

Powerful 1161

Chapter 1161: Found a Treasure

And so, the remaining eight swords were tested one by one under everyone's expectant and astonished gaze.

The final results were: three superior spirit bodies, two inferior dao bodies, two average dao bodies, and three superior dao bodies.

By this time, the testing field was already packed to the brim.

It seemed that all the Inner Sect disciples from the Ancient Abyss Sect had hurried over today.

When the last result also turned out to be a superior spirit body, the entire crowd erupted into enthusiastic applause.

"Heavens! Are these people this freakishly talented? I've never seen so many people above superior spirit bodies in my life!"

"Yes, yes! You're right! This test is comparable to the entrance tests of second or third-rate sects!"

"Tsk, ts! Unbelievable, unbelievable! With so many outstanding recruits, our Ancient Abyss Sect is bound to soar to new heights! Even we might rise to glory along with them!" Someone said with a hopeful expression.

"You? Just forget about it. You're a mediocre spirit body, no one even bothers with you." Another disciple who was familiar with him gave him a disdainful look, taking the opportunity to strike a blow.

"You, you—you are so insufferable!"

Their conversation elicited laughter from those around them.

The disciple who was mocked immediately blushed with shame, flicked his sleeves, and stormed off.

"Hahaha! Truly, the heavens bless our Ancient Abyss Sect! You all must join our sect!"

Elder Dugu was almost so excited that he fainted.

This made him feel as if he had returned to the day he discovered Yang Yan was the Celestial Flood Dragon Saint Body.

Yang Yan truly is his lucky star, truly never disappointing him!

Returning to the Hidden World of the Forgotten Land, he unexpectedly brought back such a batch of talents.

Although Guo Guoguo was quite envious of those women among the Ten Swords with such excellent physiques, and who had always stayed by Yang Yan's side, she was still happy for them because this concerned the future of the Ancient Abyss Sect.

"That's great! Congratulations to you all! You must train diligently from now on!" Yang Yan said happily for them.

Although he had long expected that the physiques of the Ten Swords would be extraordinary, the result still gave Yang Yan a big shock.

However, after thinking it over, he was relieved.

How could those who become his subordinates be anything less?

"Yes! King!" The ten bowed in unison.

With that final result, the Ten Swords felt secretly relieved.

Upon arriving, they were all actually afraid of becoming a burden to Yang Yan.

Judging by the reactions of other disciples and the sect's high-ranking officials now, their talents were evidently extraordinary.

In this case, not only would they not become a burden to Yang Yan, but they could continue to be his strong support, aiding him in conquering the world.

Sect Leader Lin An and Guo Guoguo were extremely delighted with this result, but they restrained themselves from expressing it too much in front of everyone and followed Yang Yan and others back to the Butcher Palace.

"Haha! You all must remain and join our Ancient Abyss Sect!"

Before even entering the door, Sect Leader Lin An impatiently started speaking.

Seeing the unexpected looks from everyone, Sect Leader Lin smiled awkwardly: "As long as you join our Ancient Abyss Sect, we will provide you with ample resources!"

What a joke, even a single superior spirit body is hard to come by, let alone so many superior spirit bodies and dao bodies?!

No matter what, they must be retained, not a single one can be missed.

This is a significant opportunity to strengthen the Ancient Abyss Sect!

As the Sect Leader of this generation, Lin An had always hoped to seek a breakthrough, allowing Ancient Abyss to progress further.

Now, with Yang Yan's appearance, he already sees the Dawn, coupled with the Ten Swords, in front of him lies an evident path to glorify the Ancient Abyss Sect.

"Sect Leader! They will all stay by my side. In that case, I'm very grateful. Moreover, I also have to trouble Sect Leader to ensure their protection." Yang Yan stood up and said immediately.

Yang Yan naturally had his reasons for saying this.

Previously, there was an incident where the Yizheng Sect tried to kill him. Now, with the appearance of such a promising batch of disciples, who knows what troubles might arise.

"No problem, once they enter our Ancient Abyss Sect, they are ours. I won't let other sects snatch or harm them." The Sect Leader spoke as if ready to pound his chest.

"What?! The Ancient Abyss Sect obtained three superior spirit bodies, two inferior dao bodies, two average dao bodies, and three superior dao bodies, a total of ten people!" An old sect leader was so shocked his eyes almost fell out.

"Hmph! The Ancient Abyss Sect has been in the limelight a lot lately!" Another sect leader said through gritted teeth in jealousy.

"We must snatch those individuals away. The Saint Son is too strong to grab or kill, but this time we must capture them. Even if we can't capture them, we must kill them!" An eerie voice directed his men.

"Yes!"

...

Several days passed since the special test for the Ten Swords brought back by Yang Yan to the Ancient Abyss Sect, yet the whole sect was still abuzz about the event.

The reason being the test results were astonishing and exciting.

Among these ten people, the least impressive were superior spirit bodies.

In the past, just one dao body in the Ancient Abyss Sect would have been treasured.

But this time, there were eight at once.

No wonder the elders of the sect were grinning from ear to ear.

Elder Dugu even considered going back to Yang Yan's Hidden World to see if he could find more treasures.

Fortunately, he hadn't lost his reason yet and knew well that such opportunities are rare and should be cherished.

The names of Yang Yan and his Ten Swords became well-known among the sect's disciples.

Everyone talked about them with faces full of admiration.

Especially since the lowest cultivation level among the Ten Swords was the Qi Cultivation stage five, making them eligible to join the Inner Sect.

Subsequently, someone with a mischievous streak leaked the news of the previous battle between Zhuge Wushuang and Young Sect Leader Guo Guoguo, where it ended in a draw.

This undoubtedly stirred another great commotion.

Zhuge Wushuang's test results showed he was in the Qi Cultivation stage six with a superior spirit body, on par with Guo Guoguo.

Such talent more than qualifies him to become a Core Disciple.

As a result, the fame of Yang Yan and his Ten Swords became even more illustrious, surpassing even the top three on the Inner Sect's Celestial Pride List and Young Sect Leader Guo Guoguo.

This led many people to form lines trying to establish relationships with the Ten Swords, either hoping to curry favor with Yang Yan or to find a Great Power to pledge allegiance to.

However, even in the Hidden World, the Ten Swords only followed Yang Yan and did not establish their own sect, so how could they bother with such people?

After making a stand and declaring their position, people no longer dared to provoke these figures.

Faintly, there were rumors that Yang Yan and his Ten Swords were on the rise, poised to become the top force among the sect's disciples.

Yang Yan naturally understood the principle that a tall tree catches the wind, but since no one was genuinely causing trouble, he neither agreed nor disagreed.

Yang Yan always absolutely trusted the Ten Swords.

Now, what Yang Yan was considering was the Foundation Establishment issue for the Ten Swords.

Chapter 1162: Courting Death

In the past, when they were in the Hidden World, wanting to further improve themselves as top existences was as difficult as the average person climbing to the heavens.

But in the cultivation world where spiritual power was hundreds of times more abundant, their talent made breakthroughs foreseeable.

What troubled Yang Yan was that not all of the Ten Swords qualified for perfect foundation establishment.

Five people could only undergo ordinary foundation establishment.

Yang Yan did not wish for their combat strength to have significant differences due to talent constraints.

The Ten Swords were called Ten Swords because each had their own unique talent.

Although the strength among them did differ, the gap was not evident.

If the talent gap caused his Ten Swords not to be a unified group, that was something Yang Yan absolutely did not wish to see.

However, this matter might still need a discussion with Master Zongming for a solution.

Fortunately, the secret technique used to communicate and convey information with the Ten Swords was still usable in this world.

Therefore, Yang Yan first imparted all his insights on how he cultivated from Qi Cultivation Level Nine to perfect foundation establishment to the Ten Swords, and told them to comprehend and cultivate based on the experience.

Just as Yang Yan was making arrangements for the Ten Swords in the Butcher Palace, Gu Sheng reported that Young Sect Leader Guo Guoguo urgently requested a meeting.

If Lin Zimu was coming with business, Yang Yan would prepare meticulously.

But as it was this Little Witch coming, Yang Yan truly could not think what urgent matter she would have.

As Yang Yan was wondering, he heard the anxious yell from Guo Guoguo outside the Butcher Palace:

"You dead Yang Yan, still not coming out, do you want your Ten Swords or not!"

Since it concerned the Ten Swords, Yang Yan immediately became serious.

His figure shuddered, and the silvery Illusory Night had already draped over him, then his whole person darted outside like lightning, standing sternly in front of Guo Guoguo saying: "Where are the Ten Swords? What exactly happened!"

Normally mischievous Guo Guoguo was startled seeing Yang Yan with such evil qi, then came to her senses and quickly said:

"The Ten Swords were ambushed, we suspect... suspect it might be Yizheng Sect people..."

"Yizheng Sect... courting death——"

Before Guo Guoguo finished speaking, Yang Yan had already rushed out like an arrow off the string.

"Hey! They are all late-stage foundation establishment cultivators, don't fight stubbornly if you can't win!"

Seeing Yang Yan dart off midway upon hearing, Guo Guoguo fumed and scolded "idiot", then couldn't help yelling another reminder to Yang Yan:

"Hey! You bad guy, at least hold on until Elder Dugu arrives!"

Wearing the Illusory Night cloak, Yang Yan already appeared in the sky like lightning, how could he hear Guo Guoguo's advice afterwards?

Looks like Illusory Night also needs upgrading!

Complaining about his speed, Yang Yan simply summoned Star Night, flying through the sky with sword control.

A perfect foundation cultivator, flying at full speed with sword control, such awe made many Qi Cultivation disciples on the ground only see a flash of rainbow light.

Even those sharp-eyed identifying someone flying couldn't see who it was.

However, sensing Yang Yan's foundation establishment stage strength, many assumed it was a senior steward on an urgent mission, never connecting it to Yang Yan.

At this moment, Yang Yan's anger almost condensed into substance from his eyes.

The scheming aimed at harming him last time, the accounts hadn't been settled with these cursed clowns!

This time they dared target his people?!

This Yizheng Sect, really can't be tolerated!

Yang Yan narrowed his eyes slightly, his gaze sharp.

If the Ten Swords were here, they would understand, Yang Yan was truly enraged now.

Though he couldn't fight recklessly with the enemy yet, he would make them pay dearly, to quell his hatred.

Thinking this, Yang Yan's killing intent intensified, Star Night's speed increased again.

Through divine thought sensing the Ten Swords, Yang Yan roughly ascertained their location.

Upon first setting out, the Ten Swords were separated, each cultivating alone due to different talents.

Now, in Yang Yan's perception, the Ten Swords had gathered in one place.

Luckily, no life-threatening danger yet.

When Yang Yan descended like a meteor among a group of people, those circling around shivered in fright, retreating a circle.

At this point, the Ten Swords had formed the Immortal Slayer Sword Array.

With the Qi Cultivation circle-master Lin Zimu joining, they could only hold temporarily.

But the gap between Qi cultivation and foundation establishment cannot be bridged by the Immortal Slayer Sword Array.

The defeat of the Ten Swords was just a matter of time.

That's why these people exhaustively surrounded the Ten Swords together, watching the fight of a trapped beast like a cat playing with a mouse.

Probably Yang Yan suddenly descending from the sky was this action's biggest variable.

Seeing the injured Lin Zimu beside the Ten Swords, Yang Yan guessed he covered for Guo Guoguo's escape to report, staying behind for rearguard.

Lin Zimu saw the battle-ready Yang Yan, greeted awkwardly: "Brother Yang..."

If the Ten Swords were ambushed within Ancient Abyss Sect territory, he couldn't shirk responsibility.

Yang Yan's expression indifferent as deadwater, spoke softly to him: "You rest first."

Hearing Yang Yan's arrangement, Lin Zimu quietly moved to the other side of the Immortal Slayer Sword Array.

Actually, he wanted to ask why Elder Dugu wasn't seen.

However, since Guo Guoguo called Yang Yan, she should've notified the elder too, right?

Lin Zimu discerned Yang Yan's anger hidden beneath his calm features, didn't dare ask much, just comforted himself thusly.

"King."

The Ten Swords simply addressed him.

"King, they carry a local world's drug, tough to handle, we almost got drugged unconscious earlier!" Jing Hong promptly reminded.

Upon hearing this, Yang Yan's face turned ominous.

Daring to drug his people!

Perhaps seeing Yang Yan not moving for long, someone in the surrounding group mustered courage to step forward and said:

"May I know your honored name? We are Yizheng Sect's foundation establishment cultivators, capturing traitors from within. Hope you won't interfere with internal sect matters!"

Yang Yan gave him a look, sneered: "Hm! Yizheng Sect is shameless to the extreme, bringing such a lame excuse!"

Yang Yan had harbored killing intent against this sect, naturally he would suppress them in all aspects.

"Are my Ancient Abyss Sect people all traitors within your sect?"

Saying this, Yang Yan raised his voice a bit, stating his stance.

"Take him down!"

Those people heard Yang Yan declare his sect, immediately opened moves without a word.

"Humph!"

Yang Yan snorted coldly, a chilling blade emerged in his hand, then with a flash of figure charged into the encirclement.

"Asura, Star Night has strengthened before you, can't lag behind!"

Yang Yan murmured quietly, like speaking to himself.

And this blade clearly heard his intention, responded immediately.

Swish!

Cold light flashed, quivered slightly.

Chapter 1163: Playing Right Into the Trap

Seeing the figure of Yang Yan in front suddenly turn into a mere silver gleam, the group of Yizheng Sect cultivators was taken aback.

But someone quickly calmed down and shouted loudly:

"Don't panic, everyone, don't panic, this kid is just fast! We ten Foundation Establishment cultivators can't beat him?"

However, just as he finished shouting, he felt a tightness in his throat.

Yang Yan suddenly appeared ghost-like in front of him, sneering coldly, "Is it just speed?"

The Yizheng Sect cultivator widened his eyes in horror, and immediately blood spurted from his throat.

The long blade had already pierced through his Spiritual Power Shield, protruding from his back.

Subsequently, his face instantly turned pale, devoid of any blood.

When Yang Yan withdrew the Asura from his body, the entire blade was already blood-red, with some obscure runes glowing with a bloody light along with the blade's hum.

"It seems Asura really likes the blood of you Foundation Establishment cultivators."

Witnessing their comrade's bizarre death, as Yang Yan looked at the remaining cultivators like they were prey, they all involuntarily stepped back.

Even though each of them was unconvinced, Yang Yan had so effortlessly dealt with a cultivator of the same level, forcing them to be on guard.

"Immortal Slayer Sword Array, Immortal Binding!"

Ten swords suddenly executed a move, pinning a Yizheng Sect cultivator who had unexpectedly tried to ambush Yang Yan mid-air.

Although it only held him for a few seconds, it was enough for Yang Yan to cut him in half before he could escape into the ground.

"Earth escape, huh? Interesting!"

Yang Yan swung the blade without hesitation, draining the blood of the cultivator, who was skilled at earth escape but had pitiful defenses.

"Losing an earth escape cultivator is a significant loss for the Yizheng Sect too, isn't it?"

Yang Yan said coldly, nodding appreciatively toward the ten swords.

Having lost two comrades, the remaining eight Yizheng Sect Foundation Establishment cultivators could no longer remain calm.

"Damn it! When did the Ancient Abyss Sect produce such a monstrous disciple?" someone began to curse.

The roles of hunter and prey suddenly reversed, causing these naturally proud Foundation Establishment cultivators to lose their composure.

"Didn't they recruit a Celestial Flood Dragon Saint Body? My master said the last five Foundation Establishment sent were all defeated by him!" one, somewhat apprehensive, said.

Another immediately echoed: "What's even more terrifying is that at that time, he was only at the Qi Cultivation level!"

The third person furrowed his brows, clutching his sword hilt tightly, his voice trembling as he said, "Are you saying this kid is the Ancient Abyss Sect's Saint Son?"

Without waiting for that cultivator to answer, the Foundation Establishment who posed the final question cast a stern glance and said chillingly:

"Stop holding back. Whether he's the Saint Son or not, if we don't give our all, we'll end up like those two guys!"

With that, his whole body suddenly turned red, as if he were on fire.

"Blood Burning Technique!"

The crimson blood shot out like missiles from his fingertips as it burned, scorching the soil black upon contact.

Yang Yan dodged these blood missiles with Asura, frowning slightly—such blood was unusable.

While dodging, Yang Yan continued to close in on the "Fireman," eventually using Small Shifting to get close.

Just as he was about to strike with Asura, a nearby cultivator suddenly leaped up, engaging in close combat with Yang Yan.

This cultivator was surprisingly adept at melee combat, matching Yang Yan blow for blow and successfully blocking him.

When Yang Yan thrust Asura towards him, the person's hand sign suddenly changed, shouting—

Soul Transformation.

Immediately, his body became as insubstantial as air, leaving him unharmed by Asura's fierce attacks.

It seemed, these guys were starting to pull out their trump cards.

Soon after, Yang Yan suddenly felt a probing sense, causing his heart to tighten.

Following the gaze, he saw a massive eyeball in mid-air, watching him as if to see through all his secrets.

Until the ten swords disrupted the giant eye through the Immortal Slayer Sword Array, that eerie feeling vanished.

"Azure Vault Technique—Fengduan!"

Yang Yan struck decisively, and with a slash of Asura, a gash appeared on the giant eye's surface, then it dissipated, faded away...

Below, a cultivator covered one eye painfully, with blood continuously seeping from his fingers.

"No mistake, he must be the Saint Son Yang Yan!"

The cultivator stared at Yang Yan resentfully and viciously said, "Dare to destroy my Eye Demon, I'll definitely kill you! Fellow senior brothers, follow me to capture this one, it will be a great achievement!"

Spurred on by the cultivator, the remaining seven Foundation Establishment cultivators were reinvigorated, attacking Yang Yan with a variety of bizarre techniques and Daoist methods.

Now, even Yang Yan had to admit that with his current strength, dealing with a group of serious, full-force, late-stage Foundation Establishment cultivators, in a normal state, was quite challenging.

After dodging a devastating wave of Daoist bombardment with the help of the Immortal Slayer Sword Array and Lin Zimu's restraint, Yang Yan suddenly shouted towards the sky behind him:

"Elder Dugu, if you don't act now, you'll just watch us get captured!"

Everyone was stunned.

Soon after, a golden light appeared in mid-air, and a Spiritual Power Array surfaced.

Standing atop the array were Elder Dugu and Guo Guoguo, who had gone to notify Yang Yan.

Elder Dugu was clearly surprised that despite hiding his presence deliberately, Yang Yan still detected him, and chuckled:

"Knowing this old man is here, are you afraid of being captured by these few insignificant guys?"

Yang Yan rolled his eyes at him, then stood still, even retracting Illusory Night and Asura.

Elder Dugu smiled wryly, understanding that Yang Yan wanted him to take over.

Which suited him just fine.

If Yang Yan had single-handedly wiped them all out, wouldn't his prepared Spirit Array have been set up in vain?

Elder Dugu raised his hand, and a circle of brilliant lines emerged under the terrified gazes of the Yizheng Sect cultivators, encompassing them all.

"Spirit Slaying Array, a level-three Spirit Array, capable of both attack and defense, with an added imprisonment effect."

"Of course, when dealing with these Foundation Establishment cultivators, it's naturally a critical strike."

Elder Dugu proudly introduced, his eyes frequently glancing at Yang Yan, clearly not giving up on passing down his legacy to him.

But seeing Yang Yan remaining noncommittal, Elder Dugu could only purse his lips, clenching his palm, causing the Spirit Slaying Array to blaze with grandeur.

When the array's light dissipated, the remaining eight Yizheng Sect Foundation Establishment cultivators had turned to ashes.

Not even their souls remained.

Yang Yan had originally intended to search their souls for more information and seize that bizarre giant eye to study, but now he could only give up.

He naturally wouldn't tell Elder Dugu that although he hid well himself, the Spirit Slaying Array he set up was unmasked and anyone with a little understanding could notice.

It just so happened none of these Foundation Establishment cultivators had studied Spirit Arrays.

Yang Yan had sensed Elder Dugu's presence through this array, deducing that he had been watching for a while.

Chapter 1164: Scheming

"By the way, I reported to the Sect Leader before coming. He felt this matter was significant and asked me to tell you to meet him for a conversation afterward."

As Elder Dugu spoke, he pointed at the ground underfoot:

"Look, the Teleportation Array is right under my feet. Come up when you're ready!"

With that, he and Guoguo's figures flickered and disappeared from the Spirit Array in mid-air.

Yang Yan took a moment to rest in place, and after healing Lin Zimu, he explained the follow-up matters and let the Ten Swords accompany Lin Zimu back to the sect.

As for himself, he flew into the Teleportation Array, directly reaching the Sect Master Hall.

However, when Yang Yan arrived at the other side of the Teleportation Array inside the Sect Master Hall, he raised his head to see Sect Leader Lin An and Elder Dugu already seated and waiting.

As for Guoguo, who had come with Elder Dugu, she was not present in the hall at the moment.

But since the Sect Leader wished to have a private conversation with him, it was not surprising for unrelated personnel to leave.

"Disciple Yang Yan greets..."

Yang Yan was about to salute Lin An, but the latter gently supported him with a soft palm.

Then, he heard him say, "No need, no need. In terms of seniority, I should be the one saluting you!"

Elder Dugu also slowly said, "Since there are only the three of us here, why not temporarily put aside the unnecessary formalities and have an equal conversation to discuss matters?"

This remark cleverly resolved the awkwardness, and Yang Yan and Sect Leader Lin An exchanged smiles.

Without further ado, Yang Yan walked to the seat reserved for him and sat down.

Indeed, it made sense.

Among the three of them, one was the current Sect Leader of the Ancient Abyss Sect, another a disciple of the Ancestral Master with the Celestial Flood Dragon Saint Body, and the last, a Level 3 Spirit Array Master.

Indeed, each had their own reasons to be proud.

Putting these three together, it was tough to determine who was superior or inferior.

Treating each other equally was best to avoid future awkwardness.

"Yang Yan, do you know why I summoned you here?"

Sect Leader Lin An was the first to speak.

Yang Yan was momentarily surprised and looked somewhat unexpectedly at Lin An.

It seemed this Ancient Abyss Sect wasn't as unconventional as he thought, using such an old-fashioned opening.

Though he thought this, Yang Yan still cooperated and replied, "I guess it might be because of the Ten Swords?"

"Correct." Lin An nodded with a smile and responded, "Are you really decided on sending them away?"

It was indeed because of this matter.

Yang Yan sighed, looked at Lin An, and asked with a slight smile, "I wonder what concerns the Sect Leader has?"

After a while, Lin An spoke in a deep voice, "I remember I promised that as long as they remained in the Ancient Abyss Sect, they would have ample resources and..."

"Ample resources and protection." Yang Yan filled in the latter part of Lin An's sentence, which had suddenly paused and gone unsaid.

No wonder Lin An hesitated slightly, seemingly unable to articulate it.

Just now, he learned from Elder Dugu about the Ten Swords being ambushed.

Offering protection under such circumstances was indeed quite embarrassing.

"We certainly remember," Yang Yan softly said, breaking the awkwardness first. "We also naturally trust Sect Leader Lin An's promise, and moreover... we never said we would depart from the Ancient Abyss Sect!"

Elder Dugu also chimed in, "Before returning to the sect, Grandmaster Yang indeed had already arranged it so."

"Imagine if we could successfully place the Ten Swords into various sects as eyes and leverage them to provide resources and protection, why wouldn't we do it?"

"Moreover, their relationship with Yang Yan is beyond question, so there would be no worries at all."

Seeing Elder Dugu's inclination toward Yang Yan, Sect Leader Lin An couldn't quite maintain his composure.

He furrowed his brows slightly, looking hesitantly at Elder Dugu: "Elder Dugu, you—hmph! Could it be that you also don't trust the Sect Leader, don't trust the Ancient Abyss Sect?"

Unlike Yang Yan and Elder Dugu, as the Sect Leader, he bore the responsibility of the entire Ancient Abyss Sect's interests.

Thus, whatever plans he made that involved sect interests would be considered thoroughly.

Progress through stability was best.

Such a large investment of risk was something he dared not even think about, and if a regular person proposed it, he would have refused outright.

But the person making this decision was Yang Yan.

And judging by Dugu's words, the Ten Swords were under Yang Yan's direct control, so even if he wanted them to act on tasks, he'd need Yang Yan's consent.

This made it quite troubling.

"It is precisely because I trust the Ancient Abyss Sect that I am reassured to distribute the Ten Swords." Yang Yan calmly replied.

The next moment, however, he suddenly became serious and said in a deep voice, "The Sect Leader wants the Ten Swords to remain in the Ancient Abyss Sect to strengthen the sect, I can understand."

"But ultimately, riches bring misfortune. If the Ten Swords stay within the sect, they will invite trouble, just like today."

"Facing the same risks and encountering the same challenges, I believe rather than centralized strength, distributing the Ten Swords outside the sect would be better. Casting a wide net, in the end, would yield returns far exceeding that of a solitary strong position at a cost!"

"Keeping them in the sect is certainly safe, but in the end, it will only result in temporary prosperity on an unprecedented scale, which could provoke repression from the other nine sects."

"On the other hand, sending them outside and letting the other sects cultivate them while building an intelligence network."

"When we finally reel in the power, we'll undoubtedly have control of the situation, and unifying the Wandering Dragon Star would be within reach!"

Upon hearing Yang Yan speak so eloquently, not only Sect Leader Lin An but even Elder Dugu was momentarily lost.

Initially, Elder Dugu only intended to set up eyes within various sects to understand the dynamics of their upper ranks.

But he did not expect that Yang Yan's ambition and strategy would far surpass his own.

He actually intended to unify the Wandering Dragon Star!

If he hadn't heard these words from Yang Yan's mouth, he would've wanted to curse at the one uttering such mad ambitions.

"Boy, weigh yourself carefully. See what you're made of before you speak."

Yet even so, with Yang Yan's strategy and resources, the unification of the Wandering Dragon Star... It might actually be possible!

Thus, his evaluation of Yang Yan came down to one phrase—

This young man is no ordinary fish in a pond; his future holds limitless potential!

While Sect Leader Lin An and Elder Dugu were momentarily stunned, a sudden burst of laughter came from beneath the seat.

"Haha, such a bold young man! As expected of my disciple Zongming!"

An immortal-like elder, clad in flowing robes, slowly stepped out from the Void, looking at Yang Yan with eyes full of mirth.

Who else could it be but Zongming?

"Greetings to the Ancestral Master!"

"Greetings, Master!"

Upon seeing this elder, Yang Yan, Lin An, and Elder Dugu promptly bowed in salute.

How did a properly arranged meeting manage to disturb the secluded Ancestral Master?

Everyone's heart was filled with surprise, fearing the wrath of this elder.

Seeing the curious glances, Zongming chuckled a few times and explained:

"Zongming's true body is still in tight seclusion; I am but an external avatar of his. However, I can fully represent his will."

Sect Leader Lin An, who had initially felt relieved, immediately became serious.

Regardless of whether it was the real body or an external incarnation, its appearance at this moment signified that something particularly important had occurred.

Chapter 1165: Acting

As expected, Zongming's avatar quickly said, "I am here to express my stance; do whatever you wish. I will always support any actions you take for the benefit of the Ancient Abyss Sect."

Yang Yan was overjoyed upon hearing this and respectfully said, "Thank you, Master, for fulfilling your disciple's wishes!"

However, at this moment, Sect Leader Lin An was not in a good state.

The Ancestral Master intentionally showed up just to show support?

It seems this matter cannot be opposed!

Just as expected, Zongming slowly turned his head and said earnestly to Lin An:

"Xiaozi, remember, short-sightedness and stubborn conservatism will lead to no future. If we wish to strengthen the Ancient Abyss Sect, we must dare to take risks. Since you regard Yang Yan as a beacon of hope, you must support him without reservation!"

With that, Zongming's avatar gradually disappeared.

Sect Leader Lin An bowed once more towards the direction where Zongming's avatar vanished, respectfully saying "Farewell, Ancestral Master," and then fell silent.

After a while, he sighed, raised his head, and said to Yang Yan, "Go ahead and do what you need to do!

Moreover, my previous promise still holds."

Yang Yan clasped his fist towards Lin An, "Thank you, Sect Leader!"

Afterward, he went directly from the Teleportation Array at the door to the hall outside.

Upon returning to Butcher Palace, Yang Yan found Guo Guoguo sitting inside the guest room.

Before Yang Yan could ask, Guo Guoguo hurriedly approached him, worriedly asking, "Yang Yan, are you alright? My father... didn't make things difficult for you, did he?"

After all, the scene of Yang Yan confronting ten late-stage Foundation Establishment cultivators is still vivid in her memory.

It was clear that Yang Yan's battle was not easy.

If not for Elder Dugu, with Golden Core cultivation stepping in, Yang Yan may not have emerged unscathed, perhaps having paid some price.

Yang Yan was a bit puzzled by her question and somewhat dismissively said, "Me? How could anything happen to me!"

Then he mischievously asked, "What's the matter, Guoguo, are you concerned about me?"

"I'm not concerned about you at all!" Guo Guoguo's face flushed with anger, as she reached to pinch Yang Yan's ear.

This time, Yang Yan was quick to dodge, promptly restraining Guo Guoguo's menacing hand and quickly retreating.

Guo Guoguo massaged her reddened wrist, angrily saying, "I came here to ask you, how did those ten swords train so swiftly?"

"In just a few days, they advanced from the fifth and sixth layers of Qi Cultivation directly to the ninth layer, almost reaching perfection!"

As she spoke, Guo Guoguo's face flushed with jealousy.

After all, she had only reached the seventh layer of Qi Cultivation in perfection, while the ten swords had exceeded her within days.

"They're just as monstrous as you!" Guo Guoguo muttered angrily as she pondered more about it.

"You've been with them these days. Haven't you noticed anything?" Yang Yan responded with a smile.

Honestly, he did not know how the ten swords had improved so quickly.

Even if the spiritual power here had increased a hundredfold, the distance between each layer had expanded a hundredfold as well.

The same speed didn't account for such rapid progress.

"It's Lingbi." Lin Zimu emerged from the inner room to explain, "I observed your ten swords, and found each of them contains Lingbi."

"Lingbi is a kind of self-imposed limitation formed within cultivators who do not advance their cultivation over time."

"This limitation can obstruct a cultivator's training, but once broken through, it releases accumulated spiritual power, advancing multiple levels isn't impossible."

Listening to this explanation, Yang Yan understood the situation.

It's like a game with returning player rewards; you haven't trained for some time, so when you log back in, you receive some benefits.

The ten swords must have stumbled upon such an opportunity.

Yet this was a good thing; he didn't want the gap between them to be too large.

Though surprised, with the ten swords gaining self-protective strength, their plan could proceed more smoothly.

Yang Yan had an in-depth discussion with the sect elders about the ten swords being ambushed during training.

This caused varied reactions among the ten swords.

To prevent similar events, despite their rapid progress, they formed small groups to watch over each other and avoid such occurrences.

After all, being interrupted during training and going astray would be disastrous.

Since the meeting a few days ago, the top three swords under Yang Yan encountered bottlenecks or other issues during cultivation.

No matter how hard they tried, they couldn't overcome these hurdles.

They even reread the magic technique provided by Yang Yan to confirm no mistakes, and sought his advice.

Fu Changjian tentatively asked, "Lord, according to the technique you taught us, we've encountered some difficulties. We hope you can help us."

"Certainly, it's just that you're not putting in enough effort. I went through the same experience initially."

Yang Yan, evidently uninterested in being disturbed while training, replied coldly.

"You probably don't want to genuinely help us, right!"

An unsatisfied Jing Hong couldn't help but speak up, perturbed by Yang Yan's response.

Previously, when Jing Hong acted impulsively, Fu Changjian and Sanqian would intervene, but not this time.

They all seemingly agreed it was Yang Yan who wasn't offering the true guidance.

"It's probably because you aren't putting your heart into it. If you can't overcome minor challenges, how can you grow stronger?"

Yang Yan said with a composed face and ceased paying attention to them, returning to his meditation.

"Impossible! We followed your method exactly, yet advancing is tough. If it's not your fault, whose fault is it?"

Jing Hong continued bitterly.

Yang Yan ignored him, remaining in his meditative state.

"Lord, since you can't teach us, we'll find other ways to train."

Jing Hong, in frustration, left abruptly with a final word.

Fu Changjian and Sanqian hesitated briefly, then followed Jing Hong out.

After they had gone far, Yang Yan slowly opened his eyes and murmured, "Ah, it's tough leading this group. Hopefully, they will figure it out on their own!"

With a wry smile, Yang Yan closed his eyes again.

Though Yang Yan's constitution surpassed the others, the effort he put in wasn't as simple as they imagined.

The top swords among the ten, including Fu Changjian, had arranged to perform a hardship drama with Yang Yan to lure out the big fish.

They wanted to advance faster, higher, stronger along the path of cultivation; when a desire for capability arises, dissatisfaction and jealousy burn within.

This spread of jealousy prompted some forces to stir, creating an opportunity.

Outsiders believed the ship of friendship had already capsized among them.

And perhaps trust among the other swords had already begun to waver!

Not only Fu Changjian's trio, but others among the swords also privately asked Yang Yan for clarification, with the same response.

The apparent conflict escalated, tensions rose sharply.

In reality, the hardship drama was a success.

While they were quietly waiting for the opportunity.

Chapter 1166: The Full Act of Pretending

This quarrel caused quite a stir; many disciples were heavily affected and became extremely restless.

But whether it was Yang Yan or the Ten Swords, their status in the Ancient Abyss Sect was transcendent, so no one dared say anything; they could only silently endure.

In contrast, Butcher Palace was very quiet; even someone as bold as the Little Witch Guo Guoguo didn't dare enter Butcher Palace anymore.

In the past, Miss Guo feared neither heaven nor earth, but this time her arrogance was unusually restrained, clearly not wanting to disturb a painstakingly arranged performance.

Yizheng Sect and the other sects all heard about this, and were overjoyed.

Previously, because the Ancient Abyss Sect not only had a Saint Son, but had also snatched away so many outstanding talents, everyone couldn't help feeling anxious about the upcoming grand talent competition.

Upon hearing this news, some sects even slapped the table in delight.

"You bring ruin on yourself and can't live"—that saying perfectly described the Ancient Abyss Sect's current situation.

If the Ancient Abyss Sect were united as one, breathing as one, then this world would inevitably become the Ancient Abyss Sect's private fief.

And they, these other sects, could only watch helplessly as the Ancient Abyss Sect rose, and in the end be forced to submit.

Now that such a conflict had actually appeared within the Ancient Abyss Sect, it was simply a heavenly blessing!

If you're going to put on a show, you have to play it all the way through.

Ever since the quarrel began, Fu Changjian and the others had never gone to see Yang Yan again.

This situation gradually convinced those sects that had originally held doubts, making them believe that there truly was a problem between Yang Yan and his Ten Swords.

"It's those people again. Do they ever stop, day in and day out?"

Jing Hong glared at the throwing knife suddenly sticking out of the stone pillar, and said angrily.

Recently, the three of them, who had originally been progressing at a tremendous pace, all seemed to have suddenly hit a bottleneck, unable to advance an inch further.

This made them exceptionally distressed, even somewhat irritable and uneasy.

"Huh, there's writing on this throwing knife..." As Sanqian spoke, he yanked the knife out. On the blade were clearly carved four small characters—Come Out For A Talk.

"This level of strength is not something an ordinary person could wield."

As he spoke, Sanqian handed the throwing knife to Fu Changjian.

"Mm! To carve such powerful, vigorous characters on such a small throwing knife, and for them to look so natural—this absolutely isn't something a common person could do. Looks like the other side has deep foundations, probably from a major sect."

Jing Hong came over to take a look as well, nodded, and asked, "So are we going or not? What if it's a trap, and they're just trying to test us?"

"Go, of course. What's there to be afraid of? We've been waiting for them."

With that, the already impatient Sanqian was the first to leap out the window, pinching a Spell with his fingers as a vortex of qi formed beneath his feet, suddenly lifting him into the air.

"Let's go, we'll get to the bottom of this."

Fu Changjian shot Jing Hong a look, his figure suddenly blurring into a streak of light that shot off into the distant sky.

"Wait for me!" Jing Hong shouted, and hurriedly chased after them.

The three of them chased one another; just as they left the sect, they were blocked by a man in black.

Jing Hong was about to launch an attack, but was stopped by Fu Changjian.

Fu Changjian narrowed his eyes and sized the man up, then suddenly smiled and said slowly, "I take it you're the one who used the throwing knife to call us out here."

The other man laughed heartily. "If I didn't use a bit of a trick, how could I lure out several outstanding talents like yourselves?"

The man in black did not give his name, but it was almost certain that he was from another sect.

"Outstanding talents? How are we outstanding talents? We're just ignorant fools being used by others."

This, of course, came from the impulsive Jing Hong.

The man in black laughed. "With physiques as exceptional as yours, you are naturally outstanding talents."

"It's just a pity they don't know the proper way to teach you, and instead are holding back your growth."

Sanqian let out a cold laugh. "You slander our King like this—what exactly is your goal?"

The man in black waved his hand. "Sanqian, right? No need to put on an act about what's real or fake. From what I've observed, you're actually the most dissatisfied of the three, aren't you?"

"You..." As though his secret had been exposed, Sanqian was momentarily at a loss for words.

Taking advantage of the momentum, the man in black asked blandly, "Well then, can we have a proper talk? Whatever you want, we can give you, far beyond your imagination."

At this point, the most steady of the three, Fu Changjian, finally spoke up.

"Let's hear it, then. What exactly can you offer us?"

As if he'd just gotten what he wanted, the man in black broke into a broad smile and said proudly:

"Naturally, we can give you the resources you desire, and the most exceptional Magic Techniques, to help you advance by leaps and bounds on the path of cultivation."

Before Fu Changjian could say anything more, Jing Hong couldn't help himself and blurted out, "Just how strong is your Dharma Gate? Is it as strong as the King... ahem, as Yang Yan?"

The man in black replied casually, "You really don't need to worry about that. Admittedly, the basic physiques of you three aren't as monstrous as Yang Yan's, but with a proper cultivation Dharma Gate, you'll still be able to catch up to him."

"In that case..."

Jing Hong was just about to say something when Sanqian raised a hand to stop him, and said in a deep voice, "This is a serious matter; we need to think it over. You should head back first. We need some time."

The man in black didn't seem surprised by this outcome. He nodded. "I hope the three of you can give me a satisfactory answer—and give yourselves a chance."

After the man in black left, Jing Hong asked, somewhat puzzled, "Do we really need to let the fish bite down on the hook even harder? No matter how we act, some people will still be suspicious."

Before Fu Changjian could respond, Sanqian gave a sly chuckle off to the side:

"As the saying goes, 'start with a sky-high price, settle for what hits the ground.' It's no bad thing to take more time to consider something like this; we don't have to make a decision so early."

"If I'm not wrong, other sects will be coming to us soon as well."

Fu Changjian also nodded, which counted as endorsing Sanqian's view.

Some of the more impatient sects had already started secretly contacting Fu Changjian and the others, even some of the other swords, privately promising all kinds of benefits.

These unforeseen developments left the three of them somewhat surprised.

Only then did they finally realize just how sought-after they were, all because of their special physiques.

The same result also gave them a bit of inspiration.

Maybe they could make a big score—cast the net for the biggest fish of all.

The three of them took all the terms offered by the various sects and compared them, and found that they were actually more or less the same.

These sects that had contacted them in private all said they were willing to provide resources superior to those of the Ancient Abyss Sect.

On the condition that they leave the Ancient Abyss Sect, enter their mountain gates, and become Inner Sect Disciples.

It seemed that the battle for talent was fierce no matter what world you were in.

What's more, in this world, this wasn't just about fighting over talent; it was also a great opportunity to strike at the Ancient Abyss Sect.

The Ancient Abyss Sect already had a Saint Son. If they could win over these few talents as well, then by weakening one side and strengthening the other, the gap between them wouldn't be as huge.

At the very least, it would give them a bit more leverage in future competition.

Otherwise, with the Ancient Abyss Sect holding a Saint Son and dominating alone, it would definitely not be a good thing for the other sects.

Chapter 1167

"Moonlight, we..."

Mu Qingcheng, who hadn't spoken a word to Yang Yan for a long time, finally mustered the courage to speak, but saw Yang Yan shake his head without a word, and had to close her mouth.

"This is not the Hidden World, and Moonlight's title is just a hollow name. You can just call me Yang Yan."

Before she could nod, Yang Yan suddenly said, "Someone's coming."

Then, he closed his eyes and began cultivating as if no one was around.

Mu Qingcheng, standing nearby, quickly walked towards the door, expressionless.

She acted as though Lin Zimu wasn't there when she slipped out silently.

Lin Zimu, staring at Mu Qingcheng's departing figure, was taken aback. Just then, Yang Yan opened his eyes, and Lin Zimu hurriedly approached to ask, "What's wrong with her?"

Yang Yan calmly shook his head, "Nothing, she's just packing some things to move to the sect's allocated residence. It's not appropriate to keep staying here at my Butcher Palace."

Lin Zimu slightly furrowed his brows and asked in surprise, "What about the other Nine Swords? Have they all moved out?!"

Yang Yan lightly nodded, "Yes! Actually, having an independent residence is quite good."

The more indifferent Yang Yan's demeanor appeared, the more astonished Lin Zimu felt inside.

He feared Yang Yan might be genuinely upset but was pretending not to care, bearing all the pain himself.

Just like... he did in the past.

Thus, although Yang Yan's status was higher, as the senior brother of the Inner Sect, he couldn't avoid stepping in to offer some guidance.

Lin Zimu organized his words slightly and then cautiously said, "Yang, there's something I'm not sure if I should say."

"Please speak, Zimu." Yang Yan thought with a bitter smile, showing no change in expression.

From the look of things, the events recently between him and the Ten Swords were affecting the sect.

Lin Zimu was evidently unaware and had been deceived by the worsening "conflict" between them.

"Yang, though it's true you brought the Ten Swords back, and they have indeed brought considerable talent to the sect, however..."

At this point, Lin Zimu paused!

Oh well!

It seemed this guy was about to start preaching.

Clearly, Lin Zimu was genuinely concerned about the relationship between him and the Ten Swords.

Yang Yan pinched his nose, feigning a posture of being taught, while using his spiritual power to block his ears.

Thus, despite Lin Zimu's earnest and lengthy efforts, Yang Yan heard none of it.

Finally, seeing Yang Yan was somewhat distracted, Lin Zimu hurriedly stopped and changed the topic:

"Outside, many disciples have significant grievances against them. Especially concerning resource distribution, there have been many disputes."

"Some old Inner Sect disciples, who have worked hard for a long time and finally became Core Disciples, feel the Ten Swords have taken away the cultivation resources that should've belonged to them."

"Though they can't beat the Ten Swords, causing trouble every day is not good either."

Knowing Yang Yan's tendency to protect, Lin Zimu intentionally defended those disciples while recounting.

But seeing Yang Yan merely nod mechanistically after listening, with no intention of intervening, Lin Zimu was a bit puzzled.

Was this the Yang Yan he knew?

There were people causing trouble for the Ten Swords, yet he remained indifferent!

Just a few days ago, he had fought against ten Foundation Establishment late-stage cultivators for the Ten Swords on his own!

The stark contrast was truly puzzling to him.

When Lin Zimu stopped speaking, Yang Yan removed the shield and regained his hearing.

Then, he heard Lin Zimu say, "There's an Inner Sect disciple at Qi Cultivation level nine, dissatisfied with them later surpassing, already challenging Frost Heaven, with the stakes being the cultivation resources Frost Heaven obtained."

Upon hearing there was a battle, Yang Yan showed a bit of interest and followed Lin Zimu to the challenge arena.

He was also curious to know the level of improvement of Cui Shuangtian, ranked third among the Ten Swords.

When Yang Yan and Lin Zimu arrived at the challenge arena, a large crowd had already gathered.

It seemed that all the disciples of the Ancient Abyss Sect had come to watch the fight.

Frost Heaven had recently broken through to Qi Cultivation level eight, while the challenging old Inner Sect disciple had reached level nine.

At first glance, the challenge seemed somewhat unfair, but since Frost Heaven dared to accept, it indicated he was quite confident.

This was why so many people came to watch.

Because the sect's resource tilt towards the Ten Swords was something all Ancient Abyss Sect disciples cared about.

They often only heard of the Ten Swords' reputation and were truly curious about how they fought.

Yang Yan and Lin Zimu proudly stood in the air, looking down at the two contestants below.

Before Yang Yan arrived, the two on stage had already exchanged several moves.

Frost Heaven, usually a bit lackadaisical, instantly became a different person when fighting, appearing very composed.

The Inner Sect disciple at Qi Cultivation level nine would mock with every attack, while Frost Heaven continuously evaded silently, only blocking with his sword when necessary.

Frost Heaven did not attack proactively, merely evading, so even ordinary disciples watching uniformly thought Frost Heaven was at a disadvantage, and defeat was just a matter of time.

"After all, there's a whole level difference! It's already good that he's lasted till now."

Even Lin Zimu seemed to believe Frost Heaven was about to lose, saying with a sigh.

However, as he was about to say some comforting words to Yang Yan, he suddenly heard Yang Yan laugh:

"This is good? You're underestimating Frost Heaven too much. The other guy isn't his opponent at all!"

As if responding to Yang Yan's judgment, Frost Heaven suddenly halted after a period of silence and said before the other disciple could speak: "You're talking too much."

With that, a terrifying aura entirely different from before burst from him, like a miniature storm.

"Gale—"

With his shout, a sudden strong wind blew, making it hard for people to keep their eyes open.

"It's just a simple Wind Control Technique."

Seeing this scene, the other person sneered indifferently and said:

"Competing Daoist Technique with me is simply overestimating..."

Before finishing, a crack suddenly appeared in the spiritual power shield around him.

Then another crack!

And then another...

Soon, more and more.

"Blade Resolution—"

In the blink of an eye, the spiritual power shield around him was riddled with holes, finally breaking apart. Before he could react, a thick Wind Dragon Scroll rushed in, taking advantage of the situation.

Unprepared, it threw him off the challenge arena.

Frost Heaven's actions were fluid and seamless.

Many disciples watching barely had time to see clearly before the contest ended.

Upon hearing Yang Yan's judgment, Lin Zimu, who initially wanted to debate a bit, had to retract his earlier words in embarrassment after seeing the outcome.

Chapter 1168: Drama King

After winning, Frost Heaven raised his head and gave a broad smile to Yang Yan floating in the air.

However, to the uninformed disciples, this was undoubtedly a blatant provocation.

In just a short moment, some even began looking forward to a fight between Frost Heaven and Saint Son Yang Yan.

Then, Frost Heaven walked over to the disciple he had just blasted off the challenge stage and said plainly, "On a real battlefield, you'd be dead by now."

The disciple, who had just experienced a swift defeat, was utterly dumbfounded, still not recovered from the result of his loss.

It wasn't until he saw Frost Heaven retrieve a slender longsword that he started to understand why his Spiritual Power Shield had shattered.

"Stop! What kind of Magical Treasure is that sword?" the person yelled from the ground, unwilling to accept the truth.

Frost Heaven glanced at him and said indifferently, "The sword's name is Cold Wind; it's just a sword I carry with me."

Having said that, Frost Heaven turned to leave.

"I don't accept this! How could a non-Magical Treasure break my Spiritual Power Shield? Hmph! What's the worth of your ten swords, if not for relying on the power of a Magical Treasure to bully?"

The disciple on the ground screamed in unwillingness, verging on hysteria.

Hearing this, Frost Heaven suddenly stopped, slowly raised his head, and said to the steward in charge of this challenge stage:

"If I'm not mistaken, can those who don't accept the outcome challenge again, but with double the stakes, right?"

Then, he turned his head again, looking down at the person coldly and asked, "Do you dare? If not, then later, bring the equivalent cultivation resources to my place."

The person was completely intimidated by Frost Heaven's aura, opened his mouth but couldn't say a single word.

Frost Heaven snorted coldly and left straightaway, and this matter ended amid the astonished and awed gazes of the crowd.

Soon after, for some reason, Frost Heaven and Yang Yan had another dispute, angrily flying out of the Butcher Palace, while Yang Yan always had a grim face and even avoided all guests.

Even Guo Guoguo and Elder Dugu were turned away at the door that day.

The next morning, Yang Yan discovered that Jing Hong, Fu Changjian, and San Qian had left without saying goodbye, leaving only a farewell letter in Fu Changjian's room.

They quietly disappeared from Yang Yan's perception range, and no one in the sect saw them again, suggesting they had already left the Ancient Abyss Sect.

Guo Guoguo, having faced a closed door the previous day, knew Yang Yan wouldn't be in a good mood and took the initiative to console him.

This time, Yang Yan didn't turn her away.

And surprisingly, there wasn't any argument between them.

Inside the sect, some disciples who were already indifferent to the ten swords secretly laughed with joy.

This news spread quickly, making the Ancient Abyss Sect a laughingstock for a time.

With the situation now out in the open, other sects had no more scruples, even openly extending "olive branches" to the remaining members of the ten swords.

Rumors circulated outside that Sect Leader Lin An and the high-ranking members of the Ancient Abyss Sect were furious.

Everything fell into place naturally.

Ever since implementing this plan, the ten swords began seeking opportunities to infiltrate other sects as undercover agents.

Frost Heaven left silently by himself.

Subsequently, Jing Hong, Fu Changjian, and San Qian left letters and departed.

Now, Yang Yan was left with only six swords around him, four of whom were women, making it truly a case of yin flourishing over yang.

On this day, Yang Yan arrived at the martial arts arena to check on the cultivation of the remaining members. Perhaps the arrival of the ten swords caused deep resentment among the disciples, as many people always gathered whenever they practiced martial arts.

"Where are the others?"

Looking around, only Xiaocao, Ruyan, Wushuang, and Qingcheng were in the arena.

Yang Yan frowned and asked Xiaocao, who rarely spoke.

Xiaocao paused her cultivation, pursed her lips, shook her head, and said:

"I don't know, My Lord. I think they might have gone to cultivate on their own! But, they have some grievances against you."

The others stopped their cultivation upon seeing Yang Yan.

"Oh? What grievances?" Yang Yan smiled lightly.

"They said you didn't take good care of them and forgot your promises to them," Gongsun Ruyan answered truthfully.

"And they think you're the reason Jing Hong and the others left," Mu Qingcheng interjected.

Yang Yan shook his head seemingly helpless, saying lightly, "They chose their paths, I didn't intervene in any way."

"Besides, it's because they themselves thought the treatment from other sects was better, which is why they left. Others think so too?"

Zhuge Wushuang shook her head and said wryly, "We talked about this last time, and everyone showed dissatisfaction toward you."

"Frost Heaven and Fu Changjian were closer to them when they left, maybe it influenced them."

"During the last cultivation, there was a sudden incident, and Frost Heaven believed it was a problem with the Spell you gave him, and we argued for a while."

"My Lord, we are all firmly on your side. However, Frost Heaven's doubts resonated with the other three. There is nothing we could do."

The more Yang Yan heard, the darker his face became.

This group must have been born actors, mocking him so effortlessly.

And now, they even managed to deceive others.

Gongsun Ruyan quickly comforted Yang Yan upon seeing his poor complexion: "My Lord, don't think too much about it, maybe they just have some misunderstanding about you. I can tell they still respect you."

Yang Yan nodded and said in a deep voice, "Everyone has their own thoughts, and I won't interfere. No matter who it is, if there's a problem, tell me, and I'll do my best to help."

"As for those few, they are too eager for quick success. You must know haste breaks speed, every matter requires a natural course, cultivation especially so."

"I hope you work harder, don't worry about their affairs, I have a grasp on the situation. Alright, continue your cultivation; I'll take my leave now."

Yang Yan left these words and rose up, flying away into the sky.

"Yes, My Lord!"

The four people behind watched his disappearing figure and answered respectfully.

The other disciples who overheard their conversation couldn't help but feel sorry for their Grandmaster Yang.

To encounter such ingrates.

"Hehe! We played this scene well, didn't we? Surely we fooled many people." Zhuge Wushuang said to the others in private.

The plan proceeded step by step, and Yang Yan had no doubt about the capabilities of Fu Changjian and the others.

The wait was always long, but during this time, Yang Yan's progress was astonishingly swift.

One morning, Elder Dugu knocked on the door of the Butcher Palace very early.

As soon as he entered, he said to Yang Yan, "Yang Yan, show me your recent cultivation achievements."

Yang Yan was not surprised; to coordinate with the performance, he had indeed become more high-profile recently.

As if he was in some kind of rivalry.

The speed of his progress was evident to everyone, and although Elder Dugu knew the inside story, he couldn't help but feel eager.

"Alright, Elder."

After speaking, Yang Yan made a Spell, generating a small whirlwind in his hand.

Judging by its concentration, it was more than twice as strong as before.

He hadn't even made a move yet, when Elder Dugu's eyes lit up, clearly very satisfied with Yang Yan's current growth.

Chapter 1169: Four Women Crossing the Tribulation

"Go!"

As Yang Yan's voice fell, there was a muffled boom, and a distant rock suddenly exploded.

When the dust settled, a deep cut appeared on the stone-paved ground, as if carved by a knife.

Elder Dugu nodded in satisfaction when he saw it, and said with a grin:

"Hmm! Not bad, not bad, it seems your recent cultivation achievements have made great progress. As expected of the Saint Son."

"Even this Sacred Body of yours makes this old man a bit envious. Haha! Hahaha..."

Yang Yan waved his hand modestly and said:

"Elder, your praise is too much. Cultivation also relies on gradual accumulation, it's not something that can be accomplished overnight."

Elder Dugu stroked his beard and nodded, clearly very pleased with Yang Yan's humility. He said with some admiration:

"With your cultivation speed, you're bound to shine brightly in the upcoming Immortal Cultivation Conference."

"I see you haven't been affected by their actions at all. When you wanted to do this back then, this old man was a bit worried, fearing it might become real."

"Or, to take a step back, even though it was a ploy, it could have affected your state of mind and obstructed your cultivation, ending up being more harm than good."

Yang Yan knew that Elder Dugu was considering his well-being, so he respectfully nodded, "I understand, Elder."

Having achieved his purpose, Elder Dugu smiled and said, "Good, I am very satisfied with your performance, so I won't disturb your cultivation any further."

With that, he transformed into a streak of light and vanished without waiting for Yang Yan to speak again.

Elder Dugu's words reminded him a bit.

"I hope they have enough strength to handle all of this..."

Shaking his head, Yang Yan collected his thoughts and entered a meditative state once again.

Cultivators generally have no concept of time.

In just a few days, Juechen and Red Dust were nowhere to be seen.

Currently, of the Ten Swords, only four women—Zhuge Wushuang, Mu Qingcheng, Gongsun Ruyan, and Xiaocao—were still cultivating in the sect.

Elder Dugu was naturally aware of the situation, but to cooperate, he dispatched the most capable members of the Ancient Abyss Sect to discreetly search for these individuals.

Unaware of the full picture, disciples of the Ancient Abyss Sect, out of righteous indignation, clashed with various grand sects, resulting in numerous casualties.

Seeing as things were about ripe, Yang Yan's heart became even more tranquil.

Counting down, there were still two years until the Immortal Cultivation Conference.

But for Yang Yan now, this period wasn't long.

Possessing the Sacred Body, he was truly in his element along the path of cultivation.

Yet, even with the Sacred Body, after a period of frenzied improvement, Yang Yan also encountered a bottleneck.

Regarding this, Yang Yan wasn't anxious.

He understood that the enhancement of cultivation needed a gradual process.

After running too fast, a temporary pause to consolidate his prior knowledge wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

Meanwhile, the remaining Xiaocao and the other three women progressed rapidly, also reaching a bottleneck stage, desperately seeking a breakthrough.

Though the constitution of these Four Swords wasn't as formidable as Yang Yan's Sacred Body, Zhuge Wushuang's upper-level Spirit Body and Gongsun Ruyan and Mu Qingcheng's lower-level Dao Body were still quite rare.

The last time Yang Yan forcibly overcame the Celestial Tribulation was out of necessity.

Fortunately, the Sacred Body constitution allowed him to succeed in crossing the tribulation unprepared.

If it were anyone else, without the blessing of array and spiritual treasures and three Foundation Establishment-level guardians, at best they'd be severely injured and become useless, at worst they'd be obliterated, never to return.

The path of cultivation is never a solo journey; method, place, partner, and wealth are indispensable.

The array needed for crossing the tribulation is called the Thunder Gathering Array, consisting of forty-nine layers of mystery, each linked and transforming based on the previous layer.

Every imprint requires a strong spiritual sense for calculation; too many or too few would lead to the array's collapse.

For Yang Yan, he would naturally not set up such a profound array.

But the Ancient Abyss Sect, as one of the top ten sects, stands proudly in the world with unimaginable heritage.

So the array matter isn't something Yang Yan needs to worry about.

However, finding three Foundation Establishment experts is indeed a challenge; counting himself and Lin Zimu, there's only two.

This gave Yang Yan quite a headache.

Finding the third person proved difficult; after pondering deeply, Yang Yan could only turn to Elder Dugu.

Fortunately, Elder Dugu was straightforward and immediately agreed to Yang Yan's request.

Crucially, he didn't seek others' help but personally got involved.

Three days later, Zhuge Wushuang, Mu Qingcheng, Gongsun Ruyan, and Xiaocao sat at the center of the Thunder Gathering Array, while Yang Yan, Lin Zimu, and Elder Dugu surrounded its perimeter.

Their task was to assist if the four women failed the tribulation by using the Thunder Gathering Array to deflect the Celestial Tribulation outside the formation.

It seemed simple but was actually challenging.

Unexpected dangers were lurking, so Yang Yan and the others were well-prepared.

The four formed finger signs, and as Elder Dugu waved his sleeve and the array activated, he solemnly sat upright, chanting continuously.

The tribulation officially began at that moment.

Opportunity lay in this instant!

A moment later, fierce winds howled, dark clouds roiled, and celestial thunder rumbled.

Lightning flashed and thunder roared within the clouds, and everyone felt a hint of awe-inspiring pressure.

This was the might of the heavens!

"Boom!"

A bolt of celestial thunder struck down, hitting the Thunder Gathering Array.

The array lit up with a pillar of light, shooting straight up to the sky.

The pillar rapidly expanded, absorbing the Celestial Thunder Power!

Subsequently, the celestial thunder passed through the array, fiercely striking the four women in their respective positions of east, west, south, and north.

Even though the array absorbed most of the celestial thunder's power, the remnant force of the thunder couldn't be underestimated.

The heavenly might alone was enough to give the four women a tough time.

The first celestial thunder had completed, and the second followed closely...

Without a word, Yang Yan focused intently on the situation within the Thunder Gathering Array, deep in thought.

Soon, an idea flickered across his mind, and a hint of a smile appeared on his lips.

The tribulation of the Ninefold Celestial became increasingly intense, totaling twenty-seven strikes.

As they reached the twenty-sixth tribulation, the four women seemed somewhat exhausted.

Only one strike left, and the Ninefold Celestial would be successfully overcome.

"Boom!"

The final celestial thunder came crashing down with fury, causing the array to tremble violently, as if ready to collapse at any moment.

Fortunately, the array was robust, forcibly withstanding the final strike.

At that moment, the dark clouds swiftly dispersed, revealing a clear sky.

It was as if the Ninefold Celestial had never appeared.

Yang Yan let out a deep sigh of relief.

The result now depended entirely on the four women's fortune.

Expressing gratitude to Elder Dugu, Yang Yan then hurriedly left, eager to verify a thought in his mind.

Throughout history, the vast majority of cultivators focused mainly on cultivation methods, rarely on body cultivation.

While watching the four women undergo the tribulation, Yang Yan felt occasional insights, eager to put them into practice to see if they could work.

Chapter 1170: Thunder Tribulation Tempering

Yang Yan believed that if he strengthened his body, combined with his sacred body constitution, he would have an absolute trump card in close combat.

However, for Yang Yan, whose constitution was a sacred body, ordinary cultivation techniques often provided minimal help.

So, after having this thought, Yang Yan dived right into the Library Pavilion to find a suitable cultivation technique.

Three days later, Yang Yan found Sect Leader Lin An, intending to entrust the four girls who were in the midst of breakthroughs to him, and stated that he was going to go into closed-door cultivation.

Lin An readily agreed, guaranteeing that he would take good care of Xiaocao and the others.

After all, the stronger Yang Yan was, the greater his usefulness would be to the Ancient Abyss Sect.

This was a result that Sect Leader Lin An absolutely hoped to see.

Yang Yan chose an unnamed peak near the Ancient Abyss Sect, solemnly opened the ancient scroll in his hand.

This cultivation technique was supposed to be divided into two volumes, and now Yang Yan only had half of it in his hands.

As for the other half, he searched the entire Cultivation Technique Tower but could not find it.

Presumably, this cultivation technique still remaining in the Ancient Abyss Sect is only half.

This cultivation technique has a rather dominant name, the "Celestial Spirit Dominating Body Technique."

The cultivation requirements for this technique are quite harsh, requiring the use of celestial thunder to temper one's body.

This is likely also why it was shelved and unheeded.

It is well known that celestial thunder is something all cultivators avoid, yet it is a threat that must be faced during the process of overcoming tribulations.

A slight mistake might lead to being reduced to ashes.

Now, Yang Yan plans to realize his idea, to use it for tempering, the risk is undeniably significant.

If it were not for Yang Yan possessing a sacred body, he would probably have to shy away when faced with such harsh conditions.

Rumble——

In the following three months, the area near the Ancient Abyss Sect often went from a clear sky to sudden thunder and lightning, with clouds rolling in.

The disciples had become accustomed to this.

However, because Yang Yan's cultivation site was safeguarded by an array personally set up by Elder Dugu to prevent outside probing, no one could confirm who was repeatedly attracting the thunder tribulations.

Indeed, some had speculated it might be Yang Yan, but lacking evidence, they only discussed it privately.

Today is the seventh day of September. Near dusk, the sky suddenly howled with strong winds, clouds gathered, and thunder rolled.

Crack!

A bolt of lightning struck down powerfully, directly hitting the mountaintop.

Counting this, it was already the third celestial thunder fiercely striking the figure sitting upright at the mountain's peak.

Amidst the swirling dust, a battered figure remained sitting upright like a rock.

This person was none other than Yang Yan, planning to enter the path through his physical body, taking an unconventional path.

Yang Yan underestimated the difficulty of this cultivation technique.

Three months of tempering had not allowed him to fully adapt to the intense lightning strikes.

At this moment, Yang Yan appeared only with singed clothes, a bit disheveled but with no apparent injuries.

However, internally, his Qi was turbulent, and his blood flowed backward, suppressed only by a strong force of True Qi.

Otherwise, he might have already spat blood and collapsed unconscious on the ground.

Cough, cough!

After three deep breaths, Yang Yan suddenly took a deep breath, staggered, and collapsed to the ground, gasping for breath.

Feeling the chaotic Qi within him and his reversing meridians, he could only smile bitterly to himself.

The path to cultivation is indeed fraught with challenges, but with the date of the Immortal Cultivation Conference drawing near, he naturally could not slacken in his training, choosing to once again summon the celestial thunder.

However, what brought him consolation was that the past three months of effort had not been in vain.

From barely withstanding a single thunder tribulation initially, to now being able to withstand the third, he had made significant progress.

Needless to say, his sacred body constitution had been further activated, its strength unknowable how many times beyond its original base.

He did not dare claim to be the only one in the world who could withstand the Heavenly Dao's thunder tribulation with the physical body, but such individuals were indeed rare.

Five months later,

After enduring the baptism of five thunder tribulations, Yang Yan again examined his body and was overjoyed.

Every part contained astonishing power, with traces of lightning in the patterns!

Although sparse, it was definitely good news.

In his current state, even if faced with a mid-Foundation Establishment stage expert, he was confident of defeating them instantly.

Yet at this moment, a thousand miles away from the Ancient Abyss Sect, Zhuge Wushuang of the Unrivaled Slaughter Sword had fainted unconscious on the ground.

Gongsun Ruyan of the Ice and Snow Sword was breathless, spitting blood.

Xiaocao of the Traceless Sword was battered, nearly crippled.

Mu Qingcheng of the Heartless Sword sat beside Gongsun Ruyan, panting, her eyes emitting a wolf-like gleam.

Scattered before her were numerous corpses, most of which were disciples of the Ancient Abyss Sect.

"Mu Qingcheng, I'll give you one more chance. Bring the other three to join our Yizheng Sect, or else don't blame us for our merciless hands,"

a man in green clothes holding a treasured sword declared coldly.

"Pah! Shameless scoundrels, bullying with numbers, resorting to an ambush. If you want to kill, kill! I, Mu Qingcheng, will never collude with the likes of you scoundrels even if I die!"

Mu Qingcheng felt a sense of deep regret in her heart.

Originally intending to venture out with the disciples of the Ancient Abyss Sect, who could predict that Yizheng Sect would ambush them midway, collaborating with other sect experts?

Facing far greater numbers, and with the enemy prepared, they were caught off guard.

Despite quickly sending a disciple back to request support, they underestimated Yizheng Sect's despicable tactics.

The enemy immediately used muscle relaxants to bind her, leaving no chance to even delay.

Holding her sword hilt tightly now, she still lacked the power to fight.

Even Zhuge Wushuang, known as the Sword of Slaughter, was seriously injured by their joint attack and lay unconscious.

"Hmph! Since you refuse a toast, you'll be forced to drink a forfeit; don't blame me, kill them!"

The man's order rang out, and experts surged forward.

The only one left with any combat ability, Gongsun Ruyan, stepped up to battle, but ultimately, two fists couldn't compete against four hands.

Moreover, she herself was already injured, and was defeated as soon as they faced off.

"Kill them all!"

Seeing the longswords rushing towards her in an instant, Mu Qingcheng closed her eyes, preparing to thrust her final strike with all her might.

Even if she were to die, she'd drag one down with her.

"My king, it seems Qingcheng can no longer stay by your side."

When Yang Yan and Lin Zimu arrived at the scene based on the signal sent by the distressed disciples, the sight of countless blood-soaked scenes chilled their hearts, though they had witnessed many such sights.

Blood was splattered everywhere like the Manjushaka blossoming on the banks of Yellow Springs.

Trees had been cut in half, and the low bushes and plants were adorned with severed limbs, the air filled with an overpowering stench of blood.

Even the wild beasts nearby seeking food were stunned by the murderous aura and dared not approach.

Yet, there were only traces of battle here, not a single person in sight, leaving one truly perplexed.