

Doctor 491

Chapter 491: Martial Dao Tower

No one at the scene exposed Dragon Maiden's lie, thereby avoiding her embarrassment.

Fang Bai's gaze shifted from Dragon Maiden to Long Jingtian, and after sizing up Long Jingtian for a few moments, he said politely, "So this elderly gentleman is Group Leader Dragon's grandfather. I had heard of the old gentleman's great reputation from Group Leader Dragon before, and seeing him today, his fame is indeed well-deserved. My disrespect! My disrespect!"

When Fang Bai initially joined the "Dragon Guard," he knew that Dragon Maiden's grandfather was called Long Jingtian and was the legendary current leader of the "Dragon Guard," but he had never met Long Jingtian face to face.

On their way to Shaolin, Fang Bai released his Divine Sense and detected that Dragon Maiden and a Heaven Level Martial Artist were following him and his disciple, although at that time he had guessed that the Heaven Level Martial Artist might also be a member of the "Dragon Guard," he didn't know that it would be Long Jingtian himself showing up.

With Long Jingtian, a Heaven Level Martial Artist, present to deter many lawbreakers, it's no wonder the mysterious and powerful Huaxia "Dragon Guard" is revered by Martial Artists of the Ancient Martial World as "Guardians of Huaxia."

Long Jingtian was also seeing Fang Bai for the first time. His worldly eyes sparkled with interest as he scrutinized Fang Bai, his surprise growing the more he looked.

In Long Jingtian's eyes, Fang Bai possessed a demeanor that transcended the material world, rose above the mundane, and was free from all worldly concerns. In the entire Secular Ancient Martial World of Huaxia, including Long Jingtian himself, there were only a few who could achieve this.

What surprised Long Jingtian even more was that Fang Bai clearly had only the initial stage of Earth Level Cultivation, but no matter how much pressure he exerted on him, Fang Bai was utterly unaffected, embodying the stance of "remain unmoved no matter how the wind blows and the waves beat."

An ordinary Martial Artist at the initial stage of Earth Level actually withstanding the pressure of a Heaven Level Martial Artist was truly inconceivable.

This Fang Bai was either concealing his true power, with a real Cultivation Level higher than his own.

Or he had cultivated an extremely powerful Cultivation Technique, possessing the ability to fight beyond his level.

Long Jingtian was more inclined to believe the latter, otherwise a mere twenty-year-old with strength surpassing his own was too hard to accept and simply unheard of through the ages.

"The four benefactors, please come to the Pagoda Forest on the back mountain for a talk. My senior brother Xuan Nan is already waiting!"

Long Jingtian had countless questions in his heart and wanted to pull Fang Bai aside to ask for a clear explanation, but he was interrupted by the voice of the Sweeping Monk, Xuan Ku.

"Alright, then let's go together to meet Master Xuan Nan!"

Long Jingtian knew this wasn't the right place to talk, so he decided to have a thorough chat with Fang Bai after leaving Shaolin.

"The seven of you, come along as well!"

Xuan Ku glanced at the seven eager old monks of Shaolin—Abbot Jueren, Scripture Pavilion Elder Jueyi, Dharma Hall Elder Jueli, Prajna Hall Elder Juezhi, Arhat Hall Elder Juexin, Discipline Hall Elder Juecong, and Reception Hall Elder Jueming—and said indifferently.

"Yes."

Jueren and the other seven elders replied in unison, unable to hide their joy.

They already knew Xuan Nan was a Heaven Level Martial Artist, and if they had the fortune to receive guidance from Xuan Nan at the Pagoda Forest, they would benefit for life.

Immediately, Xuan Ku led the way, Fang Bai and Long Jingtian walked side by side, Ghost Hand and Dragon Maiden followed closely behind, and Jueren along with the other seven elders followed in the rear, all heading towards the Pagoda Forest behind the mountain.

The Pagoda Forest of Shaolin consisted of hundreds of differently sized pagoda structures, mainly built of brick and stone, varied in height and scattered in a picturesque disorder, each with its unique shape.

The Pagoda Forest contained not only pagodas which housed the remains of high-ranked monks from generation to generation but also pagodas where monks would seclude themselves for cultivation. It was a forbidden area of Shaolin; ordinary disciples were not allowed to enter at will.

The most striking among them was the central nine-story pagoda, built on the highest terrain. It appeared solemn and ancient, filled with a sense of the years it had weathered.

Standing under the nine-story pagoda, one could feel an imposing pressure, heavy as a mountain looming overhead. Those slightly weaker would find it difficult to breathe under such pressure and could only avoid it by keeping their distance.

The doors of the nine-story pagoda, which had always been locked, were now slightly ajar, though it was unknown who had opened them.

When Fang Bai, Ghost Hand, Long Jingtian, Dragon Maiden, Xuan Ku, Abbot Jueren, and the rest of the twelve-person group arrived at the nine-story pagoda, Xuan Ku, with a solemn expression, said, "This nine-story pagoda, called the 'Martial Dao Tower,' houses Shaolin's most powerful martial arts techniques. Only Shaolin disciples who have reached the Earth Level Perfection and are considered capable of breaking through to the Heaven Level Realm may enter to comprehend and cultivate..."

At this point, Xuan Ku shook his head and sighed before continuing, "Regrettably, since Elder Brother Xuan Nan, not a single Shaolin disciple in nearly a hundred years has met the criteria to enter the tower for comprehension and cultivation. Brother Xuan Nan had no choice but to guard inside the tower..."

Abbot Jueren and the other seven senior monks saw the look of disappointment in Xuan Ku's eyes as he glanced over them, and they felt deeply ashamed.

In the past hundred years, generations of Shaolin disciples had come and gone. It was rare to even see a disciple reach High Rank Earth Level, let alone Earth Level Perfection. Indeed, it was too disheartening.

In Abbot Jueren's generation, the strongest martial monk was Abbot Jueren himself, who was at Mid Rank Earth Level.

And as Abbot Jueren was already in his sixties, it was nearly impossible for him to advance to Earth Level Perfection and enter the nine-story tower for comprehension and cultivation in his lifetime.

"Xuan Ku, our esteemed guests have arrived. Won't you invite them into the tower for a discussion?"

Xuan Ku was about to say more when suddenly a deep, aged voice echoed, reverberating in the ears of everyone at the base of the tower.

"Yes, Eldest Brother! Honored guests, please follow me into the tower," Xuan Ku replied and gestured for Long Jingtian, Fang Bai, and the others to proceed, taking the lead himself with Fang Bai and Long Jingtian following after and the rest of the group trailing behind, entering the tower in single file.

This "Martial Dao Tower" had withstood a thousand years of weathering, its exterior looking very ancient. However, the inside of the tower was kept impeccably clean, with hardly a speck of dust to be found.

"The 'Martial Dao Tower' is Shaolin's cultivation holy land. Since its establishment, it has always been someone's responsibility to take care of it. After Elder Brother Xuan Nan entered the tower to study and cultivate, I took over the task of cleaning. I sweep it twice daily and also manage Elder Brother Xuan Nan's daily living. Time flies; in the blink of an eye, decades have passed..." Xuan Ku said, filled with emotion as he walked.

The group listened intently to Xuan Ku's words, while Fang Bai's divine sense had already spread out, reaching the ninth level at the top of the tower.

Inside the space on the ninth floor, there was only a bookshelf and an old monk.

In the bookshelf were several ancient scriptures that had yellowed with age; from the titles on their covers, it could be deduced that these were some of Shaolin's martial arts teachings and lineages.

The old monk was sitting cross-legged on a cushion, his appearance withered, with long beards and eyebrows, looking even older than Xuan Ku, the sweeping monk.

Even though the old monk had concealed his martial artist aura, Fang Bai could still sense his cultivation level.

Chapter 492: Master Xuan Nan

The old monk, though at the same rank as Long Jingtian as a Heaven Level early-stage martial artist, had meridians and blood vessels that were broader and more resilient, and his Qi Sea contained True Yuan that was thicker and purer.

Without circulating any cultivation technique, the True Yuan in the old monk's Qi Sea was remarkably restless, churning ceaselessly, as if eager to break free from the Qi Sea and flow throughout his body.

In Fang Bai's view, these signs indicated that the martial artist's realm had reached a new critical point and was a harbinger of an imminent breakthrough.

With enlightenment or an opportunity, this long-eyebrowed old monk might advance from the early stage of Heaven Level to the middle stage.

Regrettably, even though the old monk's True Yuan was thick and his strength formidable, time spares no one, and his age had reached a stage unattainable to ordinary people. The function of his bodily organs was inevitably rapidly declining, almost reaching the point of exhaustion.

Unless the old monk could advance in rank again and continue to snatch life from the heavens, he might genuinely pass away in this tower within three to five years.

However, enlightenment and opportunity sometimes come in an instant, yet may not appear in a lifetime. Everything depended on whether the old monk had such fortune.

Fang Bai knew that this long-eyebrowed old monk must be Xuan Ku's senior brother, Xuan Nan.

Xuan Nan sat quietly with slightly closed eyes. From the faint aura fluctuations around him, Fang Bai sensed only tranquility, peace, and compassion for the world, devoid of aggression, brutality, or bloodshed.

Clearly, this extraordinary Shaolin monk, who emerged only once in a hundred years, disliked conflict, had never spilled blood, and had never taken a life, was a true monk of virtue.

"Hmm?"

Xuan Nan seemed to sense something, and his half-closed eyes suddenly opened wide, a sharp glint bursting from within.

Fang Bai hadn't expected him to be so keenly alert and to detect his Divine Sense probing, so he immediately withdrew it without carelessness.

The group, following Xuan Ku, ascended from the first to the ninth floor of the "Martial Dao Tower," each treading lightly and with caution, afraid to disturb Xuan Nan's meditation.

Upon stepping onto the final staircase, the group finally saw the legendary Shaolin monk Xuan Nan.

Xuan Nan's eyes were now open, and his elderly face was adorned with a gentle smile, lacking any of the imposing demeanor of a Heaven Level martial artist, and instead resembling a kindly old man.

Jueren and the other monks, upon seeing Xuan Nan's smiling face, felt their initial unease, anxiety, reverence, and tension instantly dissipate.

The space on the ninth floor of the "Martial Dao Tower" was not large, but it was more than sufficient for the twelve people standing there. They lined up in a row, facing Xuan Nan, silently observing the legendary martial monk.

Xuan Nan's gaze slowly swept over the twelve individuals before him, lingering a bit longer on Long Jingtian and Fang Bai.

"Long Jingtian pays his respects to the Master!"

As Xuan Nan's gaze fell upon him and seemed to ponder something, Long Jingtian stepped forward, bowing slightly.

In the past, Xuan Nan and Long Jingtian's mentor, the founder of the "Dragon Guard," Long Yi, had been comrades in the Martial Dao. As a monk and a secular person, they often discussed martial arts and exchanged insights. After Xuan Nan isolated himself for in-depth cultivation, Long Yi often lamented the absence of his close friend and comrade, full of regret.

Although Long Jingtian had never met Xuan Nan, he frequently heard his mentor speak of this legendary Shaolin monk. Now seeing Xuan Nan in person, he was reminded of Long Yi, who had raised him and taught him martial arts techniques, stirring a sense of sorrow in his heart.

Even though Long Jingtian was now a Heaven Level martial artist, at the same realm as Xuan Nan, he did not presume to be arrogant and maintained sufficient respect in his presence.

"Does Benefactor Long recognize a benefactor by the name of Long Yi?"

From Long Jingtian, Xuan Nan felt a sense of familiarity in the aura fluctuations, visibly moved.

Long Jingtian respectfully answered, "Long Yi is indeed my mentor!"

"As I suspected! May I inquire where Benefactor Long Yi is residing now?"

"My mentor has passed away many years ago."

"Amitabha! Benefactor Long Yi, learned and supernaturally gifted, his passing is indeed unexpected..."

Hearing this news, Xuan Nan let out a long sigh, seeming to age a few years in an instant. He brought his palms together in a prayer-like gesture, chanted a Buddhist invocation, then lowered his eyes and softly recited a passage from the sutras.

"Benefactor Long has reached the Heaven Level Realm, a great fortune for the Ancient Martial World and a blessing for the people of Huaxia! It is indeed a matter for celebration!"

A moment later, Xuan Nan looked at Long Jingtian again, a look of gratification in his eyes.

"Master is the true blessing of the Ancient Martial World and the people of Huaxia!"

Long Jingtian humbly said.

Xuan Nan chuckled and asked, "Benefactor Long's visit to Shaolin, may I know what it concerns?"

"This..."

At Xuan Nan's question, Long Jingtian felt somewhat embarrassed, glanced at Fang Bai at his side, and said with a bitter smile, "To be frank with the Master, I have some history with this young fellow, and this young fellow has some disputes with Shaolin. I was hiding nearby, ready to step in and mediate should any conflict arise. Unexpectedly, I was seen through by the Master... my apologies! My apologies!"

Xuan Nan nodded, his gaze shifting to Fang Bai.

At this time, Fang Bai was no longer deliberately suppressing his cultivation level, so in the eyes of people like Xuan Ku, Xuan Nan, and Long Jingtian, he appeared to be an Earth Level middle-rank Martial Artist, on par with Fangzhang Jueren.

Although Xuan Nan's cultivation level was slightly stronger than that of Long Jingtian, he too found Fang Bai somewhat inscrutable. While the young man's cultivation level appeared to be that of an Earth Level middle-rank, he seemed very different from ordinary Martial Artists of that rank.

Fang Bai's ease in defeating Fangzhang Jueren in front of the Thousand Buddha Hall, his bold declaration of challenging the Shaolin Eighteen Arhats formation, and his fearless stance in the face of the Earth Level Perfection master Xuan Ku, all proved that his strength was not comparable to that of an ordinary Earth Level middle-rank Martial Artist.

Although Xuan Nan did not witness the confrontation between Fang Bai and the Martial Monks firsthand, as a Heaven Level Martial Artist with superior sensory abilities, he was well aware of the duel between Fang Bai and Jueren, as well as Xuan Ku's application of a strand of oppressive aura to probe Fang Bai, even while he was in the "Martial Dao Tower."

Since Fang Bai was able to withstand Xuan Ku's oppressive aura, it proved that his strength was no less than Xuan Ku's, and such prowess even impressed Xuan Nan, who thus invited Long Jingtian and Fang Bai to come to the tower to talk.

"Amitabha! Forgive this old monk's lack of insight. Young Benefactor, have you by chance cultivated some kind of technique that conceals strength?"

Unable to see through Fang Bai, Xuan Nan directly inquired, his status and power obviating the need for any pretense.

Fang Bai smiled and replied, "What the Master currently senses is indeed my true cultivation level."

Xuan Nan nodded, saying, "I understand."

With a cultivation level of Earth Level middle-rank and capable of contending with the Earth Level Perfection Sweeping Monk Xuan Ku, Fang Bai must have cultivated a high-level technique, affording him the ability to challenge across levels.

To Xuan Nan, the so-called "high-level technique" could very likely be a Heaven Level Technique.

Chapter 493: Challenging Xuan Nan

Heaven Level Techniques were extremely rare in the Huaxia Ancient Martial World, and not commonly seen even in the Hidden Sect World. It was unknown whether Fang Bai's Heaven Level Technique came from his mentorship lineage or he gained it through a serendipitous opportunity.

Although Master Xuan Nan was full of curiosity about this question, he would never ask, as it was a taboo topic in the Ancient Martial World. Who would willingly divulge the origins of their own Cultivation Technique? If it attracted covetous attention, it could lead to a fatal disaster, and by then it would be too late for regrets.

"What brings young benefactor Fang to visit Shaolin? May you share it with this old monk?"

Master Xuan Nan gestured to the two meditation cushions opposite him, signaling Fang Bai and Long Jingtian to sit down, then he asked again.

The three of them sat in a '品' character arrangement. Fang Bai simplified and recounted the massacre that befell his mentor's sect, Myriad Medicine Valley, by the hands of the three major sects, to Master Xuan Nan.

The elders like Jueren sitting beside them bowed their heads with eyes downcast and faces tinged with guilt. Unsure whether Master Xuan Nan would unleash his thunderous fury after hearing about the incident, they felt somewhat uneasy.

"Sinful! Sinful! Fortunately, those disciples stopped in time and repented, thus avoiding a grave error. Otherwise, the millennial reputation of Shaolin would have been destroyed in an instant!"

Master Xuan Nan's complexion was grave and his expression serious as he spoke to Jueren in an unquestionable tone: "As the Abbot, you cannot shirk responsibility for this incident. Starting today, you are to resign from the position of Abbot and reflect against the wall in the 'Martial Dao Tower' for the next ten years, without leaving Shaolin!"

A pause followed before he continued, "As for the disciples involved in the Myriad Medicine Valley incident, they are to be punished with five years of wall facing in the 'Reflection Hall' on the back mountain, without the right to cultivate higher-level Techniques, serving as a warning to others!"

"Amitabha! The elder is wise. I am willing to accept the punishment!"

Jueren clasped his hands together and spoke out loud.

Far from feeling dejected or regretful after being stripped of the Abbot title, Jueren secretly felt relieved.

Elders like Juecong and Jueming were envious of Jueren, wishing that Master Xuan Nan would mete out the same punishment to them.

Though Master Xuan Nan's order for Jueren to reflect against the wall in the "Martial Dao Tower" for ten years seemed like a severe punishment, it was actually a colossal opportunity for Jueren.

Reflecting in the tower gave him the chance to be in close contact with Master Xuan Nan, and perhaps some day, if Master Xuan Nan was in a good mood, he would give Jueren some pointers.

As a Heaven Level Martial Artist, Master Xuan Nan's understanding and insights into the Martial Dao far surpassed those of an Earth Level Martial Artist. The problems that had once seemed insurmountable to Jueren might just evaporate with a few words from Master Xuan Nan, helping him to breakthrough his bottleneck and reaching a new realm in the Martial Dao.

"May I ask if the punishment the old monk has decided satisfies young benefactor Fang?"

Master Xuan Nan's gaze shifted away from Jueren as he inquired with a smile to Fang Bai.

Fang Bai replied with a smile, "As long as the master agrees to a battle with me, all grievances between us and Shaolin will be wiped clean with a laugh, never to be raised again! What say you?"

His statement amounted to a direct challenge to Master Xuan Nan. Upon hearing this, the elders such as Jueren showed expressions of displeasure, thinking that Fang Bai was far too arrogant and was overestimating his strength.

Even the Sweeping Monk Xuan Ku felt somewhat discontented.

Despite Fang Bai having defeated Abbot Jueren and withstanding the pressure of Xuan Ku's aura earlier on, proving his formidable strength, this did not imply he was qualified to challenge Master Xuan Nan.

After all, Master Xuan Nan was a martial artist who had stepped into the Heaven Level Realm, and his strength was far beyond what an Earth Level Martial Artist could imagine.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that even five Xuan Ku at Earth Level Perfection weren't necessarily a match for Master Xuan Nan alone, which shows just how powerful a Heaven Level Martial Artist is.

In the eyes of the elders like Jueren, although Fang Bai was strong, his strength was at best enough to fight against Xuan Ku. To challenge Master Xuan Nan, a Heaven Level Martial Artist, would simply be masochistic.

Perhaps Fang Bai didn't care about winning or losing at all, but rather wanted to take the opportunity of a battle with Xuan Nan to gain some fame?

Xuan Nan is a legendary Martial Monk of Shaolin, standing at the pinnacle of the Ancient Martial World of Huaxia as a Heaven Level Martial Artist. Being able to fight him, even in defeat, would be an honor; once such news spread, it would be hard for Fang Bai not to become famous in the Ancient Martial World of Huaxia.

"Fang Bai, Master Xuan Nan is a high monk who has attained the Dao, and besides, he is of an advanced age; it would be rather inappropriate for him to engage in fisticuffs again! If you really want to fight, I'll take you on later!"

Long Jingtian, worried that Fang Bai's words would displease Xuan Nan, kept making eye signals to Fang Bai.

Almost everyone inside the tower believed that Xuan Nan would reject Fang Bai's challenge, but to their surprise, Xuan Nan just smiled faintly and nodded, saying, "Counting the years, it has been decades since this old monk has had the pleasure of sparring with friends from outside. Since Young Benefactor Fang wishes it, then this old monk shall accompany you for a few moves!"

Upon hearing this, Jueyuan and the others could not help but change their expressions slightly.

Even Long Jingtian was secretly shocked, his eyes widening in astonishment as he looked at Fang Bai as if he were seeing the young man for the first time.

Xuan Nan's acceptance of Fang Bai's challenge was equivalent to acknowledging that Fang Bai had the strength to challenge him.

"Elder brother, let me accompany Young Benefactor Fang for a few moves instead!"

Xuan Ku said hastily, feeling that his elder brother's agreement to battle Fang Bai was more likely an attempt to resolve the grudge between Fang Bai and Shaolin, rather than a recognition of Fang Bai's ability to fight his elder brother.

"Hehe, do you think Young Benefactor Fang's strength is not qualified to battle me? You are wrong... all of you are wrong!"

Xuan Nan glanced at Xuan Ku and said seriously, "Young Benefactor Fang's realm and cultivation level may be a bit low, but his true combat power far surpasses yours! You are not his match!"

His last words exploded like thunder in the ears of monks like Xuan Ku, Jueren, and the others.

Jueren and the other old monks were skeptical, deeming it unlikely to be true.

However, Xuan Ku, who had accompanied Xuan Nan in the Martial Dao Tower for decades, knew him better than anyone else and was sure his elder brother's words wouldn't be mistaken.

Long Jingtian's eyes widened, and he looked at Fang Bai as if he had seen a ghost, saying, "Good lad, you've hidden your strength so deeply; I've actually misjudged you! When you said just now that Earth Level mid-stage is your true cultivation level, you must have practiced some incredible Cultivation Technique and possess the ability to challenge those above your level... am I right?"

The corners of Fang Bai's mouth carried a faint smile, and he did not confirm nor deny Long Jingtian's inquiry.

Sometimes, defaulting is equivalent to acknowledgment; there's no need for further words.

Long Jingtian revealed an expression of understanding and murmured to himself, "Twenty years old with Earth Level mid-stage cultivation, combat power capable of contending with Heaven Level Martial Artists... truly a freak of nature!"

Sitting next to Long Jingtian, Dragon Maiden stared at Fang Bai with unblinking eyes, her beautiful eyes shining, her thoughts a mystery.

"Master, shall we spar outside? This treasured pagoda is an ancient monastery of a thousand years; it would be a sin to damage it in any way!"

Fang Bai suggested.

"Indeed, we should! In the mountains behind us, there is a place where we can stretch our limbs; please follow me, Young Benefactor Fang!"

Xuan Nan said, and surprisingly, his seated form rose into the air and flew out of the tower window beside him.

Chapter 494: Martial Dao Wuya, Who Dares to Claim to be the First?

Heaven Level Martial Artists, with their True Yuan rich and dense, can fly through the air for a short time, although only briefly, but in the eyes of ordinary people, they are akin to walking deities.

This scene was observed by the likes of Xuan Ku and Jueren, the elder monks, and their hearts were filled with reverence and envy, their yearning for the Heaven Level realm growing even stronger.

Before the people in the tower could react, another figure followed, moving in the same way, flying out of the tower window with controlled flight, closely following Xuan Nan, towards the Pagoda Forest beyond the back mountain.

Watching the figure traverse the void at a speed that was in no way inferior to Xuan Nan, the people inside the tower were dumbfounded, their faces full of shock.

No one had expected that the figure following Xuan Nan would actually be Fang Bai.

Nobody thought that Fang Bai could also fly like a Heaven Level Martial Artist.

"Good lad, you really do have the strength to fight a Heaven Level Martial Artist! Haha, I'll go have a look at the excitement too!"

Long Jingtian laughed loudly, slapped his hand on his leg, and his entire body soared into the sky, pursuing Xuan Nan and Fang Bai.

Three figures, using the same movement technique and at the same speed, headed toward a valley behind the back mountain.

The remaining people inside the Martial Dao Tower reacted swiftly, with Ghost Hand being the fastest. He leaped directly from the tower window to the ground, then deployed his movement technique and in an instant, disappeared from sight.

Following Ghost Hand, Dragon Maiden also sprang into the air and left.

"A rare chance to witness a spar between Heaven Level Experts, let's all go take a look!"

Seeing that the remaining monks in the tower were eagerly looking at him, Xuan Ku knew that they were very keen to observe the showdown between Fang Bai and Xuan Nan but were worried about Xuan Nan's potential blame afterward, so they sought his assistance.

Now, in Shaolin, aside from Xuan Nan, he was the highest in seniority, and as he was also Xuan Nan's fellow disciple, as long as he nodded, they wouldn't have to worry about repercussions from Xuan Nan.

With Xuan Ku's consent, Jueren and the other elder monks were overjoyed, and they successively flew toward that valley behind the back mountain.

When Xuan Ku and the other elder monks arrived at the valley behind the back mountain, they saw Fang Bai and Xuan Nan standing on a huge stone platform in the center of the valley, spanning several zhang. The howling north wind fluttered their garments and cassocks, as if they would ride the wind away at any moment.

As Xuan Ku and others entered the valley, they stood with Ghost Hand and Dragon Maiden about ten meters away from the stone platform, looking on solemnly, silently waiting for the showdown between the two Heaven Level Experts.

A clash between experts not only serves as a trial for the fighters themselves but also presents a tremendous opportunity for onlookers. Some martial artists, gifted with clever talents and exceptional comprehension, might just have a moment of enlightenment, thereby enhancing their own strength.

Accompanied by the whistling north wind, snowflakes began to fall from the sky, growing heavier as they descended in a thick flurry like rain. In the blink of an eye, a thin layer had covered the people in the valley.

"Grandpa, how many moves do you think Fang Bai can withstand from Master Xuan Nan?"

Dragon Maiden shivered a little, shaking off the snowflakes from her body, her gaze shifting between Fang Bai and Xuan Nan on the stone platform, and she asked in a soft voice.

Long Jingtian chuckled lightly, "How many moves? Are you that unoptimistic about Fang Bai?"

"Then, do you have faith in Fang Bai, Grandpa?"

Dragon Maiden retorted.

"I... heh heh... Although I'm not too optimistic either, I believe that since Fang Bai dares to challenge Master Xuan Nan, he must have some trump cards. Perhaps he can last for a dozen or twenty moves?"

Although Long Jingtian said so, he, like the Dragon Maiden, didn't have high hopes for Fang Bai, feeling that it would be impressive if Fang Bai could last five moves since Xuan Nan's strength was likely even greater than his own.

Although Fang Bai possessed the ability to challenge those above his level and could fight against Heaven Level Experts, he was not an Innate Expert after all, and there was a vast gap in realm and cultivation level, a flaw that was impossible to compensate for.

The monks, including Xuan Ku and Jueren, had an even lower estimate of Fang Bai, even believing that if Xuan Nan did not hold back, he could defeat Fang Bai with a single move.

Atop the stone platform, Xuan Nan stood with a straight back, his eyes brimming with light, vibrant and spirited, completely lacking the haggardness of before. He let the snowflakes fall upon his head and body, his gaze steadily on Fang Bai, his face bearing an unprecedented seriousness.

"Does Young Benefactor Fang come from the Hidden Sect World?"

A moment later, Xuan Nan asked.

The reason he asked was because Fang Bai was so young, yet his strength was unimaginably powerful; no Ancient Martial Sect in the secular world could possibly train a disciple as exceptional and astonishing as him.

Only those top-tier Ancient Martial Sects of the Hidden Sect World, or the Prominent Clans with a legacy of Heaven Level Techniques, could raise such a monstrous talent.

Fang Bai shook his head and said, "I am a man of the secular world, from Zhongzhou in Huaxia, with an ordinary family background. My martial arts techniques were taught by an elusive old man, a Divine Dragon who appears without a trace. Where the old man comes from, his surname and name, and where he is now, I do not know... Have I been detailed enough? Does Master have anything else to ask?"

"No more questions."

Although what Fang Bai said was fabricated, Xuan Nan did not doubt him and remarked with a sigh, "My vast Huaxia is indeed full of hidden dragons and crouching tigers, with many talents emerging. The old man who taught you your techniques must be a Hidden Master!"

Fang Bai responded with a smile, "Whether he's a master or not, I don't know. The only thing I know is that the old man had a peculiar temperament and insisted on teaching me martial arts techniques after he saw me. At that time, I was young, and he tricked and threatened me into learning... Afterward, the old man drifted away, and there has been no news of him since."

Xuan Nan said, "Amitabha, that is your chance! The fact that he could teach a disciple like you shows that the master who passed on the martial arts techniques to you must be far more advanced in cultivation than me. It's a pity I cannot meet him, a great regret!"

Fang Bai replied, "Master's strength is not weak either. In the Secular Ancient Martial World, you can be called the best!"

"In martial dao, there's no limit; who dares to claim to be the best?"

Xuan Nan said seriously, "Before I met Young Benefactor Fang and Benefactor Long, I thought I might be the only Heaven Level Martial Artist in the Secular Ancient Martial World, but I didn't expect that both Benefactor Long and you also have the capacity of Heaven Level Martial Artists. Who knows how many more Heaven Level Martial Artists there might be in this secular world?"

Fang Bai laughed and said, "Master speaks wisely."

Xuan Nan smiled faintly, his long eyebrows lifting slightly, causing the few snowflakes resting on them to drift down gently.

"Young Benefactor Fang, please make your move!"

After Xuan Nan finished speaking, his hands slowly came together, his demeanor solemn, and his wide monk's robe suddenly inflated as if it were a ball filled with air.

The oppressive aura and fighting spirit of a Heaven Level Martial Artist also surged toward Fang Bai at that moment.

If an Earth Level Martial Artist had been in place of Fang Bai, that overwhelming pressure and raging fighting spirit from Xuan Nan might have weakened their resolve, leading to a loss without a fight.

And at this moment, where was there any sign of Xuan Nan's supposed frail old age? He was clearly a divine being descended, his presence dominating in all directions.

Chapter 495: Shocking News

"I originally thought Master Xuan Nan might only be slightly stronger than me, but now it seems, even three of me combined would not be his match!"

Long Jingtian looked at Xuan Nan, who had already entered a battle-ready state, with a face full of shock and let out a bitter smile and sigh.

If it were not for Long Jingtian taking the full brunt of the Heaven Level Martial Artist's pressure emanating from Xuan Nan, Dragon Maiden would have been unable to bear it and would have retreated long ago.

Xuan Ku and the others were initially standing shoulder to shoulder with Long Jingtian and his granddaughter, but now they had been pushed back to a spot five meters behind them by Xuan Nan's pressure.

Xuan Ku's expression remained fairly normal, but Jueren and the other elders had already turned pale.

The mere pressure released by Xuan Nan was already unbearable for them; if he were to take action, it would be like a mountain bearing down upon them, the might of lightning and thunder – a single move could annihilate them.

The immense power of a Heaven Level Martial Artist could be glimpsed from this.

Fang Bai, who was only five meters away from Xuan Nan, also put away his calm and collected demeanor, and his face took on a more solemn expression.

The pressure released by Xuan Nan, most of which was directed at Fang Bai, came silently and in waves, as if it had solidified, making the space in front of Fang Bai feel like it was squeezed into a vacuum, making his breath uneven.

Fang Bai felt that if he were replaced by a stone stele standing here, it would certainly not withstand Xuan Nan's pressure and would crack.

It seemed that Xuan Nan was also aware of his extraordinary combat strength, and thus he directly exerted eight parts of his power to probe.

Fang Bai circulated the "Dragon-Tiger-Lion-Elephant Technique," prompting the True Yuan inside his body to whirl crazily, releasing an aura that resisted the pressure from Xuan Nan, a Heaven Level Martial Artist.

In fact, without using True Yuan, Fang Bai could withstand Xuan Nan's pressure with his robust physique alone, but that would be too shocking for the world to accept. Until a life-and-death situation, Fang Bai did not intend to reveal this; otherwise, Xuan Nan and others would regard him as a monster.

After all, no matter how powerful a martial artist is, they are still made of flesh and blood. Without the protection of True Yuan, how could flesh and blood be harder than iron or stone? That would already be beyond the comprehension of ordinary humans.

"Master, please forgive my offense!"

After withstanding the pressure from Xuan Nan, Fang Bai let out a loud shout, his figure shook, and he swept to Xuan Nan's front at an incredible speed, throwing a punch.

His body moved like a dragon soaring through the skies, his fist roared like a tiger accompanied by thunder.

The Dragon Soaring to the Heavens Technique, paired with the Tiger Roar Thunder Fist, bore the invisible yet mighty force of True Essence, and with an unstoppable and invincible momentum, Fang Bai launched an attack at Xuan Nan.

The Chaos Origin Energy in Fang Bai's Qi Sea merged gold, wood, water, fire, earth, wind, and thunder – the seven types of True Yuan. As his cultivation level and realm advanced, the Chaos Origin Energy continued to evolve.

Now, if Fang Bai were to look within using his Divine Sense, he would see that the cluster of Chaos Origin Energy floating in his Qi Sea had grown to the size of a pigeon egg. The seven different properties of True Yuan became even more distinct yet still clung closely together, producing and restraining each other, as if they were enacting the natural laws of Heaven and Earth Dao.

Though it was just a small cluster of Chaos Origin Energy, it contained extraordinary power. Once fully unleashed, its strength would be immeasurable.

Fang Bai, though capable of challenging those above his own level, did not dare to underestimate Xuan Nan, the super strong martial artist who was only a step away from entering the middle phase of Heaven Level.

In his attack, Fang Bai's fist was wrapped with Chaos Origin Energy, and his punch seemed to bring with it the sharpness of metal, the vitality of wood, the vigor of water, the ferocity of fire, the weight of earth, the freedom of wind, and the wantonness of thunder, as if the forces of nature were all manifesting in this single blow.

Fang Bai's strike was earth-shattering and seemingly unstoppable.

"If his punch were aimed at me, I might not be able to withstand it!"

Long Jingtian's eyes widened as he watched Fang Bai, his figure turning into a blur and his fist striking straight out. It was then that he truly believed that Fang Bai's challenge to Xuan Nan was not out of youthful arrogance or impulsive passion.

He truly had the strength to fight against a Heaven Level Martial Artist.

The old monks of Shaolin, including Xuan Ku and Abbot Jueren, also felt the tremendous and vast power contained within Fang Bai's punch, all drawing a sharp breath of cold air as their eyes filled with shock and fear.

Especially Abbot Jueren, who now realized that during their exchange moments ago, Fang Bai had actually held back; otherwise, just with the punch before them, Fang Bai could have shattered him to pieces, sending his soul to the Western Paradise.

The Sweeping Monk Xuan Ku was filled with shame, finding it laughable that he had previously wanted to take his senior brother's place in a battle with Fang Bai. If it weren't for being stopped by his senior brother, he would have surely faced a crushing defeat.

The Dragon Maiden had once sworn in front of her grandfather that she would overtake Fang Bai, but Fang Bai's punch had now completely crushed her hopes.

She was merely at mid Profound Level, whereas Fang Bai could fight a Heaven Level Martial Artist; the disparity in strength was so vast it was despairing!

When Fang Bai threw his punch, True Yuan vibrated vehemently, and its oppressive force was overwhelming. A hundred tigers roared in unison while thunder rolled continuously. The entire stone platform was engulfed by the force of his punch.

The fluttering snowflakes that were leisurely falling towards the stone platform dissipated into nothingness several feet above it, due to the force of the punch.

Master Xuan Nan saw that Fang Bai's punch subtly contained an aspect of the Heaven and Earth Dao, its power unimaginably tremendous, and a flash of astonishment swept through his eyes as his pupils contracted slightly.

"Well met!"

Master Xuan Nan's eyes widened, his aura surged once more, and with a thunderous shout, he extended a single palm to meet the oncoming punch from Fang Bai with a "Prajna Palm".

The Prajna Palm, evolved by the Dharma Grandmaster from the "Great Prajna Sutra," was profound and vast, containing a thread of the Buddha's mystical secrets.

With the Prajna Palm that Master Xuan Nan executed, Buddhist chants resonated around him, as if a monk was reciting scriptures, carrying a power that cleansed the spirit, instilling a sense of peace and tranquility that prevented any rise of violent killing intent.

This palm had the power to affect the emotions of a martial artist and dissolve their fighting spirit,

and martial artists with weaker resolve or less sturdy states of mind would immediately crumble under its influence.

However, Fang Bai was not affected by this palm technique in the slightest.

In his former life, Fang Bai's will had been tempered over ten thousand of years and countless trials. His resolve and mental fortitude, unmatched by anyone, were impervious to any external influence that sought to sway his emotions or shake his determination.

The collision between the Tiger Roar Thunder Fist and the Prajna Palm did not result in the earth-shattering noise and shockwaves of True Yuan that everyone had anticipated. In fact, not even their clothing or hair stirred in response.

Their fists and palms met, but they did not separate immediately. Their lips were tightly pressed, and their expressions were indescribably solemn and serious.

The valley fell into silence, with the Dragon Maiden, Ghost Hand, and the others staring wide-eyed, tensely watching the standoff on the stone platform between the elder and the younger, their hearts suspended in suspense.

"Why have they stopped fighting? The victor has yet to be decided..."

The Dragon Maiden, seeing Fang Bai and Master Xuan Nan motionless for a long time, couldn't help but frown and whisper.

"Look at their feet..."

Long Jingtian whispered to his granddaughter.

Chapter 496: My Master is Someone Skilled at Creating Miracles!

"Under their feet?"

Dragon Maiden followed Long Jingtian's gaze and looked closely, only then did she notice the giant stone platform under Fang Bai and Xuan Nan's feet, which was several zhang in circumference and extremely tough, had unexpectedly developed visible cracks.

It turned out that when they issued their True Essence Force during the fist and palm contact, it surged into the stone platform below through their feet, and as a result, the massive stone platform couldn't withstand the simultaneous impact of the two robust True Essence Forces and began to crack from where both individuals were standing, extending outwards in all directions.

If this continued, the stone platform might very well collapse after a couple more exchanges.

"Both of them have reached a realm where they can summon and control their True Essence at will, with astonishing precision. Incredible! This isn't something that can be achieved overnight. How did Fang Bai manage to do this?"

Long Jingtian once again felt amazed.

Xuan Nan was a centenarian Shaolin prodigy, so Long Jingtian was not surprised by his strength, taking it as only natural.

But Fang Bai was merely in his twenties and not particularly well-known before, so his performance greatly shocked Long Jingtian.

Based on the speed of Fang Bai's movement when he left the "Martial Dao Tower" and the power behind the punch he just threw, Long Jingtian felt that if he were to face Fang Bai, the scales of victory would probably tip slightly in Fang Bai's favor.

Fang Bai was still so young, if after another ten or twenty years, how powerful would his abilities become?

By then, even if Master Xuan Nan was still in good health, he would likely have to admit defeat in Fang Bai's presence, wouldn't he?

"Who could the Master who taught Fang Bai his Martial Arts Techniques be? Being able to mold Fang Bai so powerfully, could they be an entity even stronger than a Heaven Level Martial Artist?"

Long Jingtian looked at Fang Bai's upright figure on the stone platform, his thoughts drifting as he began to take a deep interest in Fang Bai's "Master."

Unfortunately, Long Jingtian was unaware that the so-called "Master" Fang Bai spoke of didn't actually exist; he was merely a fictitious character made up by Fang Bai.

Fang Bai's strength was due to the countless past life Martial Arts Techniques and secret techniques in his mind, and the body he had taken over was the seldom-seen Chaos True Body. The combination of both meant he was destined for greatness.

"Master is formidable!"

"Young Benefactor Fang isn't bad either!"

"I put all my strength into that punch, but Master, you still held back, didn't you?"

"Hehe, Young Benefactor Fang is the first to make this old monk use up to eighty percent of his strength."

"Master, let us continue! You have not defeated me yet!"

"Does Young Benefactor Fang still have the confidence to battle? Could it be that you have a winning ace up your sleeve?"

"Haha, you'll know once you try, Master!"

"Good! If I do not defeat you within three moves, I shall consider myself defeated!"

On the stone platform, Fang Bai and Xuan Nan finished their conversation, and their figures simultaneously retreated, creating a distance of three zhang between them.

The onlookers heard the exchange between the two clearly, and everyone except for Ghost Hand displayed an expression of expectation, thinking that Fang Bai had not lost yet because Xuan Nan had not used his full strength.

Now that Xuan Nan had declared that if he didn't defeat Fang Bai within three moves, he would lose the duel, it indicated that this Shaolin marvel was prepared to give his all.

Xuan Ku and Jueren were certain of Xuan Nan's victory, and they looked forward to his upcoming full-power attack with anticipation mixed with excitement.

Long Jingtian and Dragon Maiden, however, were somewhat worried, concerned that Fang Bai wouldn't be able to withstand Xuan Nan's full-force attack, and might be injured as a result.

Ghost Hand held an almost fanatical admiration and blind faith in Fang Bai, firmly believing that Fang Bai would not lose.

The snowstorm had intensified quite a bit from before, with the strong north wind whipping up the heavy snowfall from the sky and pouring into the valley. If one didn't focus carefully now, they could hardly make out the figures of the two on the stone platform.

Long Jingtian and Xuan Ku took big steps forward, moving closer to the direction of the stone platform, hoping to gain a clearer understanding and perhaps derive some insight from the fight between Fang Bai and Xuan Nan.

Old monks like Jueren and Jueyi also didn't want to miss the rare battle between strong fighters, so they moved a few meters closer.

Knowing their limits and aware that they couldn't withstand the oppressive force and True Essence shockwaves produced by Fang Bai and Xuan Nan's exchange, Ghost Hand and Dragon Maiden remained where they were without moving.

"Hey, aren't you worried about your master?"

Dragon Maiden shot a glance at Ghost Hand, noticing not a single shade of anxiety on his face, she couldn't help but ask.

"Why should I be worried?"

Ghost Hand countered.

"That last strike, your master put all his effort into it, but Master Xuan Nan still held back some strength! From this, we can infer that your master is no match for Master Xuan Nan!"

"Who wins and who loses is only known after the battle! Let me tell you, my master is good at creating miracles!"

Ghost Hand said with pride on his face.

When Ghost Hand first became Fang Bai's disciple, he was merely a Yellow Level Martial Artist. In just over half a year, he became unbeatable at the Profound Level.

And Fang Bai himself, being merely at the middle stage of the Earth Level, was able to hold his ground against a Heaven Level Martial Artist.

These were the miracles created by Fang Bai.

Aside from him, who else in this world could achieve such feats?

"Master is overly confident, challenging a Heaven Level Martial Artist; the disciple blindly worships, lavishing empty flattery! This master and disciple pair truly is... is truly exceptional!"

Dragon Maiden muttered under her breath.

Ghost Hand chuckled, "heh heh", without paying her any more attention, his gaze sharp as lightning, piercing through the heavy curtains of snow toward the two increasingly blurred figures on the stone platform.

"Amitabha! Young Benefactor Fang, be careful!"

The aged and resounding voice of Master Xuan Nan rose amidst the wind and snow, signaling the start of another assault.

He swept his broad sleeves against the wind, rolling dozens of snowflakes into his sleeve, then with the warmth of the True Essence Force, he compacted them into an ice leaf and flicked it forward with his finger.

Whoosh—

The ice leaf shot out from beneath Master Xuan Nan's sleeve, carrying the powerful True Essence Force, breaking through the air and shooting straight toward Fang Bai.

Whoosh—

Whoosh—

Whoosh—

Before the first ice leaf reached Fang Bai, a second, third, and fourth were successively flicked from Master Xuan Nan's fingertips, all aiming directly at Fang Bai.

These small ice leaves, imbued with the True Essence Force of a Heaven Level expert, were extremely sturdy. Even if they struck an iron plate, they would leave deep marks.

"To think Shaolin's Thousand Leaf Finger, when used by Master Xuan Nan, could be so formidable!"

Within Shaolin's secret techniques, the Thousand Leaf Finger wasn't particularly outstanding. Yet, in the hands of Xuan Nan, it turned decay into magic, eliciting great admiration from Long Jingtian.

The four ice leaves, carrying the supreme True Essence Force and moving at great speed, arrived in front of Fang Bai in a flash—one targeting his chest while the other three blocked Fang Bai's left, right, and upward escape routes, cutting off his chance to dodge.

In other words, Fang Bai had no other option but to hard block the ice leaf aimed straight at his chest.

The problem was, that tiny ice leaf was not only exceptionally strong but also sharper than a blade's edge. How could Fang Bai defend against it with just his bare hands?

Even if he could barely block it, getting injured was inevitable.

In the eyes of Long Jingtian and the others, Fang Bai's strength was already inferior to Xuan Nan's. Once injured, his combat power would definitely be compromised, which was almost tantamount to defeat.

Chapter 497: One Finger

Xuan Nan's strike was truly without mercy.

After trading blows with Fang Bai just now, Xuan Nan knew that Fang Bai's combat power was not much weaker than his own, possibly even surpassing Long Jingtian. Even if Fang Bai couldn't catch the ice leaves shot by his Thousand Leaf Finger and got injured, the injuries would not be too severe.

For martial artists, sustaining injuries was nothing out of the ordinary. As long as the injuries weren't serious, applying Shaolin's specially formulated medicine for healing wounds would soon lead to recovery.

"Haha...."

A few hearty laughs came from Fang Bai's mouth as his figure swayed. Raising both hands in succession, the four enormously powerful and incomparably sharp ice leaves propelled by Xuan Nan with the Thousand Leaf Finger, as if trapped within an invisible Heaven's Net, were easily caught by Fang Bai.

Fang Bai's hand movements were mystical, containing the rhythm of the great Dao of heaven and earth, so fast that even Xuan Nan couldn't see clearly.

Everyone present was stunned by this miraculous move from Fang Bai, their faces showing shock.

This was the "Intercepting Dragon Hand" that Fang Bai had created years ago. Back then, he could even catch and block spiritual artifacts that possessed the power to move mountains and calm seas, and he could intercept divine dragons that bore limitless divine power. Now, dealing with merely a few ice leaves was effortless.

"The second move!"

Xuan Nan had said he would defeat Fang Bai within three moves. Seeing that his first strike was easily resolved by Fang Bai, he let out a deep shout, and the second strike was already on its way.

There was originally some distance between him and Fang Bai, but then his slender figure suddenly launched forward, almost reaching Fang Bai with instantaneous movement, then thrust out directly with his right index finger.

This seemingly simple finger strike was anything but. It was as if Xuan Nan had condensed all the essence of his martial arts and all his robust True Yuan into this one point.

This was the renowned "One-Finger Chan" of Shaolin. When executed by Xuan Nan, the diminutive finger seemed like a 10,000-catty hammer smashing down or like a towering sword that could pierce through gold and crack stones, with an unstoppable force.

Hei—

Fang Bai's eyes sparkled with brilliance. He circulated the Dragon-Tiger-Lion-Elephant Technique, let out a loud shout, and once again threw a punch with the Tiger Roar Thunder Fist.

At the tip of his fist was contained Chaos Origin Energy; it was his peak strike.

He wanted to break all techniques with a single punch and shatter the might of Xuan Nan's committed strike.

The fingertip met the tip of the fist, like a hammer striking a great stone. True Yuan burst forth in all directions, causing the two men

to have their garments fluttering and their hair dancing in the air.

This clash between the two was a real collision of strength, where no trickery would work, and the stronger one could be instantly discerned.

Xuan Nan's slender figure only swayed slightly, while Fang Bai's feet slid backward along the ground, traveling several meters before he managed to stand firm.

In this exchange, it was clear that Fang Bai had been at a disadvantage.

The group of Shaolin monks, led by Xuan Ku, wore looks of joy, their expressions invigorated, thinking that since Fang Bai couldn't even withstand one strike from Xuan Nan, this sparring match was surely lost.

Long Jingtian and the Dragon Maiden showed concern on their faces, worried that Fang Bai might be injured.

Ghost Hand remained composed; he knew that just because his master, Fang Bai, was at a disadvantage did not mean defeat.

After Ghost Hand became Fang Bai's disciple, the cultivation technique he practiced was one taught by Fang Bai. This technique connected with the natural forces of heaven and earth, drawing in all Essence Energy while emphasizing the simultaneous refinement of body and breath. With each increase in strength by a realm, his True Yuan would become more profound and pure, and his physical body would grow extremely powerful, thus granting him the ability to challenge those beyond his level.

Take Ghost Hand for example: when he faced an opponent much stronger than himself, he didn't panic at all, calm and fearless. Even if he was bloodied and covered in wounds, as long as the injuries weren't fatal, he could possibly turn the tide and win.

Ghost Hand believed that the cultivation technique practiced by his master must be even more wonderful and mysterious and not something that could be easily defeated.

Xuan Nan repelled Fang Bai, but no trace of joy or pride could be seen on his face; instead, he looked even more solemn.

In that last strike, Xuan Nan had used his full strength. Although he gained the upper hand, Fang Bai was merely a bit disordered in his breath and hadn't been injured, which surprised Xuan Nan.

Xuan Nan knew that if Fang Bai had relied solely on pure True Yuan for defense, he definitely wouldn't have been able to withstand that strike and would have suffered internal injuries, leading to impaired combat capabilities and possibly losing the ability to fight again.

Had he already cultivated the legendary Vajra Indestructible Body?

Xuan Nan suddenly remembered that in the Ancient Martial World of Huaxia's ancient times, there were two major types of cultivation techniques—refining the body and refining the breath. However, because body refinement was extremely arduous, requiring great determination and perseverance, and progress in strength was slow, martial artists gradually abandoned it.

By now, nearly all the cultivation techniques passed down in the Ancient Martial World are those that refine the breath, and even if body refinement techniques still exist, martial artists are no longer willing to approach them.

Xuan Nan was aware that the purpose of body refinement techniques was to stimulate the body's potential through various extreme exercises, in order to achieve a powerful physique.

When the body becomes strong to a certain degree, one could rely solely on physical strength to compete against the True Essence Force released by a breath refinement master.

Body refinement is harsh; without decades of effort, it is hard to show its power. While the Shaolin Scripture Pavilion does inherit a body refinement technique named the Vajra Indestructible Technique, said to have been created by the Dharma Grandmaster himself, not a single martial monk has taken up its practice.

Even Xuan Nan himself, when he was young, chose the path of breath refinement and never considered body refinement techniques.

When cultivated to the extreme, the Vajra Indestructible Technique endows one with a Vajra Indestructible Body. It is said that at that level, a martial artist has skin as tough as copper and bones as strong as iron, with tough meridians impenetrable by swords and blades.

According to Shaolin records, in nearly two thousand years since the establishment of Shaolin, the only person who truly cultivated the Vajra Indestructible Body was the Dharma Grandmaster himself.

This young man before him had definitely cultivated a body refinement technique similar to the Vajra Indestructible Technique, and it must have been substantially achieved; otherwise, he couldn't have withstood Xuan Nan's strike.

Xuan Nan looked at Fang Bai again and saw that after being repelled, there wasn't a hint of dejection, but rather he was excited, his eyes burning with an even stronger desire to battle.

"Grandmaster is indeed formidable! Let's go again!"

Fang Bai excitedly shouted, and like a whirlwind, he rushed toward Xuan Nan, swinging his fists, launching a tempestuous attack like a storm.

As for the three moves that would determine the winner, which Xuan Nan and he had agreed upon earlier, Fang Bai had already cast aside the notion. He only wanted a hearty battle against Xuan Nan, this rare opponent, to fight to his heart's content.

Although he had been entangled in various matters recently, Fang Bai had always managed to find time for cultivation, especially after obtaining a large number of Essence Stones from Zhuge Dingtian's tomb, which considerably accelerated his progress. His Qi Sea was brimming with True Yuan, restless and on the verge of reaching the barrier of high Earth Level.

Sparring with someone like Xuan Nan, who could threaten and pressure him, was the best way to stimulate his body's potential to the fullest, far superior to regular body refinement practices—it could even result in a potential breakthrough.

Why would Fang Bai miss such an opportunity? He was also worried that Xuan Nan would suddenly propose a truce and refuse to fight any longer, so as he launched his attack, his fists and palms flew, delivering relentless and dense attacks like rain, thundering without giving Xuan Nan any chance to speak.

Chapter 498: Fang Bai's Insane Move!

Xuan Nan saw Fang Bai's attacks coming like a tide, almost crazily, and faintly guessed what he was thinking—he intended to find Fang Bai's flaw and defeat him so that both sides could rest.

However, Fang Bai's combat strength was not much weaker than his, with each move as ferocious as the last, True Yuan grandly enveloping everything about; Xuan Nan for a moment couldn't find a good opportunity to win with a single strike. Instead, if he was not careful, he could be defeated.

"This young benefactor Fang, treating me as a practice target!"

A wry smile emerged on the corner of Xuan Nan's mouth, and, with no other choice, he concentrated and put forth his full effort to respond.

Two Heaven Level masters, their figures separating and joining on the stone platform, fists and feet constantly colliding, the sounds of tiger's roar and thunder occasionally emanating, as well as the rumbling sound of stone chunks being smashed and scattered into the air.

Their speed was so fast it dazzled the onlookers; besides Long Jingtian, no one else could clearly see what was happening.

Xuan Nan, ultimately, was one notch stronger than Fang Bai. At the beginning, Fang Bai took the initiative and the upper hand, but shortly after, Xuan Nan turned the tables and pressed on Fang Bai. Out of ten moves, seven or eight were his attacks.

But as soon as he showed any slack, Fang Bai would launch a fierce counterattack.

Fang Bai seemed like an unkillable roach, repeatedly repelled by Xuan Nan, but time and again, he charged back, exhibiting an ever more valiant fighting spirit.

Xuan Nan, who had secluded himself for decades in the "Martial Dao Tower," believed he had refined his state of mind to one beyond joy and sorrow, detached from worldly matters. Yet this battle with Fang Bai stirred in him a competitive spirit, making him fight with full force and without mercy in each and every move and pose.

Xuan Nan's attacks carried a monumental momentum, majestic and imposing, like huge waves sweeping across, crashing against the shore, seeking to destroy and engulf everything in their path.

However, Fang Bai was like a small boat amongst these giant waves, bobbing and drifting, seemingly at risk of capsizing at any moment, yet always managing to turn perils into safety at the last second.

"Splendid! Absolutely splendid!"

Long Jingtian was utterly captivated, his face full of excitement.

From the movement techniques and combat between Fang Bai and Xuan Nan, he glimpsed some Martial Dao Arcane that he himself had realized, and something clicked in his mind, subtly elevating his cultivation level.

On the stone platform, the duel between the old and young grew faster, the True Yuan even fiercer, the fight increasingly intense. Fang Bai, the one slightly weaker, finally began to show signs of injury.

Bang——

Amidst the myriad palm shadows, Fang Bai's chest was struck by Xuan Nan's palm, blood trickling from the corner of his mouth as he staggered back several meters.

...

Whoosh——

Xuan Nan's monk robes whipped violently, and in an instant, snowflakes flew like arrows, the wild wind cut like knives, enveloping Fang Bai. One by one, inch-long wounds appeared on Fang Bai's body, turning him into a bloodied figure in an instant.

...

Boom——

With their four fists colliding, Fang Bai's body was sent flying high, blood spraying the sky, nearly being blasted down off the stone platform.

...

On the surface, Fang Bai's injuries seemed quite severe, but in fact, most of them were just superficial. The few mouthfuls of blood he spat out were due to the internal impact from the True Yuan Force, creating some congestion within his body, which Fang Bai intentionally expelled.

After expelling the congested blood, the circulation of True Yuan became even smoother, and Fang Bai actually felt more comfortable than before.

Fang Bai's physical body was tough, such that even if he used his flesh to directly withstand the attacks of martial artists below the Heaven Level, he wouldn't get injured. However, now he was repeatedly injured by Xuan Nan, which showed just how sharp and powerful Xuan Nan's attacks were.

As long as his inner organs were not severely damaged, his combat power wouldn't be significantly affected. Fang Bai circulated his cultivation technique and stimulated his True Yuan, carrying his injuries with him as he shouted furiously. He continued to fiercely battle with Xuan Nan like a devilish deity.

Xuan Nan had made Fang Bai spit out fresh blood multiple times, thinking he would lose his ability to fight and voluntarily concede defeat. However, with every retreat after being struck, Fang Bai would casually wipe away the bloodstains and then pounce back into the fray, fighting tenaciously with him,

making Xuan Nan inwardly curse his luck.

Although Xuan Nan seemed to have the upper hand, with every repulsion of Fang Bai, the force of the counterattack he received was not small either, causing him quite some trouble. The excessive consumption of True Yuan made his complexion appear a few shades paler than before the exchange of blows, and his slim body was trembling slightly, like a flickering candle in the wind that could be snuffed out at any moment.

In the blink of an eye, hundreds of exchanges had passed, and the huge stone platform under Fang Bai and Xuan Nan's feet had cracked even more, creating larger fissures, with some areas even collapsing.

The cultivation technique practiced by Fang Bai was unique. Even though the Chaos Origin Energy in his Qi Sea was still weak and not at the state of circulating and generating endlessly, when he circulated his cultivation technique, he was constantly able to absorb Essence Energy from between heaven and earth. This was something Xuan Nan could not compare with.

Therefore, as Fang Bai consumed True Yuan, he could also receive replenishment from the Heaven and Earth Origin Energy. In contrast, Xuan Nan's True Yuan was swiftly and continuously diminishing. Under this cycle of depletion and augmentation, Fang Bai gradually overturned the disadvantage and managed to fight Xuan Nan to a draw, with both defense and offense.

If Fang Bai was to take out some Essence Stones from his Spatial Ring during the battle and absorb Essence Energy to replenish himself at any time, he might have gained the upper hand long ago. But that would be akin to opportunism; winning against Xuan Nan in such a manner would be meaningless to Fang Bai, and he disdained to do it.

In fact, Fang Bai had many more trump cards he could use. Defeating Xuan Nan wouldn't be difficult.

For instance, the Blood-Drinking Mad Blade he obtained from Zhuge Dingtian's tomb chamber was an extremely powerful Spiritual Artifact. With a single slash, Xuan Nan would find it very difficult to defend.

But Fang Bai wanted to fight Xuan Nan relying purely on his own strength, pushing his potential to its utmost limit.

Xuan Nan saw that Fang Bai was covered in wounds. Had it been any other martial artist, they would have already succumbed. Yet, Fang Bai remained as vigorous as a dragon, which made Xuan Nan sigh at his formidable physical strength and also grow somewhat anxious. He thought that if the fight continued this way, he might be the one to face defeat.

After all, Xuan Nan was already 120 years old. Although his True Yuan was profound, his bodily functions had begun to decline and couldn't compare with those of a young person brimming with vitality. Once his True Yuan was exhausted, he could not contend with Fang Bai with sheer physical strength alone.

"Amitabha! Young Benefactor Fang, we have fought for too long. Victory or defeat will be decided in this last move!"

All of a sudden, Xuan Nan's eyes blazed with intent as he burst into a roar.

His True Yuan roared like a lion, transforming into waves of sound that burst forth from his mouth, causing the space before him to seemingly ripple with the vibrations.

With the horrifying sound of the lion's roar, he flipped his right palm and struck out towards Fang Bai.

One palm became ten, ten palms became a hundred, a hundred became a thousand, as if a thousand Buddhas were simultaneously striking out, their palms covering the sky and enveloping Fang Bai from all sides.

Buddhist Lion Roar!

Thousand Hands Tathagata Palm!

Xuan Nan executed two great Shaolin ultimate moves at the same time, and he did not hesitate to stimulate his potential, doubling the power of his attack.

Xuan Nan had made up his mind to wholly defeat Fang Bai with this final strike.

Not only to win honor for himself but also to gain prestige for the Shaolin.

No one expected that in the face of Xuan Nan's strongest strike, Fang Bai would make a move that left everyone dumbstruck in astonishment.

He actually met Xuan Nan's Thousand Hands Tathagata Palm with his own chest.

Chapter 499: With Outside Help, Breaking Barriers!

"What is he trying to do?"

"Is he seeking death?"

"He's insane..."

"Master Xuan Nan, please show mercy!"

...

Xuan Ku and others watching the battle from afar saw Fang Bai's suicidal move, some were dumbfounded, and some called out anxiously.

Even Ghost Hand, who had always been indifferent, suddenly changed color.

Although he had almost blind faith in Fang Bai and knew of Fang Bai's robust physique, how could Fang Bai withstand that palm strike from Xuan Nan, which could collapse even a body of steel?

Even Xuan Nan himself was taken aback, unable to understand why Fang Bai would do such a thing.

Although Xuan Nan's True Yuan had reached the realm where he could control it at will, that palm strike had unleashed all his latent potential, concentrating twelve parts of his True Essence Force. It could be said that it was the strongest strike of his life, unstoppable and irreversible.

Thump—

Under the watchful eyes of the audience, Fang Bai's chest was heavily imprinted with a palm, and his body soared high into the air like a cannonball, crossing over the stone platform, and landing in the snow a dozen meters away.

Looking at Fang Bai lying motionless in the snow, the scene fell into utter silence.

"Amitabha!"

Xuan Nan chanted the Buddha's name with a face full of regret and guilt.

He intended to check on Fang Bai, but the side effects of unleashing his body's potential in that strike manifested immediately, leaving him nearly drained.

He could only sit down slowly and began to circulate his cultivation technique to recuperate.

"Master!"

After standing still for a moment, Ghost Hand rushed to Fang Bai's side with red eyes.

Just as he was about to help Fang Bai, he suddenly sensed a fluctuation of energy from Fang Bai's body and then his face showed sheer ecstasy.

Normally, after a martial artist suffers a heavy blow, their energy fluctuation should be very weak, but Fang Bai's current energy fluctuation was exceptionally strong, which was an abnormal sign.

Ghost Hand's cultivation technique was imparted by Fang Bai, so he knew this phenomenon foretold that his master's cultivation level was about to break through and advance once again.

"So Master didn't just take a beating deliberately. He was using Master Xuan Nan's profound True Essence Force to break through his own barriers and seize an opportunity for breakthrough! This method wouldn't work for other martial artists at all. Only someone with a physical body as powerful as Master's would dare to risk trying it!"

Ghost Hand thought to himself.

Following Ghost Hand were Long Jingtian and Dragon Maiden, who had also rushed over and sensed Fang Bai's intense energy fluctuation, and they couldn't help but feel astonishment.

Dragon Maiden didn't know the reason for this, while Long Jingtian looked utterly shocked.

"This kid is simply crazy! If he couldn't withstand Master Xuan Nan's strike, he would be reduced to a pile of dust and bones!"

Long Jingtian murmured.

"Grandfather, Fang Bai... he won't be in trouble, will he?"

Dragon Maiden's beautiful eyes stared at Fang Bai's body lying in the snow, full of worry and anxiety.

"He's in trouble? Ha... What trouble could he possibly have!"

Long Jingtian pointed at the motionless Fang Bai and said, "Not only is this kid fine, but he has actually turned misfortune into a blessing! However, what he did is something that cost him his life, something that others can't simply learn!"

"Turned misfortune into a blessing? What do you mean?"

Upon hearing her grandfather say Fang Bai was unharmed, Dragon Maiden breathed a sigh of relief internally, yet she was puzzled by the phrase "turned misfortune into a blessing."

In her view, Fang Bai's injuries were severe, and the abnormal fluctuations of energy seemed more like the "fleeting resurgence" often seen in martial artists right before they died.

"To put it simply, Fang Bai directed the True Essence Force from Master Xuan Nan's palm strike into his own body, and with the help of this external force, he broke through the barrier of his own cultivation... It seems it won't be long before he advances to the next level!"

Long Jingtian explained in a low voice, then muttered to himself, "There are legends of cultivation techniques that can make a martial artist's flesh, bones, and blood as hard as steel. This kid's physical

body is strong; he must have cultivated some sort of body refinement technique! But to be able to withstand a palm strike from Master Xuan Nan, that's a miracle!"

Dragon Maiden glanced at Ghost Hand, thinking back to what he had just said, "My master is a man adept at creating miracles." She originally thought he was just flattering Fang Baima, but now it seemed to be true.

With Fang Bai's mid-level Earth strength, to challenge Master Xuan Nan, who possessed Heaven Level Martial Artist strength, and not to be defeated even after hundreds of moves, was a miracle in itself.

To survive Master Xuan Nan's palm strike with his flesh was yet another miracle.

To use the force of Master Xuan Nan's palm strike to break his own cultivation barrier and seize the opportunity to reach a breakthrough was an extraordinary miracle.

Dragon Maiden had always admired her grandfather the most, but the series of miracles that occurred to Fang Bai caused her a great shock and impact, bringing forth a sense of admiration for Fang Bai, and even placing him on the same level as her grandfather.

At the same time, Old Monks like Xuan Ku had also reached Master Xuan Nan's side. They could see that Master Xuan Nan was merely overtaxed and would be fine after some restorative breathing, which relieved them. They stood around Master Xuan Nan, acting as his protectors.

After a moment, Master Xuan Nan's period of restorative breathing ended, and he slowly opened his eyes.

His face was still somewhat pale, his eyes expressing deep fatigue.

The previous strike, though it grievously injured Fang Bai, had also triggered his body's potential and left him with lingering afflictions that were hard to rid, bringing his already declining bodily functions to the brink of exhaustion. What could have been three to five more years of life might now not even last a single year.

"A thought of Buddha, a thought of demon. Out of a moment of competitiveness, I gave rise to demonic thoughts... Amitabha! My sin! My sin!"

Looking at Fang Bai lying silently in the snow in the distance, Master Xuan Nan fell into deep self-reproach.

He had been focused on regulating his own breathing and was currently very weak. Also, the distance between him and Fang Bai was substantial; therefore, he had not sensed the abnormal energy fluctuations from Fang Bai and believed Fang Bai had fallen to his palm strike.

"The master need not blame himself, Fang Bai is not going to die!"

Hearing Master Xuan Nan murmuring in self-reproach and self-pity, Long Jingtian's voice came from afar.

"Good, very good!"

Master Xuan Nan's brows lifted, and his expression lightened slightly.

If Long Jingtian said Fang Bai would not die, that meant Fang Bai's injuries weren't critical, and since Fang Bai's physical body was strong, far superior to ordinary martial artists, he should recover soon.

Fang Bai was lying in the snow, swiftly becoming covered with a thick layer of snow. Ghost Hand sensed the energy fluctuations inside him growing increasingly intense, knowing that Fang Bai's breakthrough moment was critical. Far from daring to clear the snow from him, he instead stepped back a few paces.

"You, as a disciple, don't seem to care about your master at all! Can't you see he's covered in snow?"

Dragon Maiden gave Ghost Hand a look and hesitated for a moment. Then, she walked up to Fang Bai, about to kneel down to clear the snow off him.

"Dragon Maiden, be careful!"

Long Jingtian sensed the energy fluctuations within Fang Bai suddenly becoming fierce and, with a sense of alarm, he uttered a soft shout, hurried forward, grabbed Dragon Maiden's arm, and quickly drew her back.

Chapter 500: Thanks for Your Help!

Just then, an extremely fierce aura erupted from Fang Bai's body, violently sweeping all around. The accumulated snow within a three-zhang radius of Fang Bai's body was powerfully swept away, and even many of the gravel pieces beneath the snow were sent flying in all directions along with it.

"That was close!"

Dragon Maiden patted her chest, her complexion a bit pale. If her grandfather hadn't promptly pulled her back, she would probably have been injured by that fierce aura.

"Hmph, I was just trying to help him by clearing the snow off his body, and this is how he repays me. No good deed goes unpunished!"

Dragon Maiden said, puffing herself up in anger.

Long Jingtian waved his hand and said, "Don't blame him. He probably did it unconsciously."

"He... he's moving!"

Dragon Maiden suddenly opened her eyes wide and pointed at Fang Bai with her delicate hand.

Long Jingtian turned his head and saw Fang Bai's shoulders twitch, then he propped himself up with his hands and sat on the ground.

He didn't stand up, but instead sat cross-legged in the same spot, eyes on his nose, nose on his heart, entering a selfless cultivation state. His previously restless aura gradually quieted down.

"This kid, he must be advancing in realm! His battle power was only slightly weaker than Master Xuan Nan's. If his cultivation level advances by one rank, wouldn't he truly be on par with Master Xuan Nan?"

Long Jingtian watched Fang Bai with a solemn and dignified expression and couldn't help but admire him inwardly.

A moment later, Fang Bai's body trembled slightly, and the next moment he slowly opened his eyes and swept his gaze over towards Ghost Hand and the others.

"Congratulations on advancing in realm, Master!"

Seeing that Fang Bai had exited his cultivation state, Ghost Hand stepped forward and joyfully said.

Fang Bai let out a hearty laugh, stood up, took a deep breath and said, "That was not an easy advancement, almost cost me my life! Hm, although it was risky, it was worth it!"

"To exchange one's life for a chance to advance in realm, such a crazy thing, probably only you, Fang Bai, could pull it off!"

Long Jingtian pointed at Fang Bai and said with a wry smile.

"If you want to take a shortcut, you have to pay a price! Old Master Long, if you're interested, you might as well give it a try in the future!"

Fang Bai said, teasingly.

Even though his body was covered in injuries, none were severe, especially after his cultivation level had advanced and his True Yuan was abundant. As it circulated within his body, it was healing his wounds on its own.

"To exchange one's life for a chance to advance in realm, this is too crazy and too risky. A slight misstep, and life could be lost... Never mind, I shall still diligently and steadfastly cultivate step by step!"

Long Jingtian shook his head and waved his hand.

Although he possessed the martial artist's spirit of fearing neither life nor death, he did not have Fang Bai's powerful physical body. If he tried to withstand an earth-shattering hit like Xuan Nan had delivered, it would be nothing less than courting death.

If there was even a glimmer of hope, Long Jingtian might dare to take the risk, but he certainly wasn't going to do something that he knew was tantamount to throwing his life away.

On the stone platform, Xuan Nan and the others saw Fang Bai actually stood up and was even chatting and laughing with Long Jingtian and the others. They looked at each other in disbelief, finding it inconceivable.

They thought, with Master Xuan Nan's strike powerful enough to shatter a firm stone stele, Fang Bai, who had countered the palm strike with his flesh and blood, should have been either dead or severely injured. But Fang Bai was seemingly unharmed, which completely exceeded their imaginations.

"How... how is this possible?"

Abbot Jueren from Shaolin watched Fang Bai, dumbfounded, murmuring to himself.

"Amitabha! Young Benefactor Fang is unharmed, my sin is diminished by a fraction! Good indeed! Good indeed!"

Master Xuan Nan joyfully said.

Just then, Fang Bai walked briskly towards the stone platform with a smile on his face, followed closely by Ghost Hand, Long Jingtian, and Dragon Maiden.

"What is he coming over for?"

"Did Uncle Master Xuan Nan injure him? Is he looking for revenge?"

"Protect Uncle Master Xuan Nan!"

"Even if it costs us our lives, we can't let him succeed!"

...

Seeing Fang Bai and his companions suddenly walking in their direction, Abbot Jueren and the other old monks were taken aback, stepping in front of Xuan Nan, who was sitting in a meditative posture, looking at Fang Bai with tension and wariness.

During the previous battle, Xuan Nan had exhausted his True Yuan. Although he had recovered somewhat after regulating his breath, his combat strength was not even half of what it was at his peak.

On the other hand, Fang Bai, although covered in blood, appeared even more formidable than before the fight, with stronger True Yuan fluctuations, clearly indicating not only a full recovery but also an improvement in his power.

Just with the strength that Fang Bai possessed to fight Xuan Nan, if he wanted to harm Xuan Nan, it would be difficult for Jueren, Xuan Ku, and the other old monks to stop him, even if they worked together.

Moreover, the Heaven Level high rank expert Long Jingtian was among those who had come with Fang Bai.

If Long Jingtian and Fang Bai were to join forces against Shaolin, facing the attack of two Heaven Level Martial Artists, Shaolin might indeed follow in the footsteps of Misty Rain Tower and Qingcheng Temple.

"Young Benefactor Fang has no intention to kill, why are you all so tense? Stand aside!"

Xuan Nan, seeing the several old monks in front of him as tense as if facing a great enemy, chided them softly.

At the same time, Xuan Nan was also puzzled; Fang Bai was approaching with a smile, no trace of murderous intent or battle intent on him. What did he want to do?

Xuan Ku, Jueren, and the other old monks, having heard Xuan Nan's reprimand, reluctantly made way, but they still stood by Xuan Nan's side, glaring at Fang Bai with vigilance.

They were ready; if Fang Bai wanted to harm Xuan Nan, they would fight Fang Bai to the death to protect Uncle Master Xuan Nan and help him escape.

"Master Xuan Nan, many thanks for your assistance!"

Fang Bai walked up to Xuan Nan, ignoring the angry glares of Xuan Ku and the other old monks, and gave Xuan Nan a deep bow.

"Why do you say that, young benefactor?"

Xuan Nan, hearing Fang Bai's words, was completely baffled.

"Master, that final strike of yours was powerful and full of True Yuan. It helped me break through a bottleneck and achieve success in advancing to the next level!"

Fang Bai said with a smile, subtly releasing his Martial Artist Aura.

Fang Bai's "Dragon-Tiger-Lion-Elephant Technique" had just reached the third level, the high rank of the Xingyuan Realm, which was equivalent to the high rank of Earth Level in this world of Martial Artists.

If Fang Bai were to fight Xuan Nan now, even if Xuan Nan was at his peak, the two would be evenly matched, with neither being suppressed as had happened before.

"What?"

Upon hearing this, Xuan Nan exclaimed in shock, then released his Aura to sense Fang Bai's True Yuan fluctuations.

He had been busy recovering and had not been paying attention to his surroundings. Only now did he realize that Fang Bai's True Yuan fluctuations seemed even stronger than before their fight, indicating he had indeed advanced to a higher level.

"Amitabha! Young Benefactor Fang is a peerless genius, truly astonishing and unprecedented!"

Xuan Nan proclaimed reverently, filled with admiration.

Fang Bai's current strength, within the Secular Ancient Martial World of Huaxia, meant that aside from Xuan Nan, probably no one else could suppress him anymore.

Such a strong individual had the power to rise above secular laws. If he chose to do good, it would be a blessing for Huaxia. If he turned to evil, the harm he could cause was unimaginable.