

Y Master 1421

Chapter 1421: Sikong Family

Compared to the harsh and cold Northern Domain, the Southern Domain is absolutely considered a resource-rich region where people live relatively affluent lives.

As the central Holy City of the Southern Domain, Fire Spirit City is naturally extremely prosperous and luxurious.

And with the Southern Domain Genius Competition about to commence, giants from the Southern Domain, kings from the Northern Domain, and royalties from the Central Domain are all flocking to this renowned Holy City.

Many people have witnessed the fleeting appearances of giants who haven't been seen for centuries, fierce bandits, and legendary thieves.

Even before the competition has begun in earnest, Fire Spirit City has already become a focal point of dramatic events, showcasing the heightened attention the other Four Great Regions are paying to the Southern Domain Genius Competition.

The reason is simple: the unparalleled geniuses of the Southern Domain are bound to clash fiercely with their heirs in the near future. The road to becoming a Great Emperor is paved with bodies, and no one wants their heirs to become one of them.

Therefore, understanding the capabilities of the various geniuses from the Southern Domain has become a top priority. Not only have the two Saint Heirs from the Southern Domain and the strongest

heirs of the Wu Shang Sect arrived, but even the Saint Heirs and Princes from the Eastern Domain, Northern Domain, and even the Central Domain are here as well.

Everything about Fire Spirit City reeks of extravagance, as if all the resources of the Southern Domain have converged upon this one city.

The Qi Shi Restaurant, reputed as one of the Eight Top Restaurants of the Holy City, is entirely located in the clouds. Ordinary people don't even qualify to go up, let alone dine there.

Moreover, most of the ingredients in Qi Shi Restaurant are top-tier and absurdly expensive, so not just any cultivator can afford to dine there. A single meal can easily cost hundreds of Spirit Stones, which could bankrupt an average Loose Cultivator.

Qi Shi Restaurant resembles more of a palace than a restaurant. Although it's slightly smaller than the palace of Treasure Pavilion, it is absolutely not to be overlooked!

Perched above the clouds, a magnificent palace made of jade and crystal resembles a Heavenly Palace. Each brick and tile of the palace is carved from Jade stone, magnificent and breathtaking, exuding a mesmerizing glow under the sunlight, dreamlike and fantastical!

Jin Changgeng and Ye Fan ascended to the Qi Shi Restaurant, with a docile Bai Yan wolf sneaking along behind them, its large, brass-like eyes spinning around, unsure of what it was up to.

"Behave yourself, and stop plotting any mischief. If you get caught and turned into a meal, don't blame me!" Seeing the expression on the Bai Yan wolf, Ye Fan couldn't help but scold it sternly, half amused and half exasperated.

Jin Changgeng was aware that Ye Fan had raised a mystical White Wolf, which he had brought out of the Thunder Venerable master's tomb, so he had no objections to the wolf tagging along.

Misty clouds adorned the Qi Shi Restaurant, embellishing it like a fantastical Heavenly Palace. The intricately carved and painted architecture exuded a soft, sacred glow.

The two individuals and one wolf soared into the sky, stepping onto the white jade steps and ascending slowly. Looking back, the world below was obscured by clouds, as if they had truly ascended to the Thirty-Three Heavens.

"I ask the heavens, is there an Immortal?"

With a sense of emotion, Jin Changgeng, the Saint Heir of Treasure Pavilion, sighed deeply.

Hmm?

Ye Fan's heart stirred. Jin Changgeng's ambitions were not small; he absolutely harbored Great Emperor aspirations, otherwise he would not have expressed such a sentiment!

Throughout history, even Ancient Great Emperors had regrets, as no one truly knew if Immortals existed in this world. Even the Great Emperors were unsure, only speculating.

What constitutes an Immortal? If we simply judge by power, cultivators capable of flying to Heaven and escaping the Earth could be considered Immortals in the eyes of ordinary people. But what, then, is a true Immortal, something that would puzzle generations of Great Emperors?

Perhaps, only those who truly reach the status of a Great Emperor will understand. It's still too early to discuss such matters.

Ye Fan even considered that the so-called Immortal should be a new realm glimpsed by the Great Emperor at the pinnacle of his achievements, yet he was powerless to make further breakthroughs, leaving behind a great regret!

But this is just his speculation. Unless a Great Emperor is resurrected to tell him, this will forever remain a mystery!

The White Jade Avenue extended forward like a divine celestial bridge. Two individuals and a wolf strolled along it, surrounded by enchanting flowers and Yao grass, emanating an intoxicating fragrance.

A group of spiritually communicative Xuan Beasts frolicked and danced among the clouds, creating an atmosphere of complete harmony.

Amidst the towering palaces, eight nimble female cultivators dressed in colorful attire flew gracefully through the sky, reminiscent of the Dunhuang flying fairies, their postures graceful and ethereal.

The eight young women descended amidst the clouds, respectfully saluting them, then leading them forward, seemingly unsurprised by the pure white wolf the group had brought along.

Qi Shi Restaurant caters to so many guests, with all kinds of beings, including some powerful members of the Demon Clan, so a single white wolf doesn't surprise them at all.

Of course, as one of the Eight Top Restaurants, Qi Shi Restaurant generally requires reservations for entry, and even the Saint of each Holy Land is no exception.

The reason is simple: the ingredients at Qi Shi Restaurant are always fresh, and the higher the standard of the banquet, the more it needs to be booked in advance. Otherwise, they can't procure those rare ingredients in a short period.

Although Jin Changgeng is the Saint Heir of Treasure Pavilion, he wasn't looking to book a banquet of too high a standard, so booking half a day in advance was sufficient.

"This way, esteemed guests!"

The eight young women, despite being strong cultivators, conservatively estimated to be at the Mid-stage Saint Embryo Realm, were only there to guide guests and serve drinks and dishes, exemplifying the high standards of Qi Shi Restaurant.

Beyond a winding corridor, an incredibly spacious area unfolded, divided into four major zones, each with its own distinct scenery.

There were plum blossoms blooming in the midst of falling snow, green bamboo standing proudly against the frost, fragrant orchids that refreshed the mind, and golden chrysanthemums scattered like abundant gold.

“What is this...”

Ye Fan was quite amazed to see such an extraordinary scene within a palace, reflecting the grand scale of Qi Shi Restaurant!

This wasn't a man-made arrangement; it was a natural scene, epitomizing all four seasons in a compact space, drawing admiration.

“Qi Shi Restaurant is an enterprise of the Sikong Family from the Eastern Domain. Their deep understanding of spatial manipulation results in such extraordinary spectacles!” Jin Changgeng explained to Ye Fan, being well-versed in the affairs of every clan across the Tianxuan Continent as the Saint Heir of Treasure Pavilion.

Because the influence of Treasure Pavilion spans the entire Tianxuan Continent, no movement escapes their attention. They naturally pay extra attention to the powerful clans and Holy Lands, and the Wu Shang Sect.

“Please, esteemed guests, select a scenic area!”

The eight young women bowed in unison and spoke in harmony.

All four scenic areas, Plum, Orchid, Chrysanthemum, Bamboo, were very elegant, and Ye Fan found it difficult to choose at the moment. After some contemplation, he decided on the Han Mei District.

The reason was simple: with the generally high temperature in the Southern Domain, Ye Fan hadn't seen genuine snow since he arrived in this world. He wanted to indulge in a little nostalgia.

Of course, Jin Changgeng had no objections, and under the guidance of the eight young women, the two and one wolf entered the Han Mei District.

Upon entering this area, Ye Fan immediately felt a refreshing chill against his face, invigorating him!

Suddenly, he found himself in a winter wonderland of heavy snowfall, snowflakes dancing as the entire area was covered in pure white. Standing before the palace, all he could see was the white, blanketed landscape.

An old plum tree stood resolute amidst the snow, its blossoms burning like flames, ruby red against the winter, releasing a faint but enduring fragrance in the cold wind!

"Several branches of plum bloom alone in the cold corner, known not by the snow, but by the fragrance that comes!"

Touched by inspiration, Ye Fan couldn't help but utter.

“Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant! This poem is not only apt but high in artistic conception. I didn’t expect Brother Ye, not only with impressive strength, but also possessed of such literary talent, which is truly rare!” Jin Changgeng praised, clapping his hands.

“What kind of monster is this boy?”

The Bai Yan wolf’s eyes gleamed, muttering quietly.

It found itself increasingly unable to discern Ye Fan’s nature.

Even the eight young women couldn’t help but look at Ye Fan with newfound respect. These lines, full of profound meaning, blended perfectly with the scenery of the Mei District. If these timeless verses could be preserved, they would undoubtedly add considerable prestige to Qi Shi Restaurant.

“What an apt phrase, ‘blooming alone in the cold;’ you, my brother, must be the renowned Ye Fan from the Southern Domain?”

At that moment, a hearty voice emerged from within the palace, and an elegantly dressed young man stepped out, smiling as he addressed Ye Fan.

“I am Ye Fan, but I’m truly unworthy of being called renowned in the Southern Domain!”

Ye Fan sized up the young man before him, with his exquisite attire and piercing yet warm golden eyes; his features were sharply defined, exuding heroism.

“This person is the most outstanding heir of the Sikong Family, Sikong Po, no less formidable than I. Especially Sikong Zhan, very powerful, with few peers in the same generation!”

As Sikong Po approached Ye Fan, Jin Changgeng quickly introduced Sikong Po to Ye Fan through divine consciousness Transmission.

“So, the Young Master of Qi Shi Restaurant—no wonder he appears here. Jin Changgeng said he wanted to introduce a few people to me, could he be one of them?”

Ye Fan pondered inwardly.

Chapter 1422: If You Think You Can, Then Step Up!

“Brother Ye, I’m Sikong Po, considered a half-owner here. Your poem just now has profound meaning and perfectly matches the scenery of Han Mei District, so I intend to keep this poem here. How about it, Brother Ye?”

Sikong Po was delighted at heart. The poem would certainly add luster to Han Mei District, so he wished to keep the poem.

“A rough work indeed, not worthy of a refined place. But since Brother Sikong likes it, let’s keep it!”

Ye Fan secretly mused, it's a timeless masterpiece from Wang Anshi, a prime minister of the Song dynasty, and naturally so.

"That would be wonderful. Please, Brother Ye, bestow us with the inky treasure!" Sikong Po glanced around, and immediately a young female cultivator brought over the four treasures of study for Ye Fan to wield.

"Well... all right, let me give it a try then!"

Ye Fan pondered for a moment. Calligraphy primarily tests one's foundational skills, yet Ye Fan was coerced by Chu Xuanji into practicing calligraphy for several years in his youth to cultivate his nature and lay the groundwork for future cultivation.

So, Ye Fan's handwriting may not surpass Yan Liu's, but it was certainly passable, not too shameful.

Moreover, the characters of this world had many similarities with the ancient characters of Huaxia, making them not difficult to write.

Witnessing Ye Fan's agreement, Jin Changgeng was momentarily stunned. It's known that martial arts practitioners cultivate their temperament, yet calligraphy cannot be mastered overnight, but Ye Fan agreed nonetheless.

Ye Fan took the scroll, waved it into the air, stabilizing it with his holy power, then imbued the wolf-hair brush, focusing slightly, and immersing himself wholly into a Tao realm.

The brush danced like dragons and snakes, penned with a suspended wrist, fluid yet swift!

At this moment, Ye Fan seemed possessed by a calligraphy saint, the script spirited yet substantive, weighty as mountains.

Time seemed to halt momentarily; nobody, whether Bai Yan wolf, Jin Changgeng, Sikong Po, or the eight young female cultivators, could avert their gaze from Ye Fan's movements.

"As graceful as a startled swan, as nimble as a swimming dragon; indeed!"

Sikong Po fervently praised, such a dramatic, majestic, and ethereal fusion in calligraphy was truly a once-in-a-lifetime sight.

"Heavier than mountains, lighter than feathers, Brother Ye astonishes indeed; not only is your literary talent exceptional, your handwriting is unsurpassed."

Jin Changgeng shook his head and said, "Brother Ye, just with these abilities, even if you weren't a cultivator, you could undoubtedly make a name in the Southern Domain!"

Sikong Po agreed, deeply resonating with Jin Changgeng's words. Ye Fan, time and again, overcame the strong with the weak, defeated enemies across realms, and was unrivaled in both poetry and calligraphy. Such talent, even across the Southern Domain, might be scarce among the Five Great Domains.

“Who could definitely make a name in the Southern Domain?”

As the three were conversing, a voice arrived from outside, followed by several graceful young individuals walking over.

Among these people, Ye Fan immediately recognized the Ancient Saint and Tianxuan Saint. Although unfamiliar with the others, anyone accompanying them naturally wasn't ordinary.

“You finally arrived; I thought you might not come due to last-minute engagements.”

Jin Changgeng smiled, approached, and led the group into a small pavilion.

By then, the food and drink were fully served. After introducing Ye Fan to the crowd, Jin Changgeng began toasting and swapping drinks, enjoying the snow and plum appreciation, imparting unique sentiments.

A few drinks later, as topics burgeoned due to Ye Fan's activities in the Southern Domain, these individuals weren't strangers to him, tacitly acknowledging his equal standing.

Sikong Po ordered Ye Fan's inscribed poem to be brought out for appreciation and critique by everyone, then intended to preserve it. As for the poem, he planned to have expert craftsmen engrave it in prominent positions to highlight the scenic spots.

“Brother Ye, with such talent, why not showcase a few more skills for us to witness? How about it?” asked a burly, long black-haired young man looking at Ye Fan.

He was He Yunqi, Saint of Tianhe Sect of Bazhou. Last time, due to being in seclusion, he missed the opportunity to meet Ye Fan during the competition for fortunes.

In his view, Ye Fan merely had good luck, happened to cultivate the Thunderclap Treasure Skill’s introduction, thus obtaining the legacy; regarding strength, he didn’t think much of it.

Then, his suggestion undoubtedly was to see Ye Fan falter, also to scrutinize his true literary depth.

Understand that martial artists devote their lifetime to cultivation and martial enlightenment, often without significant achievements. Should Ye Fan indeed possess profound literary accomplishments, it inevitably would occupy vast amounts of his cultivation time, making his strength less daunting.

Others hadn’t contemplated so deeply, especially Sikong Po, whose eyes beamed with interest.

Ye Fan’s literary talent was outstanding, with considerable fame in the Southern Domain. If he could compose more poems for other scenic spots, it would undeniably elevate the Qi Shi Restaurant’s notoriety.

“Such a suggestion is excellent; what say you, Brother Ye?”

Sikong Po was full of expectation, as the young master of Qi Shi Restaurant, future heir of the Sikong Family, he naturally endeavored to facilitate this.

Before Ye Fan could respond, Sikong Po continued, “Rest assured, Brother Ye, it’s not for free. If my Sikong Family owes you a favor, at your need, we will definitely assist!”

This was an offer hard to refuse!

Though the Sikong Family resided in the Eastern Domain, they undoubtedly rivaled major holy lands; their promise was immensely valuable.

With this promise, Ye Fan essentially has an amulet—who would be foolish enough to offend a massive clan comparable to a Holy Land?

“This...”

Ye Fan hesitated, truly uncertain what the result would be of getting entangled with the Sikong family.

“What? Have you exhausted your talents?” He Yunqi said with a faint, cold smile.

If it weren't for Jin Changgeng and the prince from the Jueluo Empire present, along with Sikong Po having a favorable impression of Ye Fan, he wouldn't even allow Ye Fan to sit at the same table, seeing it as an insult to himself.

"Writing poetry isn't like sparring; it's not that easy. It's nothing if you can't compose one; it's not embarrassing!"

The speaker was a young man in blue named Lin Qingfeng, also from Bazhou, and a Saint Heir of the Tianqi Sect.

On the surface, he seemed to be speaking up for Ye Fan, but it was actually a veiled jab at Ye Fan's inability to create anything, saying he'd just embarrass himself.

Ye Fan calmly glanced at the two, noticing they both had late-stage Divine Realm cultivation, showing signs of breaking through to the Peak of Holy Embryo Realm.

"What are you saying?"

Jin Changgeng suddenly stood up, coldly glaring at the two, with a faint killing intent already rising.

"Jin Changgeng, what's this? The competition hasn't even started, and you already want to have a bout with us?" He Yunqi also stood up, unleashing a terrifying aura.

“To deal with you two, do I even need the word ‘bout’? I could suppress you with just one hand!” Jin Changgeng said forcefully.

“Gentlemen, this is my Sikong Family’s Qi Shi Restaurant, not a battlefield. Give me some face and don’t make a move.” Sikong Po also stood up, stepping between the three, separating their energies.

“Humph!” Jin Changgeng snorted coldly, saying, “Inviting you was to save you face, so don’t be ungrateful!”

“We came here to give the Treasure Pavilion face; otherwise, you couldn’t have invited us.” He Yunqi was unyielding, challenging his words.

“Very well, then we’ll meet on the competition grounds!” Jin Changgeng suddenly calmed down, giving the two a pitiful look.

Just that look sent a chill down He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng’s spines!

That gaze seemed as though they were viewing a dying man, leaving them extremely annoyed.

However, within the Sikong Family’s Qi Shi Restaurant, they truly didn’t dare cause trouble, lest even their sects couldn’t protect them.

Even among Saint Heirs, there are differing levels. To the Sikong Family, the Tianqi Sect and the Tianhe Sect are merely second-rate sects, far from Wu Shang Sect. Their so-called Saint Heirs are just an empty title, incomparable to the Saint Heirs of Holy Lands.

To put it bluntly, it was just self-aggrandizement!

“Everyone, this started because of me. If I had agreed readily, there wouldn’t have been any misunderstandings.”

Ye Fan gave everyone a glance, then said to Sikong Po, “Let’s go, let’s explore other areas!”

“Are you sure?”

Sikong Po was secretly delighted, glaring fiercely at He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng, then stood up and led the group toward the neighboring Hui Zhi Lanxin District.

Once out of the Han Mei District, the cold wind ceased. After a few more steps, they reached the Hui Zhi Lanxin District, which was, in fact, a scenic area filled with orchids.

It’s a sea of flowers, a world of orchids, with various orchids competing in beauty, exuding intoxicating fragrances, colorful and breathtaking.

“You’ve come, so why not write something?”

“Playing with words is the realm of petty scholars. We are cultivators—such pedantry is beneath us. The vast world is our stage!”

He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng bantered, their words dripping with sarcasm as they continually attacked and mocked Ye Fan.

To such comments, Ye Fan acted as though he hadn’t heard anything, not bothering to react. If this were a competition ground, he would have long punched them away with the Xuandi Fist, saving himself the annoyance.

“If you can do it, go ahead and show us. If not, then shut up!”

Bai Yan wolf retorted bluntly, leaving the two red-faced.

Chapter 1423: When My Flowers Bloom, All Others Wither

“Hehe...”

The Jueluo Empire Prince chuckled softly. This Bai Yan wolf was quite sharp-tongued, but he liked it, since Ye Fan, like him, was also from Xuanwu State.

“Pfft...”

Jin Changgeng was even more exaggerated, spurting out a mouthful of tea and nearly laughing until he couldn't breathe.

He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng were so angry their faces turned as red as pig liver, but they couldn't engage in a quarrel with a wolf and had to swallow this loss quietly.

"Hmph, let's see who's embarrassed when you can't do it!"

Lin Qingfeng at this moment also tore off his mask, speaking coldly.

Upon hearing this, the crowd turned their eyes to Ye Fan. A good poem isn't easy to create, sometimes relying solely on a flash of inspiration.

"How do you know I can't?" Ye Fan glanced at the two, looking confident and composed.

"Well, then show us what you've got,"

He Yunqi sneered, not believing that Ye Fan could come up with anything good in a short time, thinking he would likely be perfunctory.

However, even if Ye Fan were to be perfunctory, they wouldn't be able to detect it. No matter how good the poem is, they wouldn't appreciate it, like cattle chewing peonies.

"Smell the fragrance and delight in knowing the orchid's elegance!"

Ye Fan stepped forward, and the first line flowed lightly from his lips, brightening the eyes of Jin Changgeng and Sikong Po. This opening line was undoubtedly a brilliant one through the ages. The only question was what followed.

The Jueluo Prince's eyes sparkled with unusual brilliance. Being a prince, he had a broad education, including martial arts cultivation and governance classics, as well as an understanding of poetry and songs. He immediately understood the brilliance of the line.

At the same time, the Jueluo Prince was puzzled, as he had previously sent someone to investigate Ye Fan's background, only to find he came from a closed-off small village. How could he have such literary talent?

"Could there have been a hidden master in that small village?"

The Jueluo Empire Prince slightly shook his head, finding this possibility too low to be worth considering, definitely not so coincidental.

He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng rolled their eyes. They couldn't see the beauty of this line, but regardless, Ye Fan had produced a line that left them feeling grim.

Of course, no one bothered explaining to them either, while the eight young female cultivators had their eyes sparkling, looking at Ye Fan with a dazzled glow of admiration.

As maidens of the Qi Shi Restaurant, besides cultivation, they had to study poetry and songs too, so they quickly realized the excellence of Ye Fan's first line.

At this moment, Ye Fan took another step: "Pure and fresh, the charm flows!"

As soon as this line was spoken, those who understood poetry trembled, for in just two lines, many traits of the orchid were nearly touched upon, containing subtle beauty.

"These two lines alone are enough to be passed down through the ages. Brother Ye is truly a genius!"

Sikong Po sighed and shook his head; such lines were not only fitting but carried excellent ambiance.

"Two good lines don't make a whole poem good; let's wait until it's complete to judge its merit!"

Lin Qingfeng, oblivious to the mood, added, attracting sideways glances from everyone except He Yunqi.

"Am I wrong?" Lin Qingfeng was smug, not at all feeling he misspoke.

“Ah! Summer insects cannot discuss ice...”

The Jueluo Prince felt sitting with such people was beneath him, as they understood nothing.

“Worthy in painting or song, suits both spring and autumn alike!”

At that moment, Ye Fan took two steps, spontaneously reciting the following lines, which together with the first two perfectly described the orchid, lacking the plum’s backbone but possessing a unique flavor.

This left He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng truly dumbfounded!

Though they didn’t comprehend poetry deeply, they knew Ye Fan’s four lines were absolute gems.

Having suffered their share of embarrassment, He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng finally grew wiser, falling silent, simply watching from behind with faces growing increasingly sullen.

Next, Ye Fan and his party arrived at the bamboo grove of Bamboo Garden, where a faint, pure smell invigorates the spirit, indeed a world unto itself, although different from the spaces created by the Supremes, Great Emperors, and Divine Race, the Sikong Family, adept in Space Law, showcased the grand in the small.

Here, Ye Fan composed another popular poem, silencing He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng completely.

Although they had little literary prowess, they could read the room well, observing Sikong Po, Jin Changgeng, and the Jueluo Prince's reactions to realize Ye Fan's poem was extraordinarily good.

After drinking and chatting leisurely in the bamboo grove, they reached the final scenic spot—Jin Qiu Garden!

The entire Jin Qiu Garden was like a golden ocean filled with blooming chrysanthemums, intoxicating scents wafting in the air, and a slightly higher temperature.

With autumn crisp and cool, golden chrysanthemums in full bloom, the environment in Jin Qiu Garden was distinctly different from other areas, making it feel like they had entered a golden realm.

Strolling among the sea of golden chrysanthemums, Ye Fan appeared as if he were just playing, showing no signs of composing a poem!

Seeing this, He Yunqi couldn't help but speak again: "Genius Ye, you already have three masterpieces; the final one can't be lesser, can it?"

"Indeed, this garden is an ocean of chrysanthemums; according to your usual style, shouldn't you compose about chrysanthemums?"

Lin Qingfeng chimed in. They seemed to have forgotten past humiliation; previously saying Ye Fan couldn't produce anything good, only to be proven wrong, now they did it again.

Sikong Po furrowed his brows, unable to react since this was his family's business. Reputation comes first, and he mustn't offend guests.

Jin Changgeng privately regretted inviting those two; had he known, he wouldn't have invited them, as they were just disrupting, once considering them potential friends, seeing now as unnecessary.

The Jueluo Prince cared even less for them, but with no grudge between them, it was hard to fall out over Ye Fan and the two Major Sect Saint Heirs.

However, Prince Jueluo had already made up his mind. If they meet in the competition, he must give him a ruthless beating!

At this moment, Ye Fan's mind was fiercely struggling, and he thought of two poems related to chrysanthemums. Both were very domineering, making it hard to choose!

Hearing their words, Ye Fan immediately smiled and said with a smile, "Since you all are so keen to know what kind of verses I will compose, I shall oblige you!"

"We are all ears!"

He Yunqi coldly smiled. Although he dared not underestimate Ye Fan's literary prowess anymore, surpassing the previous three poems with the final one seemed almost impossible, especially the first one, which was already perfect and hard to surpass.

Ye Fan also felt that the first poem about plum blossoms was indeed difficult to surpass in terms of artistic conception, but he had two trump cards, so he wasn't worried.

These two were composed by a leader of a rebel army, absolutely magnificent and well-suited for the cultivators of this world, absolutely earth-shattering.

Glancing at the two, Ye Fan smiled, exhibiting an air of confidence. The sight made the hearts of the eight young female cultivators flutter, as if there was a little rabbit nestled in their chests.

Sikong Po, Jin Changgeng, and Prince Jueluo also held their breaths, pricking their ears, fearing they might miss a word.

Bai Yan wolf curled its lip disdainfully. It didn't believe Ye Fan could produce anything good.

Unfortunately, they didn't know that in Huaxia, there were many excellent poems.

Chu Xuanji was also a typical eclectic, involved in all the schools of philosophy, the Five Elements, the Eight Trades, and the three religions and nine schools of thought, and Ye Fan had learned quite a bit.

“When autumn comes on the ninth of September!”

In full view, Ye Fan casually recited the first line, which was from the famous chrysanthemum ode of the great General Huang Chao!

The first line was ordinary, causing He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng to smile; it was too plain, lacking any artistic conception.

The eight young female cultivators were also taken aback. Ye Fan shouldn't be this substandard. This first line was nothing compared to the previous three poems, absolutely inferior.

“I am still on August ninth!”

Bai Yan wolf took the chance to strike, remembering the comment Ye Fan made last night and eager to retaliate whenever possible.

Ye Fan had the impulse to beat Bai Yan wolf again. It always undermined him!

“A good poem, indeed a good poem!”

Just as Sikong Po and Jin Changgeng were frowning, Lin Qingfeng suddenly came out with this line, making everyone stunned. Did he hear a hidden meaning?

Seeing his ambiguous expression, everyone immediately understood that this fellow was deliberately mocking Ye Fan, or else why would he say such a thing?

Facing Lin Qingfeng's sarcasm, Ye Fan was not angry. He calmly began the second verse: "After my flowers bloom, all other flowers die!"

With this line, Ye Fan employed his acoustic skill, his voice resounding like a thundering explosion above the Qi Shi Restaurant, echoing like a dragon's roar!

He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng were caught off guard, their ears ringing, blood surging, forcing them to take three steps back. When they looked at Ye Fan again, their eyes were filled with inexplicable fear.

These seven words were incredibly domineering. After my flowers bloom, all other flowers die – what a formidable aura, unparalleled in the world. Cultivators need such an invincible stance.

These seven words alone raised the artistic level of the entire poem far beyond that of the previous plum blossom poem, and it perfectly fits cultivators!

Sikong Po's eyes glinted with a wolf-like green light. With just this line, the style of Ye Fan's poem was bound to be extraordinary. This time, it seemed he had found a treasure.

This kind of person must be befriended, for they might bring unforeseen benefits to his family in the future!

“The fragrance pierces through the Immortal Mansion!”

Ye Fan stepped forward, approaching He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng, startling them to retreat a few steps.

At this moment, Ye Fan seemed to possess an inexplicable aura. Although he emitted no terrifying energy, both were still forced to step back simultaneously.

“Is this... Wen Qi?”

Sikong Po suddenly thought of an almost mythical legend, looking at Ye Fan with a face full of astonishment.

“The city is filled with golden armor!”

With that phrase, Ye Fan’s four-line poem was fully recited, and the aura reached its peak, like an ancient Saint!

“This... how is this possible?!”

He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng were dumbfounded. They never expected Ye Fan's final poem to be so grand and magnificent.

Although excellent poetry cannot compensate for a gap in strength, Ye Fan seemed to possess something inexplicable, not Holy Power, but equally strong, captivating the consciousness.

"After my flowers bloom, all other flowers die! It really is the legendary Wen Qi!!!"

Sikong Po's heart surged with emotion, never expecting to witness such a peculiar thing reappear in the world within his lifetime.

Chapter 1424: Unafraid of Battle

If it weren't for the aura emanating from Ye Fan that so closely resembles Wen Qi, Sikong Po wouldn't have dared to confirm this as the legendary, elusive Wen Qi!

"What is Wen Qi?"

Not only Ye Fan didn't know, but even Jin Changgeng, the Saint Heir of Treasure Pavilion, was somewhat puzzled, not understanding what Sikong Po was talking about.

"Wen Qi is an extremely special power, fundamentally different from Holy Power and Divine Power, but equally strong!"

No one expected that the one who would finally solve the mystery for everyone would be the eccentric Bai Yan wolf.

Thinking about it, it's actually not surprising. The Bai Yan wolf lived in the late period of the Thunder Venerable master's era, much earlier than now, so he might really know something.

With Bai Yan wolf's narration, a secret long buried in the mists of history surfaced...

In the era before Ancient Times, human cultivators and the Demon Clan lived together on this land, showcasing a prosperous era of cultural prosperity, where various secret techniques and martial arts emerged endlessly, and Heavenly Technique Treasure Books were created one after another.

Among them, was a Heavenly Technique Treasure Book created by ordinary scholars who could not cultivate, named Wen Qi Treasure Book, which did not cultivate martial arts or condense Holy Embryo, yet possessed combat power comparable to the Lord Realm Peak, even reaching the combat power of the Supreme Realm.

Unfortunately, later this World-Shaking Scripture vanished in the dark turmoil, with not even its legacy left behind.

Wen Qi, this Heavenly Technique Treasure Book that allowed scholars with no combat ability to wreak havoc during Ancient Times, completely disappeared into the mists of history.

Unexpectedly today, Ye Fan inadvertently unleashed Wen Qi. Could it be that the Heavenly Technique Treasure Book from Ancient Times is again reappearing in the world?

“Impossible, that kind of technique can only be cultivated by those without any cultivation. Ye already is at the Mid-stage Saint Embryo Realm, it’s absolutely impossible for him to cultivate that technique at the same time, and he definitely doesn’t have it.”

Bai Yan wolf shook his head, saying with certainty: “That Heavenly Technique Treasure Book long vanished; it’s said to be destroyed in the dark turmoil wars, impossible to reappear in the world!”

After hearing Bai Yan wolf’s words, Ye Fan was silent, secretly recalling the previous situation, trying to understand what Wen Qi really is.

Meanwhile, He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng were quite hit—Ye Fan obviously had lower cultivation than them, yet had Wen Qi enhancing him.

“How... how can he have Wen Qi enhancing him?” He Yunqi couldn’t help but whisper in frustration.

“Didn’t you say I couldn’t create?”

Upon hearing this, Ye Fan coldly glanced at He Yunqi and Lin Qingfeng, then said: “The previous one was composed for this Jin Qiu Garden. Now I will compose another!”

As his words fell, Ye Fan strolled among the chrysanthemums in the garden, coincidentally with the west wind blowing by, causing the chrysanthemums to sway with the wind, releasing a subtle fragrance!

As Ye Fan walked, he tried to relive the feeling of Wen Qi enhancing him earlier, unknowingly his aura began to rise, a powerful aura radiating outward centered on him, nearly destroying all the chrysanthemums in the garden.

“Brother Ye, watch out, don’t destroy this garden!”

Sikong Po reminded, as he waved his hand to release a field of Holy Light to resist Ye Fan’s aura!

“Sorry!”

Ye Fan smiled awkwardly, slowly ascending into the sky, the white clouds in the sky forming a backdrop, making him appear like a True Immortal descending upon the world.

“The rustling west wind fills the garden, with cores cold and fragrance cool, butterflies find it hard to come. In future years, if I become the Qing Emperor, I will cause peach blossoms to bloom together.”

Ye Fan’s voice roared like thunder in everyone’s sea of consciousness, this aura stronger than earlier. As he spoke, an invisible and formless aura instantly rushed into He Yunqi’s sea of consciousness.

Boom!

He Yunqi was struck as if by lightning, his mind went blank, spitting out a mouthful of blood, falling backward into the flowers, his face turning pale like golden paper, his breath thin like a thread!

“This...”

Everyone was shocked; it was merely a poem, how could it be like this? Ye Fan couldn't possibly possess Wen Qi's killing power, how did He Yunqi get injured?

“This kid is really narrow-minded; he couldn't stand seeing Ye Fan create a good poem and got so angry that he made himself spit blood, it's unprecedented!”

Bai Yan wolf said ironically, pointing out that He Yunqi's cause of spitting blood was entirely due to his own temper, making himself so angry that he spat blood.

Sikong Po suddenly understood, immediately calling for people to heal He Yunqi—if He Yunqi were to die here, Qi Shi Restaurant would definitely be implicated.

After some rescue efforts, He Yunqi finally recovered, though it's impossible for him to act for a while. In this competition, he might have to withdraw early.

Sikong Po ordered Ye Fan's three poems including the previous ode on plum blossoms to be collected, commanding skilled craftsmen to engrave them in the four gardens, becoming the landmark of the four gardens.

As for the last poem, although Sikong Po liked it as well, he chose the Poet's Ode on Battle after my Flowers Bloom as a more domineering choice.

Due to this incident, even the Ancient Saint and Tianxuan Saint began to view Ye Fan in a new light, as everyone returned to Han Mei District, the atmosphere immediately became much livelier.

To thank Ye Fan for composing poems for the four scenic areas, Sikong Po specially brought out some dishes that usually only appear in holy feasts, everyone eating to their heart's content!

Lin Qingfeng stayed in the elegant room of Jin Qiu Garden to take care of He Yunqi, no longer uttering any discordant voices. Although after a few days everyone would fight for victory or even face life and death on the field, it didn't at all affect the present where everyone toasted each other, calling brothers.

This meal could be described as lavishly sumptuous, Bai Yan wolf openly occupied a place, drinking fine wine, eating delicious food, occasionally blurting out amazing words, making everyone laugh their stomachs out.

"This fellow, though a Xuan Beast, really suits my taste, Brother Ye Fan, how about a deal? Will you sell me this Bai Wolf?" Sikong Po very much liked Bai Yan wolf, proposed to buy him.

"Get lost, I'm not his. Actually, he's mine. If you want him, I might consider selling him to you!" Bai Yan wolf mumbled drunkenly, reaching out a paw to push Sikong Po away, intoxicatedly saying.

"This... this wolf is indeed refined!"

Sikong Po was stupefied, though knowing Bai Yan wolf was a Spirit Wolf raised by Thunder Venerable master in his late years, today he saw another side of him.

“Don’t mind it!” Ye Fan smiled bitterly.

The banquet lasted until around dusk when it finally came to an end. Eight young female cultivators cleaned up the aftermath and served a cup of fragrant tea to everyone, standing properly by the side.

“Sikong Po, I remember you have Kung Fu tea here, why not bring a pot for us to try?” The Ancient Saint Heir said to Sikong Po with a sideways glance.

“My family does have Kung Fu tea, but even for me, it’s hard to get a cup...” Sikong Po said, feeling frustrated.

“Stop pretending to be poor, who doesn’t know your Sikong Family has a Kung Fu tea tree? Aren’t those just leaves?” Jin Changgeng chimed in.

“I say, Old Jin, you shouldn’t be so unreasonable. Speaking of good tea leaves, your Treasure Pavilion’s Xian Yin Tea is better than our Kung Fu tea, why don’t you bring some for everyone to share?” Sikong Po retorted, rolling his eyes at Jin Changgeng.

“Uh...”

Jin Changgeng rubbed his nose and said, "Our Xian Yin Tea was commissioned for auction by others, we can't keep it for ourselves. Do you think I don't want to drink it?"

"Kung Fu tea, Xian Yin Tea, aside from the Saints of Holy Lands, the sect leaders of Wu Shang Sect, and the clan leaders of the Di Clan, who else is qualified to drink it?" Prince Jueluo sighed, "It's too rare!"

Through the conversation between the Saint Heirs, Ye Fan gradually understood these two top-grade teas that even they could only admire but never taste.

On the entire Tianxuan Continent, there's only one Xian Yin Tea tree, its age is unknown, seemingly eternal, a Spirit Root of the heavens and earth. It resembles a human, and just one cup of its mature tea leaves can lead to rebirth, its efficacy astonishing.

Kung Fu Tea is also a Spirit Root of the heavens and earth, said to grow in the central path of Jiguang Ci sea in the northern part of the Eastern Domain. Its yield is extremely scarce, and it's considered fortunate if the Sikong Family can manage to pluck thirty or forty leaves thanks to their understanding of space.

Drinking this tea greatly benefits cultivators in enlightenment and martial arts comprehension, even having a chance to induce sudden enlightenment.

Thus, these two teas are esteemed as the top of the top grades, comparable to Immortal Elixir, and are regarded as minor elixirs.

Such rare items, unless one has immense fortune, are beyond reach for people of their level, so Ye Fan can only dream about them.

Fortunately, the Bai Yan wolf drank too much and slid under the table. Otherwise, if it were awake, it would surely be relentless.

This guy never forgets any good things, always trying to get them whenever there's a chance with persistence.

While drinking tea, everyone talked a lot about the upcoming competition, giving Ye Fan a general understanding of it.

The format is almost the same in each domain, without any new elements. The most crucial part is that this competition is jointly hosted by the Imperial Academy and the Immortal Academy.

Both academies have attached great importance to this competition, with a powerful vice principal from each school personally overseeing the event.

Once they discover an outstanding participant, they will immediately register it, and then choose accordingly based on different talents.

Of course, there's always been fierce competition between the two academies, willing to spray each other with saliva to vie for a talented student.

In the following days, Jin Changgeng took Ye Fan, Shen Tu, and others to several tea parties and banquets, meeting many geniuses from other domains, all here to watch the competition.

The Southern Domain Talent Competition captivates the hearts of all cultivators, especially the younger generation, who pay close attention.

The Emperor Road contest has no friends, everyone is an enemy, or at least an opponent — only after defeating all rivals can one ascend and become the Great Emperor!

Young strong contenders from the Eastern, Northern, Western, and Central Domains have arrived. Some are the strongest descendants of ancient clans with long legacies, while others are the Saint Heirs of the Wu Shang Sect.

The Fire Spirit City in the Southern Domain has become a veritable Holy City, with prominent figures frequently appearing. Even before the competition starts, there's already a sense of an impending storm.

The vice principals of the two academies are busily preparing everything for the competition, coordinating with representatives from various states to discuss every rule and detail of the event.

Meanwhile, the family elders and state representatives are intensely studying strategies and tactics with their participating team members.

Though the competition hasn't started yet, the tension is palpable, with the disciples from the Six Great States holding their heads high and ignoring each other when they meet on the streets.

Though Xuanwu State has Jin Changgeng from the Treasure Pavilion and Prince Jueluo to oversee, compared to the geniuses from other states, they fall behind in both quality and quantity, being the least favored state!

However, this does not overshadow Ye Fan's fame in the entire Southern Domain.

Especially after Qing Zi arrived, discussions about Ye Fan skyrocketed.

"The scum with the surname Ye, this talent competition will be your death!"

Upon arriving at Fire Spirit City, Qing Zi directly issued a harsh statement, vowing to kill Ye Fan.

Qing Zi, heir to the first clan of Qing Province and hailed as the number one genius of the Southern Domain, had repeatedly been frustrated by Ye Fan, driving him to rage, especially since Ye Fan had also killed his father. The enemy that killed his father is irreconcilable!

"Why fear a battle?!"

Ye Fan responded forcefully.

On this day, although Ye Fan and Qing Zi did not meet, their words exchanged from afar were filled with tension.

This competition is destined to see death, and it certainly won't be just one person!

This is a consensus shared by everyone.

Chapter 1425: Selecting Seed Players

For several consecutive days, all the inns in Fire Spirit City were completely filled, and the taverns and teahouses were also crowded.

"Xuanwu State might not even make it into the top ten this time. The other states are too strong, all of them are cultivators at the late-stage or even peak of the Holy Embryo Realm."

"Yes, Xuanwu State has been weak for a long time and truly cannot compete with the geniuses of other states."

"Especially Qing Zi from the number one family in Qing Province, it's said he has already broken through to the Divine Power Realm, even surpassing some of the older generation strong people."

In the inns, taverns, dining houses, and tea societies of Fire Spirit City, wherever there were cultivators, there were all sorts of discussions and legends.

Finally, someone released such news, causing a sensation throughout!

The geniuses from all over are in the Holy Embryo Realm, yet Qing Zi was the first to break through!

Under such circumstances, many people believe that there's likely no suspense for the Emperor among the four kings and one sovereign—Qing Zi is sure to seize one of the seats, and might very well be the only "Sovereign"!

Furthermore, the enmity between Ye Fan and Qing Zi is also a hot topic among all cultivators, always discussed over tea and meals.

Of course, almost everyone believes that Ye Fan is doomed this time—his realm is merely mid-stage of the Holy Embryo Realm, the gap with Qing Zi is too large, not even on the same level at all.

"This guy named Ye Fan, stirred up endless turmoil in Qing Province. Even the massive Lou Family was completely wiped out because of him, no longer existing. Unfortunately, this competition is most likely certain death for him."

"Qing Zi has already put the word out; during the competition, if he encounters him, he will undoubtedly kill! His days are numbered!"

"Pity a genius, just when he was about to grow, he is to perish prematurely."

“Blame only himself for provoking someone he shouldn’t have, death is his only destiny!”

“In this world, there is never a shortage of geniuses. Only those who can grow are true geniuses, otherwise, they are just a flash in the pan.”

“You can’t say that, this Ye Fan is not someone to be trifled with, even the clan leader of the Qing Family died at his hands, it’s simply incredible!”

“That’s because someone helped him, and he somehow got hold of the terrifying Cursed Soil, otherwise Qing Yu could suppress him with one hand!”

Ye Fan’s strong response left everyone astonished. Most thought he knew he was doomed and was just trying to look strong with words.

But a very small number believed that Ye Fan was definitely not as simple as he appeared.

As time went by, with the competition drawing closer, the whole of Fire Spirit City was shrouded in a tense pre-competition atmosphere.

On this day.

The vice deans of the two academies jointly called for all members participating in the competition to gather on the square in front of the competition grounds. They were about to select eight seed contestants!

Due to the overwhelming number of geniuses participating this time, even though there were six great states involved, they were divided into eight groups, with a total of eighty participants.

Naturally, each team would have one seed contestant, so selecting eight seed contestants in advance made sense. Otherwise, wouldn't it be unfortunate if two geniuses with the potential to make it to the top eight were to clash early on?

Therefore, to guarantee the fairness of the competition, selecting eight seed contestants ahead of time was the most reasonable action!

The so-called seed contestants value strength the most; without absolute strength, one does not deserve to be a seed contestant.

The news made the entire Fire Spirit City boil with excitement. Even though the formal competition hadn't started yet, the process of selecting the eight seed contestants was bound to be very exciting.

Early in the morning, cultivators who had traveled from other regions to watch the competition arrived at the square in front of the competition grounds.

When Ye Fan and others were led onto the square by Wang Qingshan and Shen Ximen, the place was already overcrowded.

“Eh, aren’t those people from Xuanwu State? Quick, make way for them, let them in!”

At the sight of Ye Fan and others arriving, many spectators couldn’t help but let out teasing smiles. In their view, Xuanwu State was too weak to compete with the other five great states, and participating was just for show anyway!

To this teasing, Ye Fan remained very calm, without a trace of anger, his face was inscrutable, revealing no indication of his thoughts!

“Hmm? Why is there a wolf among the members from Xuanwu State? Could it be that there aren’t enough young talents in Xuanwu State, so they brought in a Xuan Beast to make up the numbers?”

In the crowd, the Bai Yan wolf was particularly eye-catching, with a body as big as a calf, extraordinarily majestic, especially its pair of white pupils, which were extremely rare in the world.

“Boom...”

This remark instantly drew a roar of laughter from the onlookers, an unconcealed scorn for Xuanwu State!

“Bastard!”

Tong Qianchen's pretty face turned red, tightly clenching her fists. As a member of Xuanwu State, being looked down upon like this annoyed her somewhat.

"Junior Sister Tong, don't be agitated, no need to lower yourself to the level of dogs!" Shen Tu gave a wry smile, deliberately speaking loudly to Tong Qianchen.

"Hey kid, who are you calling a dog?" Someone in the crowd angrily asked Shen Tu.

"Who responds, that's who! Uneducated fool, is this what your master taught you?" Shen Tu, unwilling to be outdone, immediately retorted.

"Alright, alright, I'll remember you, old man!"

The man was seething with anger but couldn't act against a competition member in public; otherwise, he couldn't bear the wrath of the two academies!

Before the competition, no one is allowed to lay hands on the participants, or there will be severe punishment; it's an unwritten rule over the years, and he dared not challenge the two academies' authority.

"Why are you keeping tabs on me? I'm not a 'Rabbit', and even if I were, I wouldn't be interested in someone as unlovable and unwanted as you!"

After hanging out with the Bai Yan wolf for a while, Shen Tu didn't make much progress in cultivation, but his trash-talking skills sure improved tremendously.

"Kid, not bad, you've got my style!" Bai Yan wolf secretly transmitted to Shen Tu with divine consciousness.

"No way, compared to you, I'm far behind!" Shen Tu also flattered Bai Yan wolf using divine consciousness transmission.

"You..."

That person was so angered by Shen Tu's words that he nearly spat blood, stammering out those words before falling silent.

At the same time, everyone else secretly shivered inside. Although it's true that Xuanwu State has declined, nobody wants to squabble with them over trivial matters. Instead, they're waiting to see Xuanwu State's joke!

The square was divided into six zones, each labeled to correspond with the geniuses of each state. Each state's genius naturally went to their designated zone.

Xuanwu State was placed at the very edge, which made its awkward standing among the Six Continents quite evident.

Dong!

A melodious bell rang, and two elderly men with graying hair ascended the stage. One wore a blue shirt and the other a purple costume, appearing to be around sixty years old.

But Ye Fan knew, in the Cultivation World, you can't judge someone's true age by their appearance.

Because, cultivators who are extremely powerful can completely revert to their youth, or even remain young forever!

"Hello everyone, I..."

Both old men started speaking simultaneously but immediately exchanged glares, refusing to back down!

"I'll speak first!"

Again, simultaneously!

The audience below watched the two esteemed deputy deans squabbling like roosters, wanting to laugh but holding back with difficulty.

“Old Monster Zhou, are you deliberately opposing me?” the purple-robed elder snorted indignantly.

“Old Monster Lu, it was you who opposed me first.” The blue-robed elder remained equally defiant, glaring fiercely.

“Old Monster Zhou, your Imperial Academy isn’t as good as my Immortal Academy; it’s undeniable. Staring won’t help, we have the ‘Immortal’ character!” The purple-robed elder smirked cunningly, using the ‘Immortal’ title to pressure the blue-robed elder.

“That’s nonsense, unbearable. There’s no such thing as immortals in this world; the Great Emperor is the pinnacle. Our Imperial Academy is stronger than your Immortal Academy indeed! Ask these competing youngsters, do they want to become immortals or prove the Dao to become Emperors?” The blue-robed elder was furious.

Is there any need to ask?

Immortals are too elusive; even the Great Emperor can’t become immortal, let alone them. So becoming immortal is just an illusion, while the Great Emperor truly exists, being the top existence in this world.

No one doesn’t wish to prove the Dao to become an Emperor.

As for becoming an immortal, that’s a legend!

Ultimately, neither elder convinced the other, so they both explained the rules for selecting seed contestants.

The selection of seed contestants is simple. Both academies will simultaneously dispatch a Lord Realm strong person to spar with the contestants, thereby evaluating their true combat power to select the eight best as seed contestants.

The arena is large, divided into eight areas for competition. The selection of seed contestants takes place in only two of these zones, visible to everyone.

“In my opinion, the so-called selection is already meaningless. The three Saint Heirs and Qing Zi are undoubtedly among the eight seed contestants.

For the remaining five, Spirit Manor’s Saint Heir and Treasure Pavilion’s Saint Heir each occupy one slot, Prince Jueluo is sure to rank among the eight seed contestants.

That leaves just two spots. Bazhou’s Tianqi Sect and Tianhe Sect’s Saint Heir will undoubtedly occupy one, and the Feng Family’s strongest heir is certainly among them.”

Even before the selection began, someone made this prediction, sparking a chorus of agreement.

Swoosh!

The next moment, all eyes were on the eight people.

Meanwhile, at the edge of the square, Ye Fan maintained a calm expression.

“Hey, a bunch of dumb beasts!”

Bai Yan wolf secretly sneered, mockingly scanning the eight.

Chapter 1426: Eight Seeded Contestants

The identities, strengths, and statuses of the Ancient Saint and the Tianxuan Saint combined give them a clear advantage over the other contestants. Hence, they were the first to step forward for the test, each facing a Lord Realm expert from the two academies.

Swish!

In an instant, everyone’s eyes focused on the two of them, eagerly anticipating their performance.

“Senior, please guide me!”

The Ancient Saint respectfully bowed, and then his aura suddenly erupted as he prepared to give it his all in battle.

This battle was about the honor of becoming a seed contestant and could not tolerate the slightest negligence!

“Very well! Make your move!”

The one testing the Ancient Saint, Gu Hao, was a Lord Realm expert from the Immortal Academy. Feeling the Ancient Saint’s aura, this Lord Realm expert’s eyes flashed with admiration and he immediately displayed his domain.

“Roar~”

Gu Hao let out a mighty shout, his Holy Power gathered to its extreme. As he punched forward, a three-eyed lion immediately appeared before him, roaring as it charged forward!

The Holy Embryo of the Ancient Saint was a three-eyed green lion, also a kind of mutant beast with extraordinary power. Although formed of Holy Power, it exhibited the characteristics of a three-eyed green lion!

Boom!

The three-eyed green lion fiercely slammed into the domain and then suddenly exploded, actually breaking the domain apart.

Although the Lord Realm expert had not fully exerted his domain, the Ancient Saint's ability to break it in one move was enough to prove his formidable strength.

"Gu Hao is so strong!"

"Indeed, even though he hasn't broken through to the Divine Power Realm, he's definitely not weaker than an ordinary early-stage Divine Realm cultivator!"

"How strong would he be if he broke through to the Divine Power Realm??"

The Ancient Saint's performance immediately sparked heated discussions among the crowd, with everyone praising his strength.

"You have become the first seed contestant."

At the same time, the Lord Realm expert smiled and said, though inside he was secretly astonished by Gu Hao's strength, and vaguely felt that this tournament would be the most exciting in the history of the Southern Domain's talent competitions, with overall participant strength far surpassing previous years.

Meanwhile, on the Tianxuan Saint's side, the test also concluded. With the release of the Tianxuan Holy Light, nothing was left unbroken. The Tianxuan Saint directly entered the domain and exchanged a palm strike with the Lord Realm tester, also breaking his domain.

“Both Saints are indeed powerful; it seems that Tianxuan Holy Land and Ancient Sacred Land have worthy successors!”

The performances of both men astonished the onlookers. Although the competition had not officially started, it seemed evident that they would be among those who persisted until the end. At the very least, they would make the top four, or even the semifinals!

“Hmph!”

Just as everyone was fervently discussing, Qing Zi snorted coldly, exuding a powerful aura as he stepped onto the battlefield!

Accompanying him was the strongest heir of the Feng Family. The two exchanged a defiant glance, both with a burning determination inside!

The achievements of the Ancient Saint and the Tianxuan Saint deeply provoked them.

The strongest heir of the Feng Family had never revealed their appearance in public. Even now, they were entirely clad in a layer of gleaming black armor, with a menacing ghost face mask concealing their true appearance.

Soon, Qing Zi stood before the Lord Realm expert from the Imperial Academy who was to test him, emotionlessly saying, “Qing Province, Qing Family, Qing Zi, please guide me, Senior!”

“Make your move!”

The Lord Realm expert from the Imperial Academy nodded. He keenly sensed that Qing Zi was in the early-stage Divine Realm and, after witnessing prior events, had restrained his underestimation.

This generation of young people is very strong and should not be taken lightly. Otherwise, being repelled by a youth would be too humiliating.

“Offense!”

Qing Zi grunted lowly, his eyes instantly turning blood-red. With a flash of light in his hand, an Azure Wood Sword appeared, glowing cyan as he slashed forward with one stroke!

Swish!

Although it was the Azure Wood Sword, Qing Zi had already comprehended Divine Skills, becoming an early-stage Divine Realm expert. This Azure Wood Sword was his comprehended Divine Skill, extremely powerful, with astonishing attack power!

The power of one sword was earth-shattering!

Faced with this color-changing sword stroke, the Lord Realm expert dared not receive it head-on and punched forward to counter!

Boom!!

With a loud explosion, Qing Zi was flung backward in response, his Azure Wood Sword completely shattered, dissolving into cyan energy that disappeared into the air.

Thud, thud, thud...

After landing, Qing Zi retreated seven steps before steadying himself, his face a shade of blue, his blood and qi surging.

The Lord Realm expert from the Imperial Academy also stepped back one step.

“Hiss...”

The audience gasped, everyone was stunned; Qing Zi’s combat power was incredibly strong, enough to make a strong person in the Lord Realm retreat a step. Even though he leveraged the advantage of the Azure Wood Sword, his true combat power definitely surpassed that of the two Saint Heirs.

Meanwhile, the strongest descendant of the Feng Family also finished his battle. The strongest descendant of the Feng Family forced the strong person of the Lord Realm in the Imperial Academy to retreat half a step with one move, Eight Direction Wind.

In terms of their battle records, they were almost evenly matched, but overall Qing Zi was slightly stronger!

“Is the Southern Domain about to rise? So many demons have emerged in this generation!”

This was the common view of strong people from other domains who came to watch. The two Saint Heirs were already enough to astonish them, yet the performance of Qing Zi and the strongest descendant of the Feng Family was even stronger, leaving them shocked.

“Very well, you pass!”

The two strong people of the Lord Realm did not hesitate, directly announcing that they could become seed contestants!

Then, the Saint Heir from Spirit Manor and Jin Changgeng also took the stage, similarly breaking through the domain of the two strong people of the Lord Realm, successfully becoming seed contestants.

Up to now, six seed contestants had emerged, leaving only two spots. The Saint Heirs of Bazhou’s Tianhe Sect and Tianqi Sect took the stage simultaneously.

Ultimately, He Yunqi from Tianhe Sect failed to become a seed contestant due to underperforming after getting injured at Qi Shi Restaurant, while Lin Qingfeng successfully became the seventh seed contestant.

The other tests that followed yielded average results, unable to break through the domain laid down by the strong people of the Lord Realm, but they did display their strongest attacks.

After the tests were completed across all Five Great States, it was finally Xuanwu State's turn, with Prince Jueluo and Ye Fan taking the stage.

At this point, no one had left; seeing Xuanwu State finally taking the stage, many began to boo.

It was clear that almost no one favored Xuanwu State, not only because they had the fewest participants, but also because their overall strength was the weakest, even inferior to Bazhou.

Prince Jueluo faced the strong person of the Lord Realm from the Upper Immortal Academy, and with a single move broke through the opponent's domain, causing another sensation!

No one expected Xuanwu State to have a strong person capable of becoming a seed contestant, but considering Prince Jueluo was the future Emperor of the mighty Jueluo Empire, they felt relieved.

A strong empire is actually not much different in nature from a strong sect, and Prince Jueluo's status is equivalent to that of a Saint Heir from a Holy Land. Without such combat power, it would be abnormal!

Ye Fan's performance was intriguing; he punched with strong power, but ultimately failed to break the opponent's domain, which was just barely passable.

"This kid wants to mess things up!"

The Bai Yan wolf immediately saw through Ye Fan's intentions.

After so many days of interaction, it was clear about Ye Fan's strength, even knowing Ye Fan's secret regarding the Emperor Weapon.

In its view, with Ye Fan's true combat power, he could definitely repel his opponent!

After Ye Fan and Prince Jueluo stepped down, Zhang Taiyi, Shen Tu, Tong Qianchen, and others successively went up for tests; unsurprisingly, none of them managed to shake their opponents!

The Holy Embryo Realm against the Lord Realm, even if the opponent only defended and did not strike back, breaking their domain wasn't an easy task, so no one was surprised by this result!

Finally, the deans of the two academies announced the list of seed contestants, and Ye Fan, unsurprisingly, was not among them, while Prince Jueluo joined the ranks of the eight seed contestants.

"With such strength, he still wants to fight Qing Zi to the death? I think he's looking for death?"

After witnessing Ye Fan's strength, many expressed such sentiment, strengthening their previous suspicions.

Previously, they speculated that Ye Fan's strong response was not because of his strong ability and confidence, but because he had nothing to lose, knowing he would definitely die. Being arrogant before dying seemed good.

"The disparity in strength is too vast; Ye Fan has no hope at all!"

"Exactly, if he could become one of the eight seed contestants, there might be some hope of escaping Qing Zi, but now it seems difficult!"

"I've always said, there's never a shortage of geniuses in this world; only those who can grow have a future. There are too many geniuses that perish prematurely!"

After the results were announced, everyone looked at Ye Fan with pity, sighing in their hearts.

Ye Fan had rampaged across Qing Province, stirring endless turmoil in the Southern Domain, even killing such a strong person as the Ancestor of the Lou Family; yet ultimately, he would die here.

"He shouldn't have come to compete! If he hadn't come, maybe Qing Zi wouldn't be able to do anything to him, but in the competition, even if he had some strategies, he couldn't use them; it's purely based on strength!"

“Xuanwu Sect is too unreasonable; knowing that Ye Fan’s participation would certainly lead to death, they still let him come. Isn’t this like sending a lamb to the tiger’s lair?”

“Exactly, if I were the Sect Leader of Xuanwu Sect, I wouldn’t let him compete for anything; just give him some more time to grow, and he might not be inferior to Qing Zi in the future. It’s such a pity!”

Upon hearing these discussions, Wang Qingshan and Shen Ximen’s faces turned pale, feeling terribly embarrassed; if not for the glory of the sect, they wouldn’t have wanted Ye Fan to participate in this competition either.

As said by these people, letting Ye Fan participate in the competition was equivalent to sending him to his death!

Qing Zi was already a strong person at the early stage of the Divine Realm; no matter how demonic Ye Fan was, he couldn’t possibly cross a Great Realm to defeat his opponent!

Moreover, Tong Qianchen felt deeply ashamed; allowing Ye Fan to participate was her father’s idea, and these words deeply affected her.

Meanwhile, Yaling gazed at Ye Fan with thoughtful contemplation.

Her intuition and reasoning told her that Ye Fan definitely wasn’t as weak as he seemed!

Chapter 1427: Groups

After the test, everyone dispersed.

Back at the residence of the Treasure Pavilion, Tong Qianchen immediately found Ye Fan, looking guilty, and said, "Brother Ye, I'm sorry, we shouldn't have let you participate in this competition..."

"No need to be guilty, and no need to worry. I came willingly; it wasn't because of anyone. Moreover, it concerns the honor of the sect, so I must come!"

Ye Fan interrupted Tong Qianchen with a smile.

Hmm?

Seeing Ye Fan's confident and calm smile, Tong Qianchen was first startled, then a strange thought emerged in her mind: Could it be that Brother Ye will be alright?

At the same time, Wang Qingshan and Shen Ximen were also very worried and guilty. Ye Fan had stirred up endless trouble in Qing Province, even killed Qing Zi's father. Now Qing Zi has broken through to the early-stage Divine Power Realm; if Ye Fan encounters her, he is almost certainly doomed.

If Ye Fan were to really die in battle, it would be an immeasurable loss for the Xuanwu Sect, a devastating blow!

At this moment, they all didn't want Ye Fan to participate!

Even if it meant being ridiculed, they believed that given time, Ye Fan would create a miracle.

But now, they simply didn't have that time; the contest starts tomorrow, and it's impossible to withdraw now.

That evening, Wang Qingshan and Shen Ximen convened everyone in their room to start researching strategies and tactics.

Indeed, there wasn't much to study; each group is a round-robin, the top eight being determined based on points.

In other words, strength represents everything, and there is no luck nor is there any need for strategies.

The so-called strategy is actually knowing when to face someone you can't defeat, biding time and then conceding, preserving your strength to defeat others in future matches and earn points.

"Bear in mind, if you can't beat your opponent, don't force it. Admitting defeat is not disgraceful; otherwise, exhausting yourself too much will directly affect your results in other matches, you must remember this,"

Shen Ximen, considered an old fox, knows the rules of various contests like the back of his hand, and knows how to exploit them.

Facing an unbeatable opponent, admitting defeat is not shameful; it's a strategy to conserve strength, minimizing exertion so you can triumph in evenly matched contests and stand out, earning more points.

These are experienced insights, not very useful to Ye Fan, but very useful to others, at least enabling them to showcase their competence.

As Wang Qingshan organized a meeting with Ye Fan and others, an explosive piece of news rapidly spread like a plague in the Holy City.

"Any member from Qing Province must do their utmost to kill Ye Fan, and other province's geniuses, if someone manages to kill Ye Fan, the Qing Family will greatly reward them!"

Qing Zi once again spoke out, demonstrating determination to kill Ye Fan!

This news quickly spread across the city; whether competitors or powerful figures from other regions, everyone knew about this.

"Looks like the Qing Family is indeed anxious," Sikong Po smiled faintly, with a strange gleam in his eyes.

Sikong Po was surprised Ye Fan hadn't become one of the eight seed contestants; he didn't know Ye Fan's real combat power but believed someone able to embody Wen Qi shouldn't be weaker than Lin Qingfeng!

He felt Ye Fan intentionally hid his strength to deceive others, likely causing many to be surprised eventually.

As for others, reactions varied; some believed Ye Fan was doomed, thinking their group killing him could yield Qing Family's reward.

Others remained calm, unconcerned about the supposed rewards, adopting a neutral strategy to observe events.

However, nearly everyone deemed Ye Fan's death inevitable this time due to the substantial disparity between the two sides, offering him no chance.

"Looks like Qing Zi truly got his tail stepped on!"

The Ancient Saint squinted and sighed, not expecting Qing Zi to be the one to advance first.

In fact, breaking through to the Divine Power Realm wasn't hard for them; they've been suppressing their power as not to progress too rapidly.

To stand firm on the brutal Emperor Road in the future, each realm must be extremely solid, reaching the extreme before breaking through.

Some geniuses choose to surpass the limits in every realm!

Although Qing Zi dominated in this test, it doesn't mean he's stronger than other Saint Heirs, only that he broke through to the Divine Realm early.

"The Qing Family is too ruthless!"

Upon receiving the news, Shen Ximen cursed.

Initially, whether Ye Fan could enter the top eight was uncertain due to the strong competition all being Saint Child Level, Qing Zi's action clearly aimed to not let Ye Fan survive!

"Elder Shen, there's no need for that, let them come. It's a good chance to see how many are truly against me!" Ye Fan's eyes glinted fiercely.

"Ye Zi, perhaps you'd better not participate, just announce withdrawal," Shen Tu looked at Ye Fan worriedly and sincerely.

"Don't worry, I will be fine!" Ye Fan warmed at heart, smiling and comforting everyone.

“Brother Ye, since you’re determined to participate, I won’t stop you, but I have a request—when facing a strong opponent, be cautious, don’t fight hard, admit defeat decisively if needed. Also, avoid any life-and-death battles, can you promise that?” Tong Qianchen said from the side.

Though Ye Fan’s previous solo talk and calm demeanor suggested he had measures for protection, she still worried deeply.

“This...”

Ye Fan hesitated; he knew with confrontation against Qing Family, a life-and-death battle was inevitable.

Ye Fan sighed and subtly said: “Qianchen, rest assured, I have my limits, won’t gamble with my life.”

“Alas... I knew it, you wouldn’t listen if I said it, if you did, you wouldn’t be Ye Fan!” Tong Qianchen sighed softly.

She knew Ye Fan wouldn’t easily concede given his character, increasing the risks he faced.

“This kid obviously wants to trick everyone! How could you all be so believing?”

As everyone tried to dissuade Ye Fan, the Bai Yan wolf slinked inside from outside, murmuring lowly.

Its voice was inaudible; even if heard, none believed its words.

After failing to persuade, they could merely wish Ye Fan wouldn't face excessively strong opponents, ideally losing before facing Qing Zi, avoiding affiliation with the Four Kings and One Sovereign, at least preserving his life.

Silence fell overnight, till the morning of the next day, an echoed bell rang through Fire Spirit City.

The grand competition officially began!

Due to the round-robin format, the schedule was packed, six matches a day, three in the morning and three in the afternoon.

The six-area square divided into eight, naturally reducing space.

Each area had a rest platform for competitors not participating, to rest or watch other matches.

Once all competitors arrived, the grouping started.

The grouping rule was straightforward, all names pooled together, randomly drawn by two vice-deans.

“Zhou Yunqing, Group One!”

“He Dawei, Group Seven!”

“Cai Wen Yuan, Group Four!”

“Qian Wentong, Group Eight!”

As names and groups were announced, each competitor promptly headed to their group area, awaiting the contest to start.

“Tong Qianchen, Group Five!”

With the voice, Tong Qianchen stepped out, silently arriving at Group Five’s position.

Then names continued to be announced. Seventy-two were quickly shuffled into eight groups.

Coincidentally, Ye Fan was placed in Group Five, alongside Tong Qianchen, making their encounter inevitable in the round-robin.

Moreover, the Qing Family had two people in Group Five, including Qing Zi's cousin, the second strongest among Qing's young generation after Qing Zi, with unfathomable cultivation reaching Peak of Holy Embryo Realm.

While the other wasn't exceedingly strong, his strength reached Late-stage Holy Embryo Realm.

This, too, indirectly validated Qing Family's robust power.

In fact, if not for Ye Fan killing Lou Manyue and several geniuses from Qing Province, their overall level here would've been higher!

Once everyone finished grouping, the eight seed contestants started drawing their group.

Finally, the result came; the fifth group's seed contestant was Tianqi Sect's Saint Heir Lin Qingfeng!

Chapter 1428: The Tournament Begins

The group stage is a round-robin format, ensuring that all contestants in each group can meet and compete against each other, with the winner earning 3 points and the loser receiving 0 points. The final score is used to assess overall strength.

The arena is divided into eight zones, with eight groups competing simultaneously. Spectators can choose to watch any group based on their personal preference and the contestants they are interested in.

The first to appear in each group is a seed player, facing one of the remaining nine contestants.

Ye Fan and Tong Qianchen did not get to appear first; they are in the fourth and sixth matches, respectively.

The first to appear is Yan Yunsheng, the strongest successor of the ancient Yan Family from Xuanzhou.

Xuanzhou does not have a Holy Land, but it does have ancient family legacies.

Especially the Feng Family, which has existed since before the Taigu era, surviving several Great Emperor periods without extinction, showing the depth of its foundation.

Of course, the Yan Family cannot compare to the Feng Family; although similarly longstanding, their power and foundation cannot match the Feng Family.

Whoosh!

Although he was the first to face a seed player, Yan Yunsheng showed no signs of fear and was eager to try, stepping straight into the center of the arena.

Due to the importance of this competition, the Imperial Academy and Immortal Academy attach great importance, not only sending two vice-deans to personally oversee it but also each having three strong people participate, monitoring the competition while serving as judges.

These six strong people are teachers from the two academies, also Lords, more than capable of witnessing and judging the competition with sufficient insight.

As a seed player, Lin Qingfeng naturally came to the arena, bowed to the judges, showing his respect.

“Let me explain the rules first. You can only start when I announce the beginning, otherwise you’ll be directly eliminated! Do you understand?” The chubby judge from the Imperial Academy scanned the two before speaking.

“Understood!”

They responded in unison.

“Very well, let me introduce myself. I’m Feng Chi, a teacher from the Imperial Academy, responsible for matches at Arena Number Five.”

Feng Chi scanned the five group zones and continued, “Although you may already know the rules, I must remind you again. First, it’s forbidden to act as assassins during the competition. Remember, this is a

match, not a battle to the death; if you wish to determine life and death, sign a life-and-death pact, and I won't interfere.

Second, I generally don't intervene, but if I do, the match is immediately ended, and the winning side must not continue attacking, or they'll be judged to lose, all points zeroed. Do you understand?"

"Understood!"

The eight below responded in unison.

"Alright, let's not waste any more words, introduce yourselves and retreat one hundred meters each! Prepare for the match!" Feng Chi waved his hand, signaling them to prepare.

The arena's diameter is well over a hundred meters, filled with mysterious patterns, minimizing damage from battles to the greatest extent!

"Xuanzhou, Yan Family, Yan Yunsheng!"

"Bazhou, Tianqi Sect, Lin Qingfeng!"

"The match begins!"

After they had introduced themselves, Feng Chi decisively announced the official start of the match!

With his voice, Yan Yunsheng directly manifested his Holy Embryo, surprisingly a Nine-headed Bird, with wings spanning eight meters, nine heads born, necks like snakes, looking particularly fierce!

Nine-headed Bird is a legendary fierce beast, aggressive and powerful, and is a flying type of Holy Embryo!

“Just a little bird, can’t fly high no matter how it tries!”

Lin Qingfeng smiled faintly, not even manifesting his Holy Embryo, standing with hands behind his back, looking like a supreme master.

“Frog in a well!”

Yan Yunsheng snorted coldly, spreading his hands like a Giant Roc, rushing swiftly towards Lin Qingfeng, his hands like eagle claws grabbing fiercely at Lin Qingfeng’s chest!

Simultaneously, the Nine-headed Bird’s nine heads sprayed holy light, one head directly biting towards Lin Qingfeng’s head, its sinister teeth reflecting cold light.

“Get lost!”

Lin Qingfeng swept his large sleeve, slapping Yan Yunsheng hard, scattering his Holy Embryo directly.

Swish!

Lin Qingfeng’s clothes on his chest were also torn by Yan Yunsheng’s iron claws, revealing his solid chest inside, leaving several white marks on his chest.

“Slash!”

Yan Yunsheng’s hands united, resembling the Heavenly Blade, slashing down with a harsh whistling sound.

He’s betting everything!

“Ignorant!”

Lin Qingfeng’s face turned livid, feeling embarrassed by the torn clothes, struck with a punch, the blazing holy light cracked Yan Yunsheng’s hands open while kicking fiercely at Yan Yunsheng’s Dantian.

If this kick hits, Yan Yunsheng would be crippled, possibly bursting his Dantian, becoming a waste.

Roar!

At the critical moment, Yan Yunsheng twisted forcefully, using his thick rear to take Lin Qingfeng's kick, avoiding the vital spot!

Bang!

A crisp sound, Yan Yunsheng was directly kicked out of the arena, the match over!

"Group Five, Round One, Bazhou Tianqi Sect, Lin Qingfeng wins!"

Feng Chi announced the result, Lin Qingfeng earned three points.

Simultaneously, the first match of the other seven groups also ended, with each group's seed player winning with absolute advantage, defeating opponents in one move, and the defeated geniuses acknowledging their defeat.

Faced with seed players capable of fighting across realms, they could only helplessly admit defeat, without any hope of reversal.

However, they were pragmatic, knowing they had no chance against seed players, they didn't fight seriously, saving their strength to compete against others.

Though they can't enter the top eight, entering the top ten is still good, at least the top ten can enter the Imperial Academy or Immortal Academy.

Ye Fan didn't pay attention to these matches, knowing nothing could be seen. Until strong confrontations occur, these players usually defeat opponents in one move.

Yan Yunsheng, though unwilling, understood continuing to battle would still not beat his opponent, causing great consumption on himself, so he accepted the result.

After the two stepped down, the second group immediately came on, with Qing Tian, Qing Family's second genius of the younger generation, battling a genius from a small sect in Bazhou.

As expected, Qing Tian effortlessly dominated, resolved the fight within ten moves, knocking his opponent out of the arena; if not forbidden from being assassins, the genius's life would be in peril!

Qing Tian naturally earned three points, arrogantly glanced at Ye Fan, made a throat-slitting gesture, then returned to his seat!

Regarding Qing Tian's provocative gesture, Ye Fan maintained a calm expression, choosing to ignore.

The third match followed, featuring evenly matched opponents, fighting brilliantly, neck and neck, echoed with cheers from the audience!

Other seven zones continued competing intensely, each match meant one earning three points and the other gaining nothing.

Time passed quickly, and the morning soon went by with the third match finally concluding, a genius from Fengyi State overcoming a genius from Thunder State after some cost, earning three points.

This match took the longest—both were Late-stage Holy Embryo Realm, and their Holy Embryos were strong, various martial arts emerging continually, fought spectacularly.

After this battle, they probably lacked many trump cards, but this didn't affect future achievements; knowing their strength doesn't guarantee overcoming them.

Afternoon promised three matches, and during lunch, Qi Shi Restaurant thoughtfully sent delicious dishes made from mighty Xuan Beast meat, greatly beneficial for cultivators, replenishing their energy.

After lunch, everyone rested in place rather than returned, either cultivating or merely meditating with closed eyes.

Although Bai Yan Wolf wasn't in the competing members, Sikong Po specially arranged for its share of precious food.

Sikong Po was deeply impressed with Bai Yan Wolf; it, despite being a Xuan Beast, was almost indistinguishable from humans and had a roguish personality, much to his liking.

Of course, this wasn't free sponsorship from the Sikong Family; the meals were funded by the two academies for contestants, the Spirit Stones shared between them naturally.

However, Sikong Po didn't let them spend excessively, charging only cost prices for all food, resulting in the Sikong Family not profiting, actually losing quite a bit.

After two hours of rest, a melodious bell rang, the afternoon matches resumed.

Afternoon's first match featured Ye Fan against a genius from Fengyi State, cultivation in Late-stage Holy Embryo Realm, one realm higher than Ye Fan.

The match piqued many people's interest.

Because...

They felt, although Ye Fan didn't perform ideally in tests, his actual combat ability needed observation through matches!

Chapter 1429: Never Moved a Half-step!

After a morning of duels, Ye Fan ushered in his first match.

Perhaps because Ye Fan's reputation in the Southern Domain was truly too large, his match attracted a lot of spectators.

"Old rules: introduce yourselves first, then begin the match!"

Puffy Feng Chi squinted his eyes, deliberately glanced at Ye Fan.

"Xuanwu State, Xuanwu Sect, Ye Fan, ready to be taught!"

"Fengyi State, Tianyang Sect, Chi Yan!"

After the introductions, both sides flew towards one end of the arena, instantly opening a distance of over a hundred meters, then turned around and stared at each other.

"The match begins!"

Feng Chi glanced at the two, announcing the official start of the match.

“Let me teach you a lesson!”

Chi Yan was extremely arrogant, stomping his foot, his body charged towards Ye Fan like a specter, not even using his Holy Embryo.

“Poor child...”

Seeing this, Bai Yan Wolf mumbled, closing his eyes.

No need to guess, it knew that this person named Chi Yan was definitely not Ye Fan’s match.

Facing the arrogant Chi Yan, Ye Fan was neither joyful nor sad, likewise not exhibiting his Holy Embryo, but rather waited for him to attack.

“You have no chance!”

Chi Yan sneered, a ball of flame suddenly appeared on his fist, exuding a blazing temperature, fiercely punching towards Ye Fan’s chest.

“Is that so?”

Ye Fan slightly smiled, raising his hand to block.

Bang!

A muffled sound arose, Ye Fan easily blocked Chi Yan's attack.

"Again!"

Chi Yan's face changed, continuing his assault.

Bang bang bang...

Ye Fan stood firm, constantly deploying hands, moving to the point of dizziness. No matter from which angle Chi Yan attacked, Ye Fan could always block or neutralize his offensive.

"Hit!"

Chi Yan unleashed over a hundred moves in one breath, the angles treacherous, the speed quick. Normally, no one could withstand his storm-like attack!

Yet Ye Fan seemed to have foreknowledge, able to block Chi Yan's offense at the critical moment, not allowing a single move to succeed.

This series of attacks garnered constant cheers, but Chi Yan knew his own plight; despite the stormy assault, he couldn't injure the opponent, and Ye Fan's hands seemed like refined gold, undefeatable regardless of how hot his fists became.

Suddenly—

A loud phoenix cry sounded, Chi Yan finally used his Holy Embryo, a fire phoenix manifested behind him, its whole body engulfed in flames, almost enough to burn down the void.

"Fire Phoenix's Phoenix Wing Nine Slashes!"

Chi Yan shouted violently, his arms turned like phoenix wings, slashing towards Ye Fan with fiery heat.

The blazing light enveloped both, ordinary people couldn't see the inside situation, even cultivators of lower strength couldn't see into the fire's interior.

Only heroic lords capable of matching a Saint knew the happenings inside the light; Ye Fan's arms, like spiritual treasure, completely blocked Chi Yan's attacks, even a layer of faint purple light circulated on his body, blocking out the flames, leaving him unharmed, not even his clothes singed.

“Let’s see how long you can last!”

Having performed the Phoenix Wing Nine Slashes, Chi Yan’s eyes turned crimson, like flames burning, shouting fiercely, the fire phoenix began merging into his body.

Holy Embryo Fusion!

Once unified, a cultivator’s strength would redouble; logically, Ye Fan shouldn’t allow him to complete the Holy Embryo Fusion, interrupting directly.

But Ye Fan didn’t; he silently watched, without a trace of intention to act, allowing the opponent to complete the Holy Embryo Fusion.

“You shouldn’t have given me time, you’re too arrogant!”

Chi Yan whispered, his arms became phoenix wings, his body inclined to lengthen feathers, his face almost morphing into a phoenix’s likeness, a phoenix crown emerged on his head!

“Kill!”

Chi Yan’s arms alternated slashes, his momentum surged wild, attack power grew nearly double.

Ye Fan remained calm as an ancient well, his face unchanged, his hands always resolving the attacks.

It was only then people noticed that despite Ye Fan's constant passive defense, he hadn't moved even half a step.

This discovery astonished many, further evaluating Ye Fan's prowess; defending in such a manner already secured him invincibility.

If Chi Yan's attack showed flaws, Ye Fan would undoubtedly launch a thunderous counterattack; by then Chi Yan would be in peril.

Sure enough, Chi Yan's Holy Embryo Fusion still couldn't force a step from Ye Fan, remained enraged by his impenetrable defense.

Clearly his realm above the opponent, stronger in capability, yet the opponent like a curled-up hedgehog, all spikes, nowhere to strike.

Chi Yan knew, if this continued, the loser would likely be himself; he must resolve Ye Fan swiftly, no more delay.

"Phoenix Cry Nine Provinces!"

Chi Yan shouted loudly, mouth issuing a loud phoenix cry, resonating the Nine Heavens above and the Nine Netherworld below, power astonishing.

Whoosh!

Immediately, Chi Yan's hands joined, firing a blazing beam, directly striking Ye Fan, his whole body spun like a top cracked by a fierce whip.

"Interesting!"

Ye Fan smiled slightly, the opponent's strength had almost been fully displayed, now it was his turn, every killing move must have a flaw at the beginning.

Although at their realm there are few flaws, they cannot be completely avoided, the higher the damage of a killing move, the more apparent the flaw when it is launched!

However, Ye Fan did not intend to exploit the opponent's flaw, but to attack with strength, punching directly towards the blazing light!

Boom!

Ye Fan's punch directly dispersed the blazing light, then fiercely hit Chi Yan's fingertip, with a strong burst of holy power, instantly breaking his finger bone.

Crack!

The sound of bone breaking sounded so sharp even in the roar.

Immediately after, Chi Yan, like a soccer ball kicked hard, flew off the stage, crashing several observing cultivators into a disoriented state.

“Uh...”

This result left everyone dumbfounded, no one expected such a result.

At the beginning, they thought that even if Ye Fan could defeat the opponent, it would be very difficult, but unexpectedly he directly blasted the opponent away.

Chi Yan emerged from the Holy Embryo Fusion state, his face pale, both hands' finger bones were shattered, the pain distorted his face.

Ye Fan won, gaining three points.

After Feng Chi announced the match result, Ye Fan walked down from the stage, returning to his seat.

“This Ye Fan, his strength is definitely not as simple as it appears!”

Looking at Ye Fan’s calm face, recalling the match just now, almost all spectators made this judgment.

...

Then, the fifth match began, also the last match of this group’s first round robin, with a genius from the Qing Family facing Tong Qianchen.

Both came to the stage, exchanged names, and then the match began!

This genius from the Qing Family was named Qing Heng, also a powerful late-stage Holy Embryo Realm cultivator, although he had just broken through to the late-stage Holy Embryo Realm not long ago, his strength was still very formidable.

Ye Fan was very concerned about this match, he knew that just a few days ago, within the palace of the Treasure Pavilion, Tong Qianchen had successfully broken through to the mid-stage Holy Embryo Realm, but facing a late-stage strong person was still not optimistic.

Tong Qianchen also knew this was her first battle after exiting seclusion, a crucial battle, she must win – Ye Fan was watching from below!

Previously, Ye Fan's record had given her a lot of confidence, facing the mid-stage versus late-stage Holy Embryo Realm, she believed, what Ye Fan could achieve, she could also accomplish.

From the start, Tong Qianchen displayed her pair of small arm protectors, because she knew deeply that in front of a powerful opponent, hiding one's strength is asking for abuse!

"Heh heh!"

Qing Heng smiled cruelly and said, "I heard you're that Ye's little bitch's woman? Today I'll beat you until you're unrecognizable in front of him, collecting some interest first!"

"Courting death!"

This statement was Tong Qianchen's sore spot, unallowable for anyone to mention, Qing Heng's words just stepped on her painful spot, causing Tong Qianchen to burst out.

A crane cry sounded, Tong Qianchen first displayed her Holy Embryo, it was a pure white Immortal Crane, elegant and noble!

"Immortal Crane? Looks like a grass chicken to me!"

Qing Heng emitted a dangerous aura, with a roar, an Azure Wolf appeared behind him, larger than the Bai Yan wolf, extremely mighty and fierce.

“Awoo...”

The Azure Wolf howled and charged at Tong Qianchen, Qing Heng followed closely, swinging a palm towards Tong Qianchen!

Tong Qianchen’s lips tightened, her eyes filled with flames of anger, brandishing her pair of arm protectors as she charged at Qing Heng.

Simultaneously, her Holy Embryo Immortal Crane also engaged in battle with the Azure Wolf, crane beak like a sharp sword, shooting streaks of light.

The battle between Holy Embryos was also very exciting, though rarely did individuals fight using only their Holy Embryo, most relied on some characteristic of the Holy Embryo to fight.

The gap in strength was quite evident in the battle, although Tong Qianchen had broken through to the mid-stage Holy Embryo Realm, she just achieved the breakthrough, and the difference in realm with Qing Heng was noticeable; she did not possess Ye Fan’s freakishly strong physique, instantly falling into disadvantage in the confrontation.

In contrast, Qing Heng was at ease, facing Tong Qianchen who is a realm lower, he seemed casual, each move targeting Tong Qianchen’s vital points, forcing her to frantically defend.

Slap!

Qing Heng's body moved like a phantom, breaking through Tong Qianchen's defense, slapping her face, leaving five distinct handprints on her fair face, swelling half of it instantly.

"You can't do it!"

Qing Heng wagged his middle finger at Tong Qianchen disdainfully.

He deliberately aimed to infuriate Tong Qianchen, only if she did not give up could he slowly torment her, until she was killed!

Although killing moves were forbidden in matches, competition is competition, if one does not give their best, it might be exploited by others, ultimately losing the match.

Therefore, the referee was in a dilemma, refraining from interfering easily until the last moment to maintain the fairness of the match!

"I'll fight you to the death!"

Tong Qianchen indeed stepped into the trap, in her rage forgetting the gap between her and her opponent, using ruthless moves intending mutual destruction, suddenly forcing Qing Heng into a brief fluster.

“Sigh...”

Ye Fan saw through Qing Heng’s tricks with a glance, but couldn’t intervene to stop the match, only able to sigh lightly.

He understood well, Tong Qianchen’s actions were entirely provoked by Qing Heng claiming she was his woman, hitting her painful spot.

“Qing Family, Qing Heng!”

Ye Fan slightly narrowed his eyes, eyes like knives fixed on Qing Heng in the arena, with murderous intent swirling in his heart.

Chapter 1430: Ye Fan vs. Qing Heng

If Tong Qianchen hadn’t brought him out of the Xuanshou Mountain Range, Ye Fan wouldn’t be where he is today.

He likely would have died in the Xuanshou Mountain Range.

A drop of water shall be returned with a gushing spring!

This has always been Ye Fan's principle in life.

Moreover, Tong Qianchen once had feelings for him and expressed her love?

He wouldn't allow anyone to harm Tong Qianchen!

Qing Heng thought he'd hit Ye Fan's soft spot, little did he know he had touched Ye Fan's reverse scale!

A dragon's reverse scale, touch it and die!

Slap!

Another crisp slap echoed, as Qing Heng took advantage of the moment when Tong Qianchen lost her mind in rage and slapped her hard once again!

At this time, the battle between Tong Qianchen's Holy Embryo Immortal Crane and the Azure Wolf had reached its end. Although the Immortal Crane was indeed a very powerful Holy Embryo, the difference in strength between the two was too vast, and it ultimately couldn't defeat Qing Heng's Azure Wolf Holy Embryo.

“Unification!”

Having been slapped twice, Tong Qianchen regained a bit of clarity, knowing that if this continued, she would surely lose and could only fight desperately.

“Heh, you have no chance!”

A glint of viciousness flashed in Qing Heng’s eyes as he also wanted to conserve strength for the upcoming matches while still being able to defeat his opponents, so he intended to hold back a little.

Whoosh!

As soon as the words fell, Qing Heng punched Tong Qianchen directly, causing her to spit blood and fly backward, even the battle armor formed by Holy Power shattered!

“Stop!”

Although Tong Qianchen still hadn’t conceded and hadn’t flown out of the arena, Feng Chi stepped in, having seen that Tong Qianchen was seriously injured and could die if attacked again.

A match is a match, not a fight to the death; no deaths should occur, or it would be a dereliction of duty for him as the referee.

“Consider yourself lucky!”

Qing Heng indeed had a killing intent earlier, but Tong Qianchen’s defense was also very strong, ultimately preventing him from succeeding.

With a gloomy face, Feng Chi fed Tong Qianchen an elixir pill and then handed her over to Ye Fan, who had come up, announcing Qing Heng as the winner of the match.

“Kid, be careful. If you die at my hands, that’s not my problem!” Qing Heng said with a sinister smile to Ye Fan.

“Two slaps, one punch, I’ve remembered!”

Ye Fan turned back, coldly staring at Qing Heng, his body exuding killing intent.

Thud!

Feeling the terrifying murderous intent emanating from Ye Fan and recalling how Ye Fan had once managed to kill someone as powerful as the Ancestor of the Lou Family, Qing Heng’s heart tightened, an inexplicable fear enveloping him.

“Humph, so what if you remember?”

Although fear surged within him, Qing Heng showed none of it on his face, merely letting out a cold snort as he walked toward the Qing Family camp.

All five matches concluded, and the originally scheduled sixth match was canceled after various discussions, as the contestants had expended a lot of energy today. Continuing with a second round might cause some to be unable to perform properly due to their depleted strength.

With the match over, Ye Fan held Tong Qianchen, channeling his abundant Holy Power into her to help heal her wounds.

However, Tong Qianchen’s injuries couldn’t heal in a short time and could only be temporarily stabilized until they returned to their quarters for further healing.

Back at the palace of the Treasure Pavilion, Ye Fan personally healed Tong Qianchen until her injuries stabilized.

Once her condition stabilized, Tong Qianchen left Ye Fan, silently retreating to her room to heal in seclusion, seeing no one!

Ye Fan understood that Tong Qianchen felt ashamed to face him, so he didn’t try to keep her, but rather silently resolved to help Tong Qianchen seek revenge!

By evening, Yaling brought a Rejuvenation Pill for Tong Qianchen to help restore her appearance.

The Rejuvenation Pill is definitely a dispensable elixir, only useful for restoring one's original appearance without making one more beautiful, useful only for those who have been disfigured, otherwise useless for anyone else.

It was concocted by an eccentric genius of pill cultivation, and not many were ever made; only the wealthy Treasure Pavilion could afford to have such a rare yet worthless pill.

After dinner, Shen Tu, Zhang Taiyi, and the others each returned to their rooms to cultivate, and Ye Fan also returned to his room, directly entering the Virtual Space to cultivate.

Early the next day, with the rise of the Golden Crow, everyone once again gathered at the square outside the arena, sitting in their places from yesterday.

Thanks to the Rejuvenation Pill and her tireless effort overnight, Tong Qianchen's injuries had completely healed, and outwardly, no trace of her near-death state from yesterday could be seen.

Ye Fan sat in silence on the chair, squinting at the direction of the Qing Family camp and glancing at Qing Heng before withdrawing his gaze.

Today marked the second round of the group tournament, with Lin Qingfeng again taking the first match.

This time, Lin Qingfeng faced off against a genius from Thunder State, defeating him in just six moves to secure a second three points.

Ye Fan's match was scheduled for the third slot.

His opponent was none other than Qing Heng, who had injured Tong Qianchen the day before!

This made Qing Heng somewhat nervous!

"At most, Ye Fan is just a Mid-stage Saint Embryo Realm cultivator. I'm one Xiao realm above him, what should I fear?"

In his nervousness, Qing Heng self-hypnotized, psyching himself up.

"Go all out. Even if you can't kill him, make him suffer!"

Simultaneously, Qing Zi instructed Qing Heng to go all out against Ye Fan.

Just like yesterday, matches featuring seed players were over quickly; against seed players, almost no one could last more than ten moves, with all losing within three.

However, the second match lasted longer this time; with the experience from the previous day, everyone understood their opponents better, leading to more strategic approaches during the matches.

This brought the competition to an exciting and splendid stage, with constant cheers erupting from the eight arenas.

The insiders watched with interest, while the outsiders reveled in the thrill, especially those who didn't understand cultivation. As long as the fight was exciting, with blows landing solidly and dazzling lights, they found it impressive.

Yet, some experienced cultivators learned much from these matches, especially in the clever usage of Holy Power and the attributes of the Holy Embryos—lessons worth studying.

At the fifth arena where Ye Fan was, the battle was equally exhilarating, both sides immediately deploying their Holy Embryos, with Punch Rays tearing through the skies, Palm Forces splitting the ground, and Holy Embryos roaring, bursting with dazzling light, drawing exclamations from the ordinary onlookers.

This was a high-level duel, and although the skills of both sides were slightly below those of the seed players, their evenly matched competition made the battle all the more thrilling.

Ye Fan's focus wasn't on the ongoing battles, no matter how intense or thrilling they were, he showed no reaction.

His thoughts were on the upcoming match.

He pondered how he could utilize the rules to waste Qing Heng!

Unbeknownst to him, the second match concluded, with the outcome finally decided after a tough fight, leaving both sides with significant injuries and a hard-fought victory.

After Feng Chi announced the result, both competitors exited, and Ye Fan and Qing Heng entered the arena from opposite sides.

“I won’t repeat the rules of the match, announce your names and prepare to compete!” Feng Chi spoke expressionlessly.

“Heh, Ye Fan, I hit your woman yesterday. Are you very angry? I’m right here, if you have the guts, come avenge your woman!”

After introducing themselves, Qing Heng opened with a mocking sound.

“You will soon pay for your actions yesterday!”

Ye Fan replied in a deep voice, chilling as eternal ice, penetrating to the bone.

“Alright, I’d like to see what kind of consequences you’ll make me face!”

Qing Heng responded coldly, with a facade of composure, though in reality playing a psychological game to provoke Ye Fan, seeking an opportunity for a fatal strike.

Ye Fan offered no reply this time, instead sharply intensifying his aura, transforming himself into an unsheathed treasure sword, incredibly sharp.

Their grudge had long reached a point where only blood and life could resolve it, talking any further was pointless, it was a fight to the death.

“Prepare to die!”

Striking preemptively gives an advantage!

Seeing Ye Fan heighten his aura, Qing Heng attacked first, immediately manifesting his Holy Embryo—a green wolf!

Whoosh!

With the Holy Embryo revealed, Qing Heng moved his consciousness, and the wolf formed by Holy Power opened its gaping maw, viciously lunging at Ye Fan!

Ye Fan remained still, eyes squinting, fixated on Qing Heng.