

Medical 261

Chapter 261 Replace

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There was a subtle fake smile on his face; it was obvious he was enjoying Deng Wu's discomfort. Speechless, Deng Wu's eyes widened as he stared nervously at Rong Xing.

Her smile was exactly the same as before, but her eyes now glimmered with a different light. How could she not know that Ma Kong was deliberately provoking Deng Wu?

"Indeed," she said softly, her crimson lips curling upward. "If you can't face your opponent, how will you protect me in the future?"

Looking at Rong Xing, tears welled up in Deng Wu's eyes. A puppy wouldn't appear more pitiful than the young man with dark circles under his eyes at that moment.

"Really?" he asked in a low and pitiful voice, causing Yan Xiaobao to burst into laughter. The others quickly joined in. Within seconds, Deng Wu's crestfallen expression vanished, replaced by a confident smile.

"It's fine, even if she decides not to love me for now," Deng Wu said, relaxing as he took a large gulp of beer. "She'll realize one day how amazing I truly am."

After that, the conversation shifted to discussing the various opponents they might face the next day. However, everyone reassured each other that, unlike Deng Wu, they would try their best to make it into the top eight.

Throughout the discussion, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but keep a close eye on Deng Wu, his gaze flickering with a bright glimmer. This man had many secrets, yet his feelings were so openly displayed. Over the past six months, Yan Xiaobao had come to understand Deng Wu well, as neither had held back their secrets. He quickly saw that the black-haired youth genuinely cared for the Ice Queen, Rong Xing.

Rong Ming and Rong Xing were the first to leave. Both seemed eager to return to their quarters to prepare a quick Crystal Stone for the next day's competitions. Once the Rong twins left, Ma Kong decided to visit the infirmary for his headache, with Gao Yan accompanying him.

"Who do you think will win?" Deng Wu asked with a smile, watching the numerous students and tourists running atop the arena mountain.

"Me," Yan Xiaobao replied without a shred of hesitation in his voice. As long as he could face Wang Julong in the rematch, he was prepared for the world to know everything about him except for Lan Feng. That was how much he hoped for this fight and the level of respect he held for his opponent.

"Exactly," Deng Wu replied ironically, amused by such a serious answer from someone who was merely a child. A laugh escaped his lips as he recalled their first meeting, when he had tried to chat with him just for fun.

"You know, Rong Xing might actually choose me," Yan Xiaobao said with a flicker of magic in his eyes. "She's even seen me naked before. She should take responsibility."

After finishing his sentence, Yan Xiaobao was already running off toward his courtyard, leaving a stunned and slack-jawed Deng Wu behind.

"You little brat!" the roar echoed across the mountaintop, causing Yan Xiaobao's grin to brighten as his speed increased; he activated Speed Flow and transformed into a streak of light, aiming for his home.

Before he reached his courtyard, Deng Wu couldn't catch up and saw Hui Yue standing outside the door with a smile, seemingly greatly entertained.

"You little rascal," Deng Wu panted, leaning against the cold wall of the courtyard, his breath heaving as he struggled to regain composure. Having overexerted his Qi, chasing the Velocity Flow was impossible.

"What was that all about?" he asked angrily, a hint of uncertainty flashing in his eyes as if he feared the answer he'd demanded.

"When I was little, Rong Xing accidentally walked into my bathroom," Yan Xiaobao said matter-of-factly. "Before she even told me I was a boy, she lingered for a moment and saw everything."

At this, Deng Wu began mumbling to himself, "My innocent Rong Xing... My innocent Queen... Was she truly not innocent?"

Watching the distressed expression on Deng Wu's face, Yan Xiaobao laughed aloud, his voice ringing out in the chilly air.

"Relax," he chuckled. "I was probably five or six years old back then. It's like taking care of a child."

"But you were never just a child," Deng Wu countered, gazing at him with a complicated expression. "You were born a monster."

"Ouch," Yan Xiaobao said, though his face betrayed no signs of pain, a stark contrast to his words. "That's a harsh one. Of course, I was still a child. Long ago."

Deng Wu glanced at Hui Yue for a while, deliberating whether he wanted to know the real answer to his next question. Ultimately, he couldn't hold back and asked, "Do you like Rong Xing?" His face was filled with fear and concern, but Yan Xiaobao's lips curled into a faint smile.

"No," Yan Xiaobao replied, his eyes showing a deep sorrow. "In this life, I will only love one woman."

It was a promise for a lifetime, one that seemed to have spanned eternity yet still awaited fulfillment. Yan Xiaobao exuded an air of melancholy, making the youth in front of Deng Wu seem ancient once again.

Deng Wu stepped back in fear. It wasn't the beast hidden within that small body; it was Hui Yue's soul, a soul that shouldn't belong to someone only ten years old.

Feeling the tense atmosphere, Yan Xiaobao laughed and shook his head. "One day I'll tell you," he promised, slipping into the courtyard and leaving Deng Wu behind.

When Deng Wu heard that Yan Xiaobao wasn't interested in Rong Xing, he should have been elated; instead, an overwhelming sadness seeped into him. The black-haired rake felt more dejected and slightly guilty for even asking this question.

Inside the courtyard, Yan Xiaobao took a deep breath again,

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'Sorry.' A calm voice suddenly echoed through his memories, making the boy lift his eyebrows in surprise.

'Why do you feel sorry?' he asked curiously, though he had a good idea of what happened. This Soul Fusion sometimes allowed their thoughts to interfere with each other's.

The sorrow from Yan Xiaobao had reached the Phoenix and ultimately led him to open up.

"Ten years ago, I said I wasn't responsible for your death, but I was," Lan Feng said, and before Yan Xiaobao could respond, he continued grimly.

'When you picked up the hairpin, in the endless waiting of your world, I never felt this connection. When I saw that girl and sensed her connection with her, I knew right then you'd send me away. I truly believed I had no choice. I'm sorry for deceiving you all these years, but I had to do it. I'm sorry.'

"I understand," Yan Xiaobao sighed. Hearing the proud and haughty Phoenix sincerely apologize made him feel better about the matter.

When Yan Xiaobao first learned about Lan Feng, he was indeed filled with anger, but over the past ten years, the Phoenix had given him much in return, including paving the way for him to become an unparalleled cultivator.

Back in Yan Xiaobao's old life, he was simply friends with Li Fen—a friend as valuable as a brother. Yan Xiaobao's feelings for Li Fen were clear. If he were to confess to her, he might ruin their relationship; not only that, he would cause her distress and sadness, which was the last thing he wanted.

Li Fen was leading a happy life with her boyfriend. Losing Yan Xiaobao would be a source of pain for her, undoubtedly, but it was a pain she could overcome, allowing her to peacefully live out her life with the man she loved. freewebnovel.com

When Yan Xiaobao reached Godhood, Li Fen had already lived what could be considered a fulfilling and long life, passing away of old age; at that point, Yan Xiaobao would transform her into a youthful body, restore her memory, and then let her start anew alongside him, reborn—or perhaps he could hope to reincarnate her husband as well.

Yan Xiaobao truly did not want to resort to the final choice, but whenever he thought of Li Fen's radiant smile, he knew he would do it, just to make her happy. The most important thing to him was to tell Li Fen that he had truly loved her. After that, whatever came next, would come.

"Make sure you help me become the strongest person in the world," Yan Xiaobao sighed under his favorite tree, "then it won't matter if you kill me."

'Wait. You knew?' Lan Feng said, his apology quickly turning into outrage. "Are you saying you don't trust me?" he asked indignantly.

Hearing this flustered Phoenix, Hui Yue laughed. He absolutely enjoyed this type of personality from the once-guilty bird.

"Look at me," Xu Yue said calmly, still wearing a smile. 'Can't you see how I follow everything you say like a good disciple? It's obvious—there's something behind my death. That's all.'

Lan Feng could do nothing but complain. As Yan Xiaobao continued his relentless cultivation and training, the issue was set aside.

On the morning of the tournament's second day, the first thing Yan Xiaobao saw when opening the courtyard door was Deng Wu. The handsome, black-haired boy stood outside, sitting slightly forward.

There was no apology offered, nor any mention of the previous day; the tense atmosphere quickly became comfortable as the two began joking about Hui Yue's odds of winning the tournament.

As they moved up to the mountaintop where the arena was located, other friends eventually joined them. An hour later, the group had grown from just Deng Wu and Yan Xiaobao to all six of their friends gathered together, gambling with each other over who would win and what stakes to place.

Unlike the previous day's format, today everyone had to draw a number and face off against those who drew the same number in their bracket.

Yan Xiaobao was up first, but his match was over before it even began because his opponent was one of his first-year students. The student had witnessed Yan Xiaobao's confrontation with Shan Ping and the power he displayed the day before. As soon as he pulled the number, he forfeited immediately.

Rong Xing and Rong Ming found themselves in similar situations. Rong Xing's opponent forfeited shortly after the match began, while Rong Ming's opponent—a first-year fighter—was defeated in the first move.

The final participant in their group was Ma Kong, and when he stepped onto the stage, his eyes widened in surprise upon seeing Wang Julong standing across from him.

This was a match Yan Xiaobao had not anticipated. Wang Julong was a nine-stars student-level cultivator, while Ma Kong was a seven-stars disciple-level cultivator. Clearly, Ma Kong was at a disadvantage. However, despite his friendship with Ma Kong, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but root for Wang Julong to win.

Though Ma Kong was his friend, Yan Xiaobao was currently focused on making it to the finals and challenging Wang Julong. What he had overlooked, however, was that Wang Julong first needed to emerge victorious from his bracket, which currently included Ma Kong, Rong Xing, and Rong Ming.

Yan Xiaobao believed Wang Julong had what it took to defeat Ma Kong. Unfortunately, defeating the Rong brothers would not be an easy task, as they had already reached the Medic Level.

Yan Xiaobao watched the stage intently, frowning. Wang Julong was different. There was a tranquil air about him he had never seen before, his eyes calm and filled with determination.

On the other hand, Ma Kong showed no signs of complacency. Though he had been sparring with another seven-stars disciple the day before, suffering only a minor injury to his brow, he remained highly alert as he stood facing this young competitor from the first year.

The audience split into two factions. Both boys came from prominent families within Liluo City, families belonging to opposing factions. One was the leader of a faction, the other a strong pillar of support for the rival side.

This dynamic gave the audience ample reason to watch closely as the two young men stood on the grand arena stage, staring each other down in anticipation of the battle about to unfold.

In terms of numbers, one side had the advantage, while the other held the upper hand in skill. Furthermore, Wang Julong's advanced martial arts gave his supporters ample confidence as they nervously eyed young Ma Kong.

"Let the forty-seventh match of Group Seven begin!" The judge's voice rang out, and as the words fell, Wang Julong's hands erupted with crackling energy.

This Qi far exceeded what Yan Xiaobao had dealt with months ago. A tremendous swirling current began forming in Wang Julong's hands, growing rapidly into a massive tornado.

Within this cyclone, bolts of lightning flashed one after another. Each of these bolts was at least four times stronger than those Yan Xiaobao had seen before, and he couldn't help but feel his heart racing as he wished he were the one on stage rather than Ma Kong.

As the tornado expanded to an immense size, Hui Yue watched with a faint smile. The storm now enveloped Wang Julong entirely, lifting him off the ground while Thunder Lightning swirled around him in steady streams from both hands.

The Qi Lightning skill had clearly evolved. Skills like these developed in two ways: either advancing to a higher rank or being personally refined and adapted to suit the cultivator's preferences.

This was much like Velocity Flow; the higher the practitioner's rank, the more copies they could create. In the case of Qi Lightning, a higher rank resulted in larger tornadoes, unleashing more Qi Lightning bolts.

Wang Julong had spent significant time honing his already advanced techniques. Could Hui Yue really believe he had squandered all that time cultivating? Even the lessons used for training others were also meant to refine himself!

The fruits of Wang Julong's efforts were evident when he successfully broke into the Disciple Rank—it had doubled his energy reserves compared to before.

As his blood boiled, Yan Xiaobao's eyes sparkled with excitement. His veins throbbed as if his very essence were begging to jump into the fight. Previously, he feared their battle might be too simple due to his higher-level skills giving him an edge, with Wang Julong potentially struggling. Now, this fight was electrifying. This clash had become the only thing Yan Xiaobao could think about. His canines seemed to protrude more than before as he gritted his teeth, hunger surging from deep within him.

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Deng Wu stood next to Yan Xiaobao—his eyes darkened. He could feel Yan Xiaobao's murderous intent and noticed the young boy staring at Wang Julong, practically licking his lips like a beast ready to pounce. His eyes focused, observing every minor movement; he completely shut out everything else happening around him.

The Rong twins and Gao Yan didn't notice anything unusual, as their full attention was on the match in front of them. Unlike Yan Xiaobao, they weren't excited by the cyclone-like Qi beginning to encircle Wang Julong; instead, they were filled with fear and concern. They knew that despite Ma Kong's great potential, he usually preferred dedicating himself to learning business management. Winning such a duel wouldn't come easily for him.

Ma Kong clenched his fists, and a dull white aura began to gush out from his body, enveloping his entire right arm. This Qi was extremely white; however, it paled compared to Wang Julong's pristine radiance, something Ma Kong was keenly aware of as he devised a plan in advance.

Suddenly, with explosive speed, Ma Kong shot forward toward Wang Julong, his fist hurtling straight towards Wang Julong's face with speed and power that demonstrated his superior rank. Despite this, as he approached the massive whirlwind surrounding Wang Julong, his explosive advance quickly halted, causing the concealed force within Wang Julong to disperse.

When this happened, Ma Kong didn't panic; instead, his right leg swung from behind, aiming to strike the whirlwind. This action resulted in a twisted scream escaping Ma Kong's lips, as both his leg and Qi clashed directly against the powerful wind, which torqued his movements painfully.

Yan Xiaobao's gaze darkened further, and the intensity in his eyes increased. Although he hoped Wang Julong would win, he didn't want his friend to get injured. He silently vowed to ensure that Wang Julong would experience the same pain later.

Even after Ma Kong broke his leg, he didn't intend to end the fight. Instead, he stepped back, summoning more Qi, and wrapped it around his injured leg. He used it as a crutch, ensuring he could still move.

At first, Yan Xiaobao looked surprised, but a faint smile slowly crept across his lips. Wang Julong had no intention of fighting Ma Kong—he would leave it up to Ma Kong to concede voluntarily.

The day before, Yan Xiaobao had managed to end a battle immediately after an attack, evading strikes and staying out of range. Wang Julong felt the need to prove he could do better. He wouldn't even need to dodge; he could take the hits head-on!

This arrogance ignited fiery blood within Yan Xiaobao, forcing him to clench his fists so tightly that blood dripped from his palms, as his nails pierced his skin.

It seemed as though everyone familiar with the history between Wang Julong and Yan Xiaobao understood the silent declaration: "I'm better than you."

The two prodigies stubbornly faced each other, neither willing to back down. Ma Kong noticed the mutual stare, and the pained smile on his face revealed that he understood. If Ma Kong had taken this fight seriously, he might have had a chance. But he knew how important this was to Yan Xiaobao, so he tried to test whether Wang Julong was truly worthy of Yan Xiaobao's time.

Unfortunately, this arrogance cost him dearly, leaving him in immense pain.

"I concede," Ma Kong said with a smile, allowing a wood-affinity Master teacher to help him leave the stage and heal his leg.

With Ma Kong conceding the fight, the Rong twins and Gao Yan rushed toward the medical facility. However, Deng Wu stayed behind to monitor Yan Xiaobao's progress in the match.

Yan Xiaobao wasn't ignoring his friends, nor was he unconcerned. In fact, his icy blue eyes locked onto Wang Julong, who was staring back at him, both trying to conceal the obvious challenge within their gazes.

Smiles slowly emerged on both of their faces. Each smile was filled with confidence and a promise of an epic battle to come. The two remained locked in this stare for some time until Yan Xiaobao finally nodded and turned to walk toward the medical facility.

The academy's medical facility was located behind the administrative building; during competitions, a temporary tent was set up behind the court where all the affinity teachers were stationed.

In reality, the medical facility wasn't a single large tent but rather a small village of 20 numbered tents. Inside each tent, there were teachers with wood affinity providing care, while other tents hosted injured students resting.

In front of all the tents occupied by teachers, injured students formed long lines for treatment. These students suffered injuries ranging from fractured limbs to internal wounds. Yet, none were life-threatening.

Ma Kong was among these students, standing in the middle of the line, his Qi still wrapped around his leg, effectively supporting his weight and keeping him composed.

When Yan Xiaobao and his group spotted Ma Kong, they instantly rushed toward him. Ma Kong, calm and unperturbed, displayed an expression as still as a tranquil lake, without even the faintest ripple.

A calm smile appeared on his face as he saw his friends coming to offer him moral support. Rong Ming and Gao Yan kept ranting about how unfair it was for Wang Julong to possess such an extraordinary ability. Neither of them could grasp how he had refined his skills to such a degree, let alone how he had managed to join the Disciple Team at the age of ten. Apart from Deng Wu, Wang Julong's potential far surpassed any other student's. According to Yan Xiaobao, Deng Wu didn't count because his talent was granted by Little Dragon, just as his own was bestowed upon him by Lan Feng.

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The team's progress was slow, and while they patiently waited for Ma Kong's turn, they had the chance to look around.

A young woman was rushing about, shouting orders at the medical staff or reprimanding the youth who treated the infirmary as a playground to pass the time while waiting. This woman was not unfamiliar to Yan Xiaobao, as he had encountered her when Shan Ping had been injured. However, she was now too busy to notice the white-haired boy standing among the many queues.

Only five Master-level teachers were engaged in recovery at once, while the others were meditating to replenish their spiritual energy supplies.

The wood elemental affinity is one tied to the control of life and death. It is especially connected to the domain of vegetation, although it can, under certain circumstances, be cultivated to focus on humans. Those known as therapists specialize in using the wood element to repair human bodies rather than planting and refining medicinal herbs.

The wood element is often used to attack an opponent's soul. However, when it comes to spiritual attack skills, it typically targets the body's essence, distorting remnants of life, and in some extreme cases, prolonging life itself.

Possessing wood elemental affinity is not extraordinarily rare. The balance of heaven and earth grants one in five cultivators affinity with the wood element. Yet, less than one percent of those cultivators have an affinity for fire, enabling them to become alchemists.

Ever since Lan Feng had told him this resembled the magic revered in his old world, the affinity of Yuan Yue had been incredibly fascinating for Yan Xiaobao. Unfortunately, Yan Xiaobao hadn't yet opened his Middle Dantian, but he was eager to see how wood users consumed their spiritual energy to heal injuries like broken bones.

Time passed slowly as Deng Wu did everything he could to make Rong Xing comfortable during the wait. At first, he managed to get a chair, but once he proudly showed it to Rong Xing, she immediately handed it over to Ma Kong.

This brought a look of frustration to Deng Wu's eyes; however, as Rong Xing began praising his consideration for their injured friend, joy returned to his gaze.

Later, Deng Wu brought snacks and drinks for everyone, hoping to be praised again. His actions lightened the mood for everyone, even causing Yan Xiaobao to lose the last trace of murderous intent that had been embedded in his blue eyes since exchanging glares with Wang Julong.

Finally, after hours of waiting, it was Ma Kong's turn to enter the tent at the front of the queue. The tent could hold ten people, so Yan Xiaobao and the others followed him inside.

The Rong twins and Gao Yan had clearly come to provide emotional support for Ma Kong. Because of Rong Xing and Yan Xiaobao, Deng Wu had come along. Concerned for his friends, Yan Xiaobao had, in turn, obviously joined them, but ultimately, his intrigue lay in witnessing the spiritual healing performed by the wood-element teacher for his injured friend.

Inside the tent, everyone—except for Yan Xiaobao—had seen such healing before. To them, it was no big deal. Therapists were a rarity among Liluo City's major families, and as the nurtured youth of those families, they had visited therapists regularly throughout their cultivation training.

As they entered the tent, Ma Kong was placed on a bed. The fabric over his legs was cut away, exposing open wounds and the fractures of broken bones.

Looking at the gaping injury, Yan Xiaobao felt a slight nausea, but he quickly composed himself. After all, this was just a broken leg—it could have been worse.

Ma Kong's face twisted slightly as he looked at his legs. When the teacher applied spiritual energy to ease his pain, Ma Kong clenched his jaw shut and closed his eyes tightly. Wave after wave of agony crashed down on Ma Kong, his friends visibly uncomfortable, restless, and increasingly desperate to find ways to help ease his suffering.

Before any of them could ask if they could assist, the teacher finally turned to Ma Kong, his gaze falling upon the injured boy. The teacher appeared utterly drained—his hollowed cheeks and foggy eyes bearing evidence of his exhaustion.

As the teacher focused on Ma Kong, the entire atmosphere of the tent suddenly came alive as countless tiny green motes filled the air. These motes quickly gathered around Ma Kong's bedside, and within minutes, they began swirling over his body, as if scanning him for any ailments.

When the green motes reached his leg wounds, they condensed into a layer of green light, resembling protective armor. Initially, the green motes remained stationary, accumulating more light and other motes, but then they gradually sank into the damaged leg.

This process reminded Xu Yue of how it looked when he practiced Qi enhancement techniques on his organs. Since the appearance was so similar, Xu Hui thought the healing process would end once all the light was absorbed into the leg—but they were mistaken.

As the light entered the leg, the injuries began to transform. The broken bones started to mend at an incredible speed. As Yan Xiaobao watched in awe, they grew back together slowly, while the torn skin healed. It was as if someone had recorded an injury repairing itself and sped it up dramatically.

The entire leg returned to its previous condition—just as it had been before the battle with Wang Julong. Then, a faint green glow emerged once more from beneath the skin.

This time, the green motes no longer shimmered but ascended into the air, where they gradually disintegrated into nothingness.

As the last green mote vanished, the teacher collapsed into a chair. His hair was drenched with sweat, his complexion grew pallid, and the bags under his eyes were visible—a testament to his immense fatigue. Everyone knew it was time to leave.

Just as they walked toward the tent's exit, the woman who had saved Shan Ping rushed in.

"You stubborn old man," she chastised harshly. "You need to ensure you get enough rest. Yes, healing the children matters, but you need rest and to replenish your spiritual energy, or you'll only drag us all down."

It seemed they had engaged in similar discussions before, but all the group heard was the teacher's weary murmurs of agreement.

"Meditate or sleep," the woman said, her tone softening. "Healing more than a hundred students today alone should prove just how excellent your skills are."

That said, the woman turned and left the tent, running across the infirmary's village toward another teacher prepared to take over.

"You need to be careful," Ma Kong sighed. "Wang Julong may only be a Disciple-level Taoist, but his Qi is pure." He turned to the Rong twins and grinned awkwardly. "Haha, forget it," he said with a laugh. "You two are nothing like what a cultivator at mere disciple level would ever trouble themselves with. The entire Nine Stars are bottlenecked between you."

At this point, everyone except Yan Xiaobao burst into laughter at the idea that the twins—ranked so high—might lose to Wang Julong.

'What do you think?' Lan Feng suddenly asked, gazing at Yan Xiaobao as he observed the spectacle. Hearing the question, Yan Xiaobao let out a dissatisfied grunt.

"Look at Hong Kong. He's a Seven-Star-level student, yet he doesn't even qualify to make Wang Julong unleash his lightning. Though it's not easy, I have a feeling that, if given the chance, my dear rival might pull off something surprising."

'Never underestimate your opponent, is that it?' Lan Feng said with a smile. "You don't have time to play around here," he added as Yan Xiaobao continued quietly observing his cheerful friends enjoying beer once again after the competition.

"I know," Yan Xiaobao nodded before bidding them farewell. 'Let's go home and train.'

And so, Yan Xiaobao disappeared into the twilight, ready to return to rigorous training. He had to be cautious, not allowing himself to make any mistakes. Cultivators of his level could not afford any freedom. Each battle could very well be the last. In the end, every other student would be surpassed, and Yan Xiaobao would emerge victorious after Wang Julong's triumph marked the turning point.

The first week had three matches at Yan Xiaobao's shop. Although he had to participate in all three, the effort was required mainly for the first match, as the two remaining matches involved forfeited students.

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Chapter 265 A Fearsome Opponent

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Though Yan Xiaobao should be eager to elevate his Qi to become a more formidable opponent, he still felt bored. He fought for his position in his finals, but the first week seemed unbelievably challenging compared to his expectations.

Looking back at the first week, Yan Xiaobao felt it rushed by as if no major events occurred. Observing Hong Kong, it seemed impossible to say his legs were in a dreadful state just a few days ago. Such recovery made Yan Xiaobao question whether the injury had even existed in the first place.

Yan Xiaobao had an epiphany about different elemental affinities. Before this, he hadn't given it much thought; the only utility he saw with wood affinity was mixing it with fire to create medicinal medicine.

Nevertheless, Yan Xiaobao finally understood that these elemental affinities held infinite possibilities and uses. In turn, this led him to train restlessly, setting his next goal at the center of his Dantian, wishing to gain an affinity for the wood element.

One day slowly turned into another. Every second day was a rest day with no tournament matches. While most students and adults played at the stalls throughout the academy, some students focused solely on training.

Yan Xiaobao was clearly one of those who spent their days in training. He continued as before, strengthening his organs, practicing with the transforming weapon's sword, practicing martial arts, and ultimately refining as much essence as possible while still maintaining the current quality of Qi.

Every time Yan Xiaobao closed his eyes, he recalled how strong Wang Julong was and a slight smile appeared on his face. Excitement quickly ignited, but he also realized that Wang Julong was currently likely to have the upper hand.

Yes, Yan Xiaobao had guardians for defense, and now with his transforming weapon, he should be able to fight against stronger opponents, but Wang Julong had Bright Lightning, which had evolved to be both attack and defense. It truly deserved to be called an advanced skill.

Rong Ming got help from Rong Xing to train together. Deng Wu spent as much time as he could with his life's love. Unfortunately, she wasn't interested in being with him but instead went to Yan Xiaobao's courtyard, where he would complain about his luck while holding Rong Xing and helping with the fights.

Gao Yan was the only friend still competing who didn't spend time training. It wasn't because Gao Yan didn't want to improve his cultivation base, but because the tournament was his best chance to make money.

Gao Yan and his civilian followers were selling information to various participants. This information was collected by the civilians and written on small leaflets, one per student.

These leaflets were sold to other students and guests visiting the Royal Art Academy. Among these leaflets, those of Wang Julong, Yan Xiaobao, and Rong Ming were hot sellers, everyone wanted a copy.

The students bought the leaflets to understand their opponents. In battles against other students, knowing what you're up against is absolutely beneficial, and Gao Yan made sure others knew this very simply.

The audience bought the leaflets to understand which family the talented young students belonged to, to prepare for approaching these families. They also took them home to see the various martial arts skills used, in case they could obtain a copy if they came to help the children's families.

Every student and spectator had long sensed the tension between Wang Julong and Yan Xiaobao, which allowed Gao Yan to sell a lot of leaflets on these two boys. The sales of these two outstripped even Rong Ming, the top-seeded player.

As time went by, Yan Xiaobao went through several matches, his opponents did not forfeit, and these opponents were beaten in short skirmishes.

In the previous battles, Yan Xiaobao would spend his remaining time relaxing with friends after returning to the courtyard. The days considered rest days were ones where Yan Xiaobao sought nothing else but training.

"The winner is a first-year student, Yan Xiaobao!" The judge announced as Yan Xiaobao stepped down from the stage after his last match.

His previous opponent lay on the ground, unconscious after being hit by the martial arts attack skill, Stone Fist. This student was a Four-star disciple, and he was the strongest opponent Yan Xiaobao had faced so far.

Although Yan Xiaobao still managed to fend off the opponent's blows, it was no longer as graceful and smooth as earlier in the week. This was expected, considering Yan Xiaobao was just a cultivator ranked ninth in the student rankings, one of the few cultivators left in the entire competition.

The reason for Yan Xiaobao's victory was that he began his martial arts again. Remembering what his teacher taught him, which areas of the body to strike, how to defend, led to a quick elimination.
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It's clear that if he used the Qilin Saber of his transforming weapon or his improved Fire Spark, Yan Xiaobao could achieve a smoother victory, but they were both aces up his sleeve, and Yue Yue didn't want to reveal them too early.

Fire Spark had previously been seen by teachers and students within the academy, so it was naturally included in the leaflets. However, Yan Xiaobao wanted to keep it secret since it far exceeded expectations. It was an ability with devastating destructive potential.

As Yan Xiaobao walked off the stage, he looked at the place where Rong Xing was currently dealing with a young male, who seemed to be a year above the Rong twins.

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The student stood slightly hunched on the stage. His clothes were torn to shreds, the once blue fabric now stained black with blood.

Every inch of his skin bore visible marks, as if someone had repeatedly stabbed him with a blade. Yet, even under such circumstances, the young man steadfastly stared at Rong Xing, an unyielding determination glimmering in his eyes.

Below him, the stage was gradually turning into a crimson sea, blood dripping off his battered body. But even so, the young man clenched his fists and charged once more toward the unharmed Rong Xing.

So far, every match Rong Xing had participated in ended with her opponents forfeiting, allowing her to secure victory. These forfeits occurred for various reasons: some sought to curry favor with her, others were unwilling to offend the City Lord's only daughter, and many simply yielded to the overwhelming disparity in strength.

Now, standing before Rong Xing was the first student who refused to back down. His eyes saw neither the beauty nor the noble identity of the City Lord's daughter, nor did they acknowledge the immense gap in their abilities. To the young man, Rong Xing was merely an opponent—a rival he had to fight with every ounce of his strength.

It wasn't only Yan Xiaobao; everyone present admired this tenacious young man. Although he was a year older than Rong Xing, his cultivation base was only at the disciple-level Eight-star rank. His Qi was neither powerful nor particularly weak.

No matter how the audience judged him, it was clear the young man was inferior to Rong Xing in every aspect. Yet, he showed no intent to give up. Standing firm, he abruptly summoned the last threads of Qi from within his battered body.

Blood vessels in his right eye burst, making him look like a devil, while his Qi surged toward his right hand, aiming a desperate attack at Rong Xing's seemingly vulnerable form.

"He's cheating!" Deng Wu instinctively shouted in fear for Rong Xing, his voice trembling with panic. But the referee paid no heed, being absolutely certain the attack did not violate the rules.

"Please... be careful," Rong Ming murmured, his eyes filled with concern as he focused intently on his sister, who was experiencing her first serious contest in this tournament.

At this moment, Yan Xiaobao, observing alongside his friends, noticed their sudden unease. Even though Rong Xing had superior strength, there was no guarantee her opponent's desperate attack would fail to hit its mark. Unlike the others, Yan Xiaobao remained calm. So far, nothing had managed to land a blow on the young girl, and this final attack was unlikely to break that pattern, given the determined but slowing movements of her adversary.

Yan Xiaobao was correct. As the clenched fist flew toward her, Rong Xing gracefully stepped aside, allowing the exhausted student to stumble past her and collapse onto the stage floor.

The audience, initially stunned, erupted into murmurs of disbelief as they realized how effortlessly Rong Xing had defeated her opponent. Just as the referee was about to announce the result, the young man rose again, covering his half-closed right eye as blood trickled from the corner of his mouth.

"I... I can still fight... still... stand..." he said with great difficulty, blood seeping from his lips with every word.

Rong Xing regarded him cautiously, then cast a glance at her brother. A soft, tender smile spread across her face.

"I forfeit," she stated firmly, her tone leaving no room for the referee's objections, who instantly lost the authority to declare her the victor.

"I won't... accept... your pity!" the injured young man bellowed as he lunged at Rong Xing once more, only for her to evade him yet again.

"My cultivation may be higher than yours," Rong Xing said, her voice as gentle as a summer breeze. "But strength is not the sole concern of a cultivator," she continued.

"You defeated me long ago, with the resolve that brought you here to the tournament. It's a resolve I have never possessed. I haven't lost in power—but in mindset."

With that, Rong Xing stepped down from the stage and joined her friends, who appeared visibly relieved upon seeing her unharmed.

Rong Xing's words rang true. The power of a cultivator could be attained by anyone with patience, but for those who aspired to greatness, unwavering determination was indispensable.

Suddenly, flyers about the unknown cultivator who had just collapsed on the stage piqued everyone's interest. People were eager to learn more about him, knowing that this battle could significantly change his future.

Before anyone noticed, three weeks had flown by. Even now, Gao Yan, Rong Ming, Yan Xiaobao, and Wang Julong remained in the competition. Today marked the final eight matches of the tournament, and although Yan Xiaobao was curious about his own fight, he knew it paled in comparison to the quarterfinals.

Wang Julong went up against Rong Ming, a battle that left Yan Xiaobao feeling deeply conflicted. Rong Ming had been his friend for years, yet Wang Julong was the opponent he longed to face in this tournament.

Yan Xiaobao let out a quiet sigh, calmly watching the stage ahead. Now was not the time to worry about his fight later in the day—he needed to focus on the opponent standing before him now.

Today was the day to determine the tournament's strongest eight combatants. Despite the obvious gap in the strength of Yan Xiaobao's group compared to others, it was impossible for him to avoid facing at least one formidable opponent.

At the time, the opponent Yan Xiaobao faced was older than the usual competitors in his group by a year and ranked as an Eight-star disciple.

As he locked eyes with his opponent, Yan Xiaobao found the other boy radiating hostility. Until now, Yan Xiaobao had eased through the competition, picking off weaker opponents while leaving higher-ranked fighters to this individual, fueling his growing resentment after each match draw.

Today, he no longer needed to bottle his fury. Today, he could fight the so-called "genius" head-on. Glaring at him, Yan Xiaobao felt the malice directed toward him, the boy's ice-blue eyes brimming with a chilling killing intent.

Although Yan Xiaobao's rank was lower, he had no intention of letting such a fierce student overwhelm him. He wouldn't let anyone stand in the way of his path to the finals. Steeling himself, Yan Xiaobao bowed habitually to his opponent, his ice-blue eyes glinting with resolve, his lips curling into a determined smile.

"The final fight of the second group begins now!" the referee announced, his booming voice echoing across the mountain peaks. At this stage of the competition, only one match took place at a time, ensuring the full attention of the audience was on the two young fighters standing on the special stage.

At the sound of the start, the older boy charged directly at Yan Xiaobao, moving with the silence of the wind, his Qi coiled around his clenched fists in perfect control. The previously still air came alive with energy as his fists pierced through with impressive speed, heading straight for Yan Xiaobao.

The sudden onslaught caught Yan Xiaobao off guard, but he activated Velocity Flow just in time, barely dodging the attack with the width of a hair as he retreated.

Seeing Yan Xiaobao narrowly evade such a swift strike left the audience in complete silence. No one moved, their eyes fixed on the boy employing an advanced martial arts technique.

Though Yan Xiaobao had fought stronger opponents before, none had been as ferocious as this one. He grudgingly admitted to underestimating his adversary. Relief washed over him as he managed to escape unscathed.

Feeling the raw power of his opponent's fists during their brief exchange, Yan Xiaobao quickly calculated his options. His body could endure perhaps one direct blow at most, making the use of his Qi Guard crucial.

Summoning Velocity Flow, Yan Xiaobao created a perfect clone of himself, silently vowing to persevere. In an instant, two white-haired boys now stood on the stage, identical in strength and appearance.

The duplication through Velocity Flow was an obvious ploy to buy time as Yan Xiaobao evaluated his next move, knowing his opponent would hesitate for at least a moment to recalibrate his approach to the two identical figures.

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Chapter 267 Perfect Offense

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Although the atmosphere and feeling were identical, Yan Xiaobao fully realized that his dual identity was nothing more than a clone with no combat capabilities and no defense against destruction. All it could do was confuse opponents, buying him enough time to execute his next skill.

Yan Xiaobao sighed. He truly had only one option. Currently engaged in combat with a more powerful opponent, his only chance at victory was to preserve his energy until he could unleash his perfect attack.

Within Li's Dantian, a Qi vortex erupted with force. It accelerated at an incredible speed, making each Qi thread imperceptible. After spinning rapidly for several seconds, Qi began to flow out of the vortex, traveling through his meridians before slowly exiting through his skin pores. It coated him in a translucent, shining protective layer of Qi aura.

This was an ability belonging to a Middle Dantian Expert. It was a protective spell every cultivator learned, but even so, this execution was an unprecedented display of mastery over Qi.

This ability wasn't documented in manuals, as during the first confrontation with Wang Julong, only a handful of people witnessed it. The entire audience showcased visible awe, their breath hitching as the technique spread. Even Wang Julong, displeased, had to narrow his eyes upon noticing that his opponent's Qi Guard had improved significantly. A flicker of envy crossed his mind—he wished he was the one currently battling Yan Xiaobao. He wondered if his Qi Lightning could penetrate this seemingly impenetrable defense.

As soon as the Qi Country Guard appeared, the older boy immediately rushed at the unprotected Yan Xiaobao, hoping to minimize the damage. He discovered that as soon as his fists made contact with the clone, the clone vanished into thin air.

Frustration evident, the older man roared, sensing an incoming attack, and within less than a second, a leg appeared before his face.

However, after the initial strike, the attack shifted onto Yan Xiaobao, who moved like a cat—agile and swift—managing to evade most of the blows, allowing only two to lightly graze his protected frame. Despite the strong defensive power of his layer, Yan Xiaobao still felt a faint impact and couldn't help but curse under his breath as he extended his palm.

The white light gathered within Yan Xiaobao's palm, converging into a knife. For the boy to be defeated, Yan Xiaobao realized he would need to employ one of his hidden cards, and summoning the knife would suffice.

When the knife came alive in Yan Xiaobao's hand, the older boy before him was overwhelmed by the sheer pressure. The air felt suffocating, the knife vibrated, its domineering energy seemingly thirsting for blood.

This sensation was different from what Yan Xiaobao usually felt while training his skills. Instead, energy surged from within his body. This was no longer a practice spar; it was a real battle. The Qi inside him was urging Yan Xiaobao to move forward. To attack. To kill.

The sinister aura spread toward the audience, instilling fear among the students while shocking the experts with how the Qi of such a young boy could harbor such deadly intent.

Yan Xiaobao utilized the Velocity Flow skill to enhance his mobility, easily dodging a series of strikes. Instead of retreating, he moved closer to his opponent step by step with every dodge.

Watching Yan Xiaobao, one could see a sinister smile on his face, a glint of murderous intent flashing in his eyes. The young boy radiated domineering energy, so intense that even the judges at the sidelines were stunned.

The knife in his left hand spun, firmly grasped by Yan Xiaobao. Swiftly, he slashed the opponent's left arm, leaving a clean line as blood began to flow. The slash was so fast that the older boy had no time to react, overcome by fear. The area where the weapon made contact burned painfully, as though it had been set aflame.

Yan Xiaobao ensured the knife caused no permanent damage, displaying his speed and agility as he danced around his opponent. Then, he allowed Qi's knife to deliver prolonged retaliation against his rival.

As the second slash connected with the skin, the older boy managed to twist his body, launching a counterattack that landed on Yan Xiaobao's stomach, forcing him to retreat a step.

Luckily for Yan Xiaobao, the second slash resembled the first. Again, the older boy drowned in agony, feeling as though his entire back was set ablaze.

Yan Xiaobao was suddenly pulled back to reality. While this was indeed a real battle, it was far from a fight to the death. The murderous intent in his eyes gradually faded, replaced by a calm, calculated assessment of the situation.

Knowing his rhythm had been disrupted, Yan Xiaobao swiftly withdrew, creating considerable distance between them. Throughout this time, the knife in his hand never stopped spinning, making him look like a rogue biding his time to strike.

The audience fell into complete silence. No one had expected this prodigious boy, already endowed with several advanced martial arts skills, to suddenly unveil another mysterious ability—one undoubtedly of a higher tier.

Everyone present shivered in the wake of such talent, realizing it far exceeded their initial expectations. But astonishment quickly turned into shock and fear: how could someone so young possess such an extensive mastery of advanced martial arts skills?

Chapter 268 Perfect Attack_2

As the audience stared at the battle before their eyes, Yan Xiaobao's opponent clenched his teeth tightly. Clearly, he had not expected Hui Yue to truly live up to the title of genius, and sweat drenched his back as he stubbornly clung to the possibility of winning due to the larger Qi Pool he possessed.

The hostility between Yan Xiaobao and his opponent had been slowly building over the past three weeks. Yan Xiaobao vaguely understood why the other disliked him.

Even so, Hui Yue's failure wasn't due to the stroke of luck—or misfortune—he had faced in his lifetime. The fault lay in the fact that he now had to prove himself stronger than this young man standing before him.

Soon enough, the battle descended into chaos. Whenever his opponent unleashed a flurry of attacks, Yan Xiaobao would dart closer, only to spring further away to dodge in sharp, swift angles immediately after the strikes were completed.

Each assault conjured an unsettling memory, prickling at the edges of his mind, but he forced himself to suppress these feelings during the match unfolding before him. That unease carried a mix of thrill and excitement, paired with the almost overwhelming urge to defeat his opponent.

These sensations were unfamiliar, something Yan Xiaobao had never experienced before, but they now threatened to break free of their bindings, leaving him feeling increasingly frustrated.

Determined, Yan Xiaobao suppressed the feelings once more and focused every ounce of attention on the fight at hand.

Yan Xiaobao launched another attack, and in that moment, the stark difference in power between the two became undeniably clear. Fortunately, the older boy's temperament was average at best, and his execution was vastly inferior to Yan Xiaobao's.

The two fighters once again found themselves standing far apart, a great distance separating them. The hatred in their eyes burned fiercely as blood dotted the stage between them, reminiscent of the scenes between Rong Xing and her opponent throughout the competition.

To Yan Xiaobao's opponent, it was unfortunate that he didn't care to retreat or admire perseverance. By simple theory, Yan Xiaobao should have been at a disadvantage. After all, his rank as a cultivator was only at the nine stars level.

Watching the white-haired boy wielding his white Qilin dagger led many visiting family leaders into an uneasy state of fear.

All of these family heads quickly reached a consensus—the boy on stage wasn't a genius; he was a monster.

A silver-haired monster stood there, his face cold and emotionless, his gaze condescending as he looked at his opponent. Should he decide to severely injure his rival, the victory would be his with ease.

Yan Xiaobao wasn't stupid. From the start, he had seen the hatred and intent to kill deep within his opponent's eyes. Now, he reciprocated. For anyone who showed such blatant disdain toward him, Yan Xiaobao would repay them with the same contempt.

Yan Xiaobao's face curved into a slight smile, though it was no longer the innocent smile of a teenager wielding uncalloused hands—it was the sinister grin of an adult preparing to unleash something dreadful. Turning his head from side to side, he allowed an ominous crack to echo before shrugging his shoulders.

"Are you going to forfeit?" Yan Xiaobao asked, his voice as cold as ice. "Or would you prefer me to get serious?" Suddenly, a second blade appeared in his left palm, and within a second, Yan Xiaobao was now wielding dual daggers, poised to double the pain.

The two daggers in Yan Xiaobao's hands emitted a malevolent aura, causing his opponent to feel sick. Yan Xiaobao had transformed into an overwhelming presence.

When the older boy caught sight of the additional dagger in Yan Xiaobao's grasp, a cold shiver ran down his spine. Anyone close enough to observe could clearly see the sinister glint in the young boy's eyes. It was obvious that this child wasn't as simple as anticipated. Gritting his teeth, he let the unbridled hatred blaze in his gaze.

The older boy wasn't the only one shocked by the appearance of the second blade; the entire audience fell silent, their breaths heavy, as their eyes fixated on the unfolding spectacle before them.

The sheer presence of the boy made all Senior Experts throughout Liluo City furrow their brows slightly. It was evident that the aura he was exuding belonged to a cultivator ranked nine stars as a student.

This cultivation base, relying solely on human refinement, made it obvious to everyone that what they were seeing wasn't the human form they originally expected—it was closer to that of a Demon Beast.

Nevertheless, no matter how deeply they analyzed the boy, the Dantian Cave carried peculiarities that seemed to elude their every attempt to understand fully, leaving even the experts feeling deeply uneasy.

The only way to hide something from the experts here was through cultivation at an extraordinarily high level. Yet, this boy held secrets even they couldn't decipher.

"I forfeit," the opponent said, his eyes torn between anger and despair as he clenched his teeth. If this guy retaliated against the world's expectations, Yan Xiaobao wouldn't be surprised. However, for now, the other boy simply wanted to leave.

Yan Xiaobao exhaled a sigh of relief.

"Is it truly that terrifying?" Lan Feng asked curiously, clearly someone who understood Yan Xiaobao more than anyone else present.

"What do you even want?" Yan Xiaobao replied irritably. "This is my first time shedding flesh. Even if it isn't fatal, it's still a revolting sensation."

'Get used to it.' That was the only answer he received from Phoenix after the match's outcome became apparent. Before turning slowly to his friend and leaving the arena's peak, Yan Xiaobao swiftly removed the Qi Country Guard insignia and his transforming weapon. "Why do you have to be so aggressive?" Deng Wu asked worriedly, the only one among Yan Xiaobao's ranked friends who knew his position as third. Seeing Yan Xiaobao openly display such emotions shocked Deng Wu.

"Don't worry," Yan Xiaobao said with a smile as they headed toward the cafeteria for a free lunch. "If I need to win, I still have hidden secrets."

"You aren't planning to use... uh, him...are you?" Deng Wu asked, genuinely concerned about the prospect of Yan Xiaobao releasing Lan Feng's power. Protecting Li Fen's identity was imperative, but Yan Xiaobao only scoffed at his worried friend's reactions.

"I have other options. Don't worry," he assured.

"What are you two talking about?" Rong Ming asked curiously, but Yan Xiaobao and Deng Wu didn't answer. Instead, they merely smiled.

Back at the arena's peak, the next match hadn't started yet, as a brief intermission was granted. Even the instructors gathered together, discussing the student who had just demonstrated three advanced martial arts skills.

The audience held similar discussions, with several families stepping away from their seats to theorize with other households about the background of this mysterious genius.

The entire battle had been recorded by the judges and was already disseminated to various instructors. Eventually, the school decided to sell the footage to visitors.

Every major family purchased at least one version of the recording produced from the battle. The primary motivation wasn't admiration for Yan Xiaobao's prowess but rather an effort to analyze and understand the displayed advanced martial arts skills. If they could manage to replicate and develop sect-level techniques, they believed they could forge their own skills in half the usual time required.

Had Yan Xiaobao known that these prospective men hoped to learn or create high-tier techniques by studying his performance through the recordings, he would have laughed. Yan Xiaobao had spent years perfecting the skills he used—the Qi Guard and Speed Flow could never be understood easily, and the transforming weapon would prove even harder to grasp. Among its myriad possible forms, the weapon he showcased held nowhere near enough depth for anyone to obtain even basic comprehension.

A half-hour passed before the academy proceeded with the battles for the next group. Everyone settled back into their seats, eager to see what the new round had to offer. To their dismay, the forthcoming matches weren't nearly as enthralling as the earlier ones, leaving people scattered across their seats quietly debating various numbers.

On a nearby hilltop, Yan Xiaobao sat with his friends, calmly enjoying his dinner before the time came for them to return. Two additional fights remained to determine whether Gao Yan and Rong Ming could secure spots among the top eight contenders.

"I never knew you had another advanced martial arts skill," Rong Ming said admiringly, though a trace of jealousy lingered in his tone. The Rong Family possessed two advanced techniques, but Rong Ming wasn't qualified to learn either. Despite being Yan Xiaobao's friend, Rong Ming couldn't suppress his envy toward him. At the same time, suspicion began to brew within him.

Rong Ming was Yan Xiaobao's first friend—they had known each other for years. But now, Yan Xiaobao was no longer the sweet, innocent boy Rong Ming once knew.

Could he have a secret teacher? Rong Ming wondered, deeply intrigued by Yan Xiaobao's newfound secrets.

Rong Xing had acquired an advanced martial skill from the City Lord's mansion—a technique that inflicted severe pain upon her previous opponent. During the academy tournament, it was against the rules to utilize weapons, but then again, any weapon created by Qi didn't count as martial arts attack skills.

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Chapter 269 Perfect Person

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Rong Xing had learned the family's high-ranking martial arts skill, Flying Dagger. Its functionality resembled that of a transforming weapon, though it lacked flexibility.

It created small daggers that were then fired at the opponent. These daggers couldn't be controlled individually but were used as volleys, and after each volley, the cultivator needed to create another set of daggers.

Unlike transforming weapons, Flying Daggers couldn't be transformed into another weapon, just as Rong Xing couldn't use daggers as melee weapons.

Even with these flaws, it was still an effective technique capable of inflicting significant damage on targets, almost guaranteeing the death of any low-tier opponents with a single dagger and severely injuring others at Rong Xing's level.

Because of this ability, Yan Xiaobao and others believed that if Rong Xing went all out, she could easily become the strongest student at Liluo City Royal Art Academy. That is, if no one factored in Deng Wu.

Yan Xiaobao gazed out the window, noticing how every student and adult nearby glanced his way. He had used high-ranking martial arts skills before, but never as aggressively as today. He could no longer afford to be the carefree, boyish figure he had been in the past.

Now was the time to fully embrace this new world and fight to defend his position. To begin, Yan Xiaobao started assessing who were his allies and who were not. With such an intense display in front of so many spectators, it was clear that some senior experts would sense that something was amiss.

Though unaware of what the problem might be, Yan Xiaobao felt danger lurking in every corner. He had mastered at least three advanced martial arts skills, which made it increasingly likely that someone would attempt to coerce him into selling or surrendering them.

As he contemplated these matters, a wave of cold tears appeared in his vision. Although Yan Xiaobao's connections had once granted him many friendships, now was the time to figure out how to protect himself. He began formulating a way to leverage certain benefits and fend off immature families.

However, for reasons unclear, Yan Xiaobao couldn't shake the unease he felt toward Lord Rong Liang. There was no concrete evidence to support this feeling, but every time Yan Xiaobao saw the man, his hair stood on end, and an overwhelming sense of fear washed over him.

Yan Xiaobao knew that Lord Rong Liang and Lord Bu Huang had previously exploited their cultivation bases to examine anomalies in Yan Xiaobao's body. While they clearly hadn't found Lan Feng, it was evident they had discovered something—but neither of them addressed the issue.

Lord Rong Liang had always tried to present himself as a perfect individual, even going as far as erasing parts of Yan Xiaobao's past, yet the ominous sensation remained deeply rooted in Yan Xiaobao's mind, something he couldn't dispel.

The lingering sense of danger prompted Yan Xiaobao to keep his secrets closely guarded. What he'd learned in this world was that power determined everything, and Deng Wu had already grasped the perilous nature of withholding information.

This realization filled Yan Xiaobao with guilt. He wished he could confide in the Rong twins, Ma Kong, and Gao Yan about his secret, but for now, he had no choice but to hide it. Should Yan Xiaobao reveal his secret, someone might begin to anticipate things far beyond what Deng Wu envisioned.

"You truly live up to the nickname they've given you," Gao Yan sighed, looking at the composed Yan Xiaobao, causing the boy's eyebrows to rise in surprise.

"Nickname?" he asked with a laugh. He noticed Gao Yan had been conversing with some civilian students earlier while occasionally glancing over. freewebnovel.com

Yan Xiaobao's charismatic display had earned him attention, though he hadn't expected to be given a nickname. In some ways, it made him feel like a professional wrestler from the old world—a notion that gave him pause for a moment.

His eyes, no longer showcasing the naïve innocence they had for the past decade, were now sharp and cold, observing everything around him.

"It's time to head back," Yan Xiaobao announced, prompting the others to immediately rise and follow as he ascended toward the mountaintop.

Although Yan Xiaobao was the youngest of the group, he appeared older than the rest. They easily deferred to his judgment, readily accepting his suggestions. Even the difficult Deng Wu found little resistance in following Yan Xiaobao's lead.

As they reached the mountaintop, Yan Xiaobao's group caused a stir. Representatives from each family eagerly tried to greet him, offering him extravagant gifts in hopes of swaying his opinion. However, no matter how lavish the gifts were, they still reflected the maturity Yan Xiaobao had previously tried to hide.

The journey to the arena was longer than anticipated, as Yan Xiaobao had to stop several times to greet people he had never encountered before. Though unfamiliar with these families, Yan Xiaobao treated them with respect. Arrogance could easily invite trouble he didn't need.

Finally, they arrived at the destination, and this time, it was Gao Yan's turn to fight for a position in the top eight.

"You have got to be kidding me," Gao Yan muttered, looking at the person standing before him, whose face bore a radiant smile.

Gao Yan wasted no time considering who his opponent might be. From the beginning, he had made it clear he only cared about victory, nothing else. This led Gao Yan to avoid even glancing at the posters revealing the match participants.

Chapter 270 Perfect Person_2

After showing such an arrogant attitude, when he discovered Zhang Zhentian standing in front of him, he was clearly shocked.

"Hey, boss," the grinning young man said warmly as he walked to the top of the platform. "Sorry, boss, but today I need to fight you. Those pills will truly help my parents live in a different world."

Hearing this, Gao Yan smiled bitterly. He was in an entirely identical position. Before finally responding to the greeting, he nodded seriously. "If you stop me, I'll be very angry," he sighed heavily in his place.

Yan Xiaobao focused intently on the battle about to erupt. Fighting against one's friend often leads to discovering a genuine Crystal Stone instead of a frenzied battle, and by observing a genuine Crystal Stone, one can gain deeper insights into their own abilities.

"Take my hit," Gao Yan said as he shot forward like a cannonball, hurling directly toward his friend, determined to test him.

"Bring it back!" came the reply, the smile still lingering on Zhang Shengtian's face.

A white Qi covering was visible over Zhang Shengtian's embrace. As he moved forward with his initial impact, the playful grin on his face was replaced by a serious expression.

As Gao Yan advanced, Zhang Zhentian leaned further into accepting the strike, causing Yan Xiaobao to shake his head. With this, Gao Yan was ensuring that his attack would bring him more pain—not because Gao Yan's power diminished the damage but rather that the pain from the recoil was greater.

Zhang Zhentian appeared to understand his mistake, gritting his teeth as Gao Yan moved forward again. Unlike usual combats, Gao Yan did not capitalize on his opponent's vulnerable moment but instead waited until his counterpart was ready before taking a defensive stance.

"Give me everything you've got!" Gao Yan said, as his friend gathered all the gray glowing Qi onto his fist without needing to hear the command. The quantity and quality of the young man's energy were quite formidable.

The Qi condensed in Zhang Zhentian's hand solidified, covering only his knuckles, turning into a spike around his joints.

A tremor surged through Gao Yan's spine as he saw the martial arts offensive technique his friend was employing; however, he knew he couldn't evade it. He had to take it head-on. A grin began spreading across his face, signaling Zhang Zhentian. This would be strike after strike exchanged until one of them had to concede.

Years ago, the two of them ran together through Liluo City's dirty streets, peeking into shop windows to watch legendary cultivators strolling in the streets.

When the Martial Arts School program began, they enrolled together and had been participating in Liluo City's Royal Art Academy, with Zhang Xiantian clearly establishing himself as Gao Yan's right hand.

This was Zhang Shantian and Gao Yan's first opportunity to go all out against each other.

Watching Zhang Chengti's martial arts strikes, Gao Yan couldn't help but feel the adrenaline rush. Their friendship was evident to the spectators; neither would inflict severe harm on the other, yet neither could emerge from the fight unscathed.

The Qi spikes on Zhang Chengti's knuckles, resembling energy-crafted knuckle dusters, moved at an astonishing speed toward Gao Yan, targeting his head, aiming to strike his jaw with the force of a thousand suns.

To increase the reaction time before the strike, Gao Yan took a slight step back, a spinning Qi vortex in his hand transformed into a massive spherical Qi ball. As the orb hit his palm, it suddenly flattened and turned into a shield, which he raised as he charged at Zhang Chengti.

A massive boom erupted as the Qi-made knuckle dusters collided with Gao Yan's defensive shield, reverberating through the air. The two young men stumbled backward, struggling to maintain balance.

Gao Yan's Qi Shield showed cracks, hidden beneath his sleeve, and his arm was locked in an odd shape. Zhang Zanti wasn't faring much better, a small trickle of blood dripped from the corner of his mouth.

Though both young men were injured, neither seemed prepared to yield as they slowly returned to their stances. This time, Zhang Ziantian adopted a defensive pose while Gao Yan prepared to attack.

Gao Yan and Zhang Chengti grew up in a cutthroat area of the city, where only the strong survived. These children had crafted their own ways through brute force and sheer tenacity. Naturally, the growth with a lack of rules brought an unrefined but passionate fighting style.

The skills displayed by these two young men highlighted this approach to battle. Gao Yan formed knuckle dusters similar to the ones Zhang Chengti used, crafting Qi with the same muted gray glow.

Everyone watching held their breath as Zhang Cheng released a shield akin to the one Gao Yan had used earlier; both were preparing to clash once more.

No one spoke; silence filled the air. The spectators sat on the edge of their seats, watching the labored breaths of the two young boys in the arena.

Usually, fights were decisive and ruthless, but today the two young men were engaged in a sparring match free of constraints. Winning mattered little because both would benefit from the outcome.

For all the martial arts trainees watching the match, the techniques employed by the fighters provided insight that they could later replicate.

The Qi Shield and Qi Spike were considered low-tier martial arts skills, yet the damage they inflicted on the opponents upon contact was undeniably significant.

A thunderous explosion louder than the first roared into the air. The shockwave was so intense that it spread beyond the arena stage, sending both young men bouncing backward.

This time, Gao Yan wiped blood from the corner of his mouth, while Zhang Zanti couldn't move his right arm.

"I concede," Zhang Jingli managed to climb back up and broke the silence. It was clear to the audience that Gao Yan had inflicted more damage on his friend twice than he'd received himself.

When Zhang Jingli announced his concession, everyone in the audience stood up, applauding the two young men. Even the top-ranked experts and their families, who admired students capable of winning ferocious battles, also appreciated the good-natured sparring match between two friends going all-out against each other. It was a true display of respect from cultivators.

As Gao Yan and Zhang Cheng walked toward the medical room, all smiles, they nodded at each other. Both seemed utterly exhausted but satisfied with how the fight concluded.

With Gao Yan walking alongside Zhang Chanti, Hui Yue and others stayed behind, giving him a thumbs-up before quickly returning their focus to the next match below, featuring Wang Julong and Rong Ming.

The previous match was a display of mutual friendship and respect; the one about to unfold, however, promised to unfold like a calculated stroll through Rong Ming's park.

Despite this, Rong Ming's expression betrayed no arrogance or superiority when he entered the stage. His cautious demeanor toward his opponent served as the only clue to those observing that Wang Julong was indeed a prodigy.

Wang Julong and Rong Ming stood face-to-face on the stage, leaving neither the audience nor the judges room to avert their gaze from ensuring the fight followed the rules, with both fighters entirely focused on each other.

Both young men expressed respect with a slight nod, and a second later, they took defensive stances. As the announcer's voice echoed in the air, signaling the warriors to begin, a strong gust swept through the air, converging into a spinning Qi vortex in Wang Julong's hand. The whirlwind gradually expanded, and within a second, Wang Julong was once again cocooned in his evolved Qi Lightning skill.

Since the skill had developed into something capable of both defense and offense, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but marvel. Lan Feng had told him that it was undoubtedly a technique worthy of being considered a family treasure of the Wang Family. It was a skill he had yet to acquire himself.

Rong Xing and Rong Ming hailed from the Rong Family, which, although the current ruling family of the city, was not always such a prominent lineage. In fact, Lord Rong Liang had managed to elevate the declining Rong Family from relative poverty to unexpectedly assuming the mayoral position once held by the Wang Family, which had allowed its assets to decline.

Today's match was not merely about two students facing each other or even two prodigies of the younger generation. It represented the struggle between the previous ruling family of the city and the current one.