouths of the brothers Wen Xiangshan and Wen Xianghai.

Two pebbles, origin unknown, had flown through the curtain formed by the eighteen soft swords and struck the brothers behind their knees. Their legs went numb; they became unsteady and knelt to the ground.

As the strongest in the group of eighteen forming the sword array, the brothers Wen Xiangshan and Wen Xianghai were also the soul of the array. With their fall, the entire sword array instantly showed numerous flaws and fell into disarray.

The pressure around Ghost Hand suddenly diminished. Seizing the opportunity, he launched both fists, sending Wen Xiangshan and Wen Xianghai flying far away.

With the death of Wen Xiangshan and Wen Xianghai, the remaining sixteen disciples of Misty Rain Tower immediately fell into disarray, losing all courage and willingness to fight, and turned to flee, abandoning their swords.

However, when they reached the mountain path for descent, they found a young man dressed in casual clothes standing leisurely, blocking their path ahead.

These Misty Rain Tower disciples, seeing Fang Bai for the first time, knew only of Ghost Hand's fearsomeness, how he had killed the Tower Master and two Elders, a Life-Snatching fiend, but were unaware that Fang Bai was Ghost Hand's master.

"Kill!"

Fearful of Ghost Hand pursuing them and seeing someone blocking the way, they continued their attempt to escape by charging directly toward Fang Bai without hesitation.

From Fang Bai, these Misty Rain Tower disciples could not sense any Martial Artist Aura and mistook him as a mere tourist enjoying the snowy scenery, planning to kick him out of the way.

"Go back,"

Fang Bai reached out, grabbing the foot of the Misty Rain Tower disciple who was in the lead and attempting to kick him. With a light flick, the disciple was sent flying, screaming through the air in a parabolic arc, then landed precisely at Ghost Hand's feet without deviating.

Before the other Misty Rain Tower disciples could react, Fang Bai's figure flashed continuously, as if entering a domain devoid of anyone else. In the blink of an eye, all sixteen disciples who had reached him were grabbed and thrown by him, soaring high into the air, and like stacking Arhats, landed at Ghost Hand's feet.

"Deal with these men, I'll wait for you at the foot of the mountain,"

Fang Bai said and then turned to drift away.

The north wind howled, and the snow flew heavily.

In the snow, the bloody traces upon the bodies of Wen Xiangxin, Wen Xiangshan, and Wen Xianghai had already coagulated, and their corpses had turned cold and stiff.

Their faces were a mix of desperation, ferocity, terror, and distortion, creating a heart-stopping, chilling sight.

The sixteen Misty Rain Tower disciples struggled to get up from the ground, only to kneel before Ghost Hand again, pleading desperately for their lives.

They had the self-awareness to realize that even the top fighters of Misty Rain Tower, Wen Xiangxin, Wen Xiangshan, and Wen Xianghai, had been killed one by one by Ghost Hand. How could they, mere early-stage Profound Level Martial Artists, be a match for Ghost Hand?

Moreover, there was Fang Bai lurking nearby, who had easily overpowered them, ready to support Ghost Hand at any moment.

They could neither fight nor escape!

To stay alive, their only option was to beg for mercy.

Ghost Hand looked down at the sixteen Misty Rain Tower disciples groveling at his feet, pleading for their lives, his eyes filled with scorn.

It was these people who had once turned into butchers, slaughtering hundreds of disciples in Myriad Medicine Valley. Had it not been for sheer luck, he also would have been doomed.

Ghost Hand still remembered when Myriad Medicine Valley was subjected to a massacre, there were also disciples who desperately pleaded for mercy to those people, but they were still ruthlessly slain.

And now, it was these people's turn to kneel at his feet, begging him desperately for mercy.

"Spare your life? Heh... When you killed the disciples of 'Myriad Medicine Valley,' did anyone pity them? Spare them their lives?"

Ghost Hand spoke word by word, his gaze ice-cold and merciless, with killing intent spreading throughout his chest.

"I'll fight you!"

Some disciples of Misty Rain Tower, seeing no hope in begging for mercy, leaped up, charging at Ghost Hand with all their might, hoping for a desperate struggle.

Upon seeing this, other disciples of Misty Rain Tower also gritted their teeth and rushed forward, launching a group attack against Ghost Hand.

"Die!"

A thunderous and fierce shout burst from Ghost Hand's mouth as his fists, like thousand-pound hammers, continuously pounded out, occasionally hitting Misty Rain Tower disciples. With blood spurting wildly, they were sent flying backward, landing only to die tragically upon hitting the ground.

With Ghost Hand's combat strength surpassing even that of high-rank and mid-rank Profound Level powerhouses like Wen Xiangxin, Wen Xiangshan, and Wen Xianghai, facing a dozen or so low-rank Profound Level Martial Artists who were attacking him in a disorderly manner was even less of a concern for him.

He rose with divine fury, bellowing angrily, executing his movement technique, raging through the sixteen Misty Rain Tower disciples as if in an uninhabited realm, unstoppable in his charge.

True Yuan surged, the wind from his fists whistled, and screams were incessant. In just a matter of minutes, no one remained standing near Ghost Hand.

The corpses of the sixteen Misty Rain Tower disciples lay scattered among the snow on the ground around him, each body marked with deep indentations from his fists, showcasing the ferocity and dominance of Ghost Hand's punches.

The disgusting stench of blood permeated the cold air, with vast swathes of crimson on the snow being dazzling and startling to behold.

Ghost Hand's gaze swept over those bodies one by one, murmuring, "To kill for a life, blood debts paid by blood, these are the rules of the Ancient Martial World... In this battle, had I been weak, then it would be I who died. But you were weak, so it's only right that you die!"

He stood in place for a moment, then turned his head toward the west, his aura saturated with killing Qi, his eyes becoming sharp once again, clenching his fist and saying, "The vendetta against Misty Rain Tower ends here! Next, Qingcheng Temple!"

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The calamity that befell Jiangnan's Misty Rain Tower with the slaughter of all its high-level masters spread like a fierce wind, sweeping through the entire Secular Ancient Martial World overnight, causing every Martial Artist to tremble.

Almost all Martial Artists were guessing which power Misty Rain Tower had offended to incur such a catastrophe.

Some even boldly speculated that the fall of Misty Rain Tower might be the work of Hidden Sect disciples.

Because only the Hidden Sect disciples were capable of easily decimating a Misty Rain Tower that boasted nearly twenty Profound Level Martial Artists. Replaced by any other Sect in the secular Ancient Martial World, none would possess that ability.

Others said the annihilation of Misty Rain Tower shouldn't be linked to the Hidden Sect, because only a dozen or so Profound Level Martial Artists from Misty Rain Tower were slaughtered, while the other disciples were unharmed, which was not the style of the Hidden Sect disciples.

Regardless of whether the destruction of Misty Rain Tower was the doing of the Hidden Sect or not, it had already aroused the alertness of the Huaxia Secular Ancient Martial World.

For a time, all great Ancient Martial Sects were in a state of alarm, as if facing a formidable enemy, with each Sect raising their alert levels and recalling all disciples who were out on training for self-preservation.

Even the most secretive organization of Huaxia, "Dragon Guard," also began to operate urgently, making every effort to investigate whether the destruction of Misty Rain Tower was related to the Hidden Sect disciples.

Meanwhile, far from Suhang, the two great Sects, Qingcheng Temple and Shaolin, while secretly sending people to Misty Rain Tower to gather information, also closed their gates tightly, strictly ordering their disciples not to leave casually.

At the same time, the higher-ups of the two Sects also began to meet frequently and secretly discuss something, appearing as though a storm was about to descend upon the world.

Chapter 460: Dragon Guard's Reaction

"... Fang Bai recently returned to his ancestral home in Zhongzhou, but afterward, for some reason, he went to the Qin Family in Jinling. It is said that there, he and his disciple Ghost Hand had a conflict with people from Misty Rain Tower... Afterward, both of them disappeared... not until the day after the incident at Misty Rain Tower did they return to Zhongzhou..."

Within a high-walled compound in Yanjing, the leader of Dragon Guard, Long Jingtian, sat with his eyes closed on a lounge, quietly listening as his granddaughter related Fang Bai's recent movements.

"Dragon Maiden, what you did here was not right!"

After his granddaughter finished speaking, Long Jingtian slowly opened his eyes and spoke with a tone of dissatisfaction, "Fang Bai is already a member of our Dragon Guard. Why did you still send people to investigate him? Have you considered what the consequences would be if he found out? Have you forgotten how much effort it took you to recruit him into our ranks?"

"I didn't send people to follow and monitor him, just to check where he's been recently! That shouldn't be an issue, right?"

Feeling the anger from her grandfather, Dragon Maiden lowered her head and defended herself in a soft voice.

Long Jingtian huffed lightly and said, "Would you like it if someone investigated your movements?"

"I..."

"You suspect that the affair at the Misty Rain Tower in Jiangnan is related to Fang Bai?"

"Indeed, I have some suspicions... because some things are too coincidental... and Fang Bai's abilities are profound and inscrutable, making it possible for him..."

"Fang Bai once had a conflict with people from Misty Rain Tower... On the day the Tower was struck by disaster, Fang Bai and his disciple had vanished... Just based on these facts, you suspect him?"

"I..."

"Tell me, do Fang Bai and his disciple have a life-and-death feud with Misty Rain Tower?"

"No..."

"If they don't have a life-and-death feud, why would Fang Bai slaughter the experts of Misty Rain Tower? Is he bored?"

"But..."

"You and Fang Bai are both members of Dragon Guard. It is wrong to doubt and suspect each other like this! Alright, this matter ends here. You are not allowed to do this again in the future! Also, notify the other Dragon Guard members that no one is allowed to interfere with the Misty Rain Tower affair, I have my own arrangements!"

"Oh, got it..."

Scolded by her grandfather, Dragon Maiden left with her head down in disheartenment, yet she still felt a bit unconvinced in her heart.

A woman's innate intuition told Dragon Maiden that, even if the incident at Misty Rain Tower wasn't the work of Fang Bai and his disciple, they could not be entirely unconnected to it.

Besides, what puzzled Dragon Maiden was why her grandfather would issue an order strictly forbidding any Dragon Guard members from interfering in the Misty Rain Tower affair, which clearly went against the original purpose of Dragon Guard's foundation to uphold justice and maintain the peace of Huaxia!

Despite being full of doubts and confusion, Dragon Maiden still carried out the order issued by Long Jingtian.

Long Jingtian was not only the leader of Huaxia's Dragon Guard but also a legendary figure in the Secular Ancient Martial World of Huaxia. His word was law, and no one, including Dragon Maiden, dared to object to it.

"Every cause has its effect. When Shaolin, Qingcheng Temple, and Misty Rain Tower joined forces to massacre Myriad Medicine Valley, today's retribution has finally arrived... Sigh, I just hope that Fang Bai and his disciple do not create too much slaughter, otherwise, it will be difficult for me to remain a bystander!"

After Dragon Maiden left, Long Jingtian lay back in his armchair, gazing at the drifting clouds in the sky, his brows tightly furrowed, sighing audibly.

Following the tragic incident at Myriad Medicine Valley, Long Jingtian had conducted a secret investigation himself and eventually learned who the mastermind behind the scenes was. He also knew that a disciple named Ghost Hand had managed to escape by chance, but for various reasons, he did not disclose the truth to the public.

Latter, the disciples sent secretly by two of the three major Sects, Qingcheng Temple and Misty Rain Tower, pursued Ghost Hand, the only escapee from Myriad Medicine Valley. Long Jingtian also wanted to find Ghost Hand to protect him, yet he was never able to do so.

He had thought Ghost Hand was perhaps already dead and that the Myriad Medicine Valley tragedy would become a piece of forgotten history, never to be mentioned again. However, he had not expected the sudden massacre of the Profound Level Experts from Misty Rain Tower.

Upon learning that Fang Bai and his disciple had appeared in Jinling, clashed with the Wen Family of Misty Rain Tower, and that Fang Bai's disciple was named "Ghost Hand," Long Jingtian had a moment of realization, guessing that this Ghost Hand must be the sole fortunate survivor of the Myriad Medicine Valley tragedy. However, he did not know how Ghost Hand had ended up becoming Fang Bai's disciple.

Fang Bai, with Ghost Hand, appeared in Jinling and then mysteriously vanished, followed by the massacre of the Misty Rain Tower's Profound Level Experts. Dragon Maiden only suspected that Fang Bai and his disciple were behind this, but Long Jingtian was certain it was their doing.

In Long Jingtian's view, wiping out the Profound Level Experts of Misty Rain Tower was just the beginning of Fang Bai and his disciple's revenge. Next, Shaolin and Qingcheng Temple were likely to follow in Misty Rain Tower's footsteps.

Long Jingtian was a man of clear debts of gratitude and grievances. Upon discovering that the massacre in Myriad Medicine Valley was a joint operation by Misty Rain Tower and two other major Ancient Martial Sects, he initially wanted to seek justice for Myriad Medicine Valley. However, he restrained himself out of fear that such actions would weaken the strength of the Secular Ancient Martial World, and he had felt guilty ever since.

Now that Ghost Hand had re-emerged and begun to seek vengeance for his Sect, Long Jingtian decided to have the "Dragon Guard" maintain neutrality and not intervene.

Both Fang Bai and his disciple, as well as Misty Rain Tower and the other two major Ancient Martial Sects, were part of the Ancient Martial World. He decided to let them settle their debts and grudges according to the rules of the Ancient Martial World.

Although Fang Bai and his disciple had slaughtered the Profound Level Experts of Misty Rain Tower and retreated in safety, Long Jingtian was pessimistic about their path of revenge to come.

Misty Rain Tower was the weakest of the three major Ancient Martial Sects, but Qingcheng Temple and Shaolin were both far stronger than the rest.

In his time, Dharma Grandmaster crossed the river on a reed and passed down his teachings at Shaolin. It was said that he was a Heaven Level Martial Artist then.

If the rumors were reliable, then there might very well be a Heaven Level Technique passed down within Shaolin.

Whether there were Heaven Level Martial Artists among the Shaolin Monks, even Long Jingtian was not sure.

Although Long Jingtian himself was a Heaven Level Martial Artist, having reached the pinnacle of the Secular Ancient Martial World, and could even rank among the top fighters in the Hidden Sects, Shaolin had always been an entity he was wary of.

Long Jingtian had never met Fang Bai, but based on the information coming from various sources, he conjectured that Fang Bai was likely an Earth Level Martial Artist.

Honestly, an Earth Level Martial Artist in the Secular Ancient Martial World was already considered a top expert, but to take on Shaolin, a Sect with a millennium legacy and profound heritage, was still quite a stretch.

As for why Fang Bai and his disciple were so eager to take revenge against the three major Ancient Martial Sects instead of waiting until they grew more powerful, Long Jingtian attributed it to their youthful recklessness and impetuosity.

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Fang Bai and his disciple returned to Zhongzhou with Zhou Dabai and his family.

Upon arriving in Zhongzhou, the families of Fang Gang and Zhou Dabai met, inevitably leading to a series of sighs and lamentations.

That night, the two families went to dinner at a restaurant together. Fang Gang and Zhou Houde, the pair of old friends, drank themselves into a stupor and had to be carried home on the backs of Zhou Dabai and Fang Bai.