

## War God 191

Chapter 191 - Power of the Nine Dragon Flashes

“Alright, I will do my best. I will submit it, but whether or not it gets approved is beyond me.” Xuanyun didn’t know what else he could say since Long Chen wanted the Sky Soul Fruit so badly.

“Long Chen, you just entered the family, so you might not know how important a year’s worth of resources is. Are you sure? Are you willing to bear the risk of being left behind?”

“I’ve already made my decision.”

Dongfang Xuanyun couldn’t do much since Long Chen had made up his mind.

After registration, Long Chen left the Xuanyun Pavilion, but he only got his left foot out when Ling Xi broke the silence.

“Ling Xi, you don’t have to say anything. I’ve already made my decision and there’s nothing you can do to change it.”

She didn’t know what to do about Long Chen’s behavior. All she did was keep the sense of gratitude in her heart.

“Stop!” Long Chen had just walked out of the Xuanyun Pavilion when he was stopped by a group of teenagers on a small path surrounded by a beautiful forest.

He recognized them immediately—they were the ones he had bumped into when he first entered the Xuanyun Pavilion. There were seven of them, and all of them were looking at Long Chen with a prideful look in their eyes.

The leader of the group was a youth roughly the same age as Mo Xiaolang but was already at the mid Earthly Core Realm, a stage higher compared to Long Chen.

The youth looked handsome too, with sharp eyebrows and a tall nose. Even though he was still young, his body was fairly toned. The only thing that showed his true age was his naive-looking eyes.

“You! Are you Long Chen, the one who came in from the outer family?” Dongfang Tianya felt very cool when he surrounded Long Chen with his friends. All of them were glaring at Long Chen to intimidate him.

“Hoho, you brats. Shouldn’t you be calling me ‘big brother?’ We just met and you are already picking on me. What’s going on? Don’t tell me you don’t know how to respect your elders even though you’re a grown up?” Long Chen did not want to show them even a hint of respect.

He remembered hearing them say that Dongfang Tianyu was waiting for them earlier. It was very likely that Dongfang Tianyu was trying to inconvenience Long Chen by asking them to block him.

“What?!” Seeing how Long Chen had not stuttered and was even more of a jerk than him, Dongfang Tianya felt his nose flaring from anger. He stepped forward and exuded his aura to suppress Long Chen.

“Do you really think you’re one of us when you just joined the inner family? How dare you try to act mighty in front of me, Dongfang Tianya? I will teach you a lesson now! Rather than me calling you ‘big brother,’ you are better off kneeling and calling me ‘big brother’ instead!”

Dongfang Tianya, not wanting to waste another breath, threw a punch towards Long Chen amidst the cheers.

*He just tried to punch me without any warning? He’s too prideful. They must’ve been tricked by Dongfang Tianyu.* Long Chen knew that Dongfang Tianyu was behind this, but he didn’t want to lose to a bunch of brats.

“Sure, let me give you idiots a lesson.” Long Chen smiled and didn’t retreat. Instead, he punched as well and smashed his fist into Dongfang Tianya’s fist. Both of them staggered from the impact.

Dongfang Tianya took several steps back from the attack before he steadied himself.

*Wasn’t he at the initial Earthly Core Realm?* Dongfang Tianya was in disbelief. He thought he could show off to his friends today, but he was already embarrassed on the first attack.

Long Chen took a few steps back too, similar to Dongfang Tianya.

“Not bad, you brat. No wonder you managed to pass the qualifiers. But a country bumpkin like you can’t handle a member of the inner family!”

Dongfang Tianya circulated his Qi in anger and ran towards Long Chen. Rather than using only physical strength, he was using a martial technique!

“Heaven Rending Dragon!”

A massive fist was launched towards Long Chen. The fist also contained a faint silhouette of a dragon, marking it as a special attack.

*Looks like an intermediate Black-tier technique.* Long Chen was toying with the boy. He didn’t even need to transform to win.

*I might as well put the Nine Dragon Flashes to the test.* Long Chen smiled evilly.

Nine Dragon Flashes!

Long Chen’s body flickered, and he disappeared like the light. Dongfang Tianya was astounded by Long Chen’s speed, but his reaction was far too slow—the latter was already right in front of him!

“Ah!” Seeing how Long Chen was seeking death by approaching Dongfang Tianya’s attack, everyone shouted in shock.

“Die!” Dongfang Tianya didn’t hold back even though Long Chen was just in front of his technique. How could the youth swallow the embarrassment he had shown to his friends just now?

“Die? Are you kidding me?” Long Chen suddenly disappeared just as the attack was about to touch him. Dongfang Tianya wasn’t sure what had happened.

His move was strong, but it didn’t hit!

“How could this be?” Dongfang Tianya was surprised before he suddenly felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up.

“Careful!”

Dongfang Tianya’s face paled when he heard them warning him. He had a bad feeling and was about to turn around and punch, but he was too late.

Dongfang Tianya had failed to react to Long Chen’s Nine Dragon Flashes. Long Chen hit him with a heavy kick from the back and launched him away!

When he landed, all he saw was Long Chen smiling evilly, causing him to feel fear for the first time.

“Are you really trying to piss me off when you’re this weak?” Long Chen grasped Dongfang Tianya’s neck and smashed his face onto the ground.

Bam!

Dongfang Tianya shouted in pain. His face was red from the impact and his body was limp.

It was not a serious wound, but Dongfang Tianya had never been this heavily injured before. Everyone else was shocked when they heard him screaming.

“You dare hurt Brother Tianya?!”

Some of the girls wanted to attack Long Chen together, but he shot them a glare. “You want to end up like him too?”

He had killed far more people than them, so the killing intent in his voice was more than enough to shut them up. Even though they were angry, they didn’t dare to move. The strongest member of their group, Dongfang Tianya, had already lost, so what chance did they have?

Long Chen squatted beside Dongfang Tianya and laughed at the youth, who was on the verge of tears.

“Hey, didn’t you just say that I have to kneel and call you ‘big brother?’”

Dongfang Tianya was startled and shifted his body to the side in fear. “No ... I ... I said nothing ...”

Long Chen’s method had scared the youth.

This boy was only at the mid Earthly Core Realm, slightly better than the youths from the Red family. Long Chen had an advanced Black-tier Body Combat technique and more combat experience, so it had been an easy victory for him.

“What should you call me?” Long Chen said cheekily.

“Brother! You are my big brother!” Dongfang Tianya hated Long Chen, but he knew that he would get beaten again if he didn’t do this now.

“Not bad.” Long Chen stood up and decided to forgive Dongfang Tianya.

“Let Dongfang Tianyu know not to pull this kind of trick again, or I will hate him. We have the tournament coming up, so I will show him how strong I am then.”

Long Chen left right after saying that, leaving the teenagers to look at each other.

“Let’s go find Auntie Xuanyu! Let her come and deal with him!” Dongfang Tianya stood up shakily, his eyes red.

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Back in his room, Long Chen gave Ling Xi the two Soul Grasses to be refined. They would extend her life again.

Long Chen continued to cultivate the Nine Dragon Flashes. The little battle earlier had given him some comprehension on how the technique worked.

“It seems that I have to use it in a real battle to be able to cultivate the technique to a higher realm.”

Long Chen continued to work hard.

Xuanxiao set a goal for me—I have to be able to do four flashes in one month, but will that be my limit?

Long Chen cultivated for an hour before he heard someone approaching outside.

“Long Chen, come out.”

Long Chen knew who the voice belonged to. He walked out and saw the youthful-looking Dongfang Xuanyu.

Dongfang Xuanyu’s face was solemn. When she saw Long Chen walking out as if nothing had happened, she was even more angry. She released the aura of a Heavenly Core Realm cultivator and closed in on Long Chen. “You got guts. You just joined the inner family, yet already started beating up the juniors? You are incorrigible! If I don’t punish you today, I won’t be able to show my face here again!”

Chapter 192 - Black Whirlpool

Long Chen knew that the youths from earlier had complained to her.

If anything, Dongfang Tianya was the one at fault. He was the one who had instigated, so no matter how badly Long Chen beat him up, the blame shouldn’t have been on him. All he had done was teach Dongfang Tianya a little lesson.

“Beat them up?” Long Chen was not afraid. “I’m afraid you’re overestimating me. He’s at the mid Earthly Core Realm at such a young age. How could I possibly beat him up?”

“Do you refuse to admit it?” Seeing Long Chen’s nonchalant attitude made Dongfang Xuanyu even angrier. She would’ve struck him as soon as she saw him if she didn’t have her reservations.

Long Chen looked her in the eye and slowly explained, “I don’t have much to say about what happened today. Dongfang Tianya and the others blocked my path and tried to beat me up, so I did my best to defend myself. I have no idea what they told you, nor do I care.”

“You still dare to lie?” The more she looked at him, the more she hated him. The younger members of the family had always treated her with respect, but Long Chen somehow always pushed back against her.

No matter what the results were, Dongfang Xuanyu would not let him go.

He just entered the inner family, yet he dares to talk back to me just because Dongfang Xuanxiao loves him? I cannot let him get away with this behavior!

Dongfang Xuanyu’s aura locked onto Long Chen as she stated clearly, “Long Chen, not only did you beat up your juniors, you even dared to talk back to me. You’ve gone overboard, so I will punish you by having you kneel in front of the ancestor mausoleum for ten days and ten nights, starting now!”

“Ten days and ten nights?” Long Chen squinted.

“Why? Do you want me to drag you there?” Dongfang Xuanyu’s voice was cold.

Long Chen was speechless. She was beyond reasoning, but that didn’t mean he was afraid of her. If he showed weakness now, she would become even more unreasonable. He could not stand to live beneath her!

“I will not take a single step out of here even if you kill me. I have done nothing wrong, so why should I be punished?” Long Chen was adamant.

“You! I will kill you!” Dongfang Xuanyu was about to attack when she heard a cold grunt from behind her.

“Enough.”

Dongfang Xuanyu knew who the owner of the voice was. She turned around and came face to face with Dongfang Xuanxiao.

“You want to stop me?” When she said this, she was actually very uncertain.

Dongfang Xuanxiao was not her real brother, but he was much stronger than her. His temper was also very unpredictable.

“I won’t be seeing you out,” Dongfang Xuanxiao said coldly when he walked past her.

His words were too overbearing. Long Chen thought that he was the hardcore one, but he was just a tiny fish compared to Dongfang Xuanxiao!

“You!” Dongfang Xuanyu’s face was a mixture of bitterness, anger, and shock.

She didn’t know what to do. She was not his opponent and she had lost the battle of words, so she had no choice but to leave in a hurry.

“Xuanxiao, just you wait! I will have Big Brother punish you for defaming me today!”

Dongfang Xuanxiao couldn’t be bothered with her and asked Long Chen, “Why did that stupid bitch come looking for you?”

Even though she was his cousin, Dongfang Xuanxiao had referred to her as “bitch” with zero hesitation. It was clear he didn’t like her.

“I went out today and some kids tried to block me. I punched one of them and then she came running over …” Long Chen smiled bitterly.

Dongfang Xuanxiao didn’t really care about any of that. He merely looked at Long Chen and shook his head. “What’s going on with the Sky Soul Fruit? You wanted to get it in exchange for an entire year’s worth of resources? I’m not sure if I should call you an idiot or not.”

Long Chen knew that Dongfang Xuanyun would tell Dongfang Xuanxiao about the Sky Soul Fruit. Looking from Dongfang Xuanxiao’s viewpoint, Long Chen was a rash idiot. This was why he had come here to ask him about it.

“Stepfather, this is very important to me. Much more important than any rewards. Don’t worry, I’m confident in my decision.”

Dongfang Xuanxiao gave him a good, long look before deciding to trust him. “Alright, then it’s all up to the elders to see whether they approve it or not.”

He had not only helped Long Chen one more time, he had also chosen to trust Long Chen’s rash decision. Long Chen was very thankful for all he had done.

Long Chen was the kind of person who would repay others in kindness if they treated him right.

Just like how he was increasing his strength to save Mo Xiaolang.

“Can I go to the Star Devil Prison now?” Long Chen asked.

“I came here to take you there. There’s only a month left before the tournament, and you only need to stay at the Star Devil Prison for roughly half a month.”

“Alright.” Long Chen nodded. He was excited to go to the famed Star Devil Prison and investigate Mo Xiaolang’s whereabouts.

“Let’s go.” Dongfang Xuanxiao was not the type to linger on matters for too long.

The Eastern Azure Dragon family could enter the Heavenly Martial Realm directly. Long Chen entered the legendary Heavenly Core Realm area for the first time.

There were Category Seven Black-tier beasts here. Some of them could even fight head-to-head with Dongfang Xuanxiao.

Dongfang Xuanxiao had been to the Star Devil Prison numerous times, so he knew the safest path. They soon arrived at their destination without encountering any beasts.

“Is this the Star Devil Prison?” Long Chen was stunned. There was a massive crater in front of him. There was nothing in it except for some bare rocks.

“Look at the middle.”

Long Chen looked at where Dongfang Xuanxiao was pointing and saw a black whirlpool in the middle of the crater. It was spinning and twisting the space around it. There were even hints of light being sucked inside.

“A realm within a realm?” Long Chen said nothing, but Ling Xi was surprised.

“I didn’t expect to see another realm within a Miniverse in this backwater place. Incredible.”

Long Chen dared not ask her about it with Dongfang Xuanxiao so close. He could only do so when they were alone.

“We will reach a Transit Hall once we go through the black whirlpool, then we can go to the Star Devil Prison from there,” Dongfang Xuanxiao explained while approaching the area.

After observing it for a while longer, Long Chen realized that there were four people guarding the whirlpool.

They were heaving heavy armor of different colors, namely azure, vermilion, white, and black. Long Chen deduced that they each belonged to the four families, Azure Dragon, Vermillion Bird, White Tiger, and Black Tortoise.

Seeing Dongfang Xuanxiao approaching, the four guards walked towards them. They seemed to be in their twenties and were all at the initial Heavenly Core Realm.

Even though they were still far away, Dongfang Xuanxiao explained calmly, “These are the guards trained personally by the inner family. They are as strong and talented as the geniuses of our family.”

*The inner family is indeed strong!* Long Chen was surprised but said nothing.

The four of the guards came up to them and got down on one knee when they saw Dongfang Xuanxiao. “We greet Lord Xuanxiao!”

“Stand up.” Dongfang Xuanxiao wasted no time and pointed at Long Chen. “This is Long Chen, the one who passed the qualifiers. He is now my stepson. We are here to go to the Star Devil Prison. Yan Honghai, I will leave him in your care. Take him to the asteroid area to cultivate and explain the Star Devil Prison to him.

The guard wearing the azure armor nodded. “Understood!”

“Alright, I will be on my way. Long Chen, if you want to leave earlier, you can just ask him.”

Long Chen nodded.

After giving instructions, Dongfang Xuanxiao headed out. At the same time, the four guards crowded around Long Chen with interest. “Young Master Long Chen, are you really entering the Star Devil Prison so soon after joining the inner family?”

“You must be working very hard,” the guard wearing vermilion armor said.

Long Chen addressed them politely. “One must be diligent if they want to improve. I felt a lot of pressure After I joined the inner family, so I dare not slack off. I hope everyone here will help me in the Star Devil Prison.”

Long Chen was already a part of the inner family, but he wasn’t snobbish like the others. This made Yan Honghai and the other guards more than happy to be friends with him. They stood guard over the Star Devil Prison every day and were always bored out of their minds. With Long Chen around, they would be able to talk and pass the time.

“Alright, let’s not waste Young Master Long Chen’s time. Come, let me take you into the Star Devil Prison!” Honghai smiled and showed the way.

The Heavenly Martial Realm was a Miniverse. Since the Star Devil Prison was contained within it, it was called a realm within the realm. But Long Chen knew that there were a lot of interesting things in the world, so he didn’t pay a lot of attention to it.

“We will be able to reach the Transit Hall after passing through the black whirlpool. You might feel uncomfortable when you first enter the Star Devil Prison, but don’t be afraid. Nothing will happen to you.” Following Dongfang Xuanxiao’s instructions, Yan Honghai explained everything clearly. He was also doing so because he liked Long Chen.

“No worries. I will be able to endure it.”

Long Chen smiled and followed Yan Honghai towards the black whirlpool. He felt a strong force sucking his body towards it even though he was fairly far away.

“Don’t worry, just let it go.” Yan Honghai turned around and then disappeared into the black whirlpool.

To be more precise, he sank into it.

Long Chen took a deep breath and followed him into the Star Devil Prison.

Chapter 193 - Asteroid Area

Long Chen felt his vision go dark and then fall downwards. A strong force was pulling his body, causing him to feel some tingling and pain.

But it didn’t last long, and Long Chen soon found himself returning to normal.

He opened his eyes and found himself in a dark hall. The hall was empty and was made of metal.

“Senior Yan, is this the Transit Hall?” Long Chen realized that Yan Honghai was standing right beside him.

“Yes, this is the Transit Hall. We can reach the two main areas of the Star Devil Prison from here. We will ignore the large star area for now. Our destination is the asteroid area. It’s closer, and we can reach it from the Transit Hall.”

“What are the asteroid and large star areas?” Long Chen knew next to nothing about the place.

“The large star area is where we keep prisoners. It’s not where we’re going. The asteroid area is where the inner family sends their people to cultivate. Young Master Long Chen, you must know very little about this place, correct? Follow me.”

With Yan Honghai guiding the way, Long Chen followed him with curiosity. The further they walked out of the hall, the more Long Chen was mystified by the void.

When they exited the main door and entered a plaza, Long Chen was shocked.

He realized that the Transit Hall was the only building embedded in a cliff. It was also the only place that gave him a view of the cliff itself. All he could see in the opposite direction was a dark void.

“Is this ... space?” Long Chen tried to calm down because the scene in front of him was too preposterous.

Based on how the Transit Hall looked, he had assumed that the Star Devil Prison was located in a deep, underground cave, but to think he was seeing the night sky itself! No wonder it was called the Star Devil Prison.

“Do you see those glittering stars within the darkness? Those are asteroids.” Yan Honghai pointed at some of them.

“You mean I will be heading there?” Long Chen knew that the space he was seeing was not infinite. The distance between him and the stars wasn’t large, roughly a hundred to a thousand meters or so.

“Yeah, but don’t worry, I will take you there. Do you see those chains?” Yan Honghai nodded and pointed at the edge of the plaza. Long Chen then saw two massive, metal chains that originated from the void and connected to the Transit Hall.

They were the largest chains he had ever seen, and their toughness seemed extraordinary too. Even though they were rusty, there was a trace of ancient energy on them.

Each link of the chain was oval and was roughly half a meter in thickness. A single link was almost several beds large. How could chains this thick ever be weak?

“Are the chains connected to the stars?” Long Chen asked.

“Yes, the left one goes to the large star area, while the right one goes to the asteroid area. Long Chen, do you see the five brightest shining stars in the large star area? Those are the stars belonging to the Azure Dragon, Vermillion Bird, White Tiger, Black Tortoise, and Heavenly Wolf.” Looking at the beautiful scene, Yan Honghai felt pride as a member of the Lingwu family.

Azure Dragon? Is that where they are keeping the prisoners? I wonder which star Mo Xiaolang is being kept in?

Yan Honghai became serious and explained, “Young Master Long Chen, according to Lord Xuanxiao’s instruction, I will now take you to one of the stars within the asteroid area, but there is something important I must tell you.”

“What is it?” Long Chen was curious as to why he had gotten so serious.

“Do you see the void? That is not space itself. When you walk on the chains, you must be careful not to fall into it, or no one will be able to save you. No one in the Lingwu family knows what happens to the people that fall off.”

“Fall?” Long Chen was speechless. The Star Devil Prison was not as safe as it seemed, but as cultivators, they would easily be able to traverse the chains without difficulty as long as they were not fighting.

“Of course, something like that wouldn’t happen since we are cultivators. I’m just giving you a warning.” Yan Honghai laughed. “Come, follow me. Watch your step. I will show you to one of the weaker ones to see if it works for you.”

Yan Honghai jumped on the chain leading to the asteroid area, and Long Chen followed him closely.

*Mo Xiaolang should be on one of the stars in the large star area. Should I ask Yan Honghai for information? Would I expose myself? But Yan Honghai is someone Xuanxiao trusts.* Long Chen kept thinking while walking.

It was indeed frightening to see the darkness beneath them. Long Chen felt his heart skip a beat when he looked down, as if the void was a beast waiting to devour him.

Yan Honghai turned around and smiled. “Be careful now. We should be able to reach it in an hour.”

“Thank you for your help.”

“No worries. I heard that you beat the genius of the outer family, Jin Sheng’en, correct?” The journey was boring, so Yan Honghai was happy to have someone to talk to.

“Yeah, but he’s not really a genius. The true genius is the one from the Silver family.” Since Long Chen didn’t know how to ask, and Yan Honghai was coincidentally talking about the qualifiers, Long Chen managed to shift the topic to Mo Xiaolang.

“Indeed. Mo Xiaolang was highly talented even when compared to members of the inner family. The geniuses from the inner family were very jealous of him. But there’s nothing much we could say.” Yan Honghai shook his head when it came to Mo Xiaolang. This topic was taboo for them.

“I heard that he was imprisoned in the Star Devil Prison. He must be in one of those stars, right?” Long Chen probed.

“Yeah, I saw with my own eyes when he was led to the Azure Dragon star ... Long Chen, are you interested in him? I advise you not to bring him up, because the four patriarchs barred us from discussing him.”

“No, I’m just curious. We all admire strong geniuses, don’t we?” Long Chen smiled.

Yan Honghai failed to see that Long Chen was tricking him and smiled while they continued walking.

There was nothing in front or behind them, only darkness. This made Long Chen feel afraid for some reason.

*Is he stuck on the Azure Dragon Star? I thought he would be kept on the Heavenly Wolf Star.* Long Chen slowly formulated a plan to rescue him. Even though they weren’t far apart, Long Chen didn’t understand the secrets of the Star Devil Prison. How could he save Mo Xiaolang without information?

“We will arrive soon.” The light from the asteroids[1] wasn’t bright, but they were considerably larger now, meaning they were close.

Soon, the chains broke off into tens of different chains, each heading to a different asteroid. Yan Honghai identified the chain they needed to walk on.

“Here at the crossroads, every single chain is marked with the name and gravitational strength of the asteroid. Look here, you can see that the chain we chose is connected to an asteroid with five times the gravitational force.” Yan Honghai pointed at the marker on the chain.

“If the gravitational force of a particular asteroid is too weak for you, you can come back here and choose another. I would suggest that you take it methodologically and don’t jump to an asteroid with a much stronger gravitational force. You might die from it!” Yan Honghai explained.

“I understand, I won’t be rash.” Long Chen chuckled and remembered the warning.

“I can’t keep accompanying you. I will leave once I bring you in. You can just enter and exit on your own later on.”

Under Yan Honghai’s guidance, Long Chen approached one of the smaller asteroids. At the end of the chain was a yellow asteroid around two hundred meters in diameter.

Its surface was far from flat, and it had numerous ridges. Long Chen felt like he was a bug walking on a brain when he stepped on it.

There was nothing other than the ridges though, just yellow dirt and soil[2].

“Is the gravitational force here five times stronger?” After walking off the chain and stepping onto the asteroid, Long Chen felt like he had become heavier, as if a massive boulder was weighing him down, but the pain was not overbearing and he soon adapted to it.

“This is indeed good.” His body wouldn’t move as he wished, and it was hard to circulate his Qi.

“Looks like you do have an advanced Black-tier Body Tempering technique, so the gravitational force is not deadly to you. But I would still suggest that you take it slow and gradually increase the gravitational force rather than going all out and choosing the one with the strongest gravitational force. I have to go now. Be careful.”

Long Chen couldn’t possibly stop Yan Honghai from leaving, so he said goodbye.

He had two objectives in the Star Devil Prison. One was to find out where Mo Xiaolang was, while the second was to cultivate. Now that he was here, Long Chen would never give up a chance to increase his strength, especially after he realized how beneficial the increased gravitational force would be to his cultivation.

Now that I know Mo Xiaolang is on the Azure Dragon Star, I will have to find other details to formulate a plan, but I will just train for now!

Chapter 194 - Martial Maniac Nangong Cheng

When Yan Honghai was gone, Long Chen wandered around the asteroid while getting used to the increased gravitational force. There was indeed nothing but yellow soil.

“This place is so barren.”

Long Chen calmed down and started cultivating.

This was something he had to do every night.

He had to endlessly circulate his Qi in order to absorb nature’s spiritual energy to increase his strength. It also served as training to control his Qi.

“It’s definitely five times harder to circulate my Qi, but this is not my limit.”

The blood-red Qi surged out of his Earthly Core under his command and circulated through his veins. It was not faster than before.

The more he did it, the more refined his Qi became. Because of Blood Transmutation, Long Chen didn’t really have any issue with his Qi being unstable, but he could further increase its quality.

He believed that once his Qi had been refined to a certain point, it would give him unexpected benefits.

Long Chen settled down for the next several days. His most important task was to refine his Qi on the asteroids. After some time, his Earthly Core Qi was much more refined, which enabled him to exert more strength.

He also spent time cultivating the Nine Dragon Flashes. Even though it was an advanced Black-tier technique similar to the Sword Devil Finger, it was much more complicated. With the help of the increased gravitational force, Long Chen's progress was very noticeable and significant. He managed to surpass Dongfang Xuanxiao's expectations by completing the fifth flash.

Ten days later, he was already cultivating on an asteroid five hundred meters in diameter with a gravitational force twenty times stronger than normal. He was cultivating the Nine Dragon Flashes here due to the immense pressure. It took a lot of his strength to use it, and when he moved, his footwork was slow and deliberate, as if he were playing with a child.

But if the gravitational force returned to normal, Long Chen's speed would've been ten times faster than before.

“Flash! Again! And again!”

He kept cultivating and slowly shifted his feet. While he did so, his body slowly started transforming in a mysterious way.

After flashing five times, Long Chen felt tired. He had been cultivating for a whole day and needed to rest.

The Dragon Jade Pendant was helping him increase his comprehension skills. Long Chen had firmly grasped the essence of the Nine Dragon Flashes, and all he needed to do was cultivate it under the pressure.

Because his foundation was strong, his progress was not led astray.

He had to channel a lot of Qi into his legs while training the Nine Dragon Flashes, so he was also refining his Qi at the same time.

My strength is slowly increasing, but the fifteen day period Xuanxiao gave me is almost over. I will train for two more days and then head out.

After resting, Long Chen resumed his cultivation.

Some time later, he felt like something was weird. He opened his eyes and saw that someone else had arrived on the asteroid he was training on.

It was a youth with tanned skin and a muscular body. He was wearing a beast's fur and had a radiant smile.

When he saw Long Chen, he walked over and happily introduced himself. “I see that you can cultivate in an environment with twenty times the gravitational force. Not bad! My name is Nangong Cheng. Can we be friends?”

Long Chen saw that the youth was around fifteen years old even though he was very muscular. He was also at the mid Earthly Core Realm.

That meant that he was considered one of the geniuses within the inner family.

The youth's face was also tanned, but his teeth were bright white. He smiled at Long Chen sheepishly.

Long Chen knew that people like him who didn't plot tricks were good candidates for friendship. Networking with his peers was important, so he stood up.

"My name is Long Chen."

"Oh, then you must be the one who came in through the qualifiers." Rather than being snobbish, Nangong Cheng was more curious after learning that Long Chen was not born into the inner family. "It must be difficult to be the highest achiever among thousands of people. No wonder you can cultivate in this gravity. Which family are you from?"

"The Eastern Azure Dragon family." Seeing how easy it was to talk to him, Long Chen was more than happy to become friends.

"Oh, I'm Nangong Cheng from the Southern Vermillion Bird family." Nangong Cheng scratched his head and smiled.

"The Southern Vermillion Bird family? I'm acquainted with Feng Wutian."

"Feng Wutian? He's not an important person. He's still at the initial Earthly Core Realm even now. I fought against him back when he just entered the inner family. Long Chen, the fact that you were able to enter the inner family means you must be strong. Can we spar? I'm just a battle junkie that loves sparring against others. Even my brothers and sisters call me a martial maniac."

Nangong Cheng was surprisingly happy with the title.

*Is he just an idiot?* Long Chen rolled his eyes. Usually, people who asked for a spar with another person that they just met were rude, but seeing how Nangong Cheng somehow had a few screws loose, Long Chen did not dislike him. Rather, he appreciated his honesty.

"Do you agree?" Nangong Cheng waited for his reply eagerly.

"I agree, but there is one condition." Long Chen smiled.

"Sure, if I can fulfill it, I will do it!" Nangong Cheng was excited about having a new sparring partner.

"It's not that difficult, just answer my question. Don't worry, I won't ask about anything secret, nor will it affect your life."

"A question?" Nangong Cheng tilted his head in confusion. "Sure, you can ask me, but I don't really know a lot of things."

Long Chen didn't know how to react to someone as simple as him. But at least he would be able to learn more about the Star Devil Prison.

“Are you familiar with the Star Devil Prison? Have you gone to the large star area before?”

“The large star area? Nope. That’s where they keep the prisoners. Only the patriarchs can go there. My father said that if we got close to it, we would get stuck due to the immense gravitational force. And then we would not be able to get out unless the patriarch saved us.”

Long Chen was shocked. “Then why can the patriarchs enter the large stars? Is it because they are strong?”

“I don’t think so. I’ve heard that the five Divine Weapons can mitigate the gravitational force of the large star, but they can only access their corresponding star.”

“Does that mean that I can enter the Azure Dragon Star if I hold the Azure Dragon Halberd?” Long Chen was surprised. That meant that he had a chance to save Mo Xiaolang thanks to Dongfang Xuanxiao arranging for him to join the tournament.

“I think so, hehe.” Nangong Cheng didn’t know what Long Chen was planning to do with all this information, but he didn’t care. He just wanted to spar, so he was worried the answers would be unsatisfactory.

The information he had provided was crucial for Long Chen. He had wanted to ask where Mo Xiaolang was imprisoned on the Azure Dragon Star, but he knew that Nangong Cheng would not know either. “Alright, I’ve finished my questions. Nangong Cheng, you must not tell anyone about what I asked you here.”

“Of course. I’m a man that keeps my word. I will tell no one.” Nangong Cheng patted his chest with pride and then asked carefully, “So ... Can we spar now?”

“Here?” Long Chen was taken aback, but then he realized that it was indeed a good idea. He would improve dramatically by sparring in a place with twenty times the gravitational force. It was exciting, even.

“Yes, and I’m ready!”

Nangong Cheng took a few steps back and clenched his fists. He was ready to fight.

*This guy ...* Long Chen was speechless, but the title of martial maniac did suit Nangong Cheng, seeing how rearing for a spar he was.

He must have even more battle experience than Dongfang Tianya, and he has definitely fought in a place with increased gravitational force before. I must be careful not to lose to him.

“Let’s start,” Long Chen said plainly.

“Take this!” Nangong Cheng immediately ran over and punched Long Chen, his fist covered in flames. The flames burst forth and solidified into a fist that trapped Long Chen’s escape route.

“Vermillion Bird Technique, Heavenly Flame Fist!”

Even though Nangong Cheng’s speed was drastically reduced thanks to the intense gravity, it did not affect his attack strength!

Shit! He’s several times stronger than Dongfang Tianya.

Long Chen was silently surprised, and he got serious. To Nangong Cheng’s surprise, Long Chen’s footwork became faster.

Nine Dragon Flashes!

Nangong Cheng was shocked to see that his opponent could still move that fast despite the increased gravity. But he was not affected and launched punch after punch.

But at the crucial moment, Long Chen disappeared.

He’s over there!

Nangong Cheng managed to locate Long Chen when he completed the first flash.

This made him very excited.

But Long Chen did not stop, causing Nangong Cheng to stare in disbelief. Long Chen flashed a few more times and then disappeared completely.

“I’m over here.”

Chapter 195 - Return of the Genius

“Primordial Dragon Seal!”

Long Chen attacked from point-blank range and hit Nangong Cheng’s unguarded back. He had controlled his strength and merely sent Nangong Cheng flying from the attack.

“You lost.”

“Impossible!” Nangong Chen steadied himself and turned around. “I lost before I even got to use my stronger martial techniques?”

“If this was a real battle you would be dead. Is this not considered a loss?” Long Chen smiled.

“Can you tell me how you defeated me?” Nangong Cheng was sad about losing.

“I used an advanced Black-tier Body Combat technique to beat you in terms of speed. If we were to compete in Qi, I would lose to you,” Long Chen slowly explained to the dejected youth.

“An advanced Black-tier technique? Could it be the infamous Nine Dragon Flashes?!” Nangong Cheng was surprised. “You’ve just entered the inner family, yet you already managed to obtain it? You even cultivated it to this stage?”

He thought Long Chen was slightly weaker than himself and was surprised he could move under the increased gravity, but to think the youth from the outer family was a genius!

“It’s indeed the Nine Dragon Flashes.” Long Chen never thought he would recognize it.

“Alright, I acknowledge that I lost to you and the Nine Dragon Flashes. Long Chen, you are amazing. We can be best friends, but I won’t lose to you again. This is my first loss to you, so you will be the goal of my cultivation! I will surpass you soon.”

Nangong Cheng’s eyes were filled with determination.

He was destined to become powerful with that mindset.

“Is that so? Then you have to put in a lot of effort, haha …” Long Chen laughed at how funny Nangong Cheng was.

His strength had increased and he had learned a lot about Mo Xiaolang’s circumstances. His objectives have been completed.

For the next two days, Long Chen continued to cultivate on the asteroid with Nangong Cheng. The latter was very happy and would challenge Long Chen from time to time. Even though he lost every time, Nangong Cheng was very excited.

Combat on the asteroid had helped Long Chen comprehend the Nine Dragon Flashes. He could complete seven flashes when the fifteenth day arrived.

Dongfang Xuanxiao would be ecstatic when he found out.

“Long Chen, are you leaving now?” Nangong Cheng was disappointed.

“Don’t worry, I will come back when I have the time. This place is a treasure!” Long Chen smiled.

“I’ve heard that the Eastern Azure Dragon family will be holding the tournament for the Azure Dragon Halberd soon. Are you joining it?” Nangong Cheng asked.

“Yes.”

“Then it might be hard. I’ve fought against Dongfang Tianyu before, and he was stronger than me. I can’t even take a single attack from him. You might not be his match.”

“That might not be true.” Long Chen was confident on the outside, but he was still hesitating deep within. *Were fifteen days enough?* Long Chen felt like he had crossed a

bottleneck after cultivating at the Star Devil Prison. He was on the verge of becoming stronger again.

After bidding him goodbye, Long Chen walked back to the Transit Hall and exited through the black whirlpool. He found himself in the Heavenly Martial Realm once more.

Yan Honghai sighed in relief when he saw Long Chen come out. He would've entered to find Long Chen if he didn't come out soon. The Star Devil Prison was a dangerous place, and they wouldn't be able to find his corpse if Long Chen fell off.

"How is your progress?" Yan Honghai smiled.

"Not too bad." Long Chen faked being humble.

"Lord Xuanxiao came by, but he left when he saw that you were concentrating on cultivating. I've heard that you will be joining the tournament?" When he brought up the Earth-tier Divine Weapon, Yan Honghai became very excited.

Long Chen nodded and joked, "Yeah, that's why I entered the Star Devil Prison on such short notice."

"That's good, but it seems that the results of the tournament have been silently decided. I heard that Dongfang Tianyu, the son of Dongfang Xuanfeng, will be handed first place. Long Chen, you need to do your best and bring honor to Lord Xuanxiao. He doesn't have children, and his parents died when he was young, so the elders don't really think highly of him," Yan Honghai whispered when Long Chen was leaving.

"In the previous tournaments, the children of Dongfang Xuanfeng, Dongfang Xuanyu, and Dongfang Xuanyun were given the chance to touch the Azure Dragon Halberd. Only Dongfang Xuanxiao was excluded, because he didn't have any descendants. Except for Dongfang Tianchen and the other two, the strongest competitor will be Dongfang Tianyu. He's already at the late Earthly Core Realm. Even those at the initial Heavenly Core Realm might lose to him. If he weren't targeting you, you might've been able to do better and bring honor to Lord Xuanxiao. But I heard you have a grudge with Dongfang Tianyu?"

"I do, and it's not a small one. I think he will do everything to target me." Long Chen smiled bitterly.

"That is troublesome indeed." Yan Honghai frowned. He was worried about Long Chen.

Dongfang Xuanxiao suddenly appeared from afar.

"I have to go now. Thank you," Long Chen said to Yan Honghai before he followed Dongfang Xuanxiao into the Heavenly Core area.

“How did your cultivation go?” Dongfang Xuanxiao asked.

“I’ve refined most of my Qi and my foundation is very solid now. I should be able to advance in the near future.” Long Chen felt like he was very close.

“And the Nine Dragon Flashes?” Dongfang Xuanxiao was silently pleased that Long Chen was about to advance, though he didn’t display any emotion because he wasn’t used to it.

“Not bad. I’ve completed the goal you set for me.” Long Chen did not say he could do seven flashes, or Dongfang Xuanxiao would think he was some kind of monster in terms of cultivating martial techniques. He didn’t want Dongfang Xuanxiao to question him, so he said it as such.

“Good.” Dongfang Xuanxiao smiled plainly. He thought Long Chen had completed the four flashes only.

“The Nine Dragon Flashes will compliment your Beast Soul Transformation and Sword Devil Finger very well. You should be able to showcase your battle prowess now. If you can rise to the next cultivation level, you will have a thirty percent chance of winning. Keep it up!”

The tournament wouldn’t only affect his future, but also Mo Xiaolang’s life. Long Chen had to put his life on the line to win against Dongfang Tianyu and obtain victory.

Dongfang Xuanxiao had helped him immensely, so it was the least he could do.

And his new stepfather hadn’t merely given him a hand once or twice, he had also saved him during the qualifiers. He had even taken the time to visit Long Chen at the asteroid area, though he had not disturbed him. Long Chen would definitely repay him!

“I have some good news,” Dongfang Xuanxiao suddenly said.

“What is it?” The good news would naturally be excellent news if it was coming from someone like Dongfang Xuanxiao.

“The elders discussed and approved your application to get the Sky Soul Fruit, but you will not be able to take anything else for a year. I discussed it with them and managed to shorten the time period to nine months. That’s the limit of my power.” Dongfang Xuanxiao sighed.

Long Chen looked at him, not knowing how to thank him.

“Stepfather, all I can say is that I am eternally grateful to you. I will do my best to win the tournament!”

“That’s all that matters.” Dongfang Xuanxiao was happy to hear Long Chen’s confident declaration. He took out a dark-blue box made of jade from his Universe Pouch. The box itself was covered in dense Qi. It was made of Divine Jade!

“This is the Sky Soul Fruit.” Dongfang Xuanxiao handed it to Long Chen.

It was an item that could extend Ling Xi’s life by five years! Long Chen was very excited, much less Ling Xi. If Dongfang Xuanxiao wasn’t here, she would’ve leaped out in joy and started refining it.

Long Chen carefully put it in his Universe Pouch and saw Dongfang Xuanxiao staring at him.

“What’s wrong? Is there anything on my face?”

“I just noticed that your face was filled with happiness and bliss when I gave you the Sky Soul Fruit. Long Chen, do you have a girl you like? Are you giving it to her?”

Dongfang Xuanxiao’s voice was hoarse.

Long Chen didn’t know what to say. To think that someone as serious as Dongfang Xuanxiao would be interested in gossip like this. Long Chen denied it. “No, definitely not.”

“What about Liu Lan?”

“She’s not ...”

“Fine.” Dongfang Xuanxiao shook his head. He was aware that Long Chen was just teasing Liu Lan and didn’t have any feelings for her.

They continued walking.

“Long Chen, let me tell you something.”

“What is it?”

Dongfang Xuanxiao’s gaze was bitter and he forced a smile. “A minor piece of advice. If you have a woman you like, you need to work ten times harder to protect her.”

He walked ahead and said nothing after that.

“Huh?” Long Chen didn’t know why Dongfang Xuanxiao would say something like that at this particular time. He was indeed smart, but he had no idea what was happening.

Soon after, they exited the Heavenly Martial Realm and returned to their quarters. After sending Long Chen back, Dongfang Xuanxiao headed off to do something. Before he did, he gave Long Chen another piece of advice. “Tianchen, Tianxing, and Tianxuan have returned from their training. All of them are at the Heavenly Martial Realm, so it’s best if you don’t offend them. They are adored by the elders and the patriarch, so I can’t be too obvious in helping you if they beat you up.”

“I understand.” Long Chen nodded. He was smart, so he knew when to not do stupid things. Without strength, he needed to be humble.

Yin Mengyao came out to greet Long Chen when he arrived. He hadn't seen her in many days, and it looked like her cultivation had improved.

Her personality had always been cold, but she was much warmer around Long Chen and Dongfang Xuanxiao.

After Dongfang Xuanxiao left, she asked anxiously, "Long Chen, how was it? Any news?"

Long Chen told her all the information he had received in the Star Devil Prison.

Her brows furrowed when he was done, her cold features tightly scrunched together. "So we need to get the Azure Dragon Halberd in order to free him?"

"That's right. The Azure Dragon Halberd tournament will begin in about ten days. I will do my best," said Long Chen.

Looking at his determined gaze, Yin Mengyao said, "I will work hard too. I've spent the past few days sparring with the wooden puppets in the Martial Hall and practicing my Flowing Water Body. Actually, I've made some decent progress."

"Martial Hall? Wooden puppets?" Long Chen had never heard these terms.

"The Martial Hall is located in the Xuanyu Pavilion, and the younger disciples usually cultivate there. Stepfather was the one who took me. There's an area in the Martial Hall where there are ninety-nine wooden puppets in total. When you enter, all the puppets will swarm you." Even Yin Mengyao found the wooden puppets strange.

"Wooden puppets? How do they compare to the steel puppets?" Based on the name, the steel puppets sounded stronger.

"You've participated in the outer family qualifiers, so you must think the steel puppets are stronger. But that's not the case." She shook her head. "The steel puppets are predictable and stiff, but the wooden puppets are agile and unpredictable. Also, they are made of quality wood that is even tougher than steel. They can even use simple martial techniques. When ninety-nine wooden puppets form an array, they're not easy to defeat."

Long Chen realized that the Lingwu inner family spent a lot of effort on nurturing the next generation.

After chatting with her for a while, she started on her cultivation task for the day. On the other hand, Ling Xi had been urging Long Chen many times in the Ling Xi Sword.

Now that they had the Sky Soul Fruit, she intended to cultivate it immediately, but she couldn't because Yin Mengyao was still around.

Once Long Chen returned to his quarters, the tiny Ling Xi flew out of the Ling Xi Sword. She was over the moon, grinning like a blooming flower. She looked adorable. "Long Chen, time to give me the Sky Soul Fruit," she quickly begged, seeing as Long Chen hadn't given it to her.

“You’re younger than me. What do you think you should call me?” teased Long Chen with a stern face.

“Brother Chen, Brother Chen!” Ling Xi didn’t care about anything else when there was a delicious fruit in front of her.

“Good girl.” When he saw the girl acting as if to please him, he took out the fruit and said, “Seeing as I have sacrificed one year’s quota of rewards for you, you may call me ‘Brother Chen’ from today onwards. It makes me happy when I hear it.”

Ling Xi was so moved by his gift that she felt a little guilty. She nodded like a chick pecking at some rice and called him “Brother Chen” sweetly a few times.

Long Chen felt chills when he heard her call him that. “Xiao Xi, it’s scary when you’re so gentle!” said Long Chen, pursing his lips.

“You! Hmmp!” Taking the green jade box from his hand, Ling Xi didn’t bother to argue. But when she thought about how he had sacrificed a year of rewards to get her this, his position in her heart had skyrocketed to a very, very high status.

*He calls me ‘Xiao Xi,’ but I still call him ‘Long Chen.’ It does seem a little distant. He is indeed older than I am, and he treats me so well. I’ll just call him ‘Brother Chen’ from now on; it’s worth it,* Ling Xi thought to herself.

There was also an underground room provided for cultivation purposes within his quarters here. Long Chen brought Ling Xi into the room, then he closed the door and said, “Xiao Xi, you can start cultivating already. I’ll cover for you.”

“Alright.” She nodded obediently. The tiny girl dragged the large jade box over and placed it on the ground. Then she opened it excitedly.

Long Chen was greeted with a soul-shaking fragrance. He took only one gentle inhale, and it made him feel a few times more awake. *It looks like the Sky Soul Fruit is very useful for cultivation too. It’s no wonder it’s worth ten million divine jades. If I were to sell it ...*

There was a green, translucent fruit inside the jade box, shaped almost like an apple. It sparkled in the light, and countless vessels could be seen within its translucent body. A green liquid flowed through the vessels like blood.

“It really is the Sky Soul Fruit ...” Ling Xi completely lost her cool when she saw the fruit. Even her voice trembled.

“Xiao Xi, hurry up and cultivate. Delaying will only lead to more problems,” reminded Long Chen, looking at the fruit.

Ling Xi nodded and looked at him with gratitude in her eyes. “Thank you, Brother Chen!” Then, she used a secret technique to refine the fruit.

The Sky Soul Fruit was quickly enveloped by her soul power.

Long Chen was bored, so he started to study the last two flashes of the Nine Dragon Flashes. He only had a small portion left to master before he would achieve the late stage of mastery and also Dongfang Xuanxiao's level.

Time passed slowly. Long Chen could sense Ling Xi slowly getting stronger. He guessed that the life force of her soul was the one that was strengthening.

The Soul Grass was an intermediate Black-tier spirit herb and the Sky Soul Fruit was classified as an advanced Black-tier, but it was closer to the Earth-tier and it was on a whole new level.

How could a spirit herb worth ten million divine jades be that simple?

That was why Long Chen estimated that once she refined this Sky Soul Fruit, he wouldn't have to worry about her mortality for a long time. At the same time, if his life was ever in danger, Ling Xi could provide some assistance.

Six hours had passed, and it was already evening. Long Chen had long stopped cultivating and was sitting at the side, watching over Ling Xi. She was completely wrapped in white mist, so he couldn't see her clearly.

That was when the mist started to clear, revealing the tiny girl. Her eyes were still closed, but he noticed that she was a little different.

Ling Xi's skin was almost the same as delicate, white jade. It wasn't a physical body; her soul power was just more condensed. However, this level of solidification made her not much different from a physical body.

"I think the girl became prettier." Long Chen felt tempted when he saw her. It was a tragedy that such a beautiful girl could be destroyed by a broken sword.

Ling Xi's eyes sprang open and a ray of divine light, bright enough to shake Long Chen's soul, shot out from her eyes, startling him.

She'd just woken up when she saw that he was startled by her and burst into giggles. "Brother Chen, you're so timid."

"Who said that?" Long Chen asked sternly. He eyed her up and down, then he asked, "How do you feel?"

"I have completely absorbed the medicinal power of the Sky Soul Fruit. If I don't use any power, I can live for at least five years. If I do, I think I can withstand a hit from a First River Stage cultivator." She stretched. Although she was tiny, she had beautiful curves.

"First River Stage?" Long Chen wasn't familiar with the Heavenly River Stage. All he knew was that the Heavenly River Realm was above the Divine Core Realm, and there were only a few people beyond the Divine Core Realm in Yuanling City.

The legendary four patriarchs of the Lingwu family were masters at the Heavenly River Realm. As for the Beast Soul Palace and Ling Xi's faction, Long Chen knew nothing about them. At the very least, Emperor Yuan of the Beast Soul Palace was probably at the Heavenly River Realm. "There

are eighteen heavenly rivers in the sky of the Dragon Continent. They are all made of countless stars. Nine of them appear during the day, and the other nine at night. Every Yang river matches with a Yin river. Heavenly River Realm masters absorb the star power from the heavenly rivers until a starry sky manifests inside them, forming eighteen heavenly rivers within their bodies. When a Yin and a Yang river merge and start flowing together in tandem, one River Stage is formed. The Heavenly River Realm has nine stages, and once nine Yin-Yang heavenly rivers are opened within the body, the cultivator reaches the Ninth River Stage.

Knowing that Long Chen wasn't familiar with the Heavenly River Realm, Ling Xi explained the concept to him. "Heavenly River ... Star power ... Yin and Yang heavenly rivers ... The Heavenly River Realm also has nine stages? Xiao Xi, which stage do you think the four old geezers of the Lingwu family are at?"

Long Chen was in awe. Being only in the initial Earthly Core Realm now, he was very far away.

"Yuanling City doesn't have any experts, so I think they're at the First River Stage."

Ling Xi shrugged.

Long Chen was speechless.

The four patriarchs were on an untouchable level to Long Chen, yet Ling Xi had said that there weren't any experts. "Don't give up, Brother Chen. I believe you'll surpass them very soon," cheered Ling Xi, shaking her fist.

"Mhm. Right, where would we find the Ninth River Stage experts you speak of?" asked Long Chen.

"Yuanling City is a county within the Cangyang Kingdom, whose masters are concentrated in Cangyang Imperial City. The imperial city should have masters of that level. It's the capital of the kingdom, so it's definitely much larger than Yuanling City."

"Imperial city?" Long Chen had heard of it before. The gigantic Yuanling City was a county city under the jurisdiction of the imperial city. Right now, Yuanling City's ruling faction was just a branch of the imperial city's administrative power. Just like how the rulers of Baiyang Town, the Yang family, was a branch of the Lingwu family.

"You shouldn't be thinking about a place like the imperial city right now, Brother Chen. You should be thinking about getting the Azure Dragon Halberd," said Ling Xi.

He nodded. The Sky Soul Fruit had been successfully absorbed, so both of them emerged from the underground room. Long Chen saw that Yin Mengyao still wasn't back. "Sister Mengyao said she'd be back at dusk, but it's already nightfall. Unless ... is she in trouble?"

Frowning, Long Chen walked towards the Xuanyu Pavilion.

Chapter 197 - Dongfang Tianxuan

The Eastern Azure Dragon compound had four main pavilions arranged in a rhombus. Long Chen had been to the other three pavilions, so he quickly figured out the Xuanyu Pavilion's location.

He hurried along quickly, worried for Yin Mengyao's safety, and soon spotted the Xuanyu Pavilion from afar. Compared to the other three, this pavilion was more sophisticated in design.

He entered without a word and immediately saw a crowd gathered in a circle and heard the sounds of cheering, so he rushed over.

Long Chen could faintly make out two people engaged in an intense battle at the center of the group. He could tell that there were two girls. One was obviously Yin Mengyao, but he couldn't recognize the other.

The other teenage girl was almost the same age as Yin Mengyao, and she was just as pretty. This girl was wearing a long, light-yellow dress that fluttered gracefully around her as they fought.

Yin Mengyao was cold, but her opponent was ice-cold and had deep arrogance in her eyes.

Upon closer inspection, Long Chen realized that the girl was at a much higher cultivation level than Yin Mengyao. This was more bullying than sparring.

"Outer family members are useless. Sister Tianxuan is barely trying, yet she's already struggling."

"Of course. The outer families work for us, so how good could they be?"

The crowd discussed loudly with no reservations, pointing and critiquing the struggling Yin Mengyao.

Yin Mengyao was already tiring out under the pressure from her opponent, but her opponent had no intention of ending the duel, instead treating her as a practice target for all sorts of martial techniques.

Yin Mengyao was drenched in sweat, panting and exhausted. However, she was not the kind of person who would admit defeat so easily, so she held on. "You've been able to hold on for this long; looks like your Flowing Water Body has started to take shape. Not bad. Let me try this move instead." The girl raised her fist and punched Yin Mengyao's head effortlessly. If her pretty face was hit, she would've been disfigured.

Now that Long Chen was here, how could he let this happen?

He was about to move when there was a bout of hearty laughter. A person leaped at Yin Mengyao, grabbed her waist at lightning speed, and then retreated so she was out of range and away from danger.

It was a young man. He was handsome with fair skin and a tall nose, though the mischievous look in his eyes that made him look evil. "Dongfang Tianxing, could you not be so nosey?" The girl named Dongfang Tianxuan smirked coldly.

"Alright, my dear cousin. Could you not make me look bad in front of this beautiful girl?" Dongfang Tianxing quickly responded.

Judging by the excited look on his face, his target really suited his tastes. Dongfang Tianxuan knew what her cousin was like. Since Yin Mengyao was irrelevant to her and her opponent had been snatched away, she lost interest and turned to leave.

Yin Mengyao was suddenly in a stranger's arms, and Dongfang Tianxing's words made her very uncomfortable. Her face turned cold and she shoved him away! "Let me go, jerk!"

"Are you calling me a jerk? Girl, you're so beautiful, and you've joined Eastern Azure Dragon—doesn't it seem like we are fated to be together?" Dongfang Tianxing was quick to react and grabbed Yin Mengyao's fair hand. He looked down arrogantly, staring at her in amusement.

Long Chen knew he was powerful, but it was unacceptable for him to tease Yin Mengyao under his watch. She was his stepsister, and he would never let anyone bully her! "Fuck off!" A sudden boom startled everyone, then they saw a teenager charging at Dongfang Tianxing, his fist flying at Dongfang Tianxing's face!

"Who are you?!"

Dongfang Tianxing's expression changed; he hadn't expected anyone to attack him here. He momentarily lost his gentlemanly demeanor and hurriedly let go of Yin Mengyao to move a few steps back and dodge Long Chen's attack.

Long Chen caught Yin Mengyao and pulled her behind him. The others finally focused and regarded Long Chen with surprise.

"Who is this dog?" Dongfang Tianxing, whose gentlemanly image had been ruined, looked at Long Chen. The look of mischief in his eyes turned cold.

"Who's the dog speaking to?" shouted Long Chen fearlessly.

Dongfang Tianxing's face darkened when he saw that the brat dared shout at himself. He exclaimed, "To you!"

"Oh, the dog is speaking to me? Hehe, I see." Long Chen suddenly started laughing. This was a prank he'd pulled many times since he was young, and it was equally fun each time.

The crowd didn't quite understand why he was laughing, but they soon figured it out. Their faces twitched.

Dongfang Tianxing had called him a dog, and when Long Chen had asked who the dog was speaking to, Dongfang Tianxing was angered and fell into his trap, his reply implying that he himself was the dog.

"Die!"

Dongfang Tianxing's face darkened when he was played by Long Chen. He was about to attack when Long Chen warned coldly, "Dongfang Tianxing, if I tell my stepfather that you bullied my sister ... You know my stepfather's temper. You touched his stepdaughter, which is equivalent to a slap to his face. Try it, if you dare!"

When he heard Long Chen's warning, Dongfang Tianxing thought of Dongfang Xuanxiao and frowned. Dongfang Xuanxiao's personality was hard to grasp. If he found out that he had bullied Long Chen and Yin Mengyao, his Fourth Uncle would pay him a visit to beat him up!

Dongfang Tianxing's mother was Dongfang Xuanyu. He knew that even his mother couldn't control Dongfang Xuanxiao, having to rely on his Eldest Uncle's status instead. That was why he stopped, even though he initially wanted to teach Long Chen a lesson.

"You're *that* Long Chen?" he spat at Long Chen coldly.

"In the flesh," said Long Chen.

When the crowd learned that he was the person who had performed the best in the inner family qualifiers, they eyed Long Chen. He was very bold to fight Dongfang Tianxing.

The teenage girl, Dongfang Tianxuan, was also looking at him.

She hadn't initially paid him any attention, but he dared confront Dongfang Tianxing directly, even intimidating him so he wouldn't attack. His boldness impressed her.

But how would Dongfang Tianxing vent the anger in his heart?

He would never swallow his anger just like that. He had an idea. "You must be quite powerful if you're brave enough to humiliate me like this. I wonder, do you dare come to the Mortal Arena with me?" He smirked coldly.

Just like the outer family, the inner family also had a Mortal Arena. As long as both sides agreed to fight there, they could fight a true duel there and no one would be responsible for any deaths!

Despite that rule, most duels did not end in death. Everyone was part of the Lingwu family after all, and it was unnecessary to bear such deep enmity.

"The Mortal Arena? I'm not interested. I've only just attained the Earthly Core Realm, and you're at the Heavenly Core Realm. Don't you think it's embarrassing for you to challenge me to a duel?" mused Long Chen.

"Are you talking back?" The corner of Dongfang Tianxing's lips curved up in contempt. "You're too scared to accept a challenge. Long Chen, are you even a man? I don't think you are. Why don't you have the guts for it?"

The crowd laughed at Dongfang Tianxing's questions. It was indeed embarrassing that Long Chen dared insult him but didn't dare accept his challenge.

When Dongfang Tianxuan saw Long Chen's aggressive behavior, she initially thought he was a macho man, and he had piqued her interest. But when she saw that he didn't dare accept the challenge, she lost interest.

Long Chen's expression did not change. Instead of raging, he smiled. "If I agreed, not only would I be cowardly, I'd also be brainless. As for whether I am a man, we can only prove that in bed. Why? Do you know any good maiden you'd recommend for me to test out? As long as she looks decent, I will not refuse. Haha!"

"You!" Dongfang Tianxing lost once again in a battle of wit. "You're a coward because you dare not take the challenge, finding excuses to get out of it. Long Chen, you're the coward of the cowards!"

Long Chen didn't want to continue wasting time. Without a word, he grabbed Yin Mengyao's hand and left the Xuanyu Pavilion before the gazes of the crowd.

Yin Mengyao was startled by Long Chen's behavior, and terrified because she thought he would be beaten up by Dongfang Tianxing. Yet he had miraculously neutralized the situation by borrowing Xuanxiao's name.

She was quite impressed by her little stepbrother. *Although Long Chen isn't as talented as Xiaolang in terms of cultivation, he's much better in terms of determination and wisdom.*

Yin Mengyao was left in a daze. Long Chen seemed to have become much more powerful than when they first met.

When they arrived at the entrance of the Xuanyu Pavilion, they coincidentally ran into Dongfang Tianyu, who was making his way in. Long Chen and him locked eyes, and the flames of violence burned.

But Long Chen dared not linger, and he left hurriedly.

After Long Chen left, Dongfang Tianyu noticed that something was wrong in the atmosphere and quickly approached Dongfang Tianxing to ask, "Brother Tianxing? How was she? The girl I recommended, Yin Mengyao, suits your taste, right?"

Dongfang Tianxing's eyes were dark. "She's delicious! But she's Fourth Uncle's stepdaughter, so I can't do anything."

Dongfang Tianyu had an idea and pulled Tianxing aside. "Fourth Uncle is indeed difficult to deal with, but you can't act openly. Now that both of them are in the inner family, we will have many opportunities to make a move!"

Dongfang Tianxing perked up and said, "Brother Yu, you always come up with good ideas. I want to kill Long Chen; do you have a way?"

"Long Chen?" Dongfang Tianyu grinned. "I will kill him during the Azure Dragon Halberd tournament."

Chapter 198 - Good News, Bad News

Once Long Chen returned to his quarters, he started cultivating again until dawn. The Azure Dragon Halberd tournament was approaching, and he dared not slack off. Xiaolang's fate depended on his performance at the tournament.

At the break of dawn, Long Chen was still cultivating when Yin Mengyao knocked on the door and said excitedly, "Long Chen, I have good news!"

Long Chen opened the door and asked, looking confused, "What is it?"

"It's a secret. You'll find out later," said Yin Mengyao teasingly.

After Long Chen saved her yesterday, they'd gotten even closer.

"Alright, don't play games with me! Spill!" Long Chen threatened her.

“Alright.” It was rare for Yin Mengyao to be this mischievous, but Long Chen wasn’t buying it. She returned to normal and smiled. “Your cousin in the Northern Black Tortoise family, Yang Lingqing, is coming to meet you. She’s on her way now.”

“Huh?” Long Chen gasped in joy. It was an amazing surprise.

He had been feeling guilty because he should have gone to see her the moment he arrived. But his visit to the Star Devil Prison had taken up more than ten days. When Yang Lingqing heard that he had entered the inner family, she came over first.

After a while, he saw Dongfang Xuanxiao leading Yang Lingqing over. He knew that the two cousins hadn’t met for a long time, so he and Yin Mengyao left them alone.

Yang Lingqing was wearing a long, light-green dress, and she had become prettier. There was even a hint of deep green in her beautiful eyes that made them look very lively. “Brother ...” Yang Lingqing was overwhelmed with emotion upon seeing Long Chen.

“Let’s talk inside.” He pulled her in and made her sit down. Long Chen looked her up and down and grinned. “Hey, girl, we haven’t met in a long time, and you’ve gotten so much prettier!”

“You jerk, you’re just lying to make me happy!” Knowing Long Chen, she wasn’t going to fall for his lies.

But he was being genuine this time.

They hadn’t seen each other in so long, and they both had a lot to say. Once they started talking, they didn’t stop from morning until noon. Long Chen mainly told her about his experiences during their time apart. Yang Lingqing did the same, though her life was more boring. After receiving a few good cultivation methods and a wealth of resources, she had been spending all her time cultivating. Within less than a month, she had condensed her Human Core, therefore reaching the Human Core Realm.

Indeed, with the Dark Yin Body, her progress was extraordinary with the right cultivation methods.

“Right, where’s Sister Ling Xi?” she asked.

“She’s sleeping. She sleeps deeply for many hours every day,” said Long Chen.

“Oh.” Yang Lingqing nodded and looked around, saying wistfully, “When you said that you wanted to join the inner family qualifiers, I knew it would be very difficult. But I also knew that you would succeed! I was right!”

“Hehe, of course. Your brother is an amazing guy! Money, power, and girls are easy to get for someone like me!”

“All you do is brag.”

Yang Lingqing was much happier now that she could talk to Long Chen. She covered her mouth, laughing so hard that her stomach hurt.

But Long Chen was observant enough to notice the hint of worry and frustration hiding deep in her eyes. “Xiao Qing’er, tell your big brother, is there anyone bullying you in the Northern Black Tortoise family? If anyone dares to touch you, I’ll spank his bottom.” Long Chen knew that she was the kind that would suffer in silence, so she wouldn’t say anything if he asked her in a serious tone. That was why he had spoken in a joking manner.

She froze, but when she saw the grin on his face, she sighed in relief and said, “How could someone as likable as me have problems? Look at you, making enemies everywhere you go! You worry me to death.”

“Hehe, they’re just jealous because I’m too handsome. They’re insignificant, nothing to be feared,” joked Long Chen.

He privately made a mental note. *Dongfang Tianxing targeted Sister Mengyao as soon as he came back home. Lingqing went to the Northern Black Tortoise family alone and is vulnerable to Beitang Mo’s whims. If Beitang Mo isn’t a good person, then Lingqing is in trouble ...*

A huge boulder sat on Long Chen’s chest.

“Are you sure there’s no one bullying you?” Long Chen thought of what Liu Lan had said. People who entered the inner family were often kept inside through marriage. Yang Lingqing was getting more beautiful by the day, and she even had the rare Dark Yin Body. How could she not catch anyone’s attention?

“I’m sure. Don’t overthink it. Just focus on your cultivation; I’m waiting to brag about you to other people.” Yang Lingqing reached out and swatted his chest, as if he was overthinking things.

“Alright, I believe you.” Although that was what Long Chen said, he didn’t think so. *Based on Lingqing’s peculiar behavior, she must be in great trouble. She must be worried about me and thinks I’m not strong enough, afraid that she’ll drag me into the problem. That’s probably why she won’t tell me about it ...* Long Chen made a mental note.

He didn’t bring this topic up again. Instead, they discussed cultivation. Another two hours passed, and it was past noon. Ling Xi woke up and instantly saw Yang Lingqing, making her very excited.

The girls chattered nonstop, leaving Long Chen aside.

He watched them in silence. *Are these the two girls I must protect?*

Long Chen was frustrated. Ling Xi had insurance now that she had the Sky Soul Fruit, but he still couldn’t feel at peace, because Yang Lingqing was alone in the Northern Black Tortoise family.

Yang Lingqing only left in the evening.

He noticed her unwillingness to leave, but he knew that she had to go. The Northern Black Tortoise family was going through great lengths to nurture her, so as a trainee, she had no autonomy.

“I feel like Lingqing is worried about something,” said Ling Xu solemnly after she left.

“I know.” If Ling Xi noticed the same thing, then it had to be true. Emotions could affect a person’s entire demeanor, so it was obvious no matter how hard she tried to cover it up.

“Let’s go look for Xuanxiao.”

All he could do was ask for help. The Black Tortoise family was an immense presence, and he couldn’t fight it alone.

Dongfang Xuanxiao was sitting in the Xuanxiao Pavilion. “Has your cousin left already?” he asked.

Long Chen nodded. He didn’t hide what he was thinking from Dongfang Xuanxiao and said directly, “Stepfather, could you help me investigate if anyone is forcing my cousin to do something in the Black Tortoise family? For example, forcing her into marriage.”

“Hm.” Dongfang Xuanxiao fell silent for a while, then he nodded and called for a guard. Very quickly, an armored guard entered and Dongfang Xuanxiao told him of Long Chen’s request. The guard nodded, then he quickly disappeared. “You may return. I’ll tell you once I receive any news.”

“Thank you, Stepfather!” Long Chen trusted him, so he turned to leave.

“Long Chen,” Dongfang Xuanxiao suddenly called out.

“What is it?” Long Chen looked back.

Dongfang Xuanxiao looked at him and said mildly, “Don’t worry, it’ll be fine.”

He wanted Long Chen not to worry, but Long Chen couldn’t relax. He initially wanted to focus on preparing for the Azure Dragon Halberd tournament, but Yang Lingqing’s matter frustrated him.

No one is allowed to touch the people I protect, or I’ll chop them to pieces, even if I must risk my life!

Long Chen’s eyes darkened as he sat down in a pavilion in the courtyard.

Dongfang Xuanxiao finally came to Long Chen when it was almost midnight. He must have come to relay what he had learned as soon as he could, further proving his love for his stepson.

“Stepfather, what’s the situation?” he asked worriedly.

“You guessed right. Beitang Mo has already sent her a marriage proposal, and he has sent the dowry to Baiyang Town. But your cousin is impressive too, because she’s delaying her reply. But the marriage is being arranged by the Northern Black Tortoise family’s head, Beitang Ming, who is Beitang Mo’s father. So your cousin won’t be able to delay any longer and will soon relent. If they use your family in Baiyang Town to threaten her, she’ll definitely do as they say!”

Snap!

Long Chen squeezed the wooden railing so hard, it splintered!

A fierce, red glint appeared in his eyes!

Dongfang Xuanxiao stared ahead and asked mildly, "Are you planning to storm the Northern Black Tortoise family?"

"I was the one who encouraged her to join the Northern Black Tortoise family, but I never expected it to come to this! I don't want Lingqing to do anything she doesn't want to do; I don't want her to force herself. She is my cousin, so I must stop this, even if I die!" exclaimed Long Chen through gritted teeth.

"You're a brat who doesn't know when to stop," said Dongfang Xuanxiao in exasperation. "I'm guessing that she came to see you today because she was too stressed out. And I'm guessing she will surrender as soon as she returns. Although she has a Dark Yin Body, she started too late and is only at the initial Human Core Realm. She is as weak as an ant in the eyes of a giant like the Northern Black Tortoise family! So, tell me, what do you plan to do?"

"What else? I was the one who made her lose her freedom, so I must trade my life for her freedom!" He felt extremely guilty when he thought about how he had been stupid enough to push Yang Lingqing into that place alone.

"Don't be so pessimistic. Maybe they'll like each other? Beitang Mo is an excellent young man, and he's as strong as Tianchen in terms of cultivation. He's number one in the Northern Black Tortoise family."

"No." Long Chen shook his head. "If Lingqing liked him, she would've told me today. Plus, if she liked him, why would she delay her reply? Stepfather, it looks like I won't be able to participate in the Azure Dragon Halberd tournament ..."

Long Chen was prepared to take Yang Lingqing back to Baiyang Town, running away from this place.

"Are you saying you want to leave the Lingwu family?" Dongfang Xuanxiao turned to look at him calmly.

"I'm sorry! You've done so much for me, but I couldn't repay you!" Long Chen really had no way to repay him for everything he had done.

"Silly child." Dongfang Xuanxiao suddenly smiled and patted his shoulder. "Prepare yourself, we'll storm the Northern Black Tortoise family tomorrow!"

Chapter 199 - Storming Northern Black Tortoise

On the next day, at dawn, Long Chen was ready to leave with Dongfang Xuanxiao for the Northern Black Tortoise family.

Dongfang Xuanxiao had clearly told Long Chen that he would back him no matter how over-the-line he wanted to be.

Long Chen also understood in his heart that Dongfang Xuanxiao was being far too kind to him. This even made him feel bad, but he was not one to decline help. This was a major life event for Yang Lingqing. If he didn't deal with this appropriately, it could destroy Yang Lingqing's whole life. That was why he had to go to the Northern Black Tortoise family and take a more aggressive stance against them even if it created a huge problem for Dongfang Xuanxiao.

Being also part of the inner family, the Eastern Azure Dragon family was not far from Northern Black Tortoise, so they arrived quickly.

The Northern Black Tortoise members near the entrance hurried off to inform their leaders when they saw them both.

After a while, a middle-aged man almost the same age as Dongfang Xuanfeng emerged, passionately greeting them. "Brother Xuanxiao, it's rare for you to visit the Northern Black Tortoise family! A rare guest, a rare guest indeed! Come inside!"

Long Chen squinted. The man's features were similar to Beitang Mo's, so he was probably his father, as well as the head of the Northern Black Tortoise family, Beitang Ming.

The fact that he was the head of the Northern Black Tortoise naturally meant that he was a late Heavenly Core Realm cultivator. Just like Dongfang Xuanxiao, he was much more powerful than the nine Grand Elders of the outer families.

Beitang Ming led them to a large building with mainly ink-green as its color theme.

They sat down in sequence, according to their rank, with Long Chen next to Dongfang Xuanxiao. He looked at his surroundings and then at Beitang Ming, feeling anxious. The people around him were much stronger than he was. Any one of them could kill him easily, but Long Chen needed to settle Yang Lingqing's problem today, and it was going to be extremely difficult.

After noticing Long Chen's gaze, Beitang Ming instructed his people to serve some tea, then he asked smilingly, "Who is this little prodigy?"

"This is my stepson, Long Chen. He only recently joined the inner family. I'm sure you've heard of him, Brother Beitang," replied Dongfang Xuanxiao mildly.

"Of course. The name 'Long Chen' has been as loud as thunder these days. The youth of my family have been talking about him. I heard that he defeated the boy who was called the number one prodigy of the outer family, at only the initial Earthly Core Realm?"

"That's true. But on that note, Long Chen and you are actually indirectly related," said Dongfang Xuanxiao. He stared straight at Beitang Ming without expression, and Beitang Ming couldn't figure out what he was thinking.

"I know about this. I took in a stepdaughter recently. Her name is Yang Lingqing, and she has the rare Dark Yin Body. I heard she's Long Chen's cousin! I'll get someone to bring Yang Lingqing here so you guys can meet."

Beitang Ming was all smiles, though when he saw that Long Chen and Dongfang Xuanxiao didn't look happy, he had a bad feeling. But he relaxed when he thought about how Dongfang Xuanxiao couldn't interfere with Yang Lingqing's matters.

Someone went to call for Yang Lingqing, while Beitang Ming took great interest in Long Chen. When he and Dongfang Xuanxiao chatted, he pulled the conversation topic back to Long Chen multiple times. In the end, he even asked him questions, showing him great care.

*This old fox isn't easy to deal with. Although Long Chen was chatting with Beitang Ming, his heart was cold. Xiao Qing is just a weak girl. How could she fight back when she's living under the control of this old fox?*

That was why he had to settle this problem.

The youthful Yang Lingqing spotted Long Chen immediately, and was initially pleasantly surprised, but then that feeling turned into confusion and worry. She'd only just met Long Chen yesterday, so why was he here today?

"Qing'er, Mo'er, come sit here."

Beitang Ming smiled and called the two of them over.

Behind Yang Lingqing was the cold Beitang Mo, whose gaze landed on Long Chen when he entered. There was surprise in his eyes.

The first time he met Long Chen was in the Blood Saints' underground city. At the time, Long Chen was at the late Human Core Realm, but he could kill an opponent at the initial Earthly Core Realm. Now, Long Chen had entered the Earthly Core Realm, and he heard that Long Chen had defeated the very strong Jin Sheng'en, a mid-Earthly Core Realm cultivator, which resulted in him joining the inner family.

This brat was initially insignificant to him, but now he was shocked.

Following Beitang Ming's instruction, both Yang Lingqing and Beitang Mo sat down obediently, despite their racing thoughts.

Another wave of anger surged in Long Chen's heart, because he saw that her eyes were red and swollen. She had been crying.

He felt like he had been stabbed in the heart when he thought about how much psychological suffering his cousin had to endure here. At the same time, his viciousness was slowly growing. "You two are cousins! Why so awkward? Haha, ignore us seniors, you guys go ahead and chat!" said Beitang Ming with a smile. He picked up a cup of tea and took a small sip.

While he sipped his tea, Long Chen suddenly looked at him and asked a little coldly, "Senior Beitang, I heard that Beitang Mo intends to wed Lingqing, and has already sent the dowry to my family?"

Although Beitang Ming and Beitang Mo didn't think it was anything major, the question made Yang Lingqing shudder. She looked at Long Chen in a panic, as if a painful problem of hers had suddenly been exposed.

“Haha, Long Chen, I was just about to tell you about that. My son and Qing'er are interested in each other, and they agreed to wed last night. We'll be holding a grand wedding ceremony on the seventh day of next month!”

As he spoke, he looked at Yang Lingqing pointedly. “Qing'er, how could you forget to tell your cousin? You can't just tell your family at home.”

“I... I forgot ...” She was panicking internally, especially after seeing Long Chen's eyes turn colder.

That was when, much to everyone's shock, except Dongfang Xuanxiao, Long Chen slammed the side table so hard that it broke. Then he shot up and glared at Beitang Ming coldly.

“Long Chen, what are you doing?” Beitang Mo asked coldly with a frown.

He wasn't targeting Beitang Mo, but Beitang Ming. To Beitang Ming's surprise, Long Chen exclaimed sternly, “Interested? Is this what you call interested? Senior Beitang, by ‘interested,’ do you mean using your power and status to bully my cousin into marrying your son?”

Long Chen's sudden move was very out-of-the-norm, so Beitang Ming and Beitang Mo were too shocked to react. Yang Lingqing was stunned. The longer she stayed in the inner family, the more she learned about their power. Long Chen's behavior was undeniably the same as digging his own grave!

“Nonsense!” Beitang Ming's glare darkened. He looked at Dongfang Xuanxiao immediately. If it wasn't for Dongfang Xuanxiao, Long Chen would be an ant he could kill with just one slap, an ant who had no right to yell at him.

But when he saw Dongfang Xuanxiao's neutral expression, and how he was still drinking his tea with his head lowered, he knew that this was all silently permitted by Dongfang Xuanxiao! *Is there a problem with Xuanxiao's brain? How could he let me get embarrassed like this? This is infuriating!* Fury slowly crept through Beitang Ming!

From his perspective, a brat questioning him like this in the great hall was a great humiliation, and the fact that Dongfang Xuanxiao silently allowed this ... Beitang Ming glared at Long Chen, killing intent evident in his eyes!

“Why do you say it's nonsense? Lingqing, come here!” Long Chen showed no intention of backing down, still staring coldly at Beitang Ming.

Yang Lingqing's brain had gone blank. All she knew was that Long Chen's behavior was too shocking. When he called her name, she went towards him subconsciously!

“Lingqing, what are you doing?” asked Beitang Mo in a cold voice, startling her into halting.

“Trust me. Come here, and I guarantee you will be safe.” When she was faced with this extreme dilemma, Long Chen looked at her solemnly, saying the words that made her feel safe.

He had saved her a few times before, so she had formed a blind trust in him. That was why she gritted her teeth and, under Beitang Mo's cold glare, stood next to Long Chen!

"Brother ... What do I do?" Hot tears welled up in her eyes.

"I have confidence. Don't underestimate me; just do as I say. It'll be fine." He reached out and wrapped his arms around her shoulders, only to realize that she had gotten thinner. She was a weak girl entering a stressful place like the Lingwu family; how could she not lose weight?

An older brother would never let anyone bully their younger sister! Long Chen should have realized earlier that Lingqing was suffering here, but he had been kept away by other matters since entering the inner family, and couldn't come to her care immediately. He knew in his heart that this was his mistake.

"Mhm ..." Yang Lingqing nodded tearfully. If it wasn't for the fact that Long Chen had her trust and she was confident in him, she wouldn't have stood with him at such a critical moment. This was a wild decision to make!

"Qing'er, what are you doing? Have you forgotten what I've said to you?" There was killing intent in Beitang Ming's voice as he spoke darkly.

"Don't try to intimidate my cousin! Senior Beitang, haven't you heard the saying, 'The melon that was forcefully plucked will not be sweet?' Lingqing is unwilling, and putting the fact that you didn't care for her well as her stepfather aside, what right do you have to force her into marrying your son?" Long Chen confronted Beitang Ming directly without backing down.

In reality, the Lingwu family had long made a habit of forcing outsiders who entered the inner family to marry their youth, but Long Chen refused to believe that he was restricted to tradition! Would that mean he would be left with no choice but to marry a Dongfang girl? He would be against this arrangement.

Beitang Ming was completely embarrassed to be questioned by Long Chen like this. No longer able to suppress his anger, powerful Qi erupted from him, and he glared at Dongfang Xuanxiao and exclaimed, "Dongfang Xuanxiao, what is the meaning of this?! Just speak directly to me! If you don't like me, don't use a junior to start trouble with me! Say it to my face, if you have the guts!"

Chapter 200 - Yin Poison Strike

Beitang Ming had lost face when a junior like Long Chen yelled at him. If it wasn't for Dongfang Xuanxiao sitting there, he would've killed Long Chen already.

"What Long Chen wants is what I want. Brother Ming, you grew up with me. I think you know me well too. If the girl is unwilling, why force her?"

Dongfang Xuanxiao was calm in the face of Beitang Ming's anger.

He put his teacup on the table, then he looked at Beitang Ming mildly, though there was a hard determination in his eyes.

Long Chen was privately grateful to Dongfang Xuanxiao. "Senior Beitang, what I said before was over the line, but I am just acting for the good of my cousin. I hope you can forgive me. But I don't want my cousin to relent just because she was pressured. Even if you guys get her in the end, I think Brother Beitang Mo over here won't be willing to accept her too, right?"

Long Chen understood where to stop. He had acted arrogantly to grab their attention, and now he softened his tone, so it was more palatable to Beitang Ming.

Beitang Mo forcing Yang Lingqing to marry him was a very ungentlemanly act, and Long Chen had laid it all bare. Beitang Mo saw himself as a gentleman, and although he knew that Long Chen was trying to provoke him, he couldn't stop himself from turning red in anger and embarrassment.

"Isn't it too late for you to realize that you've stepped over the line? Long Chen, you have made terrible accusations to humiliate me, and as the head of the Northern Black Tortoise, how will I live if this gets out?" Beitang Ming could tell that Dongfang Xuanxiao was giving Long Chen free rein to make accusations.

"You may do whatever you want, Senior Beitang, but I don't think Lingqing's engagement has spread to the other people. As long as you cancel the wedding right now, I will be willing to kowtow a few times to you!"

Long Chen pulled Yang Lingqing behind him, holding her shaking hand tightly. He could feel that her palm was sweating.

The past Long Chen would never have kowtowed to another person, but now he was willing to do anything in order to help Lingqing survive this.

Although Dongfang Xuanxiao could help him, Long Chen knew that it was not so simple.

Dongfang Xuanxiao and Beitang Ming were major figures in the Lingwu family, and they still worked under the four patriarchs. They couldn't get into a conflict so easily. All Dongfang Xuanxiao could do was guarantee that Long Chen would be safe, but Long Chen still had to rely on his wits to help Lingqing.

"Don't do it!" Yang Lingqing's voice was hoarse. She knew how arrogant he was, and getting him to kowtow was harder than flying. But today, he was willing to do it for her without hesitation.

Yang Lingqing was glad she had an elder brother like him.

Dongfang Xuanxiao took another glance at Long Chen, then he nodded. The teenager's attitude proved that he hadn't wasted his time helping him regardless of the consequences.

"Kowtow?" Beitang Ming chuckled coldly. "You were disrespectful, and you think kowtowing can solve the problem? If you want your wish granted, Long Chen, you must withstand a strike from me. If you survive, I'll let you go! And your cousin's matter will be open to discussion!"

“One strike?” Long Chen’s brows were knitted. He knew that one strike from Beitang Ming was enough to kill him instantly. That meant he wanted Long Chen’s life in exchange for it.

“Beitang Ming.” When Dongfang Xuanxiao heard the request, he stood up and walked over to Long Chen, saying, “Don’t make such an unreasonable request. I’ll say it how it is: Long Chen is my stepson. As for today’s matter, I will help him to the end. You know me well, and I will stop this marriage even if I have to face pressure from the four patriarchs. Why not just take a step back for a compromise, and we’ll all live well?”

Beitang Ming knew that Dongfang Xuanxiao had always been a rebel, and he had achieved the impossible several times. He’d always been able to do anything he set out to do. Based on his personality, it was very much possible that he’d mess up the Northern Black Tortoise family over Yang Lingqing’s matter!

A huge wave of anger surged through Beitang Mo. He glared coldly at Long Chen, killing intent radiating from him. He thought this marriage was finally going to happen, yet an obstacle had appeared unexpectedly. This brat had trampled all over his name!

But Beitang Mo was already past twenty, so he understood that he had to suppress his anger. He had heard of Dongfang Xuanxiao, and he was indeed powerful. He pulled at Beitang Ming’s arm and said gently, “Father, let me deal with this. As for the reason, I’ll tell you later!”

Beitang Ming froze when he saw how confident his son was. Knowing his son’s personality, he chose to trust him. Beitang Mo took a few steps forward, eyes on Long Chen, and said, “There are no outsiders here, so I am alright with saying this directly. I can agree to calling off the wedding, but on one condition.”

“What is it? Tell me,” said Long Chen mildly, looking at this young man he once admired.

“Simple. You take one strike from me, and you’re not allowed to fight back. If you survive, I will not mention the marriage again!” said Beitang Mo.

“You were the one who said it!” Long Chen knew that he was at the mid Heavenly Core Realm, which was countless times stronger than himself. But at least he was weaker than Beitang Ming. Many people already knew of their plan to let Beitang Mo wed Yang Lingqing, so asking them to stop all of a sudden would result in a huge blow to their reputation.

Long Chen knew that the father and son duo would not stop without him paying a price that was high enough! “You can’t do this!” Yang Lingqing was horrified when Long Chen agreed without hesitation. She knew their cultivation levels, and letting Long Chen withstand a hit from Beitang Mo was like hitting an egg with a rock. He’d shatter to pieces!

“Lingqing, this is none of your business.” Yang Lingqing was only at the initial Human Core Realm, so how would she resist Long Chen? Therefore, she was pushed back to Dongfang Xuanxiao’s side. Long Chen knew that he’d help hold Yang Lingqing back.

As expected, Dongfang Xuanxiao reached out and grabbed her tightly. She was fearfully pale, struggling as hard as she could, but she could not move. “Big Brother, don’t do it! I don’t want you to die! I am willing to marry him! Isn’t that enough?!” Hot tears flowed from her eyes. Her heart was broken when she saw how willing he was to risk his life for her. The figure standing in front of herself suddenly looked so dignified!

“Lord Xuanxiao! You can’t let him get killed, he’s your stepson! Are you going to let him die like that?” When she noticed Xuanxiao, she begged tearfully, as if she had found the piece of straw that would save his life.

Dongfang Xuanxiao took a deep breath. He was also torn internally. Finally, he ignored her tears, gritted his teeth and asked Long Chen, “Kid, are you confident?”

“Yes!” Long Chen answered without hesitation.

“Remember, you owe me a lot. I’m still waiting for you to repay me,” said Dongfang Xuanxiao.

“I remember.” Long Chen forced a smile, then he looked at her. “Don’t you know that you look so ugly when you cry? Be a good girl and don’t cry. Watch me perform a miracle.”

Yang Lingqing’s eyes were filled with tears, crying so hard that she couldn’t speak. Infinite regret filled her heart. She regretted going to see Long Chen yesterday, causing him to sniff her out. She regretted unconsciously walking to Long Chen’s side just now, proving that she was unwilling to marry Beitang Mo.

She was the one to blame for her cousin’s death.

“Miracle? Enough of that nonsense. If you agree, then let’s begin! I’m so touched by the sibling love you two share,” said Beitang Mo with a chuckle.

“Do it.” Before Yang Lingqing’s broken-hearted gaze, Long Chen walked to the center of the hall and stood tall in front of the number one prodigy of the Northern Black Tortoise family without even furrowing his brows!

As he walked, he activated his Dragon Soul Transformation. The blood-red armor of scales covered his whole body.

“Beast Soul Transformation? What demonic beast is that?” Beitang Ming was puzzled. Since Long Chen was currently at the Divine Core Realm, he instinctively thought that it was a Black-tier beast soul. But there were no beasts similar to the Underground Blood Lizard in the Black tier, so he couldn’t figure it out. Nonetheless, it was all irrelevant to him killing Long Chen.

Long Chen had already prepared himself, so his Qi and Blazing Thunder Power were at their peak forms, and the power of lightning and fire encircled his body.

*Blazing Thunder Combat Body? It's too bad it's only Level Two. If it were in its Level Three complete form, my attack wouldn't even be able to hurt one hair on his body!* Beitang Mo was a knowledgeable person too.

Seeing as Long Chen was prepared, he chuckled coldly. Then, without hesitation, the Qi level of a mid Heavenly Core Realm cultivator erupted from his body. A cold, ink-green Yin aura radiated in all directions!

“Are you ready for death?” He smirked. As his Qi grew, he strode forward and then leaped, thrusting his palm out!

“Yin Poison Strike!”

A gust of Yin wind howled at Long Chen. Long Chen did not block the attack, letting his palm land squarely on his chest!

“Let's see if you can survive this!”

Long Chen was thrown back into the air, while Beitang Mo laughed.

“Big Brother!” Yang Lingqing screamed, her face even paler because she saw that when Long Chen flew backwards, he spat out black blood mid-air and his face was blackened!

She was a member of the Northern Black Tortoise family, so she knew the power of their martial techniques. The Yin Poison Strike targeted his insides and specifically destroyed the tendons, blood vessels, bones, and organs. It was difficult for someone like Long Chen to survive a strike. Even if he did, his meridians would break and clot, and his cultivation would regress!