

Medical 201

Chapter 201 Arena

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"Mr. Wang, it is my greatest honor to converse with you," he said with shining eyes and sugar-coated words.

Yan Xiaobao followed his senior as they walked toward the arena area, which was the first thing he noticed upon entering the academy grounds. This region was idyllic, rather remote. The mountaintop held five different venues, the farthest from the academy's administrative building.

Currently, aside from the two groups that had come here, no other students were present. However, according to Gao Yan, this was one of the most frequented locations. It was a place for students to settle grudges or engage in training battles.

Four summits were dedicated to arenas. The arenas on the first two summits were surrounded by seats, clearly designed for ranking competitions, whereas the other two smaller summits were open for casual student use whenever convenient.

Wang Jingshen glanced at Yan Xiaobao, and the young boy instantly accepted the challenge, but he calmed himself quickly as he realized he had misunderstood the true meaning behind the exchange of pointers.

He had heard that Yan Xiaobao was a child of unknown origins, personally cared for by the Rong twins. He might be a spoiled brat who had been gently nurtured all his life. However, regardless of Yan Xiaobao's background, he was insignificant compared to Wang Jingshen's renowned family. When his younger brother agreed to compete with Yan Xiaobao to demonstrate their superiority, Wang Jingshen was ecstatic.

"You need to be careful," Rong Xing warned with a worried expression. "Wang Julong is considered an exceptional talent within the Wang Family. He is already ranked as an eight-star student. Losing to him wouldn't be shameful."

"Wang Julong has lived on the mountaintop, much like you, so he might not take the challenge lightly. What's more, make sure to concede before he causes you serious harm," Ma Kong said, lightly patting Yan Xiaobao on the shoulder.

"I swear I'll kill Wang Jingshen," Gao Yan roared fiercely, shooting a venomous glare at the other group.

"He is lower than despicable! Failing to recognize Yan Xiaobao as a man is his own fault! Issuing such a challenge to restore his pride is utterly meaningless. I will make sure he pays for this," Rong Ming agreed, chest burning with anger. He understood that mistaking someone's gender was embarrassing, but reacting in this manner was downright vile.

"Don't worry," Gao Yan said as she reached back to pat Yue Yue on the other shoulder. "We will ensure Wang Jingshen and his followers pay a heavy price for this."

The only one who remained silent was Deng Wu. He simply stood to the side, lips curled in a subtle smile as his dark eyes playfully danced while watching Yan Xiaobao. When his dark eyes locked onto Yan Xiaobao's blue eyes, Yan felt a shiver run through his body. He feared the older boy might see through him and notice Lan Feng. But after a moment of thought, he knew such a thing was impossible since his cultivation had not even reached the Middle Dantian.

Yet, something about Deng Wu left Yan Xiaobao both cautious and uneasy. He sensed Deng Wu was aware of his discomfort and entertained by it.

"We can't concern ourselves too much with him right now," Lan Feng warned. "Your entire focus should be on the opponent standing before you. We'll deal with Deng Wu and everything else later."

Yan Xiaobao forced himself to stop thinking about Deng Wu and slowly walked toward the center of the arena before him. Wang Julong had already moved there and was awaiting Yan Xiaobao's arrival.

Before beginning the exchange of pointers, the two boys had changed clothes, since their long, incredibly exquisite robes were impractical for swift motion during battle. Both were now dressed in tunics and trousers. The tunics covered their upper bodies, providing comfort during movement and combat. The trousers wrapped around their waists, with thick fabric offering some degree of protection. Though the trousers were slightly loose, they ended snugly at the upper thighs where they encircled the legs, ensuring that their clothes wouldn't interfere with their footing during the fight.

Though their clothing styles were similar, the quality was worlds apart. Wang Julong wore garments crafted from the finest silk material, woven to an exceptionally smooth finish and obviously very comfortable. Yan Xiaobao wore clothes that were visibly old and long-worn, crafted from coarse plant-based materials. They suited him well, but were far from luxurious.

Yan Xiaobao's clothing drew sneers and mockery from the Wang Group, who regularly hurled insults at commoner students. His attire didn't surprise either Rong Ming or Rong Xing since they were familiar with his background. However, Gao Yan was slightly astonished, as he hadn't known much about the young boy. Gao Yan suddenly felt an intimate connection to Yan Xiaobao and silently vowed to avenge him someday.

Deng Wu continued to remain unreactive, and his lack of response only made Yan Xiaobao more uneasy.

The two boys stood together in the center of the arena, waiting to hear who would act as the judge. Wang Julong cast a glance at Xu Yue with a superior expression, sneering arrogantly.

Wang Julong was hailed as the only genius this year worthy enough to claim one of the prestigious high mountain courtyards. Already older, he knew he was the sole child in his family capable of rivaling talents born with celestial gifts. His enrollment in the Royal Art Academy was intended to be a grand event.

However, upon arriving today, things were entirely different from what he had expected. None of the other aristocratic families paid him any attention; they were far more curious about the origins of the dazzling child escorted by the City Lord's offspring.

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He entered the academy faster than Yan Xiaobao, dashed up the stairs, and arrived at his mountain courtyard, making other students understand his significance. As he sat in the courtyard and began cultivating, he felt immensely satisfied.

Unfortunately, his cultivation was interrupted when his older brother arrived with his usual group of slumbering thugs to complain to Wang Julong about an overly ambitious new student. Wang Jingshen would certainly challenge him if they were in the same rank, but only those of equal rank could challenge each other—unless a weaker student challenged a stronger one.

Initially, Wang Julong had no interest in avenging his brother until he heard it was a white-haired boy. Only then did he agree to help.

As Wang Julong was about to leave, he noticed a sudden illumination from a courtyard. The light was the signal that the courtyard had found its owner, and when Wang Julong saw the name Yan Xiaobao on the plaque, he almost spat out blood.

Wang Julong was a proud child who had grown up being told he was the future of his family. It was evident that he couldn't tolerate the person who took away what he deserved. The only way to satisfy his raging hatred was to utterly defeat this trash and show the world who the superior cultivator truly was!

As Wang Julong pondered these malicious thoughts, Xu Yue's face remained calm like a forest lake, her lips forming a gentle smile. Upon closer inspection, it was evident that her smile didn't extend to her cold blue eyes containing an unfathomable chill that a ten-year-old could never discern.

"Do it yourself," Lan Feng warned lightly. "Unless he inflicts serious harm on you or undermines your cultivation, I won't help you. You need to learn for yourself." With that, Lan Feng slowly drifted into the Qi Cave, focusing all his attention on the impending fight.

Yan Xiaobao took a soft breath, feeling grateful to Lan Feng. It had been a long time since his last battle, but when he thought about the martial arts skills he had practiced to perfection over the years, he felt fairly confident.

"The rules are simple," Deng Wu said, serving as the judge. He was also one of a hundred renowned figures and, while he might have a slight bias toward Yan Xiaobao, he was certainly less prejudiced than Wang Jingshen.

"You cannot kill your opponent. This is merely an exchange of pointers; if you go too far, injuries are to be expected, and I will personally ensure the academy head is informed of it."

After saying this, he nodded towards the two young men and then stepped to the side of Rong Xing's station. Clearly, he hoped to be considered impartial. Yan Xiaobao narrowed his eyes as he observed the black-haired youth, finding Deng Wu more threatening than Wang Julong.

Yan Xiaobao hadn't had the opportunity to focus on Deng Wu for a long time. Suddenly, he felt an incredible pressure emerging opposite him, gathering in Wang Julong's hands. At first, a light breeze blew toward him, but it quickly grew until it formed a massive storm swirling in Wang Julong's open palms. The storm continued to expand, rising into the sky as its gales intensified, attempting to sweep anything near the vortex away.

Yan Xiaobao narrowed his eyes, noticing flashes of light within the storm. The light was small bolts of Qi Lightning created by Qi, and seeing this sent a shiver down his spine. Although his Qi wasn't as refined as Yan Xiaobao's pure white, it was undoubtedly of excellent quality—not only exceptional in grade but also marked by Wang Julong's meticulous refinement.

"Did he start with Qi Lightning techniques right from the beginning?" Rong Xing exclaimed, her voice trembling slightly as she watched the scene unfold before her. Clearly, others murmured uneasily amongst themselves.

"Deng Wu, you must stop them!" Rong Xing implored, looking toward the black-haired youth, only to be surprised by his calm laughter.

"Don't worry. Let's place our faith in younger brother Yan Xiaobao and see if he can perform a miracle." Deng Wu wasn't foolish; he knew exactly how dangerous Qi Lightning was. It was a low-level Duke-ranked martial skill, deemed one of the Wang Family's greatest treasures. Not only did the technique possess high rank and strong offensive capabilities, but it also required cultivators with exceptionally pure Qi to utilize it. Deng Wu himself was somewhat surprised to discover that Wang Julong was already capable of wielding it.

Watching the young white-haired boy before him, Deng Wu smiled. He understood why others were worried; it was clear they hadn't noticed anything different about Yan Xiaobao—nor had they noticed it for a long time. However, he had seen it right from the start.

Five years ago, when Deng Wu joined the Royal Art Academy, he had been gifted a family heirloom as a reward. Among its many functions, one was to disguise his own cultivation, and another was to see through others' masks. As a result, the moment he encountered Yan Xiaobao, he saw the Saint-ranked Divine Beast hidden within Yan Xiaobao's Qi Cave. Deng Wu understood the significance of this discovery but was more intrigued by how a ten-year-old boy could capture such a powerful creature. Hence, he had no intention of revealing this rare phenomenon to anyone and watched Yan Xiaobao's actions closely. Gazing at Yan Xiaobao, Deng Wu's smile grew wider, his eyes gleaming with a mysterious light unseen by Rong Xing.

Yan Xiaobao gritted his teeth, realizing he had underestimated Wang Julong. Clearly, he was using advanced martial arts techniques. The technique's rank wasn't much different from his own Velocity Flow and Qi Guard, but Yan Xiaobao believed Wang Julong hadn't perfected his skills yet. He quickly activated his low-level Duke-ranked defensive martial arts technique, Qi Guard.

As soon as he invoked the skill, his entire body began to faintly glow with a pearly white sheen. Qi rapidly surged out of his Qi Acupoint in specific patterns, forming hand seals infused with threads of Qi.

Qi Yue and Qi Guard were simultaneously activated with Velocity Flow, focusing on evading Wang Julong. Yan Xiaobao left behind a series of afterimages as he moved swiftly, ensuring Wang Julong couldn't achieve his target and thwarting his current plans.

Yan Xiaobao didn't have to wait long. The storm conjured by Wang Julong's Qi Lightning had grown to its maximum controllable size. Upon fully unleashing his skill, Wang Julong sneered at the boy before him. Wang Julong couldn't help but think this child was too naive, just standing there waiting for his attack to land.

"Don't blame me if you get hurt!" Wang Julong sneered, sending out three bolts of Qi Lightning from the vortex. They were far faster than Yan Xiaobao anticipated, to the point that even his Velocity Flow struggled to evade all the bolts. This posed a far greater problem than he had initially expected.

The three Qilin Lightning bolts all struck the young boy, and smoke began to rise from the point of impact. Initially, Wang Jingshen and his thugs erupted into cheers and laughter, but they quickly fell silent, overwhelmed by disbelief. Everyone present stood in shock—even Deng Wu narrowed his eyes, for he had never seen martial arts techniques like this before.

Rong Xing and Rong Ming were both astonished. They knew Yan Xiaobao's background and understood he couldn't have access to advanced martial arts techniques. And yet, it was apparent he was utilizing one now. They couldn't help but wonder how he had obtained it.

For Wang Julong, Yan Xiaobao wasn't planning to endure the attack silently. As soon as Qi Lightning struck his afterimage, Yan Xiaobao retaliated. Swiftly activating his low-level offensive martial skill, Raging Strike—learned from Rong Ming—a sudden burst of pure white Qi enveloped his fist. His Qi-filled punch exuded tremendous pressure.

Although Wang Julong was proud, he had been trained since childhood. His family often pit him against the family guards, providing him with some combat experience. Sensing Yan Xiaobao's perfectly refined Qi's aggressive energy, Wang Julong quickly turned and gathered his white Qi in his forearm, blocking the strike.

Yan Xiaobao relied heavily on Velocity Flow's frenetic speed to amplify Raging Strike's impact. However, as a low-level skill, Raging Strike wasn't capable of breaking through Wang Julong's defense.

Without hesitation, Yan Xiaobao activated his high-level apprentice-ranked offensive skill, Shattering Kick, and swung forcefully at Wang Julong's waist.

Wang Julong, who had just blocked the previous strike using his Qi-infused arm, displayed considerable skill. However, his Qi technique wasn't defensive martial arts, preventing him from instantly shielding his entire body, which led to him being hit hard by Yan Xiaobao's kick.

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When he felt his kick might have fractured some of his opponent's ribs, Yan Xiaobao felt a certain satisfaction. However, he had no time to celebrate this minor victory, as four more bursts of Qi Lightning shot towards him at an incredible speed.

Cursing under his breath, Yan Xiaobao attempted to harness the Speed Flow technique for momentum, but he couldn't dodge all the lightning blasts and was forced to take one directly.

As one of his bolts struck Yan Xiaobao's shoulder, Wang Julong's face twisted into a sinister expression as he crashed to the ground. He understood just how devastating even a single blast of lightning could be; a mocking grin spread across his face, accompanied by the loud cheers and taunts from Wang Jingshen and other bullies in his group.

Unlike Wang Jingshen's group, Rong Ming and Rong Xing were deeply concerned. Although Yan Xiaobao had amazed them before with his Velocity Flow, they never expected this kid to have even more hidden abilities. Yet, they kept their eyes fixed on Yan Xiaobao, a mix of astonishment and unease flickering in their expressions.

As the Thunder Lightning struck Yan Xiaobao's shoulder, a faint white glow that had been covering him throughout the fight suddenly condensed. It grew rapidly thicker, shimmering with a radiant white brilliance, momentarily resisting the lightning before fading back to its previous dim luster.

Though his Qi Guard had managed to protect Yan Xiaobao from severe injury, it still left him flying backward, and his shoulder went numb as a result. Feeling the strange numbness in his shoulder, Yan Xiaobao sighed in relief. He quickly realized, however, that his Qi Guard had consumed an astonishing amount of Qi to block the attack, and with his current reserves, he could likely only withstand two more assaults of such magnitude.

Wang Julong was oblivious to this fact. All he saw was that his most powerful attack seemed to have no effect on Yan Xiaobao, and his heart burned with fury. Rising quickly to his feet, he focused his attention on the vortex forming in his hands, launching four more Qi Lightning bolts at Yan Xiaobao.

Their distance was now much greater compared to the earlier clashes, allowing Yan Xiaobao to utilize Speed Flow to close the gap. Determined to give it his all, he poured more of his precious Qi into creating a duplicate to attack Wang Julong alongside him, triggering yet another earth-shattering collision.

Wang Julong retaliated with another set of Qi Lightning, striking the rapidly approaching duplicate. Once hit, the replica dissipated, giving him just enough time to counteract the incoming devastating kick.

On the other hand, Yan Xiaobao took the opportunity to retreat, ensuring he wouldn't be struck by another Qi Lightning. He knew that if hit again, his Qi would quickly be depleted. After exchanging blows, both combatants stood on opposite sides of the arena, maintaining a cautious distance. Wang Julong's storm-like attacks had diminished by half, and the number of Qi Lightning bolts he could summon had considerably reduced. Yan Xiaobao could feel that he had already expended more than half of his own Qi reserves. In fact, his Qi Flag Guard had consumed nearly one-third of his total Qi just to defend against a single Qi Lightning strike, showcasing how terrifying the attack had been. This also clearly indicated the immense power inherited from a prominent family line.

After their exchange, Wang Julong's hatred towards Yan Xiaobao only intensified. He desperately wanted to eliminate the nameless boy standing before him. Yet, his Qi Lightning techniques seemed to have no lasting impact on Yan Xiaobao. Instead, the repeated attacks rapidly drained his Qi Pool.

Conversely, Yan Xiaobao remained on the defensive. His Qi Pool was smaller than Wang Julong's, and the earlier clashes had proven just how dangerous it would be to relax even slightly. Now, both cultivators stood motionless, glaring at each other. When the sudden sound of applause echoed through the arena, neither of them had any intention of giving up.

"Well done!" Deng Wu said with a bright smile, his eyes sparkling with admiration. "You both performed excellently during this exchange of moves. Despite sustaining minor injuries, you managed to block and avoid serious harm—a rare accomplishment!" Deng Wu praised them sincerely, seeming genuinely impressed by their efforts. While the remark made Wang Julong grit his teeth in frustration, his eyes raging with fiery anger, he couldn't retort, for intentional harm to other students would violate the rules.

Unconsciously, Yan Xiaobao shared some of Wang Julong's disappointment. He felt deeply unsatisfied with himself. Knowing that Wang Julong's ranking was higher, even if by just three stars, Yan Xiaobao had to employ significantly more martial arts techniques to compete. Despite his ability to stand against a formidable opponent, he remained frustrated by his inability to secure a victory.

"Thank you for the guidance, Wang Julong. It truly taught me a great deal," Yan Xiaobao said with a gentle smile, his eyes showing a trace of gratitude. Yet inwardly, he vowed to tirelessly strengthen his rank and refine his Qi Guard, determined to one day have Lan Feng teach him offensive martial arts techniques.

"Let's see how the next fight goes," Yan Xiaobao thought, his sky-blue eyes glinting with cool resolve, causing Deng Wu's smile to widen slightly.

Everyone present clearly understood that while the match had been officially recorded as a draw, Yan Xiaobao ultimately had the upper hand. Not only had he evaded and resisted Wang Julong's strongest attacks, but he had also managed to fracture two of his opponent's ribs, escaping with only a numbed shoulder.

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Although no other students participated in the arena, the news of the New Year's duel between the academy's two prodigies spread quickly. Despite the match ending officially in a draw, Yan Xiaobao was mentioned as the victor.

This was undoubtedly due to Gao Yan and his civilians spreading the word, making the duel widely known. While Gao Yan could not openly retaliate against the Wang Family, he did not shy away from

using his friends to strike back in another fashion. Nobles care deeply about how others perceive them, so making them lose face was immensely satisfying.

In the first few days after the students adapted to their new environment, there were no classes. Yan Xiaobao spent this time sitting with the group he now belonged to. Yan Xiaobao felt it was time for him to present himself as a more mature individual. Although he had always hidden his true nature, he didn't want to conceal himself forever.

"I need some help," Yan Xiaobao said in a serious tone, looking at the five elders sitting in his new home.

"I am not a noble, as I believe you have already guessed," he began, "so I'm not accustomed to these internal battles. I understand that the Rong Family and Wang Family don't respect each other, but what exactly happened?"

At first, the house fell silent, and the older children looked at Yan Xiaobao with complex expressions. None of them felt this was a topic they should discuss with such a young boy. Yet, he offered his insight, gazing at them with perfectly clear eyes while showing an understanding far beyond his age.

"The Wang Family used to control Liluo City," Deng Wu finally said, glancing at the others. "We might as well tell him the story. I think we shouldn't underestimate him. I have a feeling that behind those innocent blue eyes hides a monster," he said, staring straight at Yan Xiaobao. Deng Wu's words sent shivers down Yan Xiaobao's spine.

The deliberate way Deng Wu spoke clearly indicated that he knew something significant about Yan Xiaobao. Deng Wu was aware of Lan Feng, or at least had a strong impression about him. Yan Xiaobao could feel his body tense up, even as Lan Feng stayed silent. Knowing Deng Wu was observing him, Yan Xiaobao forced himself to remain calm, suppressing every trace of emotion beneath a façade as tranquil and unruffled as a cloudless summer sky.

Deng Yue was impressed by the composure Yan Xiaobao displayed: "The Wang Family has a long history. After the Dark Era, they were in charge of Liluo City. Unfortunately, they were poor managers of the economy, eventually going bankrupt and losing their position. They fell from being the dominant authority to a secondary power in the city, and they struggled to accept it."

"After regaining financial stability, they are now trying to reclaim their perceived right to rule as the City Lord. Unfortunately for them, Lord Rong Liang and his family have been performing exceptionally well, making it far more challenging than they'd hoped." Ma Kong took over the explanation, adding, "The nobles have split into two factions. One consists of the top hundred families and their followers, while the other is led by Lord Rong Liang and his supporters."

Upon hearing this, Yan Xiaobao quickly glanced at Deng Wu. The more he learned about him, the more mysterious this young man seemed. Yan Xiaobao found it increasingly difficult to trust him in the way he did others. He decided to shelve this topic for now and attempt to gather information from others later.

"But Yan Xiaobao," Rong Xing eventually asked, her curiosity long apparent, "how did you acquire such powerful Martial Arts Skills?" This was clearly a topic of interest to everyone. They stared at Yan Xiaobao with wide, probing eyes, hoping for an extraordinary story behind his strength.

Yan Xiaobao anticipated this question and had spent time with Lan Feng devising a plausible explanation.

"When I was helping my father search for medicinal herbs, I got lost. Along the way, I discovered a beautiful sapphire. When I touched it, a white mist shot into my mind, and suddenly I knew these techniques and how to practice them. But, unfortunately, after the mist disappeared, the gemstone turned to dust," Yan Xiaobao explained, recounting the story concocted by Lan Feng.

"I've never shared this with anyone before because I didn't understand what had happened. I don't know what that sapphire was, and now it's gone." Yan Xiaobao shook his head apologetically, earning gentler expressions from the youth around him.

"That's truly incredible," Gao Yan remarked after a long pause. "You must have lived in a rather unique place."

"I lived in the Magic Forest, but I've sworn never to reveal its precise location to anyone," Yan Xiaobao answered solemnly, prompting the others to nod in respectful agreement.

Living in the Magic Forest was supposed to be impossible. While some villages did exist in its depths, they were shrouded in mystery and highly remote. Only the strongest cultivators had the ability to grow up in such an environment. Upon hearing this, a newfound sense of respect sparkled in their eyes.

Although Yan Xiaobao's story was fabricated, the impression it left was vastly different. They now saw him as someone raised in the wild, battling magical beasts from a young age, stumbling upon treasures and herbal medicine along the way.

Only the Rong twins knew the truth. Yet, they raised no objections, reasoning that Yan Xiaobao's luck might truly have led him to stumble upon such a powerful legacy.

Yan Xiaobao was unaware of how his explanation had piqued Deng Wu's interest even further. Despite having a Holy Beast-ranked Divine Beast within him, Yan Xiaobao had not yet grown strong enough to subjugate it. Deng Wu theorized that Yan Xiaobao had discovered treasure left behind by one of the ultimate experts of the Dark Era.

Naturally, Deng Wu coveted the location, believing that more treasures might still be hidden there, awaiting discovery. However, Deng Wu wasn't the only one intrigued; Ma Kong and Gao Yan's eyes glimmered with unspoken desires.

"Brother Yan Xiaobao," Ma Kong asked flatly, "Do you happen to remember the exact location where you picked up that sapphire?" Gao Yan nodded affirmatively, as if encouraging Yan Xiaobao to answer their questions, portraying himself as an ally to the Hui Clan leaders. While Ma Kong and Deng Wu sought the place mainly to claim high-level Martial Arts Skills for themselves, Gao Yan imagined the site as a potential income source for his family.

Yan Xiaobao's expression fell as he shook his head. "I'm truly sorry," he replied, "but I rarely leave the village, and the outside world is unfamiliar to me. I believe this was deep in the forest, near a lake with a cave. I found the stone outside the cave but was too frightened to enter, as it might have been the lair of a powerful Magic Beast." The others nodded regretfully. They knew finding the treasure of a supreme expert would not be so simple. Nonetheless, they each imprinted the information in their hearts, promising to share it with their family leaders so cultivators could be dispatched to search for the cave.

Seeing their varied reactions, Yan Xiaobao breathed a sigh of relief. Lan Feng had warned him earlier that the prospect of treasure was sure to steer their interest away from him, and it seemed he had been right. Suddenly, Ma Kong needed to borrow books from the library, while Rong Xing and Rong Ming remembered issues they had to discuss with their instructors. Finally, Gao Yan decided to visit some friends to hear the rumors about the fight between Wang Julong and Yan Xiaobao.

The only one who remained was Deng Wu, who leaned lazily against the courtyard wall, a slight smile on his face.

Yan Xiaobao's ice-blue eyes locked onto Deng Wu's obsidian-black ones. Neither spoke, both patiently waiting for all sounds to vanish, ensuring their secrets would remain unheard by others.

Deng Wu waved his hand, and a small figure suddenly appeared within his palm. It was crafted meticulously from scales of a deep celestial blue, shaped into a mask with a smiling expression.

Shadowed accents made it appear as though the mouth could move, and faint light flickered in the eyes. With another flick of his hand, Deng Wu observed the mask briefly before it disappeared. As he looked at Yan Xiaobao, his face bore a satisfied smile.

"That thing feels oddly familiar," Lan Feng said in a strange tone, "but I can't recall where I've felt it before." Yan Xiaobao sighed. His inner feathered spirit wasn't particularly helpful in situations like this. In truth, it was already making Yan Xiaobao nervous—if his hair hadn't turned white due to the soul contract, it would surely have reflected his anxiety.

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"Have you seen enough?" Yan Xiaobao asked tentatively, every muscle in his body tense. Velocity Flow was activated in case he needed to escape.

Deng Wu had already realized that if he used his movement skills, he wouldn't be able to catch up. He had no intention of scaring this small boy away, so he remained calm and responded lightly.

"Don't worry, I don't plan to tell anyone your secret," he said casually, as Yan Xiaobao narrowed his eyes.

"What secret are you talking about?" he asked. Although Deng Wu knew of Lan Feng, did he know if Yan Xiaobao had been brought here through reincarnation from another plane?

Deng Wu wasn't stupid; he immediately realized that Yan Xiaobao was trying to make him reveal what he knew. For now, he wouldn't gain anything from this, so he simply shrugged.

"When you discovered that blue stone containing Martial Arts Skills, you also accidentally came across the soul of a Divine Beast ranked Holy Beast." That was primarily Deng Wu's theory, and based on this information, Yan Xiaobao was the most reasonable explanation.

"What do you plan to do?" Yan Xiaobao asked, his muscles tightening. His entire body was on high alert, his Qi surging through his meridians in some form, amplifying Velocity Flow, and concentrating all his strength in his legs. This allowed him to flee immediately upon hearing the answer; yet, when Deng Wu shrugged again, he was taken aback.

"I don't plan to do anything about it for now," he said calmly. "The only way to obtain the Holy Spirit's soul is by killing you and extracting it from your body, but that would make Rong Xing sad, so I'll keep it secret for now." Xu Yue looked at Deng Wu. Keeping a secret for Rong Xing's happiness seemed rather strange, but the teenager appeared to be very serious.

"Uh, better not let anyone else notice," Deng Wu warned as he turned and started to leave the courtyard. "I can assure you that no other cultivator could ignore the allure of the Divine Beast soul." With that, he departed, vanishing into the dark night and leaving Yan Xiaobao frowning, filled with endless questions.

"Lan Feng," he asked, "how come they're saying there's a chance they could extract your soul after I die? You previously said that if I died, then you'd die as well." Lan Feng slowly let his soul rise from Yan Xiaobao's body, settling onto the courtyard ground.

"Hmm, usually cultivators and beast souls don't establish soul contracts," he said while surveying the surroundings, showing little intention of continuing the conversation. Despite his indifference, Yan Xiaobao could sense something hiding behind this almost dismissive demeanor.

"Why?" Yan Xiaobao sighed. He could clearly sense that Lan Feng was concealing something. Given that they were now sharing a body and their souls were interconnected, secrets should have been impossible. But he could also sense Lan Feng's desire to share something with him, though he wouldn't do so willingly unless prompted.

"Well," Lan Feng said slowly, "a soul contract balances us and binds our souls together, but when a cultivator manages to consume the soul of a magical beast or Divine Beast, they become its master. Usually, cultivators will exploit the beast's power in one way or another." Hearing this, Yan Xiaobao glared at Lan Feng.

"Does this mean I've given up being your master and become your student instead?" he asked suspiciously.

"Exactly," Lan Feng replied with a smug grin, prompting Yan Xiaobao to feel an incredible urge to slap the transparent feathered boy.

"You deceived me?!" he exclaimed, his eyes widening as agitation filled his heart. First, Lan Feng had murdered him, and then he deceived him! How could he trust him after this?

"If you were in my position, you'd definitely do the same," Lan Feng said calmly. "The soul contract can only be canceled when its participants achieve their goals." His smug demeanor made Yan Xiaobao glare at him with a series of intense killing intent, aimed like arrows.

"Calm down now," Lan Feng finally said. "It's not so bad. If you decided to dominate my soul, I wouldn't be of any help, only adhering to your commands. Would that really benefit you?" Yan Xiaobao shot the feathered boy another glare, then grumbled, "If you were the one being deceived, you'd clearly be as angry as I am!" He said this before storming into his house, slamming the door shut. He rushed to his bedroom and sat on his bed to cultivate.

Since the two were connected, staying away from Lan Feng was clearly impossible. After a while, Lan Feng sat on the ground once more, his face lit with a smile as he stared at Yan Xiaobao. He was utterly satisfied with how skillfully he had deceived Yan Xiaobao, feeling rather pleased with himself.

"You better give me a genuinely powerful offensive Martial Arts Skill to make up for this," Yan Xiaobao said sarcastically, his eyes closed as he cultivated. Lan Feng's smug grin was strikingly clear, allowing Yan Xiaobao to feel the core of his soul.

The next day, Lan Feng promised Yan Xiaobao the strongest attack technique in Qi Country. Though Lan Feng had previously deceived him, Yan Xiaobao realized he couldn't be fooled again because their souls

were no longer unlinked. That said, he did vow to exact revenge later in some way, ensuring the cocky bird regretted ever deceiving him.

Yan Xiaobao spent his leisurely days listening to gossip circulating around the city. The Ma Family had gained noble status as the wealthiest family in the city. They owned various shops, but most of their wealth came from their Black Market Auction House, selling everything from stolen goods to high-quality items obtained from the Magic Forest, or family heirlooms to amass greater wealth.

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Ma Kong is the youngest son, and although his elder brother was supposed to be the heir, the two of them shared a close relationship. This gave Ma Kong more power than a younger brother would normally possess.

Compared to Ma Kong, the information about Gao Yan wasn't as captivating, but the strength he commanded was no less formidable. Gao Yan came from one of the poorer districts of Liluo City and attended one of the martial arts schools established by Lord Rong Liang since childhood.

Gao Yan had a grand dream of lifting his family out of poverty and becoming aristocrats. Initially, other commoners mocked him, but after his talents were noticed, he became friends with the Rong twins, and others began to hope they could change their futures as well. Most of the students at the martial arts school followed any command issued by Gao Yan.

Not all martial arts students reached the appropriate cultivation level to join the Royal Art Academy. For those who didn't qualify, many had already begun integrating into ordinary civilian lives within the city. Still, they adhered to Gao Yan, who had built an incredible information network spanning the city. Some of his former classmates worked as servants in noble households, while others became carpenters or farmers, but one thing remained certain: all the information they collected made its way directly to Gao Yan.

Deng Wu was regarded throughout the academy as a playful and carefree character. Rarely seen as serious, he was universally well-liked by nearly everyone who knew him. The Deng Family held Deng Wu in high regard, and this made Yan Xiaobao suspect that Deng Wu had secrets far beyond what he initially imagined. If Deng Wu had an extraordinary cultivation talent, it would explain why his family treasured him so deeply. Yet, his cultivation abilities displayed at the academy were merely above average. Clearly, this cunning nature was something Yan Xiaobao could not underestimate.

Rong Ming was considered the central figure in this small group. Destined to be the next City Lord, he worked hard to fulfill this expectation. At the Royal Art Academy, he had a stellar reputation, refusing to

tolerate bullying or condone nobles looking down on commoners. However, his views provoked opposition from certain nobles. As a result, a faction of young aristocrats within the school actively tried to undermine Rong Ming.

Rong Xing was pragmatic. She would record every piece of information Gao Yan provided, carefully weighing its importance. Deng Wu chose to align with this group rather than any other noble faction because of her. She knew how to leverage every piece at her disposal, and to Yan Xiaobao, Rong Xing seemed to be the strongest in their team—at least as long as he didn't factor in Deng Wu.

The noble faction opposing Rong Ming was led by Deng Wu's cousin, Deng Led. Although the two clashed frequently in their opposing groups, Deng Led never insulted Deng Wu.

Luckily, Liluo City was considered a peaceful place. Despite gathering many different factions, none openly expressed dissatisfaction toward the current City Lord. Though conflicts arose among the children, they were limited to disputes between students at the Royal Art Academy, as one might expect.

Last night, before classes began, Yan Xiaobao finally felt a sense of relief. It had taken all his acting skills to gather the information he needed, but he was ultimately satisfied with the results. Gazing at the star-filled night, Xu Yue couldn't help but reflect on how much his life had changed. This new Chapter was far more exhilarating than anything he'd experienced before.

"Tomorrow, we're going to search for the medicinal medicine's location," Lan Feng said with a grin. "We need to accelerate your training, or I won't get revenge for my opponent dying of old age."

Xu Yue woke up in his new home, allowing himself a few extra minutes of rest. The bed in this small house was evidently stuffed with feathers. Its softness was unlike anything Yan Xiaobao had ever encountered before. The blanket, woven with the finest threads, was softer than any old burlap sacks he had known that scratched and irritated his skin.

After a few minutes of rest, Yan Xiaobao sighed deeply and forced himself out of the bed's warmth. Today was an important day—his first day of class. Yan Xiaobao wondered whether Lan Feng's explanations would surpass his own or if the academy held new discoveries about the art of cultivation. After all, everything Yan Xiaobao relied on had already existed for over four thousand years.

Yan Xiaobao quickly washed his face, put on yet another set of tattered clothes, and strolled toward the nearest dining hall. Dining halls were scattered among the courtyards atop the mountain peaks, ensuring there was enough space for all the students to dine at once. The menu was always the same, but since there were multiple dining halls, none ever became overly crowded.

Early that morning, Yan Xiaobao hadn't expected anyone to be eating in the dining hall. He was surprised to find several students already having breakfast.

It was Yan Xiaobao's first time dining alone, as he usually got picked up by friends early in the morning and was forced to eat with them. As soon as the white-haired boy entered the dining hall, the student groups erupted into conversation.

Most of the students openly stared at Yan Xiaobao, blatantly discussing him without hiding it. These were mainly commoner students, excited about starting their first day at the Royal Art Academy and unable to sleep, or they were those accustomed to waking up early from their younger years. Yan Xiaobao wasn't the only one who felt this was a new beginning.

Recalling past days when he had been observed by others, he noticed the looks were no longer cast by infatuated girls. Rather, the stares came from children who seemed to think he was some kind of monster.

"I heard he angered Wang Julong because he was called effeminate," one male student said loudly enough for Yan Xiaobao to hear. All Yan Xiaobao could do in response was sigh as he listened to other comments about his appearance, making it clear that people had to ensure they never insult him.

Yan Xiaobao passed by this group quickly, noting how their expressions turned fearful as his gaze swept across their table. Yet, as he reached the next group, more gossip reached his ears—though this time with a different tone.

"This is the first time I've seen him in person," one student said with reverence, while another proudly declared, "I saw him before, walking with Gao Yan and his group. I heard he defeated Wang Julong, so he definitely deserves a spot among Gao Yan's group," the student said while looking at Xu Yue, as if he were some kind of hero.

Yan Xiaobao quickened his pace to move past the other students as fast as possible and grabbed his standard breakfast in an area of the dining hall where no other students were sitting.

While Yan Xiaobao ate, he couldn't hear what the other students were saying, but he could still sense the obvious gazes directed his way.

"Great," Yan Xiaobao thought with a sigh. "I feel like a monkey in a zoo."

To his surprise, Lan Feng responded quickly: "Get used to it," he said with a smug expression, "To achieve our goals, you look different than anyone else, and you'll have to continually leave them with a deep impression."

"Shut up," Yan Xiaobao muttered sarcastically. Because of the soul contract he had with this cursed bird, his appearance had already changed, and the soul contract remained a taboo topic for Yan Xiaobao. "If you say this again," he threatened, "I'll refuse to eat any sweets and swear to survive without them for three years."

Lan Feng gasped, quickly retreating to the Dantian Cave. Sharing a body with Yan Xiaobao meant that Lan Feng felt everything Yan Xiaobao experienced. He tasted whatever Yan Xiaobao ate and went through the same physical challenges that Yan Xiaobao endured.

Over the years, Lan Feng had developed a sweet tooth, enjoying cakes and candies brought by the Rong twins during visits. The academy dining hall also offered cakes, and Lan Feng had been ecstatic seeing them all. If Lan Feng controlled his own body, they would clearly gain noticeable weight.

After Lan Feng retreated into the cave, Yan Xiaobao chuckled to himself, took a piece of cake, ate quickly, returned to his courtyard, gathered what he needed for his first day of lessons, and began heading toward the academy buildings perched atop the mountain peak.

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Chapter 207 Promotion

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Yan Xiaobao took out his student badge and infused it with a certain amount of Qi. Over the past few days, Yan Xiaobao had noticed that this badge possessed many hidden features, one of them being a personalized schedule. Although the schedule was customized, all first-year students had the same courses for the first few weeks before being grouped based on their talents or interests.

The Royal Art Academy did not force students to attend lectures, but students who chose not to participate typically ended up unable to advance to the next year ahead of their peers. While there was no specific ranking that needed improvement, it was crucial for students to show some form of progress throughout the year and move forward with the rest of the class.

Yan Xiaobao made his way toward the first peak that housed the dormitories and began to look around. There were still a few hours before classes began, so he decided to explore various buildings to familiarize himself with the different locations and determine which buildings would be useful and which wouldn't.

The first building he saw was the "Theory of Qi Teaching Building," where the first lecture was supposed to take place. Though a few students had already gathered at the entrance and inside, Yan Xiaobao saw no reason to wait around for hours when he could be exploring.

The next building, titled "Cultivation Methods," held no interest for Yan Xiaobao. Though Lan Feng was both annoying and cunning, he had provided Yan Xiaobao with very powerful cultivation methods, which he was confident this academy couldn't surpass. Instead, he quickly walked away.

The next building was the "Martial Arts Skills Hall," and merely looking at it piqued Yan Xiaobao's curiosity. The hall was open to students all day, and Yan Xiaobao gently pushed the door open to peek inside.

The first thing that struck him was the lack of fresh air and the dim lighting. While the Skills Hall was a frequently visited place for students, everyone who entered held it in high regard, and the main doors were always kept shut to protect the many scrolls inside.

As soon as Yan Xiaobao stepped in and closed the door behind him, the lights in the room suddenly brightened. The crystals, which were similar to the ones in the courtyard, emitted a soft glow, illuminating the previously dim room.

"Do you really have to waste time here?" Lan Feng complained, casting a disdainful glance around. "I told you before, the Martial Arts Skills you get from places like this are severely lacking in quality."

Nevertheless, Yan Xiaobao chose to completely ignore Lan Feng and began scanning the numerous shelves in the room. He picked up one of the scrolls and carefully opened it. The scrolls resembled the ones given to him previously by Rong Ming; this particular scroll described a skill that used Qi to create enough friction to ignite a small flame atop a candle. After a quick perusal, he noticed the system for categorizing skills.

At the front of the room, all the Martial Arts Skills were arranged, with the center dedicated to the disciple-ranking skills and the far end to practitioner-ranking skills. Each grouping was further divided into attack skills, defense skills, and non-combat skills.

Yan Xiaobao took his time browsing the various shelves before finally selecting a few skills to take with him. One of them happened to be the "Fire Spark" skill, which was ranked first among the beginner-level skills.

The student badge automatically recorded any Martial Arts Skills taken out of the Skills Hall by students, which was why the hall could remain open all the time without requiring constant supervision from administrators or teachers. Should any student attempt to open the doors without their student badge, they would find them immovable no matter how hard they pushed.

The Skills Hall also had a restricted room, but Yan Xiaobao found it sealed off and inaccessible. He had heard about this room from Rong Ming before. The academy stored all its highest-level Martial Arts Skills inside, and the only way to enter was by invitation from a teacher upon achieving a significant accomplishment in cultivation. Even the Rong twins and Gao Yan had only managed to enter it once in the last five years.

After one final look around the hall, Yan Xiaobao quickly exited, noticing how his student badge shimmered with a silver glow before reverting to its original state.

Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but be deeply impressed by the student badge, which appeared so ordinary yet continually revealed new functions, proving it was far more than it seemed.

"Stopping to gawk at a useless Memory Stone," Lan Feng complained from within the Qi Acupoint. "We don't have much time left before classes start, so hurry up and find the Pills Hall! Though Lan Feng was still feeling some lingering pressure from the previous threat, he couldn't stay quiet for long, and he was thrilled at the prospect of snatching up some pills to help bolster their levels without spending too much time refining Qi essence."

Yan Xiaobao sighed. He knew he could scold Lan Feng again, but he himself was intrigued by these pills. His father, who came from this world, had spent his days hunting low-level medicinal plants around the edges of the Magic Forest, and from everything he had heard, the pills were capable of working miracles.

That being said, Xu Yue didn't have any actual knowledge about the pills. He could only guess they were made by combining medicinal plants, but how that was done remained a mystery. Yan Xiaobao began scanning the area for anything that might lead him to the Pills Hall that Lan Feng had mentioned.

Finally, Yan Xiaobao found a building as large as the Martial Arts Skills Hall, with a sign at the entrance reading "Pills Outlet." Yan Xiaobao felt his heartbeat quicken, and he couldn't help but grin foolishly. The chance to expand his understanding of these magical pills was exciting, but as he approached the door of the Pills Outlet, his smile froze.

Chapter 208 Promotion_2

"It will open after the first monthly pill distribution day of the new semester." A note read, clearly indicating that the pill outlet was currently closed. Yan Xiaobao felt disappointed, and Lan Feng's sense of disappointment quickly amplified his own, making both of them suddenly irritable.

"When is the pill distribution day?" Lan Feng sighed, while Xu Hui simply shrugged. "Who knows," he said, unwilling to stir any trouble with the frustrated Phoenix. "Maybe we'll be told during our first lesson today," he added, both of them sincerely hoping for such a scenario.

"Can anyone craft pills?" Yan Xiaobao suddenly asked. Pills seemed extremely popular yet troublesome at the same time, so learning how to craft them would be ideal. Unfortunately, he didn't know how to make pills yet, and the medicinal plants his father and villagers harvested in the Magic Forest seemed to be of limited use to him.

"Only alchemists can craft pills, but since becoming an alchemist requires a certain degree of talent, they always turn out to be arrogant and conceited," Lan Feng snorted, the clear annoyance in his voice making Yan Xiaobao chuckle.

"You're not qualified to become an alchemist?" Yan Xiaobao asked, his tone tinged with mockery because it took more arrogance than this feathered boy could muster.

"Shut up," Lan Feng said, licking his lips and hiding the answer he had given in the Qi Acupoint, ignoring Yan Xiaobao's questions altogether.

"Come on," Yan Xiaobao finally snapped after being ignored for most of the journey back to Qi Theory class. "At least I didn't trick you into merging your soul with a resting bird." His voice carried a hint of criticism, and the comment did provoke a reaction from Lan Feng, stirring a faint sense of guilt shared within their intertwined souls.

"To become an alchemist, you need to have a dual-element affinity, but not just any dual-element affinity will do," Lan Feng began to explain. "The first affinity you need is fire. Fire is required to refine the materials needed for the pill and to control the strength of the flames during pill crafting. Without controlling the firepower, you can't precisely manage the flames." Yan Xiaobao nodded; this made sense.

"The other element is wood. Wood grants cultivators detailed comprehension of the world's plants. It is the element of life and harvest, drawing forth the power of creation from this life. Of course, what you create is limited, but the restrictions on medicines are absolute." Lan Feng paused slightly, letting the information sink into memory before continuing.

"Achieving dual-element affinity itself is difficult, but I managed to obtain it," Lan Feng said with pride. "Unfortunately, the elements I control are fire and earth, and I'm quite certain I've mentioned this to you before. I can't become an alchemist." At this point, Lan Feng's voice carried a slight hint of disappointment, which Yan Xiaobao noticed along with a trace of longing within their shared soul.

"Because alchemists need to successfully unlock their Middle Dantian to discover their elemental affinity, it further reduces the number of alchemists. In a large city like Liluo, I bet there aren't more than one or two alchemists," Lan Feng concluded.

Xu Yue sighed faintly, suddenly understanding why medicinal pills were so valuable. He had always assumed the hardest part was finding medicinal plants, but now he realized the challenge lay in the industry itself. If he could become an alchemist, it would be incredible, but this felt like a distant

dream—he didn't have the luxury of wishful thinking but needed to figure out a way to master these profitable pills.

During their conversation, Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng arrived once again at the Qi Theory Teaching Building. Previously, some students had been waiting outside, but now the doors were open. A group of students gathered in the hall, while others lingered outside. When everyone congregated, a mix of excitement and anxiety stirred among them as they nervously awaited the teacher's arrival.

Yan Xiaobao sighed and noticed some of the students he'd seen earlier that morning. His arrival reignited discussions about his previous duel with Wang Julong and about his demeanor, which some mockingly deemed effeminate—questions about whether Yan Xiaobao was even suitable to walk alongside Gao Yan.

Inside the hall, Yan Xiaobao moved to the side, leaning against a cooling wall while observing the rest of the students with narrow eyes. While some had shed their tense expressions, others clearly seemed more at ease, chatting with smiles on their faces. Meanwhile, a few simply observed Xu Hui silently. Some students looked their age, their youthful faces filled with innocence, while others appeared more mature.

Suddenly, Yan Xiaobao's gaze fell on the entrance as Wang Julong and his group of followers walked through the doors, stopping all conversations.

Wang Julong himself seemed as if no one else existed besides him, treating all these commoners as far beneath him, unworthy even to glance at. His followers, however, glared threateningly at the students, practically mocking them for continuing their conversations.

Noticing that some of Wang Julong's followers appeared older than ten years, while others were closer in age to Yan Xiaobao and Wang Julong, Yan Xiaobao squinted his eyes. As soon as Wang Julong spotted Yan Xiaobao, his eyes turned red, his intense hatred apparent to anyone present.

Wang Julong's entourage quickly noticed Yan Xiaobao as well—although they had never met him before, it was easy to guess his identity.

Chapter 209 Promotion_3

All these children clearly belonged to noble traditions, their arrogance far surpassed that of Lan Feng. Each student cast menacing glares toward Yan Xiaobao, but so far, none had the courage to act.

The nobles whispered amongst themselves, and suddenly, one tall boy stood up.

"Tch, tch," Lan Feng scoffed, eyeing the young man who stepped forward, saying, "He's already twelve years old, a student at the ninth-star level." This boy was now walking toward Yan Xiaobao.

The boy was significantly larger than any of the other children. His physique alone made him appear at least a head and a half taller than Yan Xiaobao.

His name was Shan Ping. Although twelve years old, he was supposed to be studying with first-year students. His family was one of the older noble clans named after themselves and had long supported the Wang Family. Unfortunately, they lacked assets, and their cultivators hadn't achieved high cultivation levels, making them nearly inconsequential. As a result, they barely attained the Wang Family's favor.

When the Shan Clan saw Wang Julong enrolling in the Royal Art Academy, they deliberately enrolled their youngest son. Every year, they held him back from advancing to another grade, ensuring he remained in the same class as Wang Julong to act as a pawn, hoping to curry favor this way. Currently, Shan Ping was distinctly stronger than his peers. That was true if Yan Xiaobao only factored in cultivation realms.

Shan Ping was aware that Wang Julong was at the eight-star level. Despite being only one star higher himself, he thought he had a greater chance of victory. After all, climbing one star required considerable Qi reserves. Even if he lost, he would be seen as a brave soldier sacrificing himself for his master, fulfilling his sole command at the academy: strengthening ties with Wang Julong.

However, Shan Ping failed to consider that although Wang Julong was only at the eight-star level, he was widely regarded as the Wang Family's foremost prodigy, with strength far surpassing what his star level implied.

The primary reason for Wang Julong's immense power was his pure aura, which was far more refined than that of his peers. It enabled him to practice advanced martial arts techniques like Qi Spirit, further enhancing his prowess.

The same was true for Yan Xiaobao, though his aura was even purer, complemented by multiple advanced martial arts techniques, which allowed him to rival Wang Julong early on. These two children were far younger than Shanshan, whose strength was recorded far below theirs. There was no question about who was stronger.

Yan Xiaobao clearly noticed the underlying hostility, as Lan Feng explained the cultivation age of the older boy to him. Looking at Wang Julong's subtle nod, Lan Feng obviously hoped for recognition, causing the white-haired boy to let out a deep sigh. Yan Xiaobao was not naive; he fully understood the group bullying unfolding, even though he had never willingly positioned himself in such situations before.

Before awaiting Shan Ping's first move, Yan Xiaobao straightened his posture and slowly activated Speed Flow. Combat outside the arena was prohibited, but defense was permitted. The student certificates could record their actions, making it easy to determine the cause of the confrontation and penalize accordingly.

Yan Xiaobao didn't have to wait long. A Qi-covered fist surged toward his head at a speed that could be considered rapid. It was clearly some kind of martial arts technique, though it was a skill picked from the lower sections of the Martial Arts Skills Hall, rendering it entirely ineffective against Huili attacks.

Shan Ping's Qi, including the aura covering his hands, was neither as white as Yan Xiaobao's nor as creamy as Wang Juelang's; instead, it had a faint grayish tint, which indicated that Shan Ping's Qi quality was far inferior to theirs.

Before Shan Ping landed his attack, Yan Xiaobao let out another sigh. His figure flickered and abruptly vanished without leaving behind a mirage. Instead, he repositioned himself right behind Shan Ping, leaving the students present flustered and overwhelmed by the execution of an advanced martial arts skill.

Once Yan Xiaobao appeared behind Shan Ping, he decisively activated his Fierce Strike skill, slamming the side of his hand into Shan Ping's temple, causing the latter to collapse instantly.

Yan Xiaobao stared at Shan Ping's unconscious body in stunned silence. He had originally thought the older boy would simply fall back and leave him alone, yet now he lay lifeless on the ground, a thin trickle of blood dripping from the corner of his mouth.

The Qi Theory lecture hall fell utterly silent.

Chapter 210 Shock

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Yan Xiaobao gazed at the unconscious Shan Ping, and silently acknowledged in his mind that this big boy might have died due to the decisive attack earlier.

What shocked Yan Xiaobao the most was not that he might have killed someone for the first time in his double life, nor was it his lack of emotion. Rather, he was surprised by the effectiveness of the attack executed on Shan Ping, compared to their powerlessness against Wang Julong.

For the first time in ten years, Yan Xiaobao truly understood what Lan Feng meant when he said that this Foundation was extremely crucial. He was thankful for the feathered boy inside him, for teaching him cultivation methods that provided him with such a solid foundation.

"About time you started appreciating me," Lan Feng said in a dry tone, "but don't kill that fat boy. He's still alive, though he's fairly miserable."

"Is that so?" Yan Xiaobao asked, though he didn't particularly care about the answer. Yan Xiaobao had no intention of becoming a mass murderer, but he had long realized that it was impossible to go through life without killing others, and so he had set some rules for himself.

Anyone who came at him, he would fight mercilessly. Yan Xiaobao would only retaliate against those who targeted him or interfered with his objectives in some way. He had no intention of disrupting families or seeking vengeance on innocent people simply because they shared the same family. If any family member sought revenge, then Yan Xiaobao would make sure they perished just like the others before them.

Yan Xiaobao returned to the present, a lazy expression appearing on his face. A low murmur spread throughout the entire hall, with students staring at Yan Xiaobao in horror, as if he were a demon who had descended from the heavens.

Those who had previously doubted the rumors of Yan Xiaobao defeating Wang Julong in a duel were now utterly convinced it was true. And while they had initially found it surprising that Yan Xiaobao could

match Wang Julong, they now believed it should have been the other way around. For Wang Julong to have survived a fight against Yan Xiaobao, he must have been exceptionally skilled, because Shan Ping had been struck down by him.

All the students who had been on Yan Xiaobao's side quickly moved to the opposite side, as if fearing for their safety. Yan Xiaobao sighed as he looked at them, though he made no effort to change their perceptions of him. Despite the gossip and wary stares being irritating, they were still preferable to having students constantly lingering around him, potentially disrupting his training.

Throughout the entire commotion, Wang Julong stood at the back with his arms crossed over his chest, staring disdainfully at Yan Xiaobao and Shan Ping. Wang Julong was fully aware of his own strength. He usually dealt with trainee disciples ranked at the bottom of the hierarchy around his family's gate, and he felt deeply insulted that a boy ranked ninth believed he could assault those under Wang Julong's protection.

Though Wang Julong hated Yan Xiaobao, he hated being tied down even more. As the prodigy of the Wang Family, he didn't care about the idle gossip of ordinary civilians, nor did he concern himself with their feelings, as they were all trash he could remove with one hand. Only his weaker cultivator brother cared about public opinion, but Wang Julong's gaze had never wavered from Yan Xiaobao.
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Shan Ping had insulted him, which was why Wang Julong hadn't bothered to warn him but had instead sacrificed him, observing once more the advanced martial arts skills Yan Xiaobao practiced. Now that Shan Ping had lost consciousness, Wang Julong stepped over him and walked toward a quiet area within the hall, one that was very close to Yan Xiaobao, whom all the other students had fled from. There, he waited for the teacher to arrive, paying no attention to the chatter within the hall.

They didn't have to wait long for the teacher to appear at the doorway. At first, the teacher's face held a big smile, but it quickly disappeared when his eyes landed on the body sprawled on the floor.

The teacher was very familiar with Shan Ping. He had been teaching first-year students for the past ten years, and Shan Ping had twice repeated his courses. He knew that Shan Ping was two years older than other students, and his cultivation rank was currently the highest. Only two students could defeat him—Wang Julong and Yan Xiaobao.

When the teacher looked at these two students, he furrowed his brow. Neither of them appeared to be arguing, and as they observed the teacher, their faces carried bored expressions.

The teacher sighed deeply before reaching for his teacher emblem and raising it in the air. Every student badge in the room emitted the same silver glow Hui Yue had seen before, and he couldn't help but raise an eyebrow at this new development.

Once the student badges had gathered enough light, a beam shot from the badges toward the teacher's emblem, where it vanished, and the badges returned to their usual appearance.

The teacher pressed the emblem to his forehead and closed his eyes. Once again, the silver glow appeared on the emblem, and it seemed to channel light into the teacher's head.

For several minutes, all the students watched the teacher with great interest. It was evident that he was reviewing a recording of what had occurred. When he opened his eyes, traces of the silver light could still be seen within them.

The teacher sighed, glanced at the unconscious Shan Ping, and released a small stream of Qi into the teacher emblem to notify the Royal Hospital's medical ward of a patient.

Yan Xiaobao observed the entire scene with great interest. He knew the teacher might scold him for his actions, but he himself was confident that he hadn't violated any rules. When his gaze met the teacher's, he felt completely at ease.

The worry in the teacher's eyes was apparent, but beneath that worry was a certain degree of fear. Yan Xiaobao was a student the teacher had never heard of. He was everywhere with the Rong twins, and his talent allowed him to gain entry into top institutions, despite his first-rank status among the five-star students. If he had just scraped through, then it must mean something had been concealed.