

Martial World

(武极天下)

Arc 01

The Seven Profound Martial House

Cocooned Cow

(蚕里的牛)

Story Description:

In the Realm of the Gods, countless legends fought over a mysterious cube. After the battle it disappeared into the void. Lin Ming stumbles upon this mystery object and begins his journey to become a hero of the land.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 0: Magic Cube

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In the vast and limitless expanse of mist and snow, endless ice shards swirled in the wind and collided in a violent maelstrom. Subzero temperatures chilled one's bone to a freezing cold temperature, as if it would turn even one's very soul into nothing but ice.

Here, was the Snowfall Realm, within the myriad dimensions of the Realm of the Gods. It was a bleak and hopeless land of endless, blinding white tundra. From one year to the next, there was nothing but desolate snow, and the bitter cold.

Within these bleak fields of ice, the wind picked up, and dozens of ice shards whistled through the air, revolving and condensing in a vast eddy. Within this current, a shimmering mercurial veil bloomed into existence, and in the next second, a woman in a sapphire blue dress emerged.

The woman's aura was like a regal queen. Her raven black hair flowed like a river of the purest ink. Every inch of her body exuded an aura of holiness. In this desolate wasteland, it was as if the most beautiful pure ice lotus had fully bloomed. The only flaw on her otherwise perfect features was a thin stream of bright red blood that dripped down from the corners of her red lips.

That mercurial veil began to fade, and the woman spat out a mouthful of blood – it was as if this beautiful ice lotus was wilting.

“Big sister!”

A girl's voice resounded clearly in the crisp air, and a shining white light flew from the woman's body and condensed into the shape of a frantic young girl. "Sister, are you alright?"

"Do not worry." The blue clothed woman beckoned with her hand. She'd already suffered a grievous wound, and had forcefully shattered the barriers of space and time in order to pass through the limitless void and the infinite night to arrive at a different dimension within the Realm of the Gods. This had caused her previously serious injuries to compound even further.

"Where is this?" The sapphire blue clothed woman asked.

The young girl pulled out a jade slip and probed it with her divine sense. "Sister, we've arrived at the Snowfall Realm."

"...Snowfall?" The sapphire blue clothed female said with a trace of shock, before she sighed. "Of the three thousand dimensions within the Realm of the Gods, I've travelled through the infinite void to countless ones. I fled, but to think that I would end up in the one place that I didn't wish to go..."

She laughed bitterly. "My name is Mo Qianxue, and I was named after the snow... snowfall, snowfall... here, I too will fall..."

"Big sister, we..." The young girl began, but the air trembled, and a massive amount of energy poured into the air. In the next moment, space began to be ripped open, as if was being torn about by a pair of cruel hands, and a black clothed man walked out from the void.

The young girl saw this man, and her complexion greatly changed as her words fell silent.

The black-clothed man had an outstanding appearance that was incomparably handsome. Only, both his pupils were a vivid blood-red, which lent him a somewhat savage appearance. He looked at Mo Qianxue and lightly smiled, "Saintess, your highness, we meet again."

Mo Qianxue was eminently calm and resolute. Although she'd expected her enemies to be pursuing her, she hadn't expected that they'd catch up so quickly.

The man continued, "Saintess, your highness, I apologize for the events having come this far. It's truly regrettable that your Verdant Feather Holy lands were destroyed. As for that, I had no choice, as I was helplessly forced to do so. For existences such as you and I, with our cultivations, there's nothing in this world that is beyond our reach; the only thing that you and I desire is to reach the pinnacle of power, and to be eternal existences. I would like to request Saintess to kindly hand over the Divine Magic Cube. We can cultivate together, and study the secrets of the Magic Cube until the end of time. How about it?"

Mu Qianxue began to revolve the supernatural divine power within herself. She coldly said, "Cease with your meaningless words. Tian Mingzi, you may have destroyed my Verdant Feather Holy lands, but if you want to kill me, then you'll have to pay dearly."

"Is that so? Then I'll have to give it a try." The man called Tian Mingzi seemed disinterested. He casually waved his right hand, and an ancient looking pagoda appeared in his palm. This was the Catastrophic Spirit Treasure, the God Sealing Pagoda. It was capable of sealing gods and binding demons, as well as being a vessel that could hold tens of thousands of warriors. Just half a month ago, this man had used this God Sealing Pagoda to transport over 10,000 powerhouses from the Realm of the Gods, and had suddenly appeared within the Verdant Feather Holy Lands, leading to its ultimate destruction.

Tian Mingzi threw the God Sealing Pagoda into the air. Golden light sparkled outwards, and 10,000 powerhouses appeared in the world of snow. The entire sky was completely covered with ominous shadows.

Over 10,000 people stood in the void, casually staring with indifference at the two women that were isolated and helpless within the endless expanse of ice.

Mo Qianxue saw this, and the corners up her lips panned upwards in a condescending sneer. She had been waiting for this moment.

Netherworld Holy Land, Primordial Universe Holy Land, Ancient Laguna Palace, Crimson Blood-demon Island... since you plotted together to destroy my Verdant Feather Holy Land, then today, even at the cost of my own soul, I'll bury you all here!

Tian Mingzi said, "Mo Qianxue, I respect you, and admire your strength and talent that defies the will of the Heavens. But now, you've been seriously wounded. In the face of these 10,000 powerhouses from the Realm of the Gods, you've no chance of winning. I will leave you one path; surrender the Divine Crystal Magic Cube here, and I will let you and your sister leave alive.

Mo Qianxue ignored him. Her mind stirred, and a one inch gray cube slowly appeared in her hand. The gray cube was entirely covered with black inscriptions. This was the object that had caused such turmoil throughout the entire Realm of the Gods – the Divine Crystal Magic Cube.

Mo Qianxue poured all of her supernatural divine power into the Divine Crystal Magic Cube. Although she'd been in possession of the Divine Crystal Magic Cube for less than a year, she'd still been able to perceive some of the esoteric secrets contained within. Perhaps the legends were true, and this was a crystallized soul left behind by a fabled True God that had fallen from the heavens. It had the terrifying power to crush the soul of any existence. However, with Mo Qianxue's power, she was still unable to control this power. If she tried to, even her own soul would be devoured by this Divine Crystal Magic Cube.

"Yue'er, don't resist."

“Big sister?” The young girl didn’t know what Mo Qianxue was planning on doing, but at this moment, her entire body became covered in a layer of light. This light broke through the void, and sent her away.

First, Mo Qianxue had to send off her own little lister. This was because once the forbidden power of the Magic Cube began, every single soul around would be sucked in, and shattered apart. This was also the reason that she hadn’t used this forbidden power within the Verdant Feather Holy Lands.

“Haha, you want to send off your little sister? How could I let you do as you please?” Tian Mingzi’s hands twisted together, forming countless seals that would freeze the void within a 10 mile radius. But at this moment, his expression changed. A terrifying power seemed to be condensing within the Divine Crystal Magic Cube in Mo Qianxue’s palm, causing him to feel a soul trembling fear from the core of his very being.

This is.....

Tian Mingzi’s heart raced, and his seal-forming patterns changed. He sensed a life or death crisis heading towards him.

Heaven Earth Yuan Qi went wild in that instant. A massive vortex of energy appeared above the Divine Crystal Magic Cube.

“With my soul as a guide, let me borrow the power of a True God, Soul Extinction!”

Mu Qianxue calmly and coldly spoke these words. In the next moment, her body was transformed into dazzling specks of starlight. Her soul and consciousness were turned into streams of light that were completely absorbed into the Divine Crystal Magic Cube.

Seeing this, Tian Mingzi’s expression changed. Without any hesitation, he hastily ripped open the space around him, attempting

to escape. But at this moment, the terrifying energies within the Divine Crystal Magic Cube erupted outwards.

It was as if a star itself had exploded, and all of the space around was like a thin slip of paper that was being torn apart. The 10,000 powerhouses of the Realm of the Gods had just arrived in this snowy world, only to come face to face with a life or death crisis. Those that had the ability to pass through worlds tried to escape through the endless void. But it was too late.. All of the surrounding space was instantly dismantled, and the resulting massive storm sucked them all in like scraps of paper. Their bodies were turned into dust that vanished, and their souls were shattered into fragments within that storm, before being absorbed into the Magic Cube.

An enormous swath of space of the Snowfall Realm had been twisted into an utter dead zone. This zone was flooded with space storms that were capable of destroying anything and everything.

As for the Divine Crystal Magic Cube, it swallowed all of the soul fragments, before it was sucked into these space storms, and thrown into the endless void.....

Chapter 1: Lin Ming

Within the Sky Fortune City, the capital of Sky Fortune Kingdom, the Seven Profound Martial House stands before the Great Mountain Zhou. Seven Profound Martial House, it is the martial house set up by the Seven Profound Valley, a martial arts clan with over six hundred years of heritage. It is also the only martial house set up by them in the Sky Fortune Kingdom.

As one of the biggest martial house, Seven Profound Martial House possesses a great number of legacy martial skills and martial masters as its tutors. It was only natural that it would become the holy land of the many young aspiring martial artists. Correspondingly, the entrance qualifications for new recruits in Seven Profound Martial House were set at a high threshold. It would not be an exaggeration to say that only one in a million would be able to qualify.

Under the scorching heat of summer, a teenage boy stood within a forest of the Great Mountain Zhou. Both his fists were wrapped up with strips of cloth as he stood bare chested before a rough looking big tree. He threw punch after punch, striking heavily against the tree trunk.

“Peng!” “Peng!” Heavy sounds echoed out around the forest. The layer of bark on the big tree that were struck had sunk downwards noticeably, exposing its greyish wooden texture. On its surface, traces of blood could be seen.

This teenager’s name is Lin Ming. He possesses a Grade Three Martial Talent.

In Sky Fortune Kingdom, half of its citizens have no martial talent to speak of and are unsuitable towards the path of martial arts. As for the other half, at least eighty per cent of them have a Grade One Martial Talent. Even if these people were to practice martial arts, they would not be able to reach anywhere. One in ten of the remaining

people have a ninety per cent chance of having Grade Two Martial Talent. If these people were to be diligent in their practice of martial arts, they have a chance to accomplish something in life. However, becoming a master of the martial arts would be near hopeless for them.

Lin Ming's Grade Three Martial Talent could be considered as a high-class existence. If one were to be boastful, one could claim that he is the cream of the crop. However, even with his martial talent, it would still be difficult for him to enter the Seven Profound Martial House!

Lin Ming was well aware of this. Together with his female childhood friend, the beautiful Lan Yunyue who also has a Grade Three Martial Talent, they had agreed to take the entrance assessment for the Sky Fortune Martial House even though it is nowhere near as good as the Seven Profound Martial House.

The Sky Fortune Martial House is part of Sky Fortune Kingdom. Since the day of its inception, it has only eighty years' worth of martial skills, legacy and foundation, a limited number indeed. Legacy martial skills are something of great importance to martial artists. Without a good set of martial skills, the goal of completing the final Physical Training Stage, the Pulse Condensing Stage or higher would be near impossible.

The Pulse Condensing Stage is a realm that most martial artists vied for. It is also the first turning point for cultivators of the martial way. Once the Pulse Condensing Stage is successfully attained, a martial artist's lifespan would be greatly increased. Additionally, they would also be granted the title of nobility, allowing them to live a life of prosperity, bringing a blessing to their descendants.

It is in this Pulse Condensing Stage training that the Sky Fortune Martial House falls greatly behind the Seven Profound Martial House.

Lin Ming's heart pulsed for the sake of the martial way. It was only natural that he too, desired to enter the Seven Profound Martial

House. If his talent was insufficient, then he could only rely on his own diligence and perseverance to impress the examiners. However, the prospect of him entering was very low. Moreover, once he failed, he would have to waste half a year's time to wait for another opportunity. For martial artists, this amount of time is highly precious.

Placing all this into consideration, in addition to the fact that he had promised Lan Yunyue, Lin Ming decided instead to enter the Sky Fortune Martial House.

Lin Ming and Lan Yunyue had trained and played together for many years. Even though the both of them were still young and the topic of marriage never came up, those emotions have already begun budding. Lin Ming's parents on the other hand, had shown their approval and love towards Lan Yunyue. They would always invite Lan Yunyue to their house for dinner.

A mutual feeling of goodwill existed between Lin Ming and Lan Yunyue, leaving only a thin piece of paper between the two. Once they grow slightly older, this piece of paper would certainly be torn apart.

Lin Ming viewed the agreement between them both seriously. He had determined to charge towards the Pulse Condensing Stage even if he could only train within the Sky Fortune Martial House!

However, on the day that Sky Fortune Martial House held its entrance assessment, Lan Yunyue failed to show up.

At first, Lin Ming had assumed that Lan Yunyue was unable to arrive due to some matters. It was only later that he learnt of Lan Yunyue entering the Seven Profound Martial House. Additionally, the one who had ensured her success in becoming a disciple of Seven Profound Martial House was Zhu Yan, the genius Young Master of Green Mulberry City's number one family.

Although Lin Ming was only fifteen years old, he had accompanied his parents to do battle on the outside before. Thus, he has a greater level of maturity compared to others. He understood the meaning behind Zhu Yan's act of ensuring that the Seven Profound Martial House accepted Lan Yunyue.

For a great family such as the Zhu Family, their prerequisite in selecting future wives lied not in terms of appearances, but rather their martial talent. A highly talented wife would have a higher chance of giving birth to a martial genius. Although Lan Yunyue's family is only average, her Grade Three Martial Talent is very good considering her gender. In addition, Lan Yunyue herself is a beauty with an outstanding temperament. It was only natural that Zhu Yan would fall for her.

For Lan Yunyue, the difference between the Sky Fortune Martial House and Seven Profound Martial House is simply too great. The opportunities, honour, glory, and potential accomplishments that both could able to provide are simply incomparable. This is especially true regarding the extension of life that could be gained after one successfully reaches the Pulse Condensing Stage. Such a kind of temptation is simply irresistible for girls.

Faced with such appealing prospects, most females would have chosen to go with Zhu Yan as well. After all, Zhu Yan himself possesses handsome features; his family background and future are both far better compared to Lin Ming's.

Although he was able to understand, to say that this matter did not greatly affect Lin Ming would be a lie. He shut himself within his room for three days. After that, he walked out and proceeded to eat, sleep and train. Moreover, the intensity of his training had become much higher than before.

Before Lan Yunyue had left him, Lin Ming had already made the decision to break through into the Pulse Condensing Stage and

pursue an even higher realm of martial cultivation. The current Lin Ming was no different. If he still had any doubts before, then Lan Yunyue's act of leaving him had hardened his resolve towards the Martial Way.

He made the decision to enter the entrance assessment for the Seven Profound Martial House, no matter how difficult the process may be.

“Peng!” “Peng!” The heavy sounds of fists striking against the tree trunk echoed continuously throughout the forest. The name of this tree is Iron Tree. Not only does it possess an extremely tough layer of bark, it also has strong regenerative properties. Many beginners of the martial way would choose this Iron Tree to train themselves.

After throwing out who knew how many punches, Lin Ming finally exhausted himself. Leaning upon a tree trunk, he sat down on a piece of rock and removed some herbs from a backpack placed on the ground. He smeared them onto the surface of his fists and kneaded. For those who pursue martial arts, frequent usage of body treatment herbs is necessary. Not doing so would cause internal injuries to build up. Once these internal injuries accumulate, there is a possibility of becoming a cripple or even death.

This herb is called Iron Thread Grass. It was given this name because the green juice produced from squeezing Iron Thread Grass could help heal wounds but would cause a terribly painful sensation akin to having iron threads brushing upon the wounds.

Lin Ming gritted his teeth as he endured the pain. He retrieved a white cloth from within the backpack and rolled it around his fists, bandaging it.

Truth be told, there were many other herbs that are more effective compared to the Iron Thread Grass. These herbs also has a milder side effect, but comes at a much higher price. Lin Ming's circumstances made it impossible for him to afford such herbs.

Lin Ming's parents run a restaurant within Green Mulberry City. However, this restaurant does not belong to them. It actually belonged to the Lin Family¹ of Green Mulberry City.

Although Lin Ming's maiden name is also Lin, his family line had been separated from the Lin Family by several generations. The Lin Family placed some of their less important assets into the hands of their distant relatives for management. Lin Ming's parents' livelihood was dependent on their management of this restaurant. Every year they would be given a fixed amount of income and some commission. This money was naturally enough for them to subsist on, however, it would be a stretch to use it to fund Lin Ming's pursuit of martial arts.

Lin Ming's parents had originally wanted Lin Ming to continue the family business and become a treasurer for the restaurant. However, seeing Lin Ming's ardent devotion towards the martial way, they instead chose to take out all their savings for Lin Ming to purchase healing herbs.

Since then, Lin Ming's family savings had decreased bit by bit. But Lin Ming on the other hand had remained at the first stage of Physical Training.

The Physical Training Stage is the first realm for those who pursue the martial way. It involves the primal tempering of their bodies and is separated into six stages. The first stage is Strength Training, second is Flesh Training, third is Viscera Training, fourth is Altering Muscle, fifth is Bone Forging and sixth is Pulse Condensing. After that, one would be able to step into the Primal Assemblage Stage.

After applying the Iron Thread Grass juice onto his wounds, Lin Ming rested for half a long hour (1 hour) to allow his wounds to absorb the medicinal properties of the herb. He then straightened himself and was about to continue training his fists when a fat youngster walked into view. This fat youngster was carrying a long sword with him. Seeing Lin Ming, he grinned and spoke. "Brother Lin, today is the

registration day for the entrance assessment of the Seven Profound Martial House. Could it be that you have forgotten about it? Why are you still practicing your fists here?”

This youngster’s name is Lin Xiaodong, he is slightly younger than Lin Ming. Growing up together, the two of them have a very strong bond of brotherhood.

Lin Xiaodong is a direct descendant of the Lin Family. However, even for direct descendants, there exists a form of ranking. As it happens, Lin Xiaodong is part of the lowest ranked ones. As for Lin Xiaodong’s parents, they too were engaged in business and have a close relationship with Lin Ming’s parents.

After seeing Lin Xiaodong, Lin Ming turned his attention back to the tree trunk and said. “The beginning part of the registration will have too many people. The queue would take up to one or two long hours. Going there now would be a waste of time.”

“Damn it, you won’t even let go of this small amount of time. Do you really have to go that far?” Lin Xiaodong spoke out in exaggeration and walked up to the tree trunk. Observing the indentations caused by the fists and the traces of blood, he turned to see Lin Ming’s bandaged fists. He then let out a sigh of disappointment. “You really are crazy, to be able to damage Iron Wood to such an extent. However, with your current training methods, Iron Thread Grass alone won’t be enough. If you keep this up, your hands would become crippled!”

Lin Ming did not say anything. The martial way is a constant struggle against Heaven. Considering his Grade Three Martial Talent, attaining the Sixth Stage of Pulse Condensation was incredibly hard. If he does not give it his all while he was still young, then he would have no hope at achieving his goal. Once he had given his all, there would certainly be the possibility of him becoming a cripple due to the accumulation of internal injuries. However, there was also the

possibility of him attaining success before that happens. And once he could successfully enter the Pulse Condensation Stage, he could attain true primal tempering of the body and the internal injuries would vanish.

For Lin Ming, this was a battle with his back against the raging river². This was also a gamble with his life on the line.

Lin Xiaodong gave a sigh and pulled out a bundle from his bosom. He unfurled the bundle layer by layer and said. "Brother Ming, take this."

Lin Ming turned around and was shocked to find a bloody crimson coloured ginseng lying upon the cloth bundle. Judging from its appearance, this strain of blood ginseng is at least a hundred years old. It is a high-grade medicine used for mending wounds and nourishing blood. A thin slice is enough for each use. In addition, the powerful healing properties of this blood ginseng are very gentle. This blood ginseng should be worth at least a hundred and fifty gold liangs, the equivalent of Lin Ming's family's annual income.

Lin Ming's body paused, and he shook his head. "I cannot accept this Blood Ginseng."

Even though they are close brothers, this Blood Ginseng is simply too expensive. Lin Xiaodong's position within the Lin Family is very low. Even though his family situation is much better when compared to Lin Ming's it would still be far from comfortable if their income were used to supplement Lin Xiaodong's martial training.

Lin Xiaodong forcibly pushed the Blood Ginseng onto Lin Ming and said. "I bought this Blood Ginseng for you. You know how I train, I fish every three days and dry the fishing nets every two days³. My body's injuries are no more than a fart's worth. Using this would be a waste. If you refuse then I would have bought this for nothing. I do not have much ambitions in life. I just want to continue holding on to my position as a direct descendant of the Lin Family. As long as I do not end up losing this position and my next generation could also

successfully maintain their place in the Lin Family, that is enough for me.”

Lin Ming stayed silent for a moment before keeping the Blood Ginseng. He then spoke out. “Very well, I will accept this Blood Ginseng. For the sake of this ginseng, I must break through to the Pulse Condensation Stage.”

“Haha, now that is more like it. Not only should you break through into the Pulse Condensation Stage, you must also turn that son of a bitch, Zhu Yan upside down. That bastard has been an eyesore for a long time!”

Zhu Yan huh... Lin Ming sighed lightly. Zhu Yan had already been admitted into the Seven Profound Martial House. In addition, Zhu Yan is currently one of the high ranked disciples within the inner Heavenly Abode, his strength having reached the pinnacle of the Third Stage of Physical Training. Even so, Lin Ming had set defeating Zhu Yan as his objective. This decision was not due to Lan Yunyue but rather due to his pursuit of the martial way. This path required him breaking through one threshold after another; conquering one mountain after another. As for Zhu Yan, he has the honourable spot of being the number one to be conquered.

At the foot of the Great Mountain Zhou lied a stretch of buildings extending up to twenty li (10km) in length. This is the area of operations for the Seven Profound Martial House and the Sky Fortune Martial House and today is the day of registration for those who wishes to take the Seven Profound Martial House’s entrance assessment. A crowd was gathered on the field before the Seven Profound Martial House.

Even though Lin Ming and Lin Xiaodong had deliberately chosen to arrive late, they came to realize that they had underestimated the number of applicants. The applicants were all lined up in three lines, with each line extending up to several meters in length. Judging by

the current queue, half a long hour (1 hour) would be needed before registration could be completed.

“We will have to wait,” Lin Xiaodong gave a sigh and stood helplessly in line.

“En,” Lin Ming nodded his head.

“Hey, there are very few people there,” Lin Xiaodong pointed towards a small gate nearby. There were only a few people there. Furthermore, the ground was also paved with red carpet.

“That place is reserved for nobles...” Lin Ming noticed the writings on the sign.

Since the Seven Profound Martial House was built upon the grounds, buildings and resources of Sky Fortune Kingdom, it was only natural for them to give some face to the elite classes of the kingdom. In fact, many of the martial house’s affairs would be handed over to the elites to manage. One such example would be today’s registration for entrance assessment.

“Damn it,” Lin Xiaodong muttered in discontent. Nobility was something that only the Imperial Family could grant and could be inherited. Even though the Lin Family is a wealthy family, it is not a noble family.

Lin Xiaodong was cursing off at the nobles while consoling himself when the doors of the gate opened. Two young males strode out from the gate; one of them was wearing blue clothes with a long sword attached to his waist. His hair was tied up into a gold coloured headgear and had a handsome appearance.

Seeing the appearance of this man caused Lin Ming to frown. This was none other than Zhu Yan.

The Zhu Family's daughter had married into the Imperial Family and had become the Eldest Prince's favoured concubine. With the Eldest Prince's position in the royal family, the Zhu Family soared to become the number one family within Green Mulberry City. Moreover, they were also granted the rank of nobility, thus allowing Zhu Yan to ensure Lan Yunyue's admittance into the Seven Profound Martial House.

"Damn, we end up meeting a detestable person," Lin Xiaodong muttered unhappily.

Zhu Yan was walking side by side with the other young man. A few other nobles waiting outside then chose to follow the two of them. It would appear that Zhu Yan was bringing the other young man to register. The two of them continued walking forward. At this rate, it was inevitable that Lin Ming and Zhu Yan bump into one another.

With his current position and strength, it was possible that he would end up suffering badly if they were to bump into one another. But, Lin Ming chose not to run and instead looked forward in a calm manner as Zhu Yan approached.

Zhu Yan's pace was disrupted after catching sight of Lin Ming and Lin Xiaodong. His first reaction was that of shock. After that, he frowned. Seeing Lin Ming made him feel uncomfortable. Although he had snatched away Lan Yunyue, she had refused to engage in any acts of intimacy before their wedding. Clearly, Lin Ming still exists within Lan Yunyue's heart, not to mention her feelings of guilt. The only reason she had chosen Zhu Yan was due to the Seven Profound Martial House. As a man, Zhu Yan was unable to tolerate the fact that his future wife's heart remained within the palms of another man.

"You are called Lin Ming, am I right? How unexpected, you would actually follow us all the way here. You, with a mere cultivation level

of First Stage in Physical Training want to take the test to enter the Seven Profound Martial House?”

The meaning behind Zhu Yan’s words was obvious. He would never allow Lin Ming to enter the Seven Profound Martial House. Even though Lin Ming’s strength was of no threat to him, Lin Ming’s existence within the Seven Profound Martial House would make it impossible for Lan Yunyue to forget Lin Ming.

“Whether or not I manage to pass the assessment is my own problem. I am not here as a result of following anyone. I am here due to my pursuit of the Martial Way.”

“The Martial Way? A mere above average talent like you dared to utter the words of pursuing the Martial Way? Insolence!” Having said that, Zhu Yan’s finger released a light sound; after that, his long sword shot out from its sheath! Zhu Yan grasped onto the sword and slashed the air, releasing an intense sword qi, which created an air splitting sound. A barely visible wave flew outwards, directly cutting down half the canopy of a nearby tree.

The sounds of “pususu” could be heard as a large number of branches and leaves fell to the ground. The people around all stared with bulging eyes. Most of them were of roughly the same age as Zhu Yan and were not that much younger. However, Zhu Yan’s accomplishment in the Martial Way had already left them far behind.

The reason Zhu Yan unleashed this sword slash was to give Lin Ming a mental blow, and show him the gap between the two of them. “I am a Grade Four Martial Talent. I began training in martial arts since I was twelve, consuming countless medicinal pills in the process and have now entered the Heavenly Abode’s Sword Sect within the Seven Profound Martial House. I am currently at the pinnacle of the Third Stage of Physical Training. Even so, I am barely at the beginning stage of the Martial Way. And yet, someone like you with a mere First Stage in Physical Training dared to talk about the Martial Way?”

Zhu Yan's manner of speech was so arrogant, it caused Lin Xiaodong to become enraged. "Surnamed Zhu! You are simply someone born two years earlier than us! What are you boasting about? If our age were reversed, this senior would use just one hand to toss you away!"

Zhu Yan frowned and turned to look at Lin Xiaodong. He took a step forward, the primal energies within his body exploded outwards as he asked. "Who are you?"

"I..." Due to the oppressive pressure sent out by Zhu Yan, Lin Xiaodong's words were stuck in his throat. He took a step backwards, swallowed his own saliva and patted his chest before speaking. "This Young Master is called Lin Xiaodong, you better remember it!"

"Lin Xiaodong? Heng, those from the Lin Family that has the qualifications to talk with me can be counted with one hand. What makes you think that a clown like you have the qualifications to speak to me? That includes even you, Lin Ming! If not for Lan Yunyue, you have no qualifications to talk to me at all! I will give you this advice, a man must know his own limits. Someone like Lan Yunyue is not someone that you could match up to."

A female with Grade Three Martial Talent with good looks and bearing is rare within Green Mulberry City. Most of them would only appear in great families. However, considering the conflicts of interest between the great families, they would never allow their talented females to be married off into other families, leading to the strengthening of their rivals' bloodline. Thus, most great families would request that the male side marry into their family. This is the reason why Zhu Yan had said that.

"A thousand gold liangs! From today onwards, I do not want to see you face again!" Zhu Yan said as he pulled out a stack of gold bills from his sleeves.

The people around were rendered speechless. A thousand gold liangs is a very high sum of money, enough for a martial artist in the

Physical Training Stage to buy up necessary high-grade herbs for training usage for up to three years.

“A thousand gold liangs? Do you take us for beggars?” Lin Xiaodong pushed back the stack of gold bills. Truth be told, he was simply putting on a brave façade. Even for him, a thousand gold liangs is a huge sum of wealth.

Zhu Yan flicked his hands and a powerful repelling force knocked Lin Xiaodong away. Zhu Yan coldly stared at Lin Ming, awaiting his answer.

Lin Ming took a deep breath before speaking out in a slow yet powerful tone. “Zhu Yan, I am not your match in terms of talent, I am even less so in terms of family support. However, the cultivation of martial arts does not depend only on talent and financial support; there is an even more important factor... the heart of a martial artist!”

“Your cultivation of martial arts is done for the sake of wealth, status and vanity. However, my cultivation of martial arts is done for the sake of pursuing the Martial Way. The Martial Way does not exist for those with talent, it does not exist for those with authority and it does not exist for those with money. It exists for those whose heart beats for the sake of martial arts! There will come a day when I will surpass you!” As he reached the end of his sentence, Lin Ming spoke out each word with emphasis and in a clear voice. Everyone who were standing nearby could clearly make out what he had said.

A Grade Three Talent wanted to chase after a Grade Four Talent. In addition, there was an enormous gap in terms of background between them both. This brat has gone mad!

Hearing Lin Ming’s words, Zhu Yan became momentarily stunned before laughing out. “Good! Very good indeed! I will be waiting for you!” After saying that, Zhu Yan kept the stack of gold bills. With a “weng” sound, the long sword returned to its sheath. Zhu Yan then gave Lin Ming a long look before turning away.

[1 It shares the same concept as a clan where everyone has the same maiden name, but are not of the same grandfather.]

[2 A position of no retreat. A strategy employed by famed General Han Xin of the Han Dynasty in the Battle of Jingxing.]

[3 'Fish every three days and dry the fishing nets every two days' = '三天打鱼两天晒网' = A very relaxed way of doing things.]

Chapter 2: Peculiar Stone

“Brother Ming, you were truly domineering back then!” Lin Xiaodong said with gusto as they walked down the road.

Lin Ming remained quiet. The things that he had said back then had sounded grand and impressive, however, it would be extremely difficult for him to surpass Zhu Yan. The amount of effort that he would be required to pay would be colossal.

He has no fear of hard work or bitterness. But the same could not be said for internal injuries. Medicinal herbs were needed to heal those injuries and those medicines were undoubtedly expensive.

Lin Xiaodong was able to guess what Lin Ming was thinking and said. “Brother Ming, all you need to do is train hard. As for the financial side of things, I will figure it out for you. Just be rest assured, even though my grandfather’s position in the family is not high, it is still nothing to scoff at. Taking out a few hundred gold liangs is not impossible for me.”

Lin Ming stopped walking and turned around to face Lin Xiaodong. In life, there are many fair weather friends, but those who would offer help in times of need are rare. Between brothers, saying thanks would be hypocritical. Yet, Lin Ming still stopped and said in a serious tone. “Xiaodong, thank you”

“Enough, stop this. This is too much for me. I am not someone who pursues much in life. Taking the entrance assessment for the Seven Profound Martial House is simply a way to protect my father’s reputation. Brother Ming, I will bet on you. After you become a master in the future, you must help cover my ass a bit, hahaha.”

Lin Ming gave a hearty smile and laughed. “En! With a brother like you, I will definitely persevere onwards onto the Martial Way.”

By the time Lin Ming returned to his dwelling place, it was already evening. This room was one that he had rented. During this period of time, from the day that Seven Profound Martial House began its registration for entrance assessment until the day of its assessment, all the dwelling places within Sky Fortune City would be packed and inns full. The rental rates would undoubtedly increase by half. Thus, many applicants would choose to rent a room. Naturally, that in itself was not a cheap option.

Lin Ming had rented a single room of only ten square meters in area with a very simple set up. Just as he was about to begin his meditation upon the bed, someone knocked on the door.

Lin Ming opened the door to see the landlady standing there. The landlady is a roughly fifty years old woman with a somewhat obese body. The landlady's face was usually fierce and harsh, but today she was sporting a pleasant looking smile, causing Lin Ming to feel that something was off.

“Landlady, is there anything?”

“This... little fellow, I am sorry, but can you please vacate this room.”

“En?” Lin Ming frowned. “Why?”

“Hehe, sorry, but I have rented this room,” A harsh sounding male voice interrupted. Lin Ming turned around and found a man with huge monkey like ears walking in from the hallway. The man was smiling in a seemingly playful manner.

Looking at him for a moment, Lin Ming recognized him as one of the underlings that had followed along behind Zhu Yan and the other young man. It appeared that he is the underling of the other young man. Back then, the other young man had remained silent and only looked at Lin Ming and Lin Xiaodong with an expression of contempt.

No doubt, the young man was currently trying to get in the good books of Zhu Yan by sending his own underling to cause problems for Lin Ming. All he needed to do was offer a rental fee several times higher than what he had and the landlady would naturally be willing to force him out.

Presently, the Seven Profound Martial House is holding its registration event, leading to difficulty in searching for a dwelling place. Finding another place to rent was easier said than done. But even if he did, there was no guarantee that this underling would not appear to cause problems for him again.

Lin Ming's face turned heavy and he gazed coldly at the landlady. "Back then we had agreed that I will be renting for five months. I have also paid you the five months' rent in advance. Currently, there is still three more months until the deadline. But, you want me to leave now?"

The landlady smiled apologetically. "This... Naturally, I am aware of this. How about this? I will return the rent for the three months back to you. How about that?"

"Ah! Return me the three months' rent? You have quite the calculative mind!" Lin Ming's anger had begun boiling. If this landlady had been forced to evict him due to the pressure of the other person, then Lin Ming would simply have left. However, her current actions and words have made him furious.

"Hey, what are you talking about. Back then, we had only talked about it and not signed off on anything. This room is mine. Who I choose to rent it to is up to me!" Considering Sky Fortune City's status as the capital city of Sky Fortune Kingdom, all the property owners here have a subconscious sense of superiority. To them, all those who came from the outside are but country bumpkins; they would look down upon them while speaking in tones of disdain towards them. Furthermore, this man beside her was obviously someone sent by a

rich and powerful family. With someone like this backing her up, the landlady became more courageous.

At this moment, the man with monkey like ears laughed out arrogantly. "If you are sensible, then just get out immediately. I will tell you something else. This Young Master has my eyes on you. Even if you manage to find another place to rent, I will still be able to throw you out. Within this three months before the entrance assessment for the Seven Profound Martial House begins, you should just resign yourself to sleeping in the streets, haha!"

The man laughed.

For those who were born within the circle of elites, it was only natural for them to form an arrogant sense of superiority. However, even when they were expressing their arrogance, they would still maintain a certain bearing of grace and speech, just like Zhu Yan. This person standing before him on the other hand was revealing a naked form of arrogance, one befitting those of bullies who could only depend on others.

Lin Ming stared at the man with monkey like ears, his eyes turning colder with each passing moment.

"What are you looking at? Are you thinking about hitting me? Let me tell you, my Young Master is the second son of the lord of the Defence Army for Sky Fortune City. If you dare beat this Young Master, then this Young Master will..."

"Scram!" Lin Ming shouted and threw out a punch, striking the man squarely in this nose. With a "peng", the man flew out followed by a series of crashing sounds. After which, the man lied on a pile of debris amidst broken furnitures and pots, his hair dishevelled and his face dripping with blood.

A fist capable of indenting Iron Tree struck the man squarely in the face. The result could be imagined, the man's nose had totally sunk

inwards.

The landlady became shocked, her eyes bulged out for several moments before suddenly shouted out miserably. "Help! Murder!"

The landlady rushed out, but her fat legs were unable to work properly and she fell on the floor with a plop.

Lin Ming stepped towards the man with monkey like ears. Even though his First Stage of Physical Training was only the beginner territory of the martial way, it was by no means worthless. After all, many people within Sky Fortune Kingdom were unable to train in martial arts. Lin Ming on the other hand was a good talent to begin with. In addition, he was very hard working. Amongst one thousand peers of the same talent, it may be difficult to find even one with the same level of strength as him. As for this man, he was simply an underling and did not take much effort for Lin Ming to deal with him.

The man kept moaning, he had never imagined that Lin Ming would actually beat him. He raised a blood-stained finger and pointed at Lin Ming. "You... you dare hit me, you... you are finished."

"I do not know what would happen to me, but I do know that you are finished," Lin Ming delivered a kick at the man's abdomen, causing him to cry out miserably. Once again, he flew out. Only this time, he broke through the door and ended up being kicked all the way outside the house.

Lin Ming did not say anything. He returned to his room and packed up his belongings and began to leave. The entire house had been reduced to a state of mess, causing blood to drip out of the landlady's heart. She timidly said. "You... you cannot leave like that, you... must... must compensate."

Lin Ming stopped walking, he turned around to face the landlady who was slumped on the floor like a human meatball. He asked. "Compensate?"

“Compensate... compensate...” The landlady’s voice began losing its strength. She felt as though the gaze of the young man before her was just like a window into the nine infernal abysses, causing her to shudder.

Without saying anything, Lin Ming punched the walls, his fist penetrating through the brick walls of the house, causing the entire house to shudder and dust to fall off the ceiling. The landlady screamed out and fainted.

Lin Ming carried his luggage and walked out of the house without even glancing at the fainted man.

Lin Ming was well aware that after beating up this man, the person behind him would never let this go and would certainly bring upon Lin Ming no small amount of trouble. However, Lin Ming had no regrets.

As a man, there was a need to endure. If the person who had come today was a martial artist, Lin Ming would not have acted as he did and would have chosen to endure. This loss was one that must be endured. However, the one who appeared before him was a worthless underling, one who could only depend on the backing of his master. If Lin Ming had to endure what this kind of person had to say, then what was the point of him learning martial arts?

That was simply incompatible with the Martial Way within Lin Ming’s heart.

Thus, Lin Ming left the neighbourhood. After a while, he put down his backpack and started considering how to solve his dwelling problem. As of now, all the inns were full; in addition, the prices were also far too expensive for him. Even though he has no objections to sleeping in the wilds, Lin Xiaodong would probably throw a fuss and insist on bringing him to his own abode.

If Lin Ming were to do so and the second son of the Army Lord sends his men there, Lin Xiaodong himself can forget about sleeping in his house. He will have to accompany Lin Ming and sleep on the streets.

Moreover, Lin Ming had just provoked a dangerous trouble. There was no guarantee that the Army Lord's second son would not send some thugs over. In these people's eyes, causing others to become crippled was no big matter. Lin Ming did not want to bring such a kind of problem to Lin Xiaodong.

If that is the case, then where could I go?

After contemplating about it, Lin Ming finally thought of a place - the most luxurious dining establishment in Sky Fortune City - Grand Clarity Pavilion.

The Grand Clarity Pavilion's consumer base are all of the highest class. In addition, they themselves possess a strong background. With such a strong base of power, a mere second son of an Army Lord could do nothing against it.

The reason Lin Ming wanted to go to Grand Clarity Pavilion was obviously not to spend money to rent a place. He was headed there to find work. Lin Ming's parents operate a restaurant, it was a given that Lin Ming would be able to cook, the taste of his cooking was quite good as well. However, he was not conceited enough to think that he could compete with those cooks in Sky Fortune City. After all, his forte did not lie in the area of cooking...

...

Grand Clarity Pavilion remained brightly lit even as Lin Ming arrived. It is the establishment with the best business in Sky Fortune City.

Lin Ming's clothes were too ordinary, causing all who saw him entering the establishment to look at him with a strange expression. A person with such a kind of clothes would usually be unable to eat

within this Grand Clarity Pavilion. Furthermore, there was also the fact that Lin Ming is only a fifteen-year-old teenager.

However, the waiter maintained a favourable manner as he walked over and asked. "Little brother, are you here with your parents?"

Lin Ming shook his head and replied. "I am here for a job."

Hearing that, the waiter frowned. What kind of job could a mere fifteen-year-old kid do? Here, waiting requires beauties who are at least eighteen years old or handsome males who are at least twenty years old. As for cooking, what kind of cooking could a fifteen-year-old kid produce?

"Go away, don't cause a disturbance here," The waiter waved his hand impatiently.

"I can really work, just let me into the kitchen to try."

The waiter asked in an unhappy voice. "What can you do?"

Lin Ming smiled and replied. "Deboning."

"What?" The waiter became stunned.

...

Deboning is a biased line of work and not every restaurant would set up such a job. This job requires the meat dresser to cut up the quarry or hunted animals into pieces while removing its bones.

A master level meat dresser could cut up a cow with ease and skill, a good meat dresser could also cut up a cow, but would require a change of knife every year. Some meat dressers even need to change their knives once a month. In addition, the efficiency involved was low and they would need half a day to cut up a cow.

As for Grand Clarity Pavilion, their ingredients are not cow meat but Ferocious Beasts meat. The meat of Ferocious Beasts is delicious but their scales, skin, bones and tendons are exceptionally tough. Ordinary people would have to struggle to great lengths just to cut out a small part of it. Martial arts masters on the other hand would not be willing to lower themselves to do such a kind of job. Even if they were willing, someone who does not understand how the muscles, bone and tendons come together would not be able to do it. Using pure strength alone in the cutting up process would cause it to lose its delicious taste.

Deboning was how Lin Ming had first come into contact with the Martial Way. Within his parents restaurant, he trained himself in the deboning process every day for the past ten years.

It was a very tiring job! Lin Ming had never considered himself a genius in the martial way. All he could depend on was his own hard work, and continue training over and over again. That was how he managed to form his solid martial foundation, by slashing down the knife, slash after slash within the kitchen.

The waiter was unable to chase Lin Ming away and could only bring him over to the kitchen...

“Sister Lan, this little brother wants to apply work as a deboning worker.”

“Deboning worker?” Within the Grand Clarity Pavilion kitchen, a beautiful woman in her twenties wearing a gorgeous dress appraised Lin Ming. Observing the plain clothes on his body and the backpack he was carrying which made him appear like a refugee, she frowned. She then spoke in a dissatisfied manner towards the waiter who brought Lin Ming in. “What are you doing, bringing just anybody into the kitchen. Dong Zi, give him some silver and send him away.”

Obviously, this beautiful woman considered Lin Ming as a distressed child. As for the rebuked waiter, his face was bitter. Truthfully, he had

tried to push Lin Ming out, but had discovered that Lin Ming's legs seemed to have grown roots and was immovable.

A young man had moved over to drive Lin Ming away. However, at this moment, he suddenly felt his hands becoming lighter. He stared in confusion as Lin Ming had somehow taken away the boning knife that he was holding.

Before the man named Dong Zi could understand what had happened, Lin Ming said. "I am not here to beg for money. Sister, it won't be too late for you to drive me away after seeing my craftsmanship."

The beautiful woman was slightly surprised; it appeared that this little kid has some experience in the craft. She shot a look at Dong Zi and said. "How useless, you cannot even handle a little kid. Go to the storehouse and bring over a pig." After that, she turned to Lin Ming and said. "If you can complete it in half a long hour (1 hour), then I will allow you to stay in Grand Clarity Pavilion."

Dong Zi knew that he had lost face and turned shamefully to go bring the pig over. However, Lin Ming interrupted him. "No need, I will do that one."

Lin Ming said as he pointed towards a Scaled Draconic Beast.

The beautiful woman became surprised. A Scaled Draconic Beast is a Level Two Ferocious Beast whose body is brimming with muscles. These muscles are extremely tough and could resist even normal sword attacks. However, using certain herbs and simmering it for three days and nights would produce a thick soup with delicious taste.

For such a kind of Ferocious Beast, even a deboning master would have a difficult time cutting it up. This kid is crazy.

“Are you joking? This Scaled Draconic Beast is worth over a hundred gold liangs. How do you plan to pay us if you end up ruining it?” Dong Zi spoke out in discontent. He was still unhappy at Lin Ming for taking away his knife.

The beautiful woman gave Dong Zi a glance and snapped. “If I let you ruin it, do you think you have what it takes to ruin it?”

Dong Zi suddenly found himself becoming speechless. The Scaled Draconic Beast is not the same as pigs, cows or sheep. Ordinary people would not be able to break its scales even with a knife. Ruining it was not something that normal people could manage to accomplish.

The woman turned to face Lin Ming and said. “I will let you cut!”

Lin Ming nodded his head and picked the best boning knife in the kitchen. He had only cut Scaled Draconic Beasts twice; both times were during the birthday some important figures in the Lin Family. After all, Ferocious Beasts was not something that an average person could afford to buy.

Taking a deep breath, Lin Ming carefully stroked the scales of the Scaled Draconic Beast, feeling the whereabouts of its veins. This process took up the time of an incense’s stick. In his mind, he formed a diagram of the veins. Comparing it with the diagram of his previous Scaled Draconic Beast, he confirmed it to be correct.

While waiting, some people became impatient and finally asked. “What are you doing? Why aren’t you cutting?”

“Stop trying to be mysterious and just cut it.”

It was only natural that these people would become impatient. A fifteen-year-old teenager claiming to be able to debone a Level Two Ferocious Beast, it could only appear to be a prank to them.

Lin Ming turned a deaf ear to these questions. He picked up the knife, his eyes becoming extremely focused. For him, the deboning process was the equivalent of a practice session.

After having confirmed the diagram of the veins, Lin Ming finally began. He did not use an axe or a slaughtering blade; he only used the hard to wield boning knife.

In the hands of Lin Ming, this ordinary knife turned into an exceptionally sharp weapon. The knife descended and the Scaled Draconic Beast's scales were cut apart!

Observing this occurrence, the person who had been asking questions immediately shut his mouth. This feat alone would have required wrist strength of at least three hundred jin (181.4 kg). For them, the feat of dismembering a Scaled Draconic Beast would normally require either axes or saws.

The edge of the knife moved through the gap in the veins, cutting through it smoothly as though he was cutting through paper. Everyone could only hear the sounds of "shua shua" before the Scaled Draconic Beast's white muscles were revealed.

Looking at how easily Lin Ming was cutting away, the man called Dong Zi rubbed his eyes. He suspected that there was something wrong with his eyes. Is this little kid really cutting apart a Scaled Draconic Beast?

Lin Ming moved gracefully. Occasionally, a few unavoidable tendons would interrupt his work. When that happened, he would use brute strength to pull it out. Thus, he ended up using about less than half a long hour to cut the Scaled Draconic Beast into pieces. Beside the pieces of meat, rows of ribs were laid down in order. These were the most valuable part of the Scaled Draconic Beast. The lengths of these ribs were all consistent, showing almost no loss during work.

This scene caused everyone to become astounded. What Lin Ming had done may seem easy, but everyone here knew that the dismembering of a Scaled Draconic Beast is a huge project, requiring around five strong men to work in tandem for around half a day. However, that teenager only has a slightly reddish face after completing the task. Judging by his looks, cutting up a few more would not be a problem!

As it was already night, the Grand Clarity Pavilion was no longer that busy, allowing many of its kitchen members to quietly watch the scene unfold. Then, Lin Ming placed down the knife and asked. "Can I work here now? My working hours must not exceed two long hours (4 hours) and my asking monthly salary is at five gold liangs. One more thing, you need to provide food and accommodation for me."

The beautiful woman pondered this for a moment before nodding. "Deal!"

Lin Ming's condition was not low; however, it was worth it. Judging by the speed Lin Ming had shown earlier, many things could be done within two long hours. Most importantly, his work was highly efficient, causing very little loss in key ingredients.

Thus, Lin Ming began working for Grand Clarity Pavilion. The two long hours he spent there was not a loss because it was also a form of training for him. Punching tree trunks was a form of training in brute strength, while deboning was a form of precision training.

On that very night, Lin Ming remained in the storehouse and cut apart three Level One Ferocious Beasts. After having done so, his entire body was drenched in sweat and his arms were feeling sore. He prepared to cut apart the last one before heading to his lodge to rest.

For the last one, he chose another Level Two Ferocious Beast - Goldback Pangolin, this Ferocious Beast has teeth that could crush stones and could drill through a mountain as though it was tofu.

Due to having consumed too much primal energies earlier, Lin Ming had to exert a great deal of strength in order to cut open the Goldback Pangolin's scaled abdomen. The reason he had chosen this Goldback Pangolin was to force himself to surpass his limits.

After cutting open the scales, his work became much easier. The knife-edge slid through the gap between the muscles of the Goldback Pangolin abdomen. However, it was at this moment that Lin Ming felt the knife being blocked. It felt as though the knife had run into something hard.

Bones? No, the central abdomen area should not have any bones.

If that is not it, then could it be rocks? No, the Goldback Pangolin may occasionally swallow rocks, but those rocks would have been crushed to smithereens. Even if it were not crushed to smithereens, the powerful acid within its stomach would erode it. Such a big rock could not possibly continue to exist inside, could it be...

Inner Core?

Thinking of this possibility, Lin Ming became excited. An Inner Core from a Level Two Ferocious Beast is a valuable item. Even if he does not sell it, he could consume it, bringing a considerable amount of benefit to his body.

Lin Ming slipped on a pair of gloves and carefully retrieved the hard item while avoiding the stomach acid. Looking at it, Lin Ming became disappointed. It was a square shaped object, which meant that it was not an Inner Core, because Inner Cores are all spherical in shape.

It really does look like a stone, but there is something peculiar about this stone...

The grey coloured cube seemed to have been neatly cut, with precise corners. In addition, the six surface areas of the cube were engraved with black coloured inscriptions, giving it a mysterious aura.

Metal?

Lin Ming carefully observed it. It did not seem to be metal, nor does it appear to be stone. Perhaps it is a form of jade?

[TL: It's the All Spark...]

Chapter 3: Soul With No Master

Lin Ming washed the stone with some water from the river. After hesitating for a bit, he raised an axe placed on the ground and used its blunt end to lightly strike down on the cube shaped stone. The stone remained intact without a single scratch on it.

This was to be expected. The fact that this stone was able to remain intact after being swallowed by a Goldback Pangolin was proof of its incredible durability. Lin Ming gradually increased the strength behind his strikes. Eventually, he struck down with all his might resulting in a dent being formed on the axe and the hammering anvil. However, not a single deformity appeared on the cube.

Holy crap[1]!

Lin Ming was stunned. He had expected the stone to be tough, but he could never have expected it to be this tough. How was this item created?

Lin Ming could not come up with an answer. This stone and its shape is too peculiar. Perhaps some refining master created this stone using some highly durable materials. Considering such a possibility, Lin Ming decided to pocket the cube. Even if he could not figure out what it is, he could still use it as a form of decoration.

After tidying up the tools, Lin Ming headed towards the room that Grand Clarity Pavilion had prepared for him and proceeded to rest.

After practicing his punches, he had engaged in deboning for two long hours (4 hours). Lin Ming was currently feeling quite tired.

After meditating and adjusting his breath for a while, Lin Ming slumped on the bed without taking off his clothes and fell asleep. The bed that Grand Clarity Pavilion had prepared for its staff was very

comfortable. In addition, the second son of the Army Lord could not create any problems for him here.

Having reached this conclusion, Lin Ming was able to sleep soundly. In his sleep, he had a strange dream. He dreamt of a resplendent palace made of jade. Each pavilion was made of jade, its level of artisanship staggeringly high.

Wearing elegant dresses, a group of beautiful and seemingly good-natured beauties shuttled around the palace. Auspicious looking animals roamed the skies, creating the imagery of a world of immortals.

Lin Ming had never seen such a beautiful palace, not even in paintings. At this moment, the scenery suddenly transformed and the resplendent palace collapsed. Countless figures had appeared in the skies above. From amongst the countless figures, streams of light shot out. The streams of light were beautiful to behold; however, when it descended upon the lands, it caused the lands and mountains to be decimated!

The lands were split apart while the skies were covered with demonic flames. A huge spell array covering a surface area of hundreds of li (0.5 km) appeared out of thin air and multitudinous number of mysterious symbols covered the entire sky.

A war on this scale was something that Lin Ming could never have imagined! Masters! These are masters of an unimaginable realm of strength! This level of strength is something that those at the Physical Training Stage and Primal Assemblage Stage could not hope to compete against!

Everyone within this imagery are beings that Lin Ming would never have any chance of even glimpsing upon. However, how is it that so many God-like beings would appear here?

After that, the scene changed and turned into a world of snow and ice. A frightened looking woman held onto a one cubic inch cube, facing off against ten thousand figures standing on the skies.

This woman was actually standing just less than three feet from Lin Ming. Even though he understood that this was all an illusion, Lin Ming was able to feel an extremely powerful yet gentle and holy aura radiating from the woman's body!

What surprised Lin Ming most was that the cube that the woman was holding was the stone that Lin Ming had found within the Goldback Pangolin's abdomen!

The woman spoke out a series of words, but the words spoken were vague. Lin Ming could only make out two words - Magic Cube!

Magic Cube?

For some unknown reason, once he heard those words, Lin Ming's mind thought of the stone. Could it be that the stone's name is Magic Cube?

"Hong!"

An explosion! The space itself was rent apart, the skies were twisted into a raging whirlpool with seemingly infinite power, sweeping up all of Heaven and Land [2]. Everywhere it reached, mountains would collapse and skies would crumble. The icy glacier was instantly transformed into nothingness and the ten thousand figures were reduced into dust. Their souls were fragmented and absorbed into the cube!

As for Lin Ming, he found himself standing in the middle of the whirlpool, witnessing with his own eyes as everything were absorbed into the whirlpool. Everything around him was reduced to ashes while he himself remained unaffected. This feeling was simply

indescribable and would likely be an unforgettable experience for Lin Ming!

Lin Ming felt himself drenched in cold sweat. At this moment, he suddenly found that he had arrived at an incredibly large and dark space. Here, various specks of light hovered in suspension, resembling pieces of broken mirror. The various specks were of varying sizes, some big and some small. The bigger ones were as big as a palm, while the smaller ones were only as big as a grain of rice. In the middle of all those specks of light, there was a sphere of light, which emitted a soft glow, a gentle and sacred glow.

Inexplicably, Lin Ming felt that the atmosphere around this sphere of light was very similar to that of the woman he had seen earlier. No, it was exactly the same!

Could it be that this sphere of light is the form left by that woman?

Lin Ming recalled that the woman had turned into a stream of white light and was absorbed into the Magic Cube right after the explosion happened...

A stream of white light... could it have transformed into this sphere of light? If that were the case, then this would be the space within the Magic Cube. That would mean that these specks of light...

Lin Ming gasped. Could it be that these specks of light were all the fragments of the countless figures that were absorbed by the Magic Cube after they have been crushed by that spatial storm?

Lin Ming was immensely shocked!

As of now, he clearly understood that the vivid scene he had just seen were true. Although he had told himself that he was simply dreaming, he was unable to believe that it was just a dream. Everything he had seen in this dream was too realistic and the image of the spatial whirlpool fragmenting the world was deeply engraved into Lin Ming's

mind. As a mere ignorant teenager who had yet to achieve the Pulse Condensation Stage, how could he have a dream that involved such a great level of power?

Then, all those visions were true? This one stone cube had actually swallowed countless masters whose strength was at a level where he would have no chance of ever laying eyes upon?

Lin Ming could not imagine which kingdom could possess such a high number of masters whose strength could suffocate him to such an extent. He focused his eyes and peered into the dark space that was littered with countless specks of light. After hesitating for a long period of time, he extended his hand and gently touched a speck of light which was both the smallest and closest to him.

Upon contact, the speck of light instantly flowed into Lin Ming's fingertip. Lin Ming had no time to respond at all, as his head felt as though a heavy hammer had suddenly struck down on it viciously. He let out a cry and fell to the ground.

"A a a a!"

Lin Ming tightly gripped his head; he felt as though there was something desperately invading his mind. The piercing pain caused Lin Ming to wish he could crack open his skull and remove whatever was causing the pain!

He could not resist! Lin Ming felt as though he was about to be swallowed up!

Swallowed?

That is it! This must be the soul fragment's instinctive nature; it is trying to devour my sea of consciousness!

"Damn you!"

Realizing this fact, Lin Ming briefly panicked but immediately calmed himself. The thing threatening him was only a small fragment of a soul. In addition, its master had already perished. How could he lose to a minor consciousness that has no master?

Lin Ming suddenly shouted out, clenching his fists, his nails digging deep into his flesh and blood: Preserve my heart and mind! My heart that beats for the Martial Way!

I have sworn to pursue the extremities of the Martial Way, how could I allow my road to end here?

Lin Ming had no clue on how to get rid of that fragmented consciousness that had no owner. All he could do was grit his teeth and hold on with everything he had. Various disorderly images flowed into his sea of consciousness, causing him to undergo an inhuman amount of pain, threatening to render him unconscious. However, he kept gritting his teeth, maintaining his hold onto the vestiges of his consciousness and holding on to his unwavering Martial heart!

After who knew how long, this inhuman torture slowly faded. At last, Lin Ming woke up from his dream. He opened his eyes to see that it was already dawn and that he was drenched in cold sweat; his bed sheets were soaked and his palms were dripping with blood from being gripped too tightly!

Observing all this, Lin Ming was a hundred per cent certain that what had happened was no dream. No nightmare could produce such a kind of effect.

He calmly contemplated and could not help but feel scared. A person's soul consists of two parts: an imprinted consciousness and memories. Once the imprinted consciousness is erased, the soul would become ownerless. An ownerless soul could only act on instinct. Back then, the soul he had touched was only at half the size of a rice grain, its light dim. And yet, he had nearly been swallowed up

by it, how horrifying! If he had touched an even bigger speck, it was likely that he would have turned into a basket case by now!

The cube is too dangerous!

As Lin Ming was contemplating about the matter, his face suddenly changed: Eh... my sea of consciousness...

There are a lot more things inside!

Arrays... inscriptions... engravings... various bizarre symbols, mysterious characters, plain looking and powerful weapon techniques...

What is all this?

Could this be the memories carried by the ownerless soul?

This thought cause Lin Ming to become startled. He was vaguely aware that this set of memories could prove to be an unimaginable mountain of wealth...

Although it had entered Lin Ming's sea of consciousness, the memories were complex. They were not something that Lin Ming could recall as and how he liked. Those memories needed to be further consolidated and integrated.

While doing so, Lin Ming ignored the memories regarding arrays and inscriptions. These memories were a little fragmented and disorderly. The memories appeared to be about a profession that engraves inscriptions onto weapons.

Lin Ming held no interest towards this profession. There was something else that he needed, something he desired for. He kept searching through his sea of consciousness and finally held his breath as he found it: Physical Training Stage Formula - Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians!

A Legacy skill!

What is the reason for the Sky Fortune Martial House to be far below the Seven Profound Martial House? The reason is Legacy!

#meme#iknowkungfu#

[1 Chinese profanities are not my strong suit, so I am just blasting away here.]

[2 It should have been Heaven and Earth, but that place is not Earth. Terra sounded too science-ish, so Heaven and Land it is.]

Chapter 4: Legacy Skill

Sky Fortune Martial House has only eighty years of history. The Seven Profound Martial House on the other hand was founded by the Grade Three Clan, Seven Profound Valley. They possess six hundred years' worth of heritage and numerous Legacy skills!

Those who practice the Legacy skills from Sky Fortune Martial House have little hope of achieving Pulse Condensation Stage. However, the same cannot be said about the Seven Profound Martial House's Legacy skills. As long as one has a Grade Four Martial Talent, breaking through into the Pulse Condensation Stage using Seven Profound Martial House's manuals is not difficult at all!

As for Lin Ming, he has not even a decent training manual. All he had was a 'Beginners' Martial Arts' manual. Every day, he would train by punching tree trunks and debone animals. This was Lin Ming's martial way!

For the past few years, the only thing he could depend on was himself. He explored the aspects of martial arts himself through hard work and carved his way, step by step, until he reached the First Stage of Physical Training!

For him, legacies were an important existence!

Lin Ming was incomparably excited and he voraciously sorted out the knowledge regarding this Legacy skill. Not long after, this 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' surprised him yet again!

'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' is a pinnacle level Physical Training Manual from the Divine Domain. However, even though it is of the pinnacle level, it is only about Physical Training and thus was not that valuable within the Divine Domain. The reason Lin Ming became surprised was because he had finally understood what the Divine Domain is.

The Divine Domain is a higher realm that possesses hundreds of millions of years' worth of Legacies. Physical training, martial arts, swordsmanship techniques, technical skills, arrays, all of it have been developed and honed to the extreme. It is a world reserved for the strongest of the Martial Way! Their abilities and might are not something that the current Lin Ming could hope to imagine!

Thus, this 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' is simply invaluable! Additionally, there are even more soul fragments stored within the Magic Cube. Once his strength had reached the sufficient level, he would be able to incorporate even more of them!

Considering all of this, Lin Ming's heart was incredibly excited.

Presently, what Lin Ming fear most would be for the skill manual to be incomplete. After all the soul fragment that he had absorbed was only a small speck. It would be an absolute pity if that was the case. Thankfully, as he continued incorporating the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', he saw that it was intact. Everything from Strength Training, Flesh Training, Viscera Training, Altering Muscle, Bone Forging and Pulse Condensation were there.

This fact was surprising enough for Lin Ming. In Sky Spill Continent, Physical Training Manuals were generally for one stage only. For example, the 'Genuine Altering Muscle Channels' manual is specifically meant for the Altering Muscle Stage, the 'Golden Bone Forging Divine Formula' manual for Bone Forging Stage, the 'Divine Nine Pulse Skill' manual for the Pulse Condensation Stage and so on. However, this 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' is capable of propelling one from the Strength Training Stage to the Pulse Condensation Stage. But what Lin Ming found after this shocked him even more.

Within Sky Spill Continent, Pulse Condensation marks the end of the Physical Training Stage. After which, one will step upon the Primal Assemblage Stage. The Primal Assemblage Stage is divided into Post-

Celestial Stage and Pre-Celestial Stage. For most people, Pulse Condensation is a bottleneck, which they could not break through. These people would be forever stuck in the Bone Forging Stage.

Pulse Condensation is the limit for the veins within the human body. That is a commonly accepted knowledge. However, according to the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', there exists another stage beyond Pulse Condensation - Tempering Marrow!

Above the Tempering Marrow Stage, there are actually others! Eight Gates of Hidden Celestial Stems! Using the Eight Trigrams to correspond with the movement of the Nine Celestial Bodies, one could open up eight gates within their bodies. Nine Variant Dao Palace! With it, one could break through the limits of the body and reach an even higher level of strength! [1]

Regardless of Tempering Marrow or the Eight Gates, neither one of them would affect a martial artist when entering the Post-Celestial or Pre-Celestial Stage. This gives one a far higher degree of martial achievement compared to others. The benefits are self-evident!

Realizing this, Lin Ming was rendered speechless from shock. This 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' is a timeless treasure!

Lin Ming was fervently excited to start practicing. However, before he began, he checked his pocket within his bosom for the Magic Cube. To his surprise, the cube had disappeared!

Lin Ming became fearful and cold sweat started coming out of him. His hand probed around and felt something strange on his chest. He took off his clothes and found a strange symbol on the skin of his left chest. The symbol is exactly the same as the mysterious symbol of the surface of the Magic Cube.

The Magic Cube entered my body? Lin Ming recalled that the holy woman had summoned out the Magic Cube from her palm. It was no

wonder that she could do that. However, Lin Ming had no clue as to how to summon it.

Lin Ming tried to summon the Magic Cube, but to no avail. Lin Ming felt somewhat disappointed. After all, there were so many soul fragments within the Magic Cube. Back then, he had only touched the smallest and dimmest of fragment and had such a great harvest. If he could incorporate more of those soul fragments, then the amount of treasure that he could unlock would be simply unimaginable.

Thinking about that, Lin Ming suddenly gave a self-deprecating smile. He was being ignorant. If the smallest ownerless soul fragment had nearly swallowed his consciousness, then the bigger ones would likely be able to instantly exterminate him! Stop dreaming, Lin Ming!

It appeared that the secrets of the Magic Cube and the knowledge within the soul fragments would have to be left for when his cultivation had reached an even higher level. What he needed to do right now was to practice the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' as soon as possible.

Lin Ming stopped trying to summon the Magic Cube and began to explore the Legacy skill from the Divine Domain.

The essence of 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' is to transform the body into a divine weapon with amazing strength.

Additionally, the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' also emphasizes on techniques that utilizes strength. Its first layer of Strength Training is already far different from the norm.

Normally, once a person is capable of a force of a thousand jin (604 kg), that person would have achieved minor comprehension and could smash an Iron Tree with a punch. The Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians however, requires not only the training of strength, but also the training of precision, the control over the amount of strength

used. Once major comprehension is achieved, one would be able to use their palm to turn a tree trunk into fine fibres!

Reading this part gave birth to a great sense of longing within Lin Ming. There was no doubt that training this 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' would make him far stronger than the average master!

...

Three days later

At the foot of Great Mountain Zhou, with the full moon suspended in the skies, Lin Ming stood upon a plain of grass with his eyes closed. He breathed following a specific rhythm, standing there for who knew how long. His entire being was still like a sculpture, illuminated by the moonlight.

He was practising the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', a special method of circulating true primal energies derived from the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' manual. This formula is much better at utilizing the true primal energies to temper the body and forge the bones. Once major comprehension of this formula is attained, the resulting strength and durability would be greatly improved to a level surpassing those of the same realm!

Under the night's blowing winds, numerous fine grasses came together to form undulating waves which danced about. Lin Ming's breathing seemed to be in accordance with these undulating waves, as though he had become one with the surrounding environment.

A drop of dew rolled upon a leaf just above Lin Ming's head. Condensing quietly, it eventually dropped down.

Lin Ming who was originally motionless suddenly opened his eyes. He stretched out his right hand, allowing the drop of dew to fall upon his fingertip. The drop of dew rolled down the finger onto his palms. Grasping the drop of dew, Lin Ming's right hand suddenly formed a

fist, his shoulder and thigh moved to position, and he threw out a punch.

“Boom!”

With a muffled bang, the thick tree trunk before Lin Ming was shaken, traces of a fist appearing amidst the swirling tree dust!

Lin Ming exhaled and let go of his fist, allowing the drop of dew to drop down. With a “pa da” sound, it fell upon the grass and was scattered.

A smile emerged on Lin Ming’s face.

When ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’ reaches a state of perfection, then the drop of dew would have shot out together without being splintered [2]. Although his current state of comprehension has yet to reach that far, he had still made some success.

In addition, the earlier punch had left a fist mark of roughly half a foot in depth upon the Iron Tree. Three days ago, his punch could at best only leave half an inch. His current achievement was all due to the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’.

In these three days, Lin Ming had been practicing this ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ non-stop and had finally succeeded in reaching the beginning stage. Truthfully, Lin Ming was only able to train so well thanks to the memories of the senior [3]. The senior’s experience and comprehension had greatly benefited Lin Ming’s training. Even the circulating method of the skill had been deeply ingrained into the senior’s soul. All Lin Ming needed to do was use his body to recollect them.

Due to how crazy his training schedule was, Lin Ming’s consumption rate of medicinal herbs was also much faster. He had used up three

slices of the Blood Ginseng. At this rate, the Blood Ginseng would be used up within less than half a month's time.

He now has the solution to training manuals, but still faced the problem of insufficient medicinal herbs...

Thus, two days went by and Lin Ming's strength kept growing. The current Lin Ming was able to debone Level One Ferocious Beasts effortlessly. For him, even dismembering five Level Two Ferocious Beasts was considered easy.

...

One morning, Lin Xiaodong came to the Grand Clarity Pavilion to find Lin Ming. Lin Ming had earlier informed Lin Xiaodong that he was working in the Grand Clarity Pavilion, although he omitted telling him the reason behind it.

"The Annual Martial Arts Fair?" Lin Ming felt shocked, hearing Lin Xiaodong's proposal to go there.

"That is right, many martial arts masters and nobles will be there. As for the items that will appear there, there are no rare items, only extremely rare items!"

Lin Ming shrugged and replied. "How could we afford those items? As of now, I only have less than twenty gold liangs on me."

"So what if we cannot buy it? We can just go look around. Just take this as an act of gaining experience. Besides, we will be entering the martial house soon. We must at least buy a good weapon before that. Even if I cannot afford the high grade weapons, I should be able to get our hands on some middle grade weapons."

Not wanting to disappoint Lin Xiaodong, Lin Ming chose to go out with him. After all, it would be a beneficial experience.

As they were headed there, Lin Xiaodong kept talking non-stop about the fair. He was very familiar with the details of the fair, its distance from the Seven Profound Martial House, the areas that are considered sub urban and so on. As they were walking down an alley way, Lin Ming suddenly stopped and placed his hand on Lin Xiaodong's shoulders.

"What is wrong, Brother Ming?" Lin Xiaodong asked.

"Someone is blocking the way," Lin Ming touched his waist where his boning knife was strapped onto. Thanks to his training of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', Lin Ming's perception abilities have greatly increased.

He could guess who it was. A few days ago, he had beaten the man with monkey like ears. Now, the man's master has decided to show himself. This moment was something that Lin Ming had been preparing for.

Author's note:

Eight Gates of Hidden Celestial Stems originates from Chinese traditional culture. It is not unique to mangas.

[1 I tried translating them the best I could but, they could be subject to changes if the author describes it in more detail in the future...]

[2 This part is a bit confusing.]

[3 The owner of the soul fragment that Lin Ming absorbed. That poor sod.]

Chapter 5: Wager

Just as Lin Ming stopped moving, a slightly sharp voice sounded out in the alley. “Hehe, how unexpected, you have quite a high level of vigilance. You are called Lin Ming, right?” A teenager wearing silk clothing slowly walked out from the back of a residence, a contemptuous smile was etched on his face. Behind him, five eighteen-year-old teenagers followed. Most of them were all at the First Stage of Physical Training, only one of them was at the Second Stage. As for the teenager with silk clothing, he too was at the Second Stage of Physical Training.

Observing this situation, Lin Xiaodong suddenly panicked. He had recognized this teenager in silk clothing. He was the one beside Zhu Yan during the Seven Profound Martial House registration incident. Anyone could tell that this bastard was here to cause trouble.

They have a total of six people, two at the Second Stage of Physical Training and four at the First Stage of Physical Training. As for him and Lin Ming, they were both only at the First Stage of Physical Training. If things were to escalate into a fight, then they would certainly ended up being abused. The teenager in silk clothing must be a young master from one of Sky Fortune City’s great families. These people possess both authority and power. While they were not the type to kill indiscriminately, they were certainly capable of crippling others on a regular basis.

“What are you people trying to do?” Lin Xiaodong shouted out, traces of anger evident within his words.

“You will have to ask him,” The teenager in silk clothing pointed towards Lin Ming. “You are quite the impressive one, to beat up my underling until he was bleeding all over; two of his ribs were broken.”

For these young masters of great families, the lives of their underlings were of no consequence. However, their reputation was another

matter. Moreover, the underling had reported that he had already spoken out the teenager in silk clothing's name, but ended up being beaten all the same. This was what caused the teenager in silk clothing to become enraged.

“You are quite the capable one, to claim to one day trample upon me, Wang Yigao! Today, I would like to witness with my own eyes how you plan to do just that!” The teenager in silk clothing said, his face turning savage.

Lin Ming had never heard of the name Wang Yigao before, nor have he ever said anything about trampling on him. The underling most likely fabricated this in order to provoke Wang Yigao. However, Lin Ming did not feel like explaining himself. No matter what he says, this was bound to end in a fight.

The ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’ is indeed powerful, however, Lin Ming had only started practicing it for a few days. It would be simply too much to fight off so many people at the same time, especially when two of them are at the Second Stage of Physical Training. Not to mention, if Lin Xiaodong were to be taken hostage, then he would be in trouble all the same.

Considering the bigger picture, winning here would also bring him trouble. Once matters escalated and he was forced to beat up Wang Yigao, then the next source of trouble would come from Wang Yigao's father. This person is the Army Lord of Sky Fortune City. Lin Ming highly doubt that such a kind of individual would be interested in sitting down and engaging in a civilized discussion with him. For the current Lin Ming, this sort of person is an existence he could not afford to provoke.

What a pain in the rear...

Lin Ming pondered. Suddenly, a spark lighted up within his mind, he had thought of a way to resolve this problem. Facing Wang Yigao, he spoke. “Then, what do you want to do?”

“What do I want to do?” Wang Yigao was slightly stunned and instantly laughed out. “You actually asked me what do I want to do?”

The rogues he brought with him all laughed out in unison. In their eyes, Lin Ming was no different from an idiot. For him to be asking them what they wanted to do now was certainly the height of idiocy.

After laughing for a good while, Wang Yigao finally stopped and said. “I really am uncertain as to whether I should call you an idiotic pig or a pig like idiot. However, since you came forth with the question, then this Young Master will give you a chance. Don’t you go around saying that this Young Master is being ruthless. Just get down on your knees and lick my soles clean. After that, break off one of your arm tendons and one leg tendon. If you do that, I will forget about it.”

Hearing Wang Yigao’s conditions, Lin Xiaodong became infuriated. “Damn it! Brother Ming, there is no need for us to talk nonsense with them. Let us fight them to the bitter end. Our Green Mulberry City’s Lin Family is no pushover; let us see if they actually dare do anything!”

Lin Xiaodong knew that they would have to suffer miserably today. All he could do was bring out his family name and hope that the other side would show some fear. Some physical pain was not a problem, but if they ended up being crippled, that would be a huge blow to a martial artist. They may never be able to recover their original body state even with the help of rare herbs.

“Green Mulberry City’s Lin Family? Heng, did you think I would be afraid of your Lin Family? Lin Ming, are you going to do it yourself, or do you want me to do it for you?”

“I dare you! Come, did you think this Young Master is afraid of you!” Lin Xiaodong stepped forward, one hand firmly gripping onto his sword hilt. Truth be told, he was currently feeling extremely flustered. However, he just happened to be the type who would rather die than lose face!

Lin Ming pulled Lin Xiaodong back and spoke to Wang Yigao. “So, what you wanted were those things you said earlier? Very well, as long as you can beat me in a martial arts duel, I will accept your conditions.”

“Brother Ming, you...” Lin Xiaodong became anxious. Even though he believe that Lin Ming would become a highly accomplished person in the future, the current Lin Ming is only at the First Stage of Physical Training. How could he defeat Wang Yigao who is at the Second Stage of Physical Training? Lin Xiaodong feared that Lin Ming would end up with broken tendons after he loses.

Lin Ming said. “Do not worry, I know what I am doing.”

“A martial arts duel? You think you are qualified to duel with me?” Wang Yigao had never expected Lin Ming to suggest something like this. Within Sky Fortune Kingdom, government officials would not intervene in the fight between martial artists because they simply lack the capacity to do so. Thus, the conflicts between martial artists would end up being settled in a martial arts duel. As long as both sides agree, they would place down the terms of victory and defeat. After the duel, the conflict would be settled between both parties and neither one of them would pursue the other anymore. After all, credibility was something important to martial artists.

Considering Wang Yigao’s level of strength, which was one stage above Lin Ming, he did not believe that he would lose. He simply felt that the act of engaging in a martial arts duel with Lin Ming was inappropriate.

Lin Ming replied. “There is no such thing as qualified or not. There is only the question of whether you dare or not.”

“Are you trying to say that I do not dare? That has to be the funniest thing I have heard this year. Very well, since you are going to be so reckless, then I will satisfy you!”

Lin Ming said. "Very well, let us proceed to the square."

The alley they were at was too remote, with no one to bear witness. Lin Ming feared that Wang Yigao would go back on his words. However, if they were to duel before the many people of Sky Fortune City, even a thick faced Wang Yigao would have no way of denying the results. Unless, he no longer wants to live in Sky Fortune City.

A duel between martial artists is always a remarkable sight and the square would never be lacking in observers. In just moments, many people have started gathering there; even some martial artists were mixed in amongst the observers. Seeing the two contestants, the crowd started talking.

"Isn't that Army Lord Wang's son?"

"Indeed, this bastard is about to start bullying others again. I wonder which family's child it is, to be so unlucky."

"A First Stage in Physical Training going up against a Second Stage in Physical Training. That child is obviously going to lose."

"It seems that this child is just a commoner. For a commoner to be able to attain First Stage in Physical Training is quite the accomplishment. A pity! It appears that he is going to become crippled..."

...

Wang Yigao's reputation within Sky Fortune City was not good and most of the people held sympathy for those who are weaker. In their eyes, compassion towards Lin Ming could be seen.

The more people came, the more unhappy Wang Yigao felt. After all, a Physical Training Second Stager beating a First Stager was nothing to be proud of. In addition, there was the fact that his opponent's

identity was far below him. Thus, Wang Yigao did not want this scene to be witnessed by many!

Wang Yigao said impatiently. "What are you waiting for? Let us duel. After that, go break your own tendons. I will let you understand the gap between us."

Seeing the high number of people gathering around, Lin Ming faced Wang Yigao and replied. "Naturally, we will start the duel. However, if I lose, I would be at your mercy. Then, what happens if I win?"

Win? This bastard thinks he can win?

Chapter 6: Fighting Barehanded

Wang Yigao felt that this person before him must have some mental issues. While it is not impossible for one to defeat an opponent who is at a higher level of cultivation, that requires genius talent and pinnacle martial arts taught by masters. Lin Ming is a poor young man, for him to attain his current state of strength was already a great accomplishment. But considering his mediocre talent, he actually thought he could win? Could it be that he did not get enough sleep yesterday? Is he sleepwalking right now?

Wang Yigao asked with a smirk. “What do you want?”

“If I win, I want two hundred-year-old Blood Ginseng, and five hundred gold liangs.”

Two hundred-year-old Blood Ginseng, and five hundred gold liangs! The people around were all rendered speechless: This child is quite the high maintenance type! Two hundred-year-old Blood Ginseng would require up to three hundred gold liangs. All of it would sum up to a whopping eight hundred gold liangs! This is no small number; however, one needs to be alive in order to take it.

“Eight hundred gold liangs?” Wang Yigao coldly snorted. “You think you qualify? You think your arms and legs are worth that much?”

Within Sky Fortune Kingdom, the lives of nobles and commoners are not equal. Even if Wang Yigao were to kill someone, he would only end up being confined as punishment. After that, all he had to do was pay a compensation of two hundred gold liangs.

Lin Ming slowly replied. “For martial artists, their arms and legs are priceless. If you are unwilling, then I understand. All you need to do is break off your own tendons.”

“Screw you! You are asking for death!” Wang Yigao furiously roared out, pulling the long sword on his waist.

Lin Ming’s face remained expressionless as he spoke. “You have yet to answer my question.”

“Heng! A mere eight hundred gold liangs? I can give you a thousand gold liangs! However, do you think you can live to take it? This senior will cripple you. If you can still preserve your life after three moves, this senior will have my name read upside down! [1]”

Wang Yigao had become agitated, to Lin Ming’s delight: More money for the taking. “Very well, a thousand gold liangs it is!”

He had only finished speaking those words when Wang Yigao’s sword slash descended upon him.

A faint trace of golden light radiated from the sword, and a piercing sound resounded for dozens of metres.

A martial technique!

Martial techniques involve the use of primal energies to kill the enemy. When Wang Yigao claimed that he would kill off Lin Ming within three moves, he was not just being carried away by his emotions. Rather, he had confidence in his abilities, in his martial technique! The opportunity to learn these techniques is something that only the young masters of great families or disciples of martial houses could have.

Once the martial technique is employed, those who do not possess martial techniques would find it difficult to endure. This was especially true considering the difference in martial cultivation between Wang Yigao and Lin Ming. Wang Yigao had absolute confidence in winning with just one move. The reason he had said he would kill Lin Ming within three moves was simply him preparing a backup in cases of ‘what if’s.

Wang Yigao was correct in his assumption that Lin Ming had not learnt any martial techniques. Lin Ming could only resort to common moves to deal with Wang Yigao's attack.

When the surrounding people saw this scene, they all felt that the outcome had been determined. As for Lin Xiaodong, his heart became nervous. How could Lin Ming block off this sword attack?

Lin Ming's attention was focused upon Wang Yigao's incoming sword slash. Since practicing the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' from the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', his perception had increased by several folds. In Lin Ming's eyes, Wang Yigao was a wild beast [2] lunging towards him! For the past few days, Lin Ming had been dismembering countless number of wild beasts. Even though the beasts were already dead, dismembering them still required him identifying the gap between the bones. Whenever his knife descended, it would be quick, accurate and vicious!

At the moment when Wang Yigao's sword descended, Lin Ming's knife shot out. There were no calculations or considerations within his move; it was based purely on instinct. The knife went through the loophole within Wang Yigao's move, slashing upwards with a slight tilt.

Equipped with a dazzling sword, going against an extraordinarily common knife, yet the results was something that no one could have expected. Lin Ming leaned to the side and dodged Wang Yigao's sword slash. The knife in his hands however, had incredibly stabbed into Wang Yigao's ribs!

"Ping!" After suffering from a stab of the knife, Wang Yigao exclaimed, his body collapsing and tumbling down onto the ground.

What is going on? The surrounding onlookers were unable to understand what had just happened and were stunned.

Presently, a one-foot long hole had appeared on Wang Yigao's clothing, from his chest to his ribs. However, no blood was issued out. Instead, something silver shined through the hole.

“Flexible armour?”

Lin Ming secretly lamented. It turned out that Wang Yigao was wearing a flexible armour under his clothing. If not for the armour, that blow earlier would have dealt a heavy blow towards Wang Yigao's fighting potential.

“You!” Wang Yigao was both shocked and furious, his eyes turning blood shot. He had actually been hit! He was hit by someone whose martial cultivation level was one stage lower than him! In front of countless onlookers! For the prideful Wang Yigao, this was an unacceptable matter.

“I want you to die!”

Logically speaking, that strike earlier signified that Wang Yigao had lost. But, how could the enraged Wang Yigao admit his defeat? Wielding his sword, he once again aimed a slash at Lin Ming!

Another martial technique was launched!

As for Lin Ming, he was just like an experienced hunter, catching onto every weakness shown by a wild beast!

“Ping!” The scene from earlier replayed itself. This time, a slash tore open a hole on the right side of Wang Yigao's clothing, turning it into a waistcoat.

The surrounding onlookers were all stunned. They stared in disbelief at the outcome of the battle. How could this have happened? As the saying goes, ‘one inch longer is one inch stronger’. Wang Yigao's sword has a far longer reach than Lin Ming's boning knife. In addition, Wang Yigao possesses martial arts techniques and has a

higher level of martial cultivation. But, in this fight, he ended up being stabbed twice with a seemingly ordinary move.

“That child, both his body speed and his knife speed is faster than Wang Yigao!” A martial artist who was observing the duel commented. A Physical Training First Stager beating a Second Stager in terms of speed was an unusual occurrence!

Lin Ming’s speed was indeed faster than Wang Yigao. In fact, the disparity in speed was quite considerable. This was the results of practicing ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’! Before practicing it, Lin Ming’s knife wielding skill was already extremely accurate and insightful. However, his speed and strength was unable to complement it. It would only be natural for him to be unable to defeat Wang Yigao who was at the Second Stage of Physical Training.

But, with the existence of ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’, the situation was now completely different!

“A a a!” Mad with fury, Wang Yigao tore off his outer clothing, revealing a silver looking flexible armour. He had lost to a Physical Training First Stager brat. If he were unable to exact vengeance, then he would have no face to remain in Sky Fortune City.

“I will slaughter you!” Wang Yigao desperately poured out the primal energies within his body, causing his sword to emit an even brighter radiance than before. He slashed down onto Lin Ming’s head. If this strike were to connect, Lin Ming would certainly end up dying.

At this moment, Lin Ming made a move that surprised everyone. He threw away his knife and faced his opponent bare handed!

All the onlookers were unable to comprehend this move from Lin Ming. This slash from Wang Yigao was obviously the final blow, backed with every last drop of energy. So, why is this teenager throwing away his weapon at the most critical moment? Surely, the

knife is stronger than a fist? In times of crisis, he could even use it to parry the opponents sword.

[1 In the old days, Chinese words are usually written from top to bottom.]

[2 The word used here is different from the word used for Ferocious Beast. Not sure if the author made a mistake.]

Chapter 7: Innate Divine Strength?

The strongest attacking method within the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' that Lin Ming practiced was not a sword attack, but a fist attack!

At present, the force behind Lin Ming's strongest punch could leave a half-foot-deep indentation on an Iron Tree trunk. The durability of the Iron Tree was in no way inferior to steel. If the object being punched were stone, it would have been easily smashed to pieces!

Lin Ming kept his gaze onto Wang Yigao, his eyes locking onto Wang Yigao's chest. Moving to the side, he threw out a punch!

"Peng!"

With a muffled sound, Wang Yigao spat blood out of his mouth and flew out. Even with the protection of the flexible armour, even with a martial cultivation of Second Stage of Physical Training, even with the training to toughen his flesh to an incredible degree, he was still unable to endure this superb punch from Lin Ming.

Observing Wang Yigao falling onto the ground like a dead pig, the surrounding onlookers were left speechless. Wang Yigao had threatened to defeat Lin Ming in three moves, but the result was the complete opposite. Lin Ming instead defeated Wang Yigao in three moves!

Within the exchange of three moves, each one had ended with Lin Ming being victorious. If not for the flexible armour, Wang Yigao would have lost early on. How was this a fight between a Physical Training First Stager and a Second Stager? This seemed to be the complete opposite!

"Senior Liu, what is your opinion regarding this incident?" In the midst of the duel, an elderly man appeared amongst the onlookers. In

his younger days, this elder had once attained the Fifth Stage of Physical Training, Bone Forging Stage. He was only one-step away from reaching the Pulse Condensation Stage; however, he had ultimately failed to break through. A Bone Forging Stage martial artist has the same amount of lifespan as the common people. Naturally, their bodies could not withstand the ravages of time. Now that this Senior Liu's age had exceeded seventy, he no longer has any fighting strength. But, his perceptive eyes remained.

The elderly man pondered for a moment before replying. "That child is gifted with innate divine strength!"

The grade of a martial artist, be it Grade One Martial Talent or Grade Two is simply the measure of the speed and ease with which their body could absorb primal energies. The faster they could absorb primal energies, the higher their martial talent would be.

However, the martial artist's body strength is not included in the measurement for martial talent. That is because most people have the equivalent amount of strength.

Occasionally though, some people would be born with innate divine strength. Some are born with ten times the strength of the normal people, and others more!

With great strength comes great speed. Naturally, they would have an advantage in battles.

Yet, the number of these martial artists is small. In addition, not many of them are successful. After all, as martial cultivation progresses, the primal energies become more important and the effect that one's innate strength has becomes correspondingly smaller.

"So that is how it is..." The surrounding observers nodded their heads. This explanation was very reasonable.

Lin Ming picked up his knife and walked step by step towards Wang Yigao. The current Wang Yigao was in a miserable state. His clothes had turned into strips of fabrics, blood spilled from his mouth and his face was covered with dirt. Wang Yigao wanted nothing more than to kill himself. He had completely lost his face in today's incident. He would likely become the laughing stock amongst his peers within Sky Fortune City.

Lin Ming spoke up. "You are the one who said it earlier, one thousand gold liangs, cough it out."

Shit!

Hearing those words, Wang Yigao nearly spat out another mouthful of blood.

Oh, what a son of a bitch I am! Did I really have nothing better to do? Why did I have to turn eight hundred to one thousand? Even though Wang Yigao is a child of a great family, taking out one thousand gold liangs is no small matter!

Today's incident was certainly the most miserable and unforgettable one in his entire life. With so many people bearing witness, Wang Yigao was unable to go back on his words.

Additionally, since it was the terms of a duel, he could not even think about exacting vengeance or risk being ridiculed by all. Unless, unless it was done in utmost secrecy.

"Money, bring out the money!" Wang Yiago shouted at his men! Today, he would have to admit his loss. But, this was not the end, he swore that he would hack Lin Ming to pieces!

The group of men were all shocked senseless by Lin Ming's performance. Even if all of them were to gang up on Lin Ming, there was no guarantee that they could win! Is he really just a Physical Training First Stager?

“Xiaodong, collect the money,” Lin Mind said. One thousand gold liangs was no small sum. Even though Wang Yigao is rich, he would not have brought so much money with him. Thus, he could only pool them up through his men.

From the moment Wang Yigao vomited blood, Lin Xiaodong had been stunned. It was only after Lin Ming had called him that he finally reacted: Oh, my God! Is this for real? He actually won?

Furthermore, they had won a thousand gold liangs. A thousand gold liangs! All of Lin Xiaodong’s wealth combined amount to no more than only two hundred gold liangs. Buying up a single Blood Ginseng took up more than half of it!

Looking at the gold bills within his hands, Lin Xiaodong’s expression was one of shock. Then it turned into ecstasy before turning into one of laughter.

His eyes were never big to begin with. Now that he was smiling to such an extent, his eyes were almost unnoticeable.

“Haha, we are rich, we are rich! You are too kind, what could I say? Thank you so much for your generosity. Knowing that we were in a tight spot, you seniors have chosen to gift us with some spending money, thank you!”

“Especially brother Gao Yiwang who felt that eight hundred liangs was not enough and had insisted on giving out one thousand liangs. On behalf of the common people, I give you my thanks.”

Hearing Lin Xiaodong’s sarcastic words, ‘Gao Yiwang’ who was already seriously injured felt his mouth overflowing and spat out another mouthful of blood. Back then, he had said that if he could not kill off Lin Ming within three moves, his name would be read upside down.

Screw your granddaddy!

Wang Yigao furiously gritted his teeth. As for the others, their faces were contorted to the extreme. As it so happened, Lin Xiaodong's face was not the attractive kind. To them, Lin Xiaodong's current face was so disgusting, it could kill. After collecting the gold bills, Lin Xiaodong spit out some saliva onto his palms in an exaggerated manner and started counting the bills one by one.

"Twenty, thirty, fifty, hundred, hundred five, hundred seven..."

Lin Xiaodong counted the thick stack of gold bills three times, then said with a grin and squinted eyes. "Eight hundred and fifty gold liangs, one hundred and fifty short. I say, aren't you all men of wealth? How is it that you cannot even cough out such a small sum of money?"

Hearing Lin Xiaodong's words, Wang Yigao nearly vomited blood yet again. His face sank deep, he shook his right hand and a "ding" could be heard. His long sword was embedded in the middle of the square. "Verdant Sharp Sword, it can be sold for two hundred gold liangs in any weapons shop. We are leaving!"

Six of them came to exact vengeance on others. However, the end result was them having to hand over all their possessions, including their swords. This pathetic state was a first for Wang Yigao!

Seeing the Verdant Sharp Sword, Lin Xiaodong grinned. He has some knowledge regarding weapons and the Verdant Sharp Sword is truly an extraordinary weapon. At the very least, it is far better than the one he was using.

Lin Ming said. "If you like it, you can have it."

Lin Xiaodong replied. "I cannot do that. Brother Ming, you do not even have a weapon yet."

Lin Ming replied. "My fists are my weapons. For now, I have no need for a weapon. Later on, I will get myself a weapon that fits me. Even

though this Verdant Sharp Sword is sharp, it is too light for my fighting style.”

Lin Xiaodong recalled the fearsome fist that Lin Ming had thrown back then and had to agree that this sword was simply insufficient to complement with Lin Ming.

“Very well, I will take this sword then. However, you sure are fearsome, Brother Ming. I never saw you as such a character before,” Ever since Lin Ming started practicing martial arts, Lin Xiaodong had never witnessed Lin Ming in action. How could he have known that Lin Ming’s strength had soared to such a degree. He believed this to be the results of Lin Ming’s hard work.

Lin Ming explained. “Wang Yigao does not have a detailed grasp on his own strength, and is only a beginner Physical Training Second Stager. In addition, his foundation is also unstable. His level of cultivation is probably a result of stuffing himself with medications. Even his martial techniques were nothing of note. Beating him is nothing to be proud of, my first goal is Zhu Yan.”

Zhu Yan is different from Wang Yigao. Zhu Yan possesses a high amount of strength and a solid foundation. His Grade Four Martial Talent is not simply for show. In addition, he is also quite the hard worker. Thus, the current Lin Ming had no chance of beating Zhu Yan.

Lin Ming accepted the gold bills, then split them apart and handed one stack to Lin Xiaodong without counting. “Use this.”

“What are you doing? This gold were all earned by you. I have already taken the sword. As for gold, I have no need for it. With my way of practicing, ten gold liangs per month is the most I will need.”

Lin Ming remained silent for a while, then without objecting, he kept the gold bills into his own bosom. Between him and Lin Xiaodong, such details were unnecessary.

“All right, let us go to the fair.”

“You are right! Haha, I nearly forgot about it, the fair! Now we have the capital for it, one thousand liangs! Son of a bitch! This senior had never even laid eyes on such a huge sum of money before! This time, I will be making a splash!”

#meme#countvoncount#

Chapter 8: Qin Xingxuan

Lin Ming laughed out as well and said. “That is right, we’ll make a big splash. However, you will need to be careful when going out in the next few days.”

“Nn? You mean Wang Yigao?”

“En, he would surely exact vengeance. He would not do so openly, but rather in secret. This is a bridge that we will have to cross...” Lin Ming’s tone lowered as he said that. If Wang Yigao were to drop this matter here and now, then everything would end. However, if he were to secretly conspire against them or send assassins to target them, then Lin Ming had no scruples in giving Wang Yigao a taste of his own medicine. Naturally, Lin Ming would rather not have to resort to such measures. After all, Wang Yigao’s father is the Lord of the Defence Army for Sky Fortune City. Once such an incident is found out, everything would end badly.

...

The fair was held at the outskirts of Sky Fortune City; this place is where the biggest number of business transactions is conducted. There would be one summit of fairs held every year. In this fair, even martial masters of neighbouring kingdoms would come over to find and buy the items that they require.

As Lin Ming arrived at the entrance to the fair, he was shocked as he observed the bustling crowd of people and the high range of goods on display. This was a place of luxury, a world for nobles and masters. It would not be surprising to see a Pulse Condensation Stager randomly moving around the crowd of people.

As Lin Ming was observing the movements of the crowd, a disturbance occurred amongst them. Lin Ming turned his head to watch and was surprised to find a white luxurious carriage drawn by

horses arriving at the entrance to the fair. The horses pulling the carriage were all the same precious type: Draconic Snow Horses. These horses possess great speed and endurance. One of them could fetch up to ten thousand gold liangs in price. Forget the Young Masters of wealthy families, not even the Young Masters of great families would be willing to purchase it.

What kind of personage could be inside it? For them to be riding in a carriage worth several tens of thousands in gold liangs, could it be that a member of the Royal Family is here? Lin Ming thought to himself.

At this moment, Lin Xiaodong spoke up. "Do you see that crest depicting a knight with golden spear on the carriage? That is the Marshal Quarters carriage."

"Marshal Quarters? You mean Marshal Qin?" Lin Ming asked.

"Who else could it be? There is only one Marshal in all of Sky Fortune Kingdom."

Within the military structure of Sky Fortune Kingdom, the position of a captain of ten thousand men is a great accomplishment. Next up would be the position of Major. Above Major is Colonel; above the Colonel is the General. Finally, above the General is the Marshal. In all of Sky Fortune Kingdom, only one person made it to the position of Marshal during the past eighty years.

A number of citizens of Sky Fortune Kingdom may not know of the current Emperor's name. However, all of them knew the name of the Marshal.

The Kingdom Protector, Grand Marshal Qin Xiao; eighty years ago, Sky Fortune Kingdom suffered from an invasion led by the Eastern Sun Kingdom. Countless lives were lost and the Imperial Family had to take refuge in the South. Qin Xiao was the only one who had stayed behind. Commanding his Qin Army forces, he contributed

meritorious deeds in succession, reclaiming lost lands and saving the northern population who were in dire straits. After three years, the Qin Army forces finally managed to defeat the Eastern Sun Kingdom. The capital was relocated and Qin Xiao was granted the title of Marshal in the very same year. At the same time, the veterans of the military were organized to establish the Sky Fortune Martial House.

Due to their limited foundation, the Sky Fortune Martial House is unable to compete with the Seven Profound Martial House that is established by a Grade Three Clan, the Seven Profound Valley. However, Sky Fortune Martial House also serves as the military academy for Sky Fortune Kingdom. Those who enter the military after graduating from Sky Fortune Martial House would certainly be able to attain a good position.

As for Qin Xiao, he is the Honorary Principal of Sky Fortune Martial House. His martial cultivation had reached the Post-Celestial Stage, middle phase. For the average martial artist, the Post-Celestial Stage and those beyond the Pulse Condensation Stage is something too far away.

Presently, the carriage had stopped and Lin Ming inhaled deeply: Could it be that Qin Xiao himself is inside? That man is a legend!

The carriage's curtain was pushed aside and Lin Ming became surprised. The one who had emerged was a young woman.

Seeing the young woman, Lin Ming felt surprised while Lin Xiaodong's eyes became glued straight at her. What is a beauty that can topple kingdoms? This is it.

The young woman was wearing a white dress, her black hair descending down onto her waist, her skin glistening with the lustre of beautiful jade, her appearance as mesmerizing as the full moon, her eyes shining like the waters of autumn. She has a fine raised nose, pointed chin and a slender jade like neck. There were simply no flaws that one could see. In addition, she exuded an aura of wisdom and

purity, causing an inevitable thought to enter the minds of those who set their eyes on her: A peerless beauty.

Escorted by her bodyguards and maids, the young woman came out of the carriage and proceeded into the fair. Wherever she went, it would seem as though numerous colours had lit up in the area and peach flowers would blossom. As for the young woman, she seemed to be dancing within this beautiful image, leading to everyone seeing her becoming lost in a reverie.

All eyes were gathered onto her. Her carriage that cost several tens of thousands of gold liangs, her spectacular beauty, the Qin Family that had endured for over eighty years; any of these factors would have been enough to make her the centre of attention.

It was not until the young woman had disappeared from his sight that Lin Xiaodong was willing to turn away his gaze, a look of reluctance etched on his face.

Lin Ming asked. "Who is she? Do you know her?"

Lin Xiaodong answered. "I do know her, but she doesn't know me. She is Qin Xiao's granddaughter, Qin Xingxuan. Truly... perfect." While explaining, Lin Xiaodong praised. Lin Ming only gave an "oh". He had somewhat guessed her identity and had simply asked without any motives. Thus, he was not too surprised.

Lin Xiaodong glanced at Lin Ming and smiled as he continued. "That girl is a Grade Six Martial Talent."

"Wha... What?"

Lin Ming was dumbfounded. "Grade Six Talent? Are you certain?"

The highest talent that Lin Ming had seen before was Grade Four. As for Grade Five Talent, there was not a single one in Green Mulberry City. Perhaps these people do exist in Sky Fortune Kingdom, but their

numbers would surely be limited. However, he had just been told that the young woman that had just passed by is a Grade Six Talent. For him, this was simply an unimaginable fact!

Li Xiaodong had already expected this reaction from Lin Ming and said. "I say, Brother Ming, don't you think that in comparison with her Grade Six Martial Talent, her looks are even more amazing?"

Lin Ming replied. "I think that her talent is even more amazing, a Grade Six Talent! This is simply unheard of! Speaking of which... what martial arts stage is she in?"

Lin Xiaodong shrugged. "I do not know about that. But, it must surely be unbelievably high. Considering that she is gifted with such a high talent and also born within a great family, a Physical Training Fourth or Fifth Stage is probably nothing surprising. However... Brother Ming, why do you only ask about these martial arts stuff? After seeing such a perfect beauty, aren't your heart moved at all?"

The question surprised Lin Ming. He is not made of wood. A fair lady is beloved by all gentlemen; and Qin Xingxuan is indeed perfect. However, after what had happened with Lan Yunyue, Lin Ming had come to understand that a loving family that can last forever could only be attained after he has enough strength. With his current level of strength, such pursuits were meaningless. Turning around, he asked. "Why? Do you like her?"

"Nah, I am just an admirer. This girl is so far away from me, I cannot have those kinds of thoughts. I do not even know how many people within Sky Fortune City are hoping to be the lucky man; however, none of them is worthy. This girl would surely enter a true clan in the future, like the Seven Profound Valley. She had long since become a core disciple of the Seven Profound Martial House. Mortals like us simply cannot hope to match someone like her. But, what makes me most jealous is the fact that she is also an Inscription Master."

“Inscription Master?” Lin Ming do not have much understanding towards certain unique professions. Generally, these unique professions have a high demand in qualifications and the number of people holding those professions is small. The amount of money spent on those professions is also much smaller, comparable to a drizzle when placed beside the expenses necessary for martial arts cultivation.

“En, an Inscription Master can utilize special ingredients to engrave arrays and symbols upon weapons. They can strengthen equipment by engraving a symbol on it. This profession requires a high level of talent and a strong soul force. But, once one becomes an Inscription Master, earning money would be as easy as eating and drinking!”

“Unfortunately, most martial artists would have no chance to come in contact with this profession. Even if they have the talent, they will have no chance of achieving success in their practice because the practice would involve too many materials. Naturally, that amount of money is only a drizzle for the Qin Family. It is said that Qin Xingxuan’s attainment in Inscription Techniques had reached a high level. She is unmatched amongst her peers and could even beat many from the older generation.”

Lin Xiaodong had received a formal education in the Martial Way, thus leading to a higher level of understanding compared to Lin Ming. As he was eloquently explaining, he suddenly realized that Lin Ming had his head lowered as though he was deeply considering something.

“Brother Ming... Brother Ming, you are not feeling aroused, are you? Well, considering what a Heavenly beauty she is, this is normal.”

“Nothing,” Lin Ming waved his hand.

So, that is what it was! Those arrays, inscriptions, engravings, various symbols and mysterious characters, simple looking weapons that

radiated a strong atmosphere that were within the soul fragment, they were all pertaining to inscriptions!

It turned out that those items that he had temporarily ignored actually had such a high value!

Chapter 9: Inscription Technique

The truth was, at the time Lin Ming had thought of giving up on pursuing any path of being an inscription master. It was because he singularly desired to practice martial arts, and the steps to being an inscription master were unfathomably difficult! One had to work themselves silly, and be able to comprehend thick and comprehensive tomes in short periods of time. It was also very serious and taxing in terms of spiritual consumption. Lin Ming did not have the energy to pursue both the martial path and inscription at the same time. But now things have changed, and that was because he needed...money!

For Body Transformation, there was no such thing as the good medicine, there was only better! What he was using right now was only budget goods! There was medicine in the world that was able to directly increase the cultivation level, and even to assist in breaking through bottlenecks. For this type of medicine, the price was of course astronomically expensive.

Not only that, but weapons, armor, martial skills, all of it needed money! For Lin Ming, the 1000 taels of gold that he had won was only a pittance. It was insufficient to help him break into the Pulse Condensation Period.

If he wanted to make money, he would therefore need to become an inscription master. Lin Ming immediately decided to rent a room, and began to fuse memories left over from the soul fragment.

These memories comprised the bulk of that little soul fragment, and they were also very obscure and difficult to understand. For Lin Ming this fusion took several hours.

Lin Xiaodong was left by himself to stroll around the trade fair. It was hard to imagine that his friend had come all the way to unexpectedly cultivate! This dedication was something to at least be admired and supported. He truly was a Martial Nutjob.

In the afternoon, Lin Ming finally opened his eyes. Although he had a splitting headache, a devilish smile split his face his eyes were bright and wide with the wild color of joy!

The inscription techniques that originated from the Realm of the Gods were beyond exquisite and utterly profound. It was not something that the lower planes even dare hope to compare!

The inscription techniques found within the soul fragment were unexpectedly amazing! They could increase the level of equipment; they could also increase the strength of medicines. One could also engrave the body itself to enhance the speed of cultivation!

This was the sum of countless millennia of knowledge within the numerous dimensions of the Realm of the Gods. And it was only a tiny fragment! The lower planes might possibly have had some similar techniques but most were without a doubt lost in the passage of time due to destruction of ancient sects or other such reasons.

Sky Spill continents engraved inscription technique can only increase the level of equipment; moreover, even it can only do so by a tiny amount! To compare this with the Realm of the Gods' techniques was truly comparing the Heavens and Earth.

Lin Ming raised himself to stand. Suddenly a wave of nausea swept over him. The massive amount of information emerged within the recesses of his mind. It was a pain that came with a certain virtue. He had spent three hours fusing with the soul, and had only managed to absorb half of the information so far. But in his mind he already had a clear plan.

First he would buy the material and start from the very foundation to practice! In particular he would focus on increasing the efficacy of medicines and other compounded drugs, as well as the body engraving method. Lin Ming was ecstatic with the endless possibilities!

It had to be known there existed certain pills and drugs and herbs in this world that were prohibitively rare and precious. Even if you had any amount of money you still might not be able to purchase medicine like this! If the engraving inscriptions for medicine were applied, then the strength of one impossibly rare medicine could become two! What kind of ridiculous concept was that!?

As for the bodily engraving inscription, there wasn't need to say anything about increasing the practice speed. It was equal to enhancing one owns grade of talent. It was truly a heaven defying technique!

However thinking of the precious materials that he would have to buy, Lin Ming gave a forced smile as he recalled recent events. He had succeeded in obtaining more than 800 taels of gold, he must spend this wisely.

Sky Wind Grass juice, rank three desolate beasts blood, long-tailed cicadas molt, ice bound shrimp...Ling Ming purchased these materials in a frenzy. He could find only a few that matched those in his mind. Perhaps most ingredients he recalled were from the Realm of the Gods. If so, even in the Sky Spill Continent much less the Sky Fortune Kingdom, it was possible these materials did not exist.

Whether for better or worse, Lin Ming had gone all in on inscription. He purchased several symbol papers and headed back to practice his inscription technique. This truly was a money burning field. He must be successful in engraving these inscriptions and selling a few. Otherwise, he would not have any more follow up funds.

As Lin Ming was calculating, Lin Xiaodong arrived back from the trade fair. His eyes widened as he saw the massive pile of materials in front of Lin Mind. "You nutjob, what have you done!?"

Lin Ming did not know what to say, so he only replied truthfully, "I'm studying the engraving inscription techniques."

“...Studies, what studies?” Lin Xiaodong asked with a whisper as his eyes widened to the size of eggs. He did not dare to believe his ears almost!

“Studying the engraving inscription techniques.” Lin Ming replied again.

“You’re s-s-s-studying the e-engraving inscription technique!? Holy shit brother! My brother, my own brother were you turned into an idiot this morning? With less than one thousand taels of gold you want to study the inscription techniques? And where would you get a teacher!?”

“I purchased a rare and precious book.” Lin Ming pointed to the table. Lin Xiaodong’s eyes bulged again as he read the thick letters.

‘Inscription Technique: Getting Started on the Path to Inscription.’

Lin Ming had bought the book mainly to understand the Sky Spill Continents inscription techniques and contrast them with the ones he acquired from the soul fragment.

As Lin Xiaodong saw this knockoff ‘Inscription Technique: Getting Started on the Path to Inscription’ he almost vomited blood. He was speechless. He immediately began to regret boasting about the greatness of inscription masters in front of Lin Ming. The regret was heart wrenching.

He turned to the materials again and Lin Xiaodong felt his heart bleed yet again. Although he didn’t want to know, he still turned to look at Lin Ming and asked: “This...how much did you spend on these materials?”

Lin Ming replied helplessly, “...about 70 taels of gold...”

Lin Xiaodong sighed. Seventy taels of gold he could accept, but the tone of his voice indicated Lin Ming had not finished. The following

words almost caused him to collapse in a fit of despair.

“...I have 70 taels remaining.”

At this point, Lin Xiaodong’s world turned black, and he slipped passed out on the floor.

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“This young and handsome master! This is a very good inscription symbol paper. It is a product of the famous Master Baihong! If you use it on a treasure, the strength and prestige is bound to increase by a minimum of twenty percent!”

At the trade fair’s transaction hall, a man wearing formal clothes smiled as he introduced the goods to some juniors of large aristocratic families. After the inscription was drawn up it was placed on the symbol paper and could be used. One merely had to speak the command to mark the desired equipment. It was extremely convenient!

This transaction hall was not a place where one could casually stroll through, it required an admission of 50 gold taels! To the average martial artist, this was not a small number. It was enough for them to purchase medicinal herbs for half a month.

Lin Ming had paid the fee and entered. At this time the entirety of his fortune was a grand total of 75 taels of gold. He entered the transaction hall carefully and with the utmost caution. If he accidentally hit and bottle or pot, even if he sold his body to some old noble lady he would not be able to afford it!

Lin Ming wanted to see how inscription masters made money, but this was the floor where inscription products were sold so he could only spend the money to come here.

“This is Master Baihongs work?” A young noble asked as he stepped forward. He was obviously attracted by the renown of this masters work. “Do you have any proof, clerk?”

“Certainly young master, we have proof that even Master Baihong’s own master will approve. Be reassured young master, that the goods at this trading hall have their providence known! If not, then we will compensate at ten times the price!”

“...Hmm...how much gold?”

“1500 gold taels, if you have the VIP card we can also offer a 10% discount.”

“mmm....I think that...” The young noble pondered this for a moment. Even if he was obviously rich, 1500 gold taels was not a small number.

Hearing this price, even though Lin Ming was prepared, he was still startled! 1500 gold taels! This was simply gold coins raining from the heavens!

But...since he was learning inscription techniques by himself, then it would be hard to turn a profit so early.

Thinking of this golden rain, Lin Ming became excited. He was already brimming with impatience to learn inscription techniques!

Chapter 10: Heavenly Ladies Gathered in the Holy Land

Although Lin Ming fused with the memories of the soul fragment, he could not make light of the difficulty of inscription. In order to obtain more knowledge to fill the gaps, he must practice body and mind spiritual coordination in order to fully integrate the soul's memories within his body!

The materials for inscription were equal to his hard earned gold. He could not waste a single bit of it. At this moment Lin Ming dared not use any of his precious materials, instead he gathered the true essence within his body to practice. He circulated the energy in his body and every time it seemed to sync with the memories from the soul fragment, he carved that feeling into his mind.

This was a very tedious and spiritually taxing process, but in Lin Ming's mind he could see tens of thousands of pages flipping one at a time, again and again, as his soul and body gradually acclimated and his movements became smoother.

The soul force required was excessively demanding. Every now and then Lin Ming would take a short rest, and in the process he would read that alarming knockoff-like manual, 'Inscription Techniques: How to Get Started on the Path to Inscription', and he would feel relaxed. Although the manual could offer him nothing that he didn't know from the soul fragment, it let him have a more solid and concrete understanding of the Sky Spill Continents engraving inscription techniques.

At the end of a full day of practice, Lin Ming closed the 'Inscription Techniques: How to Get Started on the Path to Inscription' manual. In the manual was not a single description of anything resembling Sky Worm Silk.

The Sky Worm Silk was a top priority for Lin Ming. He had seen many materials in the Trade Fair but had not seen this, though he had found a good trail of information. The Sky Fortune Kingdom did have Sky Worms, but they were generally used for making zither strings.

Lin Ming could not actually be sure that these two things were one and the same...

Because the differences in quality of land and cultivation, materials identified in the Realm of the Gods might not necessarily be the same though they shared the same name. The sky worm silk in the Realm of the Gods could be completely different than the one in Sky Spill Continent. Lin Ming identified not with the name but with other factors such as appearance and smell. If these matched then it was most likely the same thing. But in Lin Ming's mind he has only the memories of the Realm of the Gods sky worm silk, and since he has not seen the Sky Spill continent's version he could not be sure they were identical.

Lin Ming thought very carefully about where he could find Sky Worm Silk and finally concluded that he might be able to locate some in the Seven Profound Martial House.

The majority of martial artists may use the sword, sometimes the knife, or bow, and so on, but ever-so-often there are those that use extremely rare and precious weapons. For instance, the zither!

Seven Profound Martial Houses name of Seven Profound naturally originates from the Seven Profound Valleys. But Seven Profound Valleys name also originates from a faction of seven people, each of which uses various weapons. One of them was a female, and her weapon so happened to be the zither!

Therefore the zither is also a legacy inheritance of the Seven Profound Valleys and has been passed down generation from generation to the present day. Because of this, it is an established department in the Seven Profound Martial House!

But the difficulties of the zither are too many to count. The talent required was unbearably high, but they also had to have a calm and regal temperament. Due to these requirements, this department of the Seven Profound Martial House had always been lonesome compared with the more popular departments. The vast majority, at least 99 percent of those who came to study the zither were women who came to cultivate their character and instrument skills and held neither interest in bloody killing nor interest in the extreme studying of martial arts.

Lin Ming immediately set off. His destination was the Zither Department's Public Lecture Hall where they publicly lectured!

Each year the Seven Profound Martial House that was set up in the Sky Fortune Kingdom selected top tier talents to enter the Seven Profound Valleys. At the request of the royal family, the Seven Profound Martial House also gave special permissions to non-students to enter the public halls where they were able to attend lectures.

However in order to enter the public lecture hall one needed a special Pass Card! Otherwise everyone and their mothers and fathers and pet dogs would come. So the public lecture hall was waterproofed against anyone except those with permissions.

The Seven Profound Martial House had laid down the rules for entry. One had to be at least the third stage of Body Transformation, part of the aristocracy, or a student of the Seven Profound Martial house or the Sky Fortune Martial House. Others did not have the privilege to enter the public lecture hall. The lectures were truly popular and in high demand, but the real content was still reserved for core disciples.

The Pass Card that Lin Ming currently had was borrowed from Lin Xiaodong. The Lin Family was very big after all, and many juniors and seniors that cultivated the Martial Path were naturally in the Seven

Profound Martial House. With Lin Xiaodong's connections, obtaining a Pass Card wasn't too difficult.

As Lin Ming first went to visit Lin Xiaodong, who shouted. "Brother! My own, dear brother! Have you finally been cured of your idiocy?"

Lin Xiaodong truly did admire his brother's hard work and diligence towards inscriptions. In his heart he had always believed that this big bro of his would achieve the highest possible boundaries of martial artists and become a legend throughout the lands! But the engraving inscription techniques were something that were not achievable by just ones convictions. No matter how driven you were, you needed inborn aptitudes!

If it was really possible to become an inscription master by tossing around 800 gold taels to purchase some materials and a copy of this truly shady manual, 'Inscription Technique: Getting Started on the Path to Inscription,' then inscription masters would be crawling all around like ants.

In Lin Xiaodong's eyes, for Lin Ming to study inscription was nothing but a pipe dream. Not only would he lose all his money and become a beggar, but he would also waste valuable time!

But Lin Xiaodong was a true brother to Lin Ming. It wasn't possible to persuade him so Lin Xiaodong could only helplessly lend Lin Ming the Pass Card as he considered his options.

He decided he would find an auspicious time and bring Lin Ming to the medical hall and find a renown doctor. What else could be wrong with Lin Ming but that his brain had been muddled and his spirit was disturbed!

Then, Lin Ming arrived at the Seven Profound Martial House Zither Department Public Lecture Halls. It was a graceful building that was three floors high. The lecture area was spacious.

However, pitiful and occasionally thickheaded Lin Ming did not know that the Seven Profound Martial Houses' Zither Department Public Lecture Hall was equivalent to a ladies restroom. It was a truly Holy Land in which all men were expressly forbidden!

The reason for this was that the Zither Department's students were essentially all women. These women who wanted to study the Dao of the Zither tended to be from aristocratic families. In their entire lives they had been gradually influenced by the sweet melodies of music, and thus their appearances also were comparably high! They were among the most beautiful specimens of womenkind. The result of this was that many aristocratic young masters' hearts were disturbed and tempted with lewd thoughts, and had the night dreams that they would poach one of two of these beauties.

These young masters relied on their status to attain a Pass Card and could thus frequent the Zither Department to spy on girls with their dark and frankly dirty intentions. They did not come for the lectures, instead focusing their eyes on perving on the female student's curves, especially those with luscious thighs and...rounder chests.

Even after the lectures were over they would follow them around and eat meals in their proximity and badger them as the ladies went shopping! Finally the beauties of the Zither Department reach the limits of their patience! They had come here to learn the Dao of the Zither and they needed to maintain a calm heart and peaceful mind, which impossible with all these lewd dogs hounding them about! Gradually the Zither Department began to prevent men from entering, in particular those shifty eyed male hooligans and directly threw them out, relentlessly and without mercy!

Lin Ming entered the Zither Department Lecture Hall, but the lecture time had not yet started, and several female students were quietly inside, exchanging talk and zither skills with each other. In the center a girl was playing a new tune. It was a nimble and fresh tune that was

filled with elegance as the notes flowed out; it was a tempting tune that lingered on one's mind.

Lin Ming approached to take a gander. The string on the zither was not Sky Worm Silk, as he had anticipated. After all, Sky Worm Silk was an expensive and rare item. The strings were also especially fierce and tenacious. Someone whose cultivation was too low could easily be wounded trying to play on Sky Worm Silk. The young and fragile flowers of the Zither Department would have no way to use such powerful strings.

The girl who was playing the zither was too dedicated to her craft to notice Lin Ming, but the two other female students who were listening naturally noticed the presence of a male. They knit their brows and frowned, but did not speak.

Every other period of time there would always been some men with evil intentions hovering like flies. They would wait for their turn and while pretending to be some zither enthusiast, they would come closer only to look at the female students chests. These sorts of men made the female students feel utter revulsion.

The female students who studied the Dao of the Zither tended to be thin skinned, and did not want to lose face over arguing against some dirty beast over whether their goods were ogled, so many sexual deviants would be intense and even maybe cop a feel with their hands or feet. It wasn't until a group of sisters banded together under the guidance of the Elder Senior Sister and all the perverts were shown the door.

Even so, there were still those utterly shameless and thick-skinned rogues and rascals, who even after being thrown out, would come crawling back with the excuse that they were true students of the Dao of the Zither, and that they wanted to study this 'Dao of the Zither' together with other female students, and that they certainly did not

entertain any dirty thoughts. But they were without a doubt, shameless students who were only masters of the Dao of Depravity!

Because of this, the Elder Senior Sister also became equally ruthless, and the second day she set upright a bold sign above the entrance upon which was written, 'Men and Dogs, Do Not Enter.'

The matter became increasingly serious, and was finally addressed through the intervention of high level members within the department. Men were therefore banned from the Zither Department Lecture Hall. The exception was that male students who came in could still enter, but under the absolute condition that their presence was determined by the Zither Department's female students. Any men that had a hint of lewd or evil intentions were instantly expelled and had all privileges forever revoked!

As such, over time, now the Zither Department Lecture Hall no longer saw even the shadows of men.

Lin Ming naturally does know the sordid history of the Zither Department and its war with all perverts everywhere. He looked around awhile and did not find a single instrument that used Sky Worm Silk, and so began stroll around down one side of the hall to a collection of books, hoping perhaps there wasn't something here that was related to what he was looking for.

As he left them, several students finished playing, and they looked at the distant Lin Ming that was standing near the bookshelves. They said with a whisper, "this fellow doesn't look like he studies the zither."

"Mm, I think I saw that little shifty-eyed rascal looking at Xiao Sian's hand a moment ago."

"Surprisingly he doesn't seem that old. He looks around 15-16 years old."

“Humph! This is our home turf here. A 16 year old male should already be married. Someone at my age might already be a mother.” The girl who spoke was only a light 17 year old girl. In Sky Fortune City, 18 year olds will generally have married by then. In the more rural countryside, they would even marry one or two years in advance, so a 16 year old married man wasn’t too rare.

“Whatever, it is not under our control. Elder Senior Sister will come to the lecture soon. If this fellow has any dirty thoughts she will immediately ask him to leave.”

Lin Ming had not heard this young girl’s discussion; otherwise he would have been left speechless. He indeed did look at Xiao Sian’s hand, but that was only because he was trying to ascertain the material of the strings!

He kept looking for the information on the Sky Worm Silk. Luckily the Zither Department Lecture Hall was very large, and even this one side had a good area set aside for a collection of books, each of which held a variety of musical knowledge and history.

Lin Ming of course was not interested in music whatsoever, he searched and searched and finally found what he was looking for! It was a manual named the ‘Sky Zither List.’

‘Sky Zither List’ was a an encyclopedia on ancient instruments of all sorts, that included origins, users, manufacturers, materials, and other arcane knowledge, all of which were described in minute detail. Of course in these rare materials were also included the Sky Worm Silk! Lin Ming was incomparably excited, and he began to read with vigor.

‘Sky Zither List’ introduced the Sky Work Silk’s properties and gathering methods. The only fault so far was that was no available picture of the Sky Worm Silk, but Lin Ming was able to roughly determine that this was the Sky Worm Silk that he was looking for!

Lin Ming was just innocently and earnestly reading, and did not realize at all that the number of female students in the Lecture Hall began to creep up. They on the other hand did notice him in the corner by himself. In this group of heavenly beauties, the presence of a single man in his dirtied clothes was truly plain as day.

Luckily Lin Ming had not looked around as all his hearts attentions were focused on the book. Even though the female students thought it might be fake, they did not have any evidence that they could use to throw him out.

Originally the lecture would have proceeded smoothly, but there existed the Zither Departments' legendary Elder Senior Sister, who retained an enormous prejudice against the entirety of men-kind!

In the social circles of aristocratic young masters, the Senior Elder Sisters name was like a thunderbolt that reverberated in their ears and caused their hearts to heat with anger. That sign upon which 'No Man or Dog shall enter' was an insult to all of them and caused them to feel the pain of losing so many chances with ladies of such... appreciable goods! They cursed her to remain a spinster for the rest of her life!

In fact, the Elder Senior Sister was a beauty among beauties. She was around 20 years of age, and had a flawless oval face, stature that belonged that to royalty, long and slender thighs and legs that climbed to the sky, and her most dangerous weapons of all, the twin peaks of Mount Tai!

It was a pity that the Elder Senior Sister had never shown any interest in men, and was easily irritated with a short temper. Any male who dared to gaze upon the forbidden Snowy Peaks of Mount Tai would be referred a swift and decisive kick between their two legs!

After the Elder Senior Sister arrived, she instantly discovered Lin Ming! Her willow eyebrows instantly wrinkled and she laid down her

zither and arrived in front of him. She rapped her fingers three times on his desk and asked him, "How did you get in?"

Chapter 11: Elder Senior Sister

When someone is angry there can be differences in the projection of that anger. With just a few words, or a slight change in body language, the story told and the effect had would be drastically different. For instance, this Elder Senior Sister had her slender eyebrows pointing straight up, her waist was rigid and unbendable, and in addition to the knocks on the table, the intense and murderous gaze, and the chilling tone used, her killing intent was soaring to the heavens! A young, simple-hearted male student who saw her would only be frightened out of his wits and cause a mess in his pants, timidly being unable to speak.

Lin Ming was also a bit confused, and wasn't sure if he came to lecture the proper way, so he asked a bit timidly, "Was I not allowed to come here?"

As soon as the Elder Senior Sister heard Lin Ming's words, her heart instantly raged with flames of anger! This little rascal! She did not believe that he could possess a Pass Card and still not know that the Zither Department had an unwritten agreement that all men could not enter! At this moment, a sweet and gentle voice sounded out, "Sister Ling, what is happening?"

Lin Ming looked towards that sweet sound and he was suddenly shocked! It came from a girl wearing a simple white dress, with hair like flowing ink. She was simply an elegant immortal beauty with incomparable grace. She was none other than Marshal Qin Xiao's granddaughter, the infamous Qin Xingxuan!

At the trade fair, Lin Ming had seen her from afar. In every single parameter, from her number one family background, her sixth grade talent, her peerless beauty and charm, her skill at inscription, and strength, all of this made even top tier talents feel inferior.

Although Lin Ming thought that with his stroke of heavenly luck, he was destined for greatness and would be able to become a hero of the entire Sky Spill Continent, at this moment Qin Xingxuan was an unattainable existence. Let alone him, before her presence even that spoiled bastard Zhu Yan would be nothing but a frog staring out of a well.

Lin Ming was astonished, he had not thought that he could see Qin Xingxuan at this moment, but his astonishment was seen by everyone and especially the Elder Senior Sister!

Humph! This was his true sexual deviation nature emerging at last!

“The toad thinks he can eat some swan!” The Elder Senior Sister’s heart burned as she criticized him. The truth was the girls thoughts were complex at this moment, although the Elder Senior Sister thought him a repugnant man, after Lin Ming did not respond after seeing Qin Xingxuan, she did not get the general feeling that he was some sort of prevent. This didn’t sit well with her. After all, all men were perverted!

She said to Qin Xingxuan, “this deviant little child snuck in to harass us women. I am questioning him. You, where is your pass card?”

The following few words after were to Lin Ming, who could only scratch his head. When did he come here to harass girls? Why was he being accused of this?

He said, “I only came here to look up some reference books, please don’t accuse me of anything I did not do without evidence or proof. All you are doing is drawing absurd conclusions and insulting mine and your intelligence.”

“Looking at reference books? All you did was look at that ‘Sky Zither List’. Are you thinking that you are going to make a zither or something?”

Lin Ming didn't have anything to say in response, so he casually said, "I just wanted to understand some things."

"Humph! These shameless lecherous men have always said they wanted to understand music and used this as an excuse to take advantage! Such acts are really disgusting. So you have interest in zithers hmm? Good, then I ask you, how many notes does a zither have, and what are they? What kind of zither material suits the treble notes, what kind of material suits the bass notes? If you can tell me and satisfy me with answers then I'll believe you have an interest in music and you want to study the zither."

Lin Ming froze on the scene. He knew only the most minimal details of zithers and music, much less zither knowledge of which he knew nothing!

"Humph! So you dare to lie in public! You just wanted to look at a book so you could appear as if you were acting casually. You little pervert, your real goal was to peek on us girls! I've seen your kind plenty enough. Hand over your Pass card, scum!" The Elder Senior Sister put out her hand in front of Lin Ming.

Lin Ming was silent. His Pass Card was borrowed, and although the Seven Profound Martial House was lax in their use, he had to conform to the rules since he was here using the Pass Card.

But Qin Xingxuan said, "Sister Ling, consider this matter settled. This is only his first offense; there is no need to be so harsh on the boy."

Qin Xingxuan also thought that Lin Ming was lying, and the truth was that he was indeed lying!

The Elder Senior Sister could naturally not disregard Qin Xingxuan's words, so she said, "Xingxuan, your heart truly is too gently; we really cannot afford to tolerate people like this. This kind of person, just taking his Pass Card is being lenient."

'Take my Pass Card?' Lin Ming said with a shock. "You are also a student. You aren't part of the school authority. What jurisdiction and right do you have to confiscate anything of mine?"

"Humph! What a smart mouth. I have the qualifications to confiscate the Pass Card and this was granted to me by the school authorities to me and me alone. In this Zither Department everyone must give me face. What I say goes. Here, I am the god! Now hand it over, or you'll see what I can do!

The Pass Card was borrowed from Lin Xiaodong, naturally Lin Ming could not let it be taken, or else how could he face his brother who had taken such pains to get it for him!

Lin Ming does not have any choice but to admit his true purpose. In fact this wasn't really anything. Inscription development was nothing new, and new materials being researched were a common matter, whether or not they succeeded.

Lin Ming said, "I am researching inscription techniques in regards to the Sky Worm Silk material."

Researching inscription techniques? Using Sky Work Silk as a new material in some technique?

If these words came from the lips of an Inscription Master in their 50's or 60's then the Elder Senior Sister wouldn't be surprised, but to hear these words from a young boy of 15 to 16 years who was still wet behind the ears? The development of new materials and techniques? Were you kidding me? Was this a bad dream?

Only an Inscription Master who was practicing techniques and found his current materials inadequate would go to seek something new as a substitute. This 15 year old country bumpkin, at best his foundation would be reading some shoddy guide like 'Inscription Techniques: How to get Started on the Path to Inscription.' Even that would be

considered good. So to develop new materials, on what basis was he not lying out of his ass again?

The Elder Senior Sister laughed out loud and said, “You think we are dumb or something? It’s true that I do not personally understand inscription at all, but unfortunately for you, you are out of luck! At my side is the greatest inscription talent in the entire Sky Fortune Kingdom, and even in several countries around! You want to show off your garbage skills before a true expert? I really am going to die smiling here. Xingxuan, I ask you, have you started to study new materials yet?”

Qin Xingxuan gave a straight look at Lin Ming. She was similar to him in age, and could not think that Lin Ming was saying anything that wasn’t a lie. She said, “Engraving inscription techniques are numerous and have profound diversity. Even just in primary materials there are recorded over 13600 kinds, and in more advanced materials, because of their secrecy it is hard to state the number. Even these 13600 materials are enough for an inscription master to learn for years to discover their effects, usages, mix ratios, structures, and other such things. My own talent is low, and I have not been able to find the use for all these primary materials, much less search for alternatives.”

The Elder Senior Sister laughed with a self-satisfied smile. “Ha-ha! The little perverted boy is spinning his web around and around and now it all comes crashing down! Spin some more boy, this Big Sis is waiting for you!”

Lin Ming heard this grossly exaggerated laughter and could only laugh to himself. This woman was certified crazy. A complete nutjob. Was she dumped by a man or something? She had some sort of psychological abnormality towards men.

He said, “I really am here to study. I am studying the inscription techniques and was suddenly inspired by a dream. Who said that I

must succeed or would not succeed? Who said that a new inscription apprentice could not study new materials?”

“Humph! It seems you’re not scared of death until you see your own coffin! Good! Very good! This Big Sis is a reasonable human after all. Today I will let you sincerely convince Xingxuan here. The inscription technique I don’t understand, so you test him.

Qin Xingxuan was frustrated. The Elder Senior Sister was indeed paranoid of men, but looking at this young man he had to be lying. He was young and wearing simple attire so his family background can’t be prominent. Did such a youth really have the financial resources and opportunity to learn the inscription techniques? Why would you mercilessly expose the poor boy to this extent?

She said, “Sister Ling, please let this be considered as finished.”

The Elder Senior Sister replied, “Xingxuan, you are just too kind-hearted! You do not know how we were initially harassed by these scums, and our struggles to stop them! If we are tenderhearted and merciful, then there will be no end to their pestering!”

Qin Xingxuan didn’t have anything she could further do except ask him a few simple questions. It would be fine if he could at least answer one!

“This fellow student, do you know who established the Sky Fortune Kingdom’s inscription technique?”

Qin Xingxuan asked the most general question as possible. But even this caused Lin Ming to be silent and scratch his head. Who the hell knew what old fogey established the Sky Fortune Kingdom’s inscription technique. And who even cared? The memory of the Realm of the Gods would not have such trivial knowledge, and even the manual ‘Inscription Techniques: How to Get Started on the Path to Inscription’ only spoke of the rudimentary knowledge, and did not

expand on the history or the Sky Fortune Kingdom's inscription technique history.

Seeing Lin Ming stuck, the Elder Senior Sister's smile grew increasingly radiant. This only confirmed for her that the youth was nothing more than a pervert of the Dao of Deviants, and in her psychologically warped mind she wanted to torment the little rascal some more for fun.

"You don't know even this? Even I know you have nothing to say."

But Lin Ming reluctantly said, "I do not know history but I know a bit about pharmacology and material reactions."

Pharmacology and material reactions? This was quite a broad and diverse field that not even Qin Xingxuan had begun to master, much less this youth. Qin Xingxuan thought that that there were some truly unreasonable people. If they were wrong first, then they just had to admit it and it would all be good. What was the meaning of continuing the deception further?

Therefore she asked a not so simple question, as she wanted to end this boring and insignificant interrogation. After all she came here to study the zither, and she was missing the lecture. Although Qin Xingxuan's weapon was a sword, that didn't stop her from playing an instrument either.

"Then this student, do you know the 'shock' inscription and the unique pattern and characteristics of it?"

Chapter 12: Qin Xingxuan's Invitation

The engraving inscription technique may use tens of thousands of different materials, from the common to the incomparably rare. These materials could be combined in a variety of different ways, and when supplemented by an inscription master, they would then be able to draw a myriad of arcane and profound inscriptions!

The inscription techniques contained 3600 foundation lines and 4900 foundation symbols. These myriad lines and symbols could then be combined into a variety of permutations to trace and engrave the ever changing inscription technique.

The 'shock' inscription was only a single one of the 3600 kinds of foundation lines.

Lin Ming naturally knew the 'shock' foundation line. In fact, he knew that the foundations lines was not limited to 3600, but there were actually 6000 different types. It was almost double the foundation lines that the Inscription Masters of the Sky Spill Continent possessed.

However, just like the Sky Worm Silk, Lin Ming was not sure that the Sky Spill Continents 'shock' line was the same the one in the Realm of the Gods. He could only hope that there weren't too many differences. He stretched out his right hand and the true essence gathered on his fingertips. With his hand he drew a series of brilliant lines in the air. They glowed with a silent and gorgeous light and finally coalesced into a complex diagram that shone in front of Qin Xingxuan and the blankly staring Elder Senior Sister.

Lin Ming had been practicing these inscriptions every day, and the soul fragments memories and his finally began to harmonize. The results of this were in two words, quite handy.

Lin Ming asked, “Was this the ‘shock’ symbol?”

Qin Xingxuan stared dumbfounded, and the Elder Senior Sister looked at her and noticed her expression. She instantly able to determine that this young hooligan was not just doodling with his fingertips, but had drawn the ‘shock’ line and there was no mistake about it! Shit! This young hick pervert actually unexpectedly understood inscription techniques?! Wasn’t this just too preposterous?!

In Qin Xingxuan’s heart she was truly surprised and was trying to not reveal her complex emotions. There were 3600 foundation lines, and it was absurdly difficult for an amateur to remember them completely. It wasn’t too strange to say that Lin Ming knew this one foundation line, but what startled her was the ‘shock’ symbol he drew was completely correct; the energy was placed in the right spots and it was simply astounding. This could only be the results of painstaking effort during practice!

With a bit of depression in her heart, she startled, “It is...”

Lin Ming said, “The ‘shock’ pattern is a sign of the killing god, its use typically will have it placed on a weapon. When a martial artist uses a weapon he will generally concentrate his energy on the weapon, and the energy will be used in a battle to defeat the enemy, but the increased effectiveness is limited. If the ‘shock’ line is placed on the weapon, then when a martial artist concentrates his energy in the weapon, it will flow through the ‘shock’ pattern and create a high speed vibration which increases the penetrating power, effectively increasing the degree of weapon sharpness...”

Lin Ming easily explained the ‘shock’ pattern as Qin Xingxuan had expected. If he was able to draw the ‘shock’ pattern with such skill, then he of course had to know the principles behind it! It would only be strange if he did not!

Qin Xingxuan’s competitive spirit was also aroused! She couldn’t let this boy outdo her! She asked, “Then, this fellow student, do you also

know the 'flag' symbol drawing technique and principle behind it? She had abandoned the relatively simple foundation lines and raised the stakes to some of the more complex foundation symbols. However, this naturally could not confuse Lin Ming! In fact, Lin Ming's understanding of foundation symbols was far more deep and profound than anything that could be offered in the Sky Spill Continent.

He calmly drew the 'flag' symbol in the air. Although the foundation symbols were somewhat complex, Lin Ming's finger did not have the slightest pause, and in the blink of an eye the complex inscription symbol sparkled in the air.

Now, even Qin Xingxuan was completely awed. The foundation symbol was far more complex with double the lines and even more so difficult to trace the energy in the symbol, but Lin Ming had done so with ease. This had already far surpassed Qin Xingxuan!

My god, this was a genius! Unexpectedly this random kid turned out to be a genius among geniuses in inscription talent!

But who did he study with to learn this godly engraving inscription technique? His appearance indicated he was not from some big aristocratic family. Was it possible that he was apprenticed to some ancient sage or extraordinary hermit who liked to live in the remote and secluded mountains?

Qin Xingxuan found that Lin Ming was filled with riddles, and she continued to test him. The more they exchanged the more she was surprised! This Lin Ming was not like he seemed! There were 3600 lines and 4900 symbols which added to more than 8000 different kinds, and he casually listed them, as if he were familiar with each one!

Compared to Qin Xingxuan's surprise, the Elder Senior Sister was already floored by their conversation and remained confused on the sidelines as the two inscriptionists spoke to each other in what

seemed to be a different and completely heavenly language; she could only look on at Xingxuan who showed increasing amazement and admiration.

The Elder Senior Sister understood Xingxuan very well. Do not be fooled by Qin Xingxuan's elegant and cool expression! She treated everyone with good manners and effortless grace, but the truth was that the natural sixth ranked talent and her immense strength had doomed her heart with the soul of arrogance. Before now, she had never given anyone of the same generation such a high appraisal.

Finally the Elder Senior Sister became numb. She only understood one thing; today it would be impossible to confiscate this boys Pass Card!

Shit! To think she would make such a big mistake! She stomped her feet on the ground! To think that this random hick kind could actually be some sort of inscription talent!

This Elder Senior Sister was really going to go mad!

Gradually, Qin Xingxuan's expression grew increasingly respectful from the tone when the exchange started it became progressively humble. She found that by conversing with Lin Ming, her knowledge of symbols and energy structures insights had a broadened outlook due to his unique understanding and depth of knowledge. It was a great and rewarding feeling.

Qin Xingxuan was able to confirm her suspicions that Lin Ming was a rare talent that could only emerge once a century. But behind him was an even greater mystery! This shadow master that taught him could only be an Inscription Master of absolute knowledge and authority! Even if compared with her own teacher, it was like comparing a candle to the raging sun!

Exactly what kind of origin did this youth have?

Qin Xingxuan had great interest in Lin Ming, not mention the exchanges they had in which she just profited, but Lin Ming himself, and the mystery teacher behind him had extraordinary significance to the Qin Family!

With that thought, Qin Xinghuan said, "Fellow student, it's about time to begin zither lessons, so I'll have to excuse myself. It was very wonderful talking to you today. If possible, perhaps after the zither lecture ends, then little Xingxuan would like to ask you to go to the Great Clarity Pavilion for a quick meal, and...explore...the principles of inscription technique together. Is this agreeable with the fellow student?"

Qin Xinghuan's sweet and dulcet voice was very persuasive, and coupled with her sincere expression and heavenly appearance; it was hard for any male to refuse.

The truth was Lin Ming did not want to reject her. Not only was Qin Xinghuan's background impressive and she herself beautiful, she was also rare in that she treated others well and did not have any airs of superiority. In front of such a girl it was impossible to have any hint of malice.

However Lin Ming was too tight on time and the exam for the Seven Profound Martial House was only three months away. He needed to make money during this period with the inscription technique to purchase the medicines he needed, and then engrave the inscriptions on the medicines and further his own cultivation as quickly as he could, all in order to enter the Seven Profound Martial House.

Even if he entered the Seven Profound Martial House he would still need strength. There was still that slimy Zhu Yan that would undoubtedly be eyeing him for a fight. If he didn't increase his strength then he couldn't even be considered a worthy opponent for Zhu Yan, and would be stepped all over miserably!

Lin Ming was simply uninterested to stay in the zither class, and then have lunch with a beautiful woman, and after lunch continue chatting with the day disappearing without any of them keeping track, and then exchanging contact information with the aim of meeting again. For Qin Xingxuan this was good and dandy, but for Lin Ming he would learn nothing! After all just in the exchange right now, it was Qin Xingxuan that had picked up all the advantages and insights, and there was no new knowledge or inspirations that she could confer upon Lin Ming!

So Lin Ming somewhat regrettably refused and said, "I'm very sorry but today I have some things to do, so I must hurry back."

"Oh..I..well, I should have known." Qin Xingxuan said with regret and her cheeks flushed red. She had asked him and had not considered the possibility of rejection. In fact, Qin Xingxuan since her childhood days had never once invited a boy of the same age as her to eat a meal! But she has been asked out countless times! All of which she rejected as she ate together with her close friend. When refusing others time and feelings, she had absolutely no feelings towards it. But this time she was the one rejected, and her number one discovery was that the taste of rejection was also very bitter as if she suffered from injustice. After all even though she came from a large aristocratic family, in the heart of her heart she was still a 15 year old young girl!

To Lin Ming's rejection, the Elder Senior Sister's brain short-circuited and she almost ran up to slap him around. In her mind was only one thought! This guy...this guy actually refused the one and only Qin Xingxuan!

My god!

Is such a thing even possible on this beautiful world!?

Is he really a man!?

Chapter 13: Inscription, Go!

“Hey you, stop! Stop you hear me! Do you even know who she is?!” The Elder Senior Sister yelled with utter disbelief. Although it wasn’t evident from just looking at Qin Xingxuan’s cool expression, but because they were the closest of friends, she knew what the poor girl was thinking. How could she let this little punk get away with harming the heart of her dearest friend? Why must men always be this cruel and thoughtless? This was what scholars called a true miscarriage of justice!

This man truly was a hateful specimen of all mankind. Let alone the most stunning beauty Xingxuan, even if a random girl plucked from the Zither Department were to be presented, it would cause hordes of men to run over like dogs. This boy didn’t know his own limits!

For any man to just simply reject Qin Xingxuan like it was just another day; this must have been a dream!

Lin Ming’s heart mourned. He certainly knew who Qin Xingxuan was, but it wasn’t like he could reveal his plans, so he tried to skirt around the subject, “Elder Senior Sister, I really do have something I must do, I’m not lying to you here.

“Who the hell are you calling Elder Senior Sister you little rascal? Look, I’m not going to quibble with you over such small matters, so I’m going to show some grace and lend you some servants to do whatever it is that you needed to do, however unimportant it may be.” The Elder Senior Sister stood in front of Lin Ming with her hands firmly set on her waist and blocked him from leaving. Although her family background wasn’t anywhere near as grand as Qin Xingxuan, she was also from an aristocratic family and dispatching a few servants to handle matters in Sky Fortune City was simplicity itself.

Lin Ming was at a loss of words, this maiden was too overbearing and haughty, he said, “My business is cultivation, I just don’t have the

time in these few upcoming months to spare.”

The Elder Senior Sister wanted to say something, but Qin Xingxuan interrupted her, “Let this fellow student leave, perhaps it is his master calling him.”

In Qin Xingxuan’s mind, with Lin Ming’s accomplishments at his young age, he must have focused most of his life’s attentions on diligently practicing. In these cases it was only natural that his mysterious master would arrange harsh lessons for him every day.

Hearing these words of hers, Lin Ming felt relief in his heart. Although he had spoken the truth, and he was just a tad more mentally mature, compared to these two beauties, he could not relax because of their overwhelming strength and background. With just a word alone, they could crush him!

As Lin Ming prepared to leaving, Qin Xingxuan smiled and said, “My name is Qin Xingxuan, if fellow student is ever finished with his cultivation and has some time to spare, please come to the Marshal’s Quarters to look for me. Your presence will always be welcome.”

Lin Ming paused in his step, and told her his name, “Lin Ming.”

Then Lin Ming walked away. Staring at his department back, Qin Xingxuan could only sigh. What sorts of characters were used to spell his name? Was it Lin as in forest, and Ming as in bright? With just these two characters, there would be too many duplicates in Sky Fortune City.

How would she find him in this city?

...

As he returned from the Seven Profound Martial House, Lin Ming had already decided what he needed. The Sky Fortune Kingdom did produce Sky Worm Silk, but it was mainly used for instruments. With

his martial arts background, it was difficult for him to find and purchase. However, he could have Lin Xiaodong request the family to purchase some, as such a large family certainly had musicians and it would be easy to obtain as long as one paid market price.

From the 'Sky Zither List', Lin Ming could tell the approximate price of Sky Worm Silk was about 20 taels of gold per foot. Although it didn't sound too expensive, it was because Sky Worm Silk was very thin and light. If calculated in weight, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it would require over a 10,000 taels of gold to purchase a single pound!

Lin Ming only had 70 gold taels, so he could purchase three feet. At the trade fair he had spent 800 taels of gold to buy a massive pile of materials, but just three feet of Sky Worm Silk would cost 60 taels of gold. This was three feet would no doubt be light, and it only proved that it was prohibitively expensive.

Lin Ming tacked a calendar onto his bedpost with pages equal to the number of days he had left. He would rip one off every day. The first month he would spend practicing the inscription technique, and the other two months he would purchase the medicines he needed and then cultivate like a mad man! He believed that with this elixirs and pills, he would be able to break through the First Stage of Body Transformation, and perhaps even reach the peak of the Second Stage!

If he could reach the peak of the Second Stage, then even if he couldn't exceed Zhu Yan, at least he would not suffer a disastrous loss.

After using his true essence to practice a hundred times, Lin Ming finally began the formal steps to inscription that involved materials. This was how most inscription masters started, but Lin Ming did not have the luxury to casually waste the materials he had! He had to treat each and every precious attempt with the utmost care. With this

pile of materials that cost 800 taels of gold, he had to come out with at least a single viable inscription!

Inscription not only required good perception, it also needed a good teacher, financial support, and most of all, a powerful soul force.

Because in the inscription process, one had to control the engraving marks by using their soul force to draw the energy structure. Lin Ming's soul force had already been measured as a child, and it was also a third grade soul force.

The third grade soul force and third grade martial talent could be considered decent. To an aristocratic family with no history of martial arts, it was good, but it certainly wasn't anywhere near the top.

Martial artists in the physical transformation stage did not have many reasons to use their soul force, so this was Lin Ming's first time utilizing this form of energy. He began to mobilize his soul force in accordance with the memories found in the soul fragment. He circulated this soul force in his body, familiarizing with it, and moving it with his mind.

All living beings had a soul force, but being able to consciously move it was something that the average person could not dare to achieve. It required the soul law formulas, and needed daily rigorous practice. Many inscription masters have managed to memorize the varieties of symbols and basic structures, but if their time studying the soul law formulas were inadequate, it would result in them not being able to use soul force. If one could not use the soul force, then the material could not be utilized. As a result, they would not even have the qualifications to waste these goods!

As soon as Lin Ming began to revolve the soul law formula, a feeling of deep peace came from the memories of the soul fragment that filled him with a familiar sensation. This soul law formula that he used, the elder who the memories had belonged to, must have used it a truly terrifying number of times before his death. With this kind of

familiar feeling it was as if Lin Ming had been practicing inscription techniques for his entire life, and he felt his fatigue fade away. Not only that but the majority of his soul force was retained and he did not need to worry about any negative influence from the memories.

He gently placed out his hand and the invisible soul force began to tug at the Sky Wind Grass roots and suck out the juices. With Lin Ming's mind, he began to practice changing the juice into various shapes under his control; sometimes he made it into thin strings, sometimes he condensed it into a crystal clear bubble.

This kind of ease even caused Lin Ming to be surprised. He knew that in the cheap manual, it had stated that for those that could utilize soul law formulas, those with inborn talent of perception would only need one month, while those with lesser talent could practice for half a year and still have no results.

Each inscription master had their own personal soul law formula. The soul law formula naturally had its different rankings, as some were worse and some were better. Inscription masters thus naturally regarded their own soul law formulas with great love and care! It was something that they might not even pass down to their disciples, because the soul law formula would directly influence the ability to utilize the soul force. It was of the highest importance to an inscription master!

Without a shadow of doubt, the 'Overbearing Soul Tactic' within the memories of the elder was at the apex of soul law formulas! Even the Sky Spill Continents greatest inscription masters were nothing but little bumpkin children compared to this great elder.

Adding that Lin Ming had a familiarity with the law soul formula that originated from the memories, in practice his third grade soul force talent was on par with a fourth grade talent, and perhaps even a fifth grade! These were the precious techniques that had been left by the memories!

His five fingers easily formed a simple seal, and a surge of soul force entered the drop of Sky Wind Grass juice. Lin Ming's fingers drew a lane in the air that shined with a sparkling light. The soul force interfaced with the Sky Wind Grass juice and rapidly coalesced into a pleasant and mystical rune.

The rune was smaller than a fingernail, yet it contained a complex energy. Even within the same rune, because of the subtle differences in shape, technique, strength of the soul force, and other factors, ten thousand inscription masters would have ten thousand different manifestations. And within these there would be those of lesser or greater profundity. Lin Ming could not tell whether the symbol rune he created was garbage or treasure, but he was still satisfied with his result.

He began to create his next symbol rune. He had only used half a drop of the Sky Wind Grass juice, so he still had half a drop remaining. His fingers twisted as he formed another seal, and began to condense his soul force with the half drop into another seal. However as soon as the seal flashed, there was a slight murmur and Lin Ming's soul force which caused in degradation in the output. Lin Ming could only gaze on as that half drop of liquid turned into floating ash.

Lin Ming could only sigh and bite his tongue. It required about a jin of roots in order to create that single drop and it cost a few taels of gold for those roots. For the general populace, that was the monthly income of an entire family.

It was hard to imagine, but for those that had just begun studying inscription techniques, there was no way for their soul force to be stable, and thus failure was an everyday occurrence, and successes were the true miracles.

In the blink of an eye a few taels of gold had evaporated into the air. In one day it was easy to spend a few hundred taels of gold on

practicing inscription techniques. It truly was burning away money! With the taste of failure still fresh in his mouth, Lin Ming became increasingly cautious. He moved his fingers again to form a seal, and one by one more inscriptions emerged from his hands. Of course, he failed more often than he succeeded, but as time went on the number of failures began to decrease.

As Ling Ming produced more runes, he began to discover that his own scant soul force was just too weak, and this was related to his first state of body transformation. Even with the top tier 'True Primal Chaos Formula' and 'Overbearing Soul Tactic' supporting him, he couldn't continue for much longer.

Along with such little soul force, Lin Ming couldn't form the runes as easily as he could before. Moreover, more faults began to show in them due to a lack of soul force, and with each fault that occurred, it was also a waste of soul force!

As his soul force became increasingly low, Lin Ming's inscription process was only at the halfway point. However he began to have difficulties in sustaining the soul force, and without him sensing, the soul force in his body had been too exhausted and a wave of dizziness passed him. The runes in front of him began to vibrate, as they verged to on the border of being shattered!

Lin Ming's heart jumped, and he quickly stabilized his soul force. In an instant his palms were covered in sweat. He had almost made a mess of things! How many tens of taels of gold would have disappeared!?

But Lin Ming could see that shining gold pot at the end of the sweat covered rainbow. He slugged right on through!

Chapter 14: Increasing Strength

Lin Ming spent half of his concentration on maintaining the integrity of the symbol runes with his true essence, and the other half of his concentration was directing the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' to speed up the rate of true essence absorption. With these two opposing thoughts in his mind, he failed his inscription!

After five consecutive failures and five piles of materials turned to ash, Lin Ming came to the realization that he was completely unable to complete the inscription before he ran out of true essence. After spending such a long time on these futile efforts, he finally cut off the soul force. The remaining seals in the air trembled, and then detonated in a succession of brilliant sparkles.

Looking at the beautiful brilliance, Lin Ming felt a stabbing pain in his heart. This was money! This was all his money...

Although he didn't expect the first time to be successful, but losing so much gold was hard on him. The only silver lining was that he had not arrived at the stage where he had to use his most rare and expensive material, the Sky Worm Silk!

His leftover material was about enough for ten more attempts. If he was unable to complete an inscription before then, then he would be dead broke and unable to continue any further.

Any other inscription master would have listened to his thoughts and coughed blood. Wanting to succeed in ten more attempts? What a fantasy! This was his first time attempting inscription, let alone completing an inscription in the next time tries, a normal inscription student would have trouble even drawing up a successful line!

Lin Ming gathered the residual ashes of the materials, and began to recount his mistakes from a moment ago. The memories he inherited from the elder weren't wrong, but it was just that the gap of soul

force between them was simply too vast. Even a simple inscription he might not be able to complete.

These inscription techniques in the elder's memory may have been considered simple and light by him, but in the Sky Spill continent it was still an incomparably complicated godly technique. Once drawn, even the inscription masters of this land would be shocked!

After summarizing the reasons for his failure, Lin Ming began to plot countermeasures. He couldn't enhance his own soul force in such a short time, but what he could do was minimize the mistakes he made as much as possible. It was simply because each mistake was a waste of soul force. If he made less mistakes, then he would not only have more materials and thus money, but more soul force to use.

Thinking like this, Lin Ming gave up using materials and instead only practiced his soul force again and again like an unthinking zombie.

His idea was very simple. Using soul force was free and it was easy on the body. If he practiced the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' well, then he wouldn't lose anything, but would also be able to practice at the same time. What could possibly be more perfect! It was as if these two were made for each other.

As long as he didn't waste any money, then he had no fears! It didn't matter if he practiced 100 times. If that wasn't enough he would practice 1000 times. If that wasn't enough he would practice 10,000 times, or 100,000 times or even a million times until the process became a reflex, and then he wouldn't believe that he would fail again!

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Sky Fortune City. Marshal's Quarters

In Sky Fortune City, two complexes were considered the most grandiose and splendid architectural achievements, the Imperial Palace, and the Marshal's Quarters, which was situated in the Sky Fortune City's northwest corner. The Martial Quarter was three miles long from tip to toes, and it was a thousand steps wide. There were rocky waterfalls with beautiful flowers, and a winding corridor garden, along with countless waterside pavilions. It truly was breathtaking.

Right now, in the Martial Quarter's library pavilion, was an elderly man wearing a long gown and carrying a gold gilded bird cage. Next to him stood a peaceful looking girl in white; it was Qin Xingxuan.

"Oh? So there is something like that out there? Even you were humbly defeated by him?"

"Mm." Qin Xingxuan politely nodded. The old man was her master, Sky Fortune City's most prestigious and famous inscription master, Mister Muyi.

Qin Xingxuan had a very good memory; she completely recounted the events that happened, even every word of Lin Mings. After the old man listened, his expression grew increasingly dignified. At first he assumed his young student was in love and being modest about some boy she liked, but it seemed she really was inferior. Moreover, that youth's knowledge was too rich and experienced; it wasn't likely to come from someone in the Sky Fortune Kingdom, but instead some ancient master from another, more developed land.

After she finished, she also described how Lin Ming drew up the foundation lines and symbols with such ease and fluidity. It wasn't something that she was capable of doing.

"Being able to draw the foundation lines with soul force, but also not stopping and still being able to grasp the intricacies of energy of each

point...what is this?" Muyi said with surprise.

"Mm..." Muyi inhaled. He had always dreamt of performing this so called drawing by instinct, but one need millions, if not billions of attempts to even think of it. Did this young boy start practicing while he was still kicking around in his mother's stomach?

"You really know that he is 15 or 16 years old?"

"Yes." Qin Xingxuan replied with certainty.

"Marvelous, marvelous!" Muyi sighed, "Such a small age and he is already this accomplished. It truly is amazing; this is the first time in my life seeing such a heaven defying young talent! I thought I'd only hear of geniuses like this in legends. But I'm even more curious who this boys master would be." Muyi thought in vain. In his mind he considered the entire Sky Fortune Kingdom, and even several nearby countries, but he could not think of any hidden inscription master that could compare with this elder.

Even though Muyi could not think of anyone, in terms of inscription knowledge he was considered the forefront expert in the Sky Fortune Kingdom, and even in neighboring countries he would be well compared to their own inscription masters. But compared to this mysterious elder he could not say that he had any chance of winning!

Muyi said, "I cannot think of anyone who is capable of teaching such a talented disciple. But if I ventured a guess, then the young boys master might have come from some ancient clan."

"Ancient clan?" Qin Xinghuan startled. Sky Spill Continent was vastly large, and had many thousands or millions of years of traditions of ancient clans. These clans had incomparably deep and profound heritages and legacies!

For instance, just the most recent clan of Sky Fortune Kingdom had established the Seven Profound Martial House. They were the Seven

Profound Valleys. They likely had their own secret masters and legacies.

Twelve years ago, the Seven Profound Valley's elders arrived at Sky Fortune Kingdom, and even the Imperial Family had to be respectful. Qin Xingxuans master, Mister Muiyi, was considered the top inscription master in the country, but to the large clans, he wasn't anything special.

Muiyi said, "Xingxuan, if you see him next time, be sure to ask him to stay so I can personally introduce myself. This youth isn't so simple. Even if he has a master that comes from some ancient clan, for him to have this degree of ability is simply heaven defying in this day and age. Also, be polite to him and treat him with respect. His master is a person of inconceivable skill which the entire Sky Fortune capital cannot disrespect; neither can we afford to offend."

"Yes, master."

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As the day passed, Lin Ming tore down another calendar page. Lin Ming had been practicing inscription every day. Every sort of symbol and line and rune had been practiced god knows how many times, and each was thoroughly imprinted in his heart.

Using soul force day and night was very tiring to his spirit and mind, so his eyes were always red with exhaustion. His true essence had long been wrung dry. He was constantly like a lamp without any oil. But he had gained some benefits. Lin Ming discovered that besides the progress in his inscription technique, his perception had become increasingly sensitive.

Now he still deboning in the Great Clarity Pavilion, but even if it were a second-level vicious beast, Lin Ming could easily perceive the entire structure of the beast, and avoid the bones, and let his knife would smoothly follow through the solid flesh of a second level vicious beast. Lin Ming needed only an incense worth of time to completely finish!

At such a monstrous speed, the Great Clarity Pavilions staffs were astonished at first and didn't believe, but after seeing they became numb to disbelief. Now in the Great Clarity Pavilion, Lin Ming had a much higher status. His work hours were optional and even rush hour was optional! His wages were no less than those of master chefs!

With such treatment, any employee would be satisfied. And although Lin Ming was privileged, he still kept deboning two hours per day. It was also a form of practice to him; deboning was a good way to take advantage of the soul force utilization.

However, Lin Ming soon found himself not being able to work the two hours. There just weren't enough vicious beasts in the entirety of the Great Clarity Pavilion. Indeed, all the storehouse stocked goods were already sliced and prepped by Lin Ming. When Sister Lan, who was responsible for checking the kitchen daily, went to the ice storehouse, she saw that all the vicious beasts had been turned into neat piles of meat and bone. Not only that but each piece was uniform in size and marbling. Sister Lan was naturally speechless.

This young boy was simply a machine!

Finally, it was the last ten days of the first month. Lin Ming had prepared his mind and prepared the materials. It was time to start the inscription once again!

Chapter 15: Overwhelming Symbol

Today, Lin Ming had prepared as well as he possibly could; solely in the tracing of the lines and symbols, he was no less than those lofty masters!

Manipulating the Sky Wind Grass juice, Lin Ming opened both his hands and a single drop of emerald liquid flew into the air where it steadily remained.

Looking at this liquid green pearl, Lin Ming closed his eyes as his hands flashed and formed a series of seals. These movements had long ago been printed in his mind, and along with memories of the soul fragment, these complex signs were as instinctual as breathing.

With a deep breath, Lin Ming began. His ten fingers flowed like a branches in a storm, and they even collided with each other as his speed of seal formation was too fast. His fingers blurred as another drop of liquid from a different material flew into the air. With his soul force at full strength, Lin Ming rapidly formed the beautiful and mysterious inscription symbols. In order to preserve his soul force, Lin Ming had started working on another material before the first had finished!

In this high-intensity and highly complicated plan, Lin Ming's error rate was low extremely low.

When the inscription was half finished, Ming began to feel the strain.

When the inscription was two-thirds complete, Lin Ming felt that his soul force was reaching its end, and he began to revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula.'

With that on his mind, the chance that a problem would arise also increased. Lin Ming clenched his teeth and pressed on. He still had to divide the several materials to use them to draw the final rune.

“Sky Worm Silk...has completed!” The tense Lin Ming finally let loose a breath of relief. Sky Worm Silk was what he lacked the most, he could now allow for failure here.

“There are five runes...” Lin Ming counted the number in his heart as his soul force reached the limit.

‘Four...Three...Two....’

“Success!”

Lin Ming finished the inscription at this moment. The sparkling runes shined and flashed for a brief moment as they coalesced into an inscription the size of a square inch. It hung there suspended in air.

Lin Ming had almost collapsed, but as he looked at this completed inscription floating in air, he felt nothing but absolute joy! This small inscription was like his precious child; he had spent a month of inhuman suffering and massive amounts of money to raise it up!

The elder had named this inscription the ‘Overwhelming Symbol.’ This title was a tad too vulgar and childish, but stemming from the respect that Lin Ming held for this elder in his heart, he did not change its name. It was the ‘Overwhelming Symbol!’

Lin Ming had bought fifteen of the cheapest symbol papers at one to two taels of gold per dozen. With just a slight bit of soul force, the ‘Overwhelming Symbol’ fell onto the symbol paper. Gold lines converged to form ancient runes on the symbol paper. The symbol paper truly was plain, and the overall effect made it look bland and unremarkable.

At the last minute of forming the symbol paper, Lin Ming changed the outwards design appearance with his soul force. It resembled a flame pattern.

This kind of design left on the inscription treasures would become a sign. His sign! Many inscription masters had their own personalized designs as a mark of their work.

Lin Ming decided on flames, as flames represented rebirth into nirvana.

Cultivating a martial path was a trial by fire. Pain was constant, and danger was ever present. Travelling down this path would burn one into ashes! Only those that have firm hearts and immeasurable wills would be able to be rebirthed through the flames, and become a dragon or phoenix that ascends like a god into the skies!

Lin Ming carefully received this precious symbol paper. He opened the window and the fresh air and bright sunlight sprinkled down on him and reflected on his bloodshot eyes. He was bone tired with exhaustion and wanted to go to sleep right away, but Lin Ming had an unprecedented sense of satisfaction.

Time left before the Seven Profound Martial House's exam - two months and ten days!

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In the past five days Lin Ming had branded his last inscription onto the symbol paper. Thus, all his materials had been thoroughly exhausted. He had managed to altogether create four copies of the 'Overwhelming Symbol.'

Looking at these symbol papers, Lin Ming has an unforgettable sense of achievement. Now he wanted to sell these four symbol papers!

At the last trade fair, Master Baihong's engraved inscription had sold for 1500 taels of gold. Clearly this was affected by the renown of the inscription master. Lin Ming had not sold any inscriptions before so he was not famous or well known, but he was confident in his work. This inscription came from the Realm of the Gods! Its effect compared to that of Master Baihong's work was like the Heavens and Earth; there was simply no comparison.

In that elder's memory, the 'Overwhelming Symbol' was merely the most basic inscription, but it was enough to use on a superior piece of equipment, a third grade piece of equipment. If used on lower grade equipment, then the effect would increase by at least sixty percent!

Not only that, but the 'Overwhelming Symbol' also granted equipment an additional skill!

Some top tier inscription techniques can add additional skills to equipment. By concentrating soul force, it was possible to use these skills. They ranged from energy attacks, armor increasing shields, illusionary techniques, to demonic techniques and more!

Lin Ming's inscription, if engraved on a weapon, would give that weapon a skill called the 'instant violent strike.'

The small inscription rune was in fact a complex array. When the user concentrated a massive amount of soul force into the weapon, the inscription would absorb this energy, compress it to the limit, and then instantly erupt! In a close combat battle, this move was truly formidable in its lethality.

Lin Ming didn't actually believe his inscription was as amazing as the ones he recounted in the elder's memories. There was also definitely no way for a piece of equipment to achieve a 60% increase in power at his current level. As for that 'instant violent strike,' Lin Mind did not know if it actually would work because the inscription technique was too complex. After making the end product, all those runes and symbols were concentrated in that tiny inscription so it was difficult

for even the creator to judge the ability of the end product. There were just too many possible structures, and a corresponding number of possible mistakes. In the worst case scenario the weapon might even blow up! As long as there was the tiniest of problems, the entire inscription would have to be sold at great discount.

Lin Ming finally had a night of full rest, and slept blissfully until the early morning. His soul force and energy were in peak condition. He asked Lin Xiaodong for some trade fairs and auction house addresses, and then departed with his symbol papers.

He had bought some new clothes included a hooded cape that covered his face. Although the trade fairs and auction houses always had a good reputation for safety, and wouldn't leak the identity of patrons, it was best to be careful. After all, if the four symbol papers were sold for any high price, then if that person were known, they might rob and kill them for their possessions.

Lin Ming first went to the official Sky Fortune City Auction Hall. There were many auction halls in Sky Fortune City, and there wasn't one that stood out among the rest, so he chose one with a slightly better reputation.

As long as these four symbol papers sold, he would be able to purchase the materials for medicine!

However as Lin Ming approached the auction house, he thought that it was just too simple.

Chapter 16: Frustration

The auction house had an extremely strict review process, in particular concerning the goods they sold; otherwise fakes and replicas would be manage to get through and the reputation of the auction house would suffer a loss. To an auction house, reputation was everything.

A middle-aged man greeted Lin Min; to be more exact, blocked him, and asked .”Sir, is there anything I can help you with?”

Lin Ming was wearing a clean and crisp robe and he looked like any other well-to-do citizen. However his height was shorter than an adult male by several inches. In addition, his voice had not yet fully matured, so it wasn’t possible to cover up the fact that he was a young boy of only 15 or 16 years.

Therefore Lin Ming simply said with his own voice, “I’m here for an appraisal of inscription runes.”

‘Oh?’ The middle aged man looked at Lin Ming somewhat suspiciously. “Can I see your inscription?” In fact, this man’s manners were already very polite. A 15-16 year old coming into the auction house to appraise some inscriptions was already strange. The price frequently rose to over a thousand taels of gold. Most people would have well founded suspicions that this was a practical joke.

After Lin Ming pulled out the symbol paper, the middle aged man frowned as he noticed the shoddy quality of it. This was the most basic and cheap symbol paper that was available on the market at one or two taels of gold for a dozen. Although the cost of the symbol paper did not affect the quality of the inscription, it was still a sign of the inscription master’s status. Naturally they would never use this kind of symbol paper! They would normally use high quality symbol paper that cost several taels of gold each, to show off the results of their inscription.

However there was a faint energy which emitted from the symbol paper and the middle aged man was able to determine that this was a complete and real product, not a practical joke. He looked at Lin Ming and asked, “Do you have some sort of certificate stating which inscription master created this?”

Lin Ming shook his head.

“Well alright, come with me.”

The middle aged man led Lin Ming through the hallway to an appraisal room at the back of the auction house. The man in the appraisal chamber wore an unlined black garment, and looked to be a harsh grandfather in his 50’s or 60’s. Lin Ming also noted the sign in front of the man that wrote “Advanced Appraiser.”

The black robed man took this symbol paper in hand and noted that the inscription was placed on inferior paper, but he didn’t reveal any expression that indicated he was disgusted or skeptical. Instead, he maintained a tranquil and calm demeanor, and quietly slipped on a pair of white gloves and invested his full attention towards an earnest and practical appraisal of the work. This demonstrated that he was a true professional!

However the appraiser only just began when he raised his head, his face slightly more serious, and looked at Lin Ming. “If I’m not wrong, the one who created this inscription symbol, his strength should not exceed the third level of the body transformation stage?”

The inscription symbol would always carry a slight hint of the makers soul force. It was possible for an appraiser to judge the creators martial arts cultivation level through these traces. Since Lin Ming created the inscription paper, the soul force trace would naturally be weak, but since he practiced the overwhelming ‘True Primal Chaos Formula,’ the soul force was much thicker than the average martial artists. If the appraiser knew that the inscription was created by a

mere boy at the first level of the body transformation stage, his chin would surely drop to the ground.

Lin Ming knew that there was no way to deny this, so he nodded.

The only man sharply inhaled, and then sighed, "To think there was such a talent within the young generation. A trivial little third level body transformation cultivation can draw an inscription symbol. It is shocking!"

Usually, the inscription masters tended to be of the older generation, and most were above the bone forging boundary. Many even broke through the pulse condensing boundary and some even at the pre-celestial boundary.

Perhaps this third level body transformation was just an inscription masters apprentice, and happened to get lucky and create a successful inscription. However this boy brought in four of the same inscription, which was truly amazing.

Lin Ming heard the old man's praise and thought things were going well, but he didn't expect the old man to change his mind. "It is a complete and real inscription symbol, but the creator is only an apprentice, therefore we are unable to identify the increase in strength it would provide or the integrity of the inscription. You must know that an apprentice's soul force is generally limited in quantity and quality, and it is very difficult to complete the myriad and complicated inscription designs. Even If the symbol increased the strength by ten percent, if it cannot be placed onto superior equipment, then we cannot auction this as failed product would harm the auction houses reputation."

Inscriptions were used only on superior equipment, because only superior equipment was sturdy and strong enough concentrate the soul force and energy of martial artists in battle. Since the inscriptions modified soul force, it needed to be at least that level.

Therefore the lowest quality goods that someone would place an inscription on were at least several thousand gold taels!

This equipment was not something the average person was able to obtain. Even the juniors of aristocratic families had to cultivate to at least the altering muscle or bone forging level to even be considered for having such a high quality weapon.

For instance, Wang Yigao had an excellent family background, but because his cultivation was low, even though he had used a fine blue sword, it did not necessarily mean it was a treasure. That blue sword was only two hundred taels of gold.

The number of times that you can engrave on a weapon was limited, essentially, it was only one time. After an inscription, another cannot be placed on. Thinking about it, who would spend several thousand taels of gold on a weapon, only to place on it an inscription of dubious origin?

Therefore the inscription market for apprentices was nonexistent.

Lin Ming had expected this result and said, "I only need to auction three, the last you can use for experiments."

After the inscription is made, it is too difficult to test the result. Even the creator can only guesstimate its effectiveness.

When a martial artist purchased an inscription, he was basically gambling on his luck, so high level inscription masters were well received because they had the reputation to guarantee the effectiveness of their products. Very few people would purchase an unknown master's inscriptions, much less an apprentice's. It was just gambling with their own precious money!

The appraiser said, "Of course. However, the experiment needs to be done with your own equipment."

Lin Ming suddenly turned silent. A weapon worth several thousand gold taels? He supposed it was impossible for the auction house to casually put up a weapon worth several thousand gold taels to test as an experiment.

If Lin Ming were an inscription master then things might have been different, because the masters have reputations and wouldn't need have their inscriptions tested. Moreover, the auction house would be happy to be on good terms with such a figure and even provide their own weapons.

At Lin Mings moment of highest worth, he only had 800 taels of gold. Where would he get a weapon that was worth several thousand taels of gold to engrave an inscription on?

He did not bother arguing or saying anything else. He could have said that there was no way their equipment would have suffered a loss, but there was no reason to believe him, because the soul force on the inscription really was too weak.

So Lin Ming took his four symbol papers and turned around to leave the Sky Fortune official auction house.

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“Sorry, but we need proof that the inscription association provides, or a signed notary provided to the inscription master...”

At the Sky Fortune City trade fair, the merchant had directly rejected Lin Ming after seeing his age.

This was a polite rejection. Afterwards Lin Ming went to several private shops and the attitudes of these people were even worse.

He tried the inscription transaction trading pavilion that was under the jurisdiction of the Allied Trade Association. The store was opulent and luxurious with six floors, each filled with high class establishments and boasted an air of refinement. Everything was expensive nothing was cheap; the goods ranged from a few hundred to several thousand gold taels. Even the shopkeepers were needlessly arrogant. If a rich young master came, then they would be polite and offer tea, kind words, and never-ending bootlicking. But for the poor salesmen, they received nothing but a straight boot to the rear.

Some did not even bother saying anything, and just waved him away impatiently.

“Look kid, don’t make trouble here, you’re blocking my good business.”

“Hi cutey, how much for the night? Haha this old lady is just playing with you...but really...”

“Hey you, this isn’t a place where a little boy should come to....oh, hey customer, what do you need! Come see...”

“Haha, child, don’t try to tease me here, I’ve already laughed today. This is just toilet paper! And you drew some small flames on this toilet paper. Did you think it was an inscription? Haha...”

Chapter 17: Lan Yunyue

In the span of an entire day, Lin Ming had visited two auction houses, a trade fair, and also five treasure trading pavilions that were set up by respectable families, and yet he hadn't found a buyer.

As he returned to the Great Clarity Pavilion, Lin Ming sighed. He hadn't expected that selling a few inscriptions would be so difficult.

However this was just a little setback. The dismissive taunts and jeers had no effect on Lin Ming, whose pain and suffering from cultivating martial arts had exceeded any psychological pain he would experience by several times. Even if it was Zhu Yan taunting him about Lan Yunyue, his poor family background, his lower cultivation, none of these could affect Lin Ming's heart of martial arts.

He placed away the symbol papers and began to practice the 'True Primal Chaos Formula.' Although he had practiced the inscription techniques every day this month, he still managed to eek out some time to practice the 'True Primal Chaos Formula.' Now, with his hard work, the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' had already finished the entirety of the first level; his own martial arts cultivation was also at the peak of the first level of body transformation.

With the strength of nine stones and a fist that can shatter Iron Wood, this was proof he was at the peak of body transformations first level, strength training!

Nine stones was equivalent to 900 jins. This was the peak of body transformations first level. But the reality was Lin Ming's present strength was no less than a thousand jins. This was due to the influence that the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' had on his training, and not only that but his strength was increasing daily. Yet, Lin Ming was actually still stuck in the first level of body transformation.

After he circulated his soul force with the 'True Primal Chaos Formula,' Lin Ming began to focus on his understandings of bones. His own deboning time had already reached an extremely high degree of proficiency and speed; even a second-level vicious beast was not enough to satisfy his practice requests. Unfortunately, even at the Great Clarity Pavilion, level three vicious beasts were very rare. Lin Ming wanted to practice on these rare beasts but was unable to! So he thought of an idea, and began to instead use the flat back of the knife to debone!

Normally, someone who was deboning would use the sharpest knife they could, or even an axe or any other sharp instrument. Deboning would also often take the entirety of a day to finish a second level vicious beast. But Lin Ming actually used the very thick back of a knife to debone. It was absurdly difficult and impossible; the knife felt as if it were cutting into solid rock, and every inch required an extreme degree of effort and strength.

This was forcing Lin Ming to constantly be exhausting his physical ability to the limit while perceiving the skill.

Before, it took more time to eat a bowl of rice than to debone a second level vicious beast completely, but now two hours still wasn't enough time to finish. Even after he did, he was soaked in sweat.

Thankfully the results were still good and he neatly cut off the slabs of meat as he had before. If Great Clarity Pavilion knew that Lin Ming was finishing deboning these second level vicious beasts with just the back of a knife, they would not only check Lin Ming into the nearest hospital, but would also check themselves in!

After a night of practice, Lin Ming was weary to his bones. He had completely forgotten about the inscription matters and directly fell asleep.

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After a night of deep rest, Lin Ming awoke before daybreak and headed to his secret place at the Zhou Mountains to practice his martial arts. With strike after strike, the sun began to rise into the sky. At this time, a young boy approached from the glade. He was a tall, healthy looking boy dressed in white. "Brother Lin, why did you ask me yesterday where to sell inscription symbols? Did you really finish engraving some?"

This boy was precisely Lin Xiaodong. Yesterday around this time, Lin Ming had asked him and he had answered without thinking. But after thinking about it more and more, he realized that there as no way that Lin Ming should have been able to create any inscriptions!

Although Lin Xiaodong did not have a deep understanding of inscription, he still knew it was impossible for Lin Ming to create a complete inscription symbol. It was likely some shoddy or half finished product, and if he brought something like that to the trade fair to sell, then the merchants would likely have had him beaten up for being some swindler.

Lin Ming smiled and nodded, "I finished some."

Lin Xiaodong's heart tightened, "You brought them to sell?"

"Mm. But I didn't sell any."

It was expected that he hadn't sold any, these merchants weren't fools. Lin Xiaodong sized up his friend with a bit of worry. His puppy dog eyes were filled with anxiety as he asked, "Brother Lin, you weren't beat up were you?"

Lin Ming was stunned silent. This little brother of his truly had a wild imagination. He burst out laughing and clapped his friend on the

shoulder, “I really did finish the inscription symbols, and I’m not some second hand swindler, why would I be beat up?”

As he said this he took out the four symbol papers which he had labored over the past month and showed them to Lin Xiaodong. He didn’t want him to worry over him.

However, as soon as Lin Xiaodong saw these four symbol papers, his face immediately stiffened in horror. The appearances of these symbol papers were truly...terrible too look at!

He guessed that Lin Ming’s inscriptions might be second rate, or even defective, but this was just too much! The paper was thick yellow; it just had the appearance of toilet paper that was used too many times. Only a fool would buy it. Lin Xiaodong had seen several symbol papers by inscription masters before and they were always on bright, clean sheets were shimmering colors.

Lin Xiaodong looked as if he had eaten spoiled porridge. He let out a dry smile. Oh brother of mine, sweet brother of mine! He did not have the nerve to embarrass Lin Ming, who was probably suffering. He could only think of the several hundred taels of material that had become over used toilet paper. Lin Xiaodong’s heart was in immediate pain. This really was a waste of money!

Lin Ming noticed Lin Xiaodong’s expression had changed, and he could guess what he was thinking at the moment. He simply put the symbol papers away. There just wasn’t any way he could adequately explain this to Lin Xiaodong in a way that he would understand.

“Brother Lin, I must say with your talent and effort, you will break through the pulse condensation period sooner or later. Why bother with this?” Lin Xiaodong decided to try the carrot approach to persuade his good friend. The stick obviously had not worked.

Lin Ming smiled and stayed silent. Lin Xiaodong wasn’t wrong. Even if he didn’t bother with inscription, it was only a matter of time until

he reached the pulse condensation phase. Even the houtian phase or even the fabled xiantian phase wouldn't be too difficult.

But cultivating the martial path was a daily struggle, and time waited for no man. If he didn't improve his cultivation as fast as he could while he was young, it would only become increasingly difficult with age.

If he didn't use special medicines or magical objects and only relied on his own diligent efforts, even if he had a solid foundation it would still take a massive amount of time. Time that Lin Ming could not afford to spend!

Therefore he needed to make money using the inscription technique and take as many shortcuts as he could.

He said, "Xiaodong, you head back first, I still have some matters to attend to."

"Matters? Brother Lin, you aren't thinking of selling these symbol papers are you?"

Lin Ming laughed and said with a smile, "Don't worry about it too much, I already know how things are." As he said this, Lin Ming had already passed several dozens of meters into the distance.

"Fuck!" Lin Xiaodong saw Lin Ming had disappeared and could only curse at his back. He knew Lin Ming had decided on his course and he couldn't change it. Brother of mine, oh brother of mine, please be careful!

Although Lin Ming's truly had the firm will and aspirations, some things were beyond even the control of the heavens...

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Although there were many shops in Sky Fortune City, the number that had the qualifications to sell inscription symbols weren't many. Including the auction houses and trade fairs, altogether there were less than thirty.

Within these, Lin Ming had already visited most of them, and without exception had been rejected from all of them. It was just that he was only an apprentice. Occasionally an apprentice would luck out and create a complete product, but no one would want to waste their precious weapons on such a dubious product!

Lin Ming was a tad disappointed by this setback, but it didn't affect him. In his mind he knew that he only needed some more time and he would see the fruits of his labor.

"You want to sell us this inscription on consignment? Are you kidding me little boy? You're so young and yet you want to do something so dishonest. This simply cannot be sold. Go, go and do not delay me in doing business. You're blocking the way."

The storekeeper of Hundred Treasure Hall impatiently waved him away. The manners of private shop owners were always worse than the more professional auction houses. Lin Ming didn't take this too heart, but as he turned around he saw a familiar face. It was an extremely beautiful face, but one he was also reluctant to see.

Not too far from him were two girls wearing light yellow dresses. One of them was the one who had missed their promised meeting a few months ago, and had accompanied Zhu Yan to go to the Seven Profound Martial House, Lan Yunyue.

Lan Yunyue had also just arrived, and she looked down at the four sloppy symbol papers in Lin Ming's hand, and thought about the words that the storekeeper and just said. Her dewy complexion changed.

Lan Yunyue had not seen inscription symbol papers before, but even if she had she would not connect those fabled objects to these rough papers in Lin Ming's hand. She guessed Lin Ming was reselling goods...some goods didn't cost much, and they would try to buy up such things and sell them at the more common, lower-end markets for the price difference. This kind of work had low profits, and above all, it wasn't work one could hold their head high to.

Also...Lin Ming's family was not rich, and he had to support the expenses of cultivating martial arts along with daily expenses for living. He must have been short on money recently, and therefore tried whatever he could...

With that thought there, Lan Yunyue sighed. She did not know if she should say anything in this situation. She felt as if anything she said might possibly injure Lin Ming's dignity, but she also couldn't pretend that she had not seen him.

By now the storekeeper had seen Lan Yunyue, and his ugly mug immediately smiled in welcome. From the past to now, it was as if he were a completely different person. "This young lady, what goods were you looking to purchase? Yesterday you bought a sword; was it easy to use? Oh yes, and how about that young master that accompanied you yesterday, did you come together? I don't see him."

It was obvious the storekeeper's mention of young master was referring to Zhu Yan. Seeing that smile on the storekeeper's face, Lin Ming also knew that the last time Zhu Yan had come here with Lan Yunyue, the storekeeper had made a fortune.

Lan Yunyue didn't think that the storekeeper would mention Zhu Yan at this time, which only made the situation more awkward and tense. She wanted to explain that she hadn't done anything with Zhu Yan, but she held the words on the tip of her tongue. Her face paled and she steeled herself. She was not a little girl anymore, and she had to be clear about these things. Sooner or later she would marry into the

Zhu Family, and although she did not like Zhu Yan, but for her goals, she had caved into her destiny and had chosen the path of betrayal...

After a little more tense awkwardness, Lan Yunyue asked in a low voice, "It's been awhile...have you been well?"

"Alright." Lin Ming replied calmly. What was in the past was in the past, he did not wish to dwell on these matters.

Alright? If you were truly alright, then how could you be there? A fifteen year old boy suffering from the pain of cultivation, while also having to worry about his own livelihood, and experiencing the derision of others...was this really okay?

Lan Yunyue knew Lin Ming's stubbornness, but seeing his appearance like this, she could only urge, "You had not thought to turn back...?"

"Turn back? Turn back to where? Ha-ha, are you telling me to give up on martial arts?"

"I am not saying that. I am only saying that cultivating martial arts is dangerous to the body. If you don't have enough money to buy medicine, then it is easy to suffer permanent disability..." Lan Yunyue sighed, and her gaze fell on the symbol papers in Lin Ming's hand. "Money you make from reselling some small goods is not enough to support the needs of martial arts cultivation. I do not think that you have suffered from anything yet...I know that you are unwilling to listen but I do not want to think that later in life the only thing you'll be doing is lying down on a bed."

Hearing her heartfelt words, Lin Ming smiled and said, "Thank you for the advice, but I won't give up. I will never give up."

He lifted his hand and pointed at the beautiful burning flame image on the symbol paper and said, "The path of the martial artist is like this flame. Practicing the martial arts will only cause pain. The

dangers are countless and the road is filled with obstacles. Everyone who walks down it will eventually turn to ash, but the true martial artist will be reborn from these ashes. Even if I was only a small and weak moth, I will walk into the flames without hesitation. I will fight my destiny for a one in a million chance that I will experience my own samsara and be reborn into a flaming phoenix. And even now, I am no longer a moth..."

Lin Ming spoke those words with a faint smile. He put away his symbol papers and quietly departed, leaving only the silhouette of his lonely, but proud back.

Lin Ming left the Hundred Treasures Hall like a moth to the light. This was his heart of martial arts. This was his Dao. He will persevere until the day he reaches nirvana. He will not rest until that day that he would soar into the skies.

Chapter 18: Sold

Lin Ming's last stop was the Red Maple auction house. Lin Ming did not entertain any ideas of success, and as he thought, the auction house's beautiful auctioneer had come out herself to turn him down.

However this beautiful lady felt that Lin Ming had been treated a bit unfairly, so she gave him two suggestions. First, he should try the Inscription Association. Perhaps they would be interested in purchasing his symbol papers for collection or educative uses. Normally an apprentice level inscription symbol was relatively rare because of the low success ratio, but Lin Ming had four, so it was even more so. Secondly, he could try heading to the city square and peddling his goods there.

Lin Ming had not gone to the Inscription Association before. He did not have the credentials of a genuine inscription master, and even a top tier inscription master would be unable to see the mysteries behind Lin Ming's inscriptions. The difference between Sky Fortune Kingdom's inscription technique and those of the Realm of the Gods was simply too large.

The only thing Lin Ming could do was to go to the city square center, and hope to sell his symbol papers there. Unfortunately, it was impossible to get a decent price.

Although the city square was a lower tier trading center, it was still an official establishment propped up by the government. In here there were a variety of goods that could be sold on commission. The trading center would take in five percent, but the reputation of the center was well known, and there wasn't a fear of being cheated, so many people chose to do that.

The quality threshold to enter the trading center was low; as long as it was genuine and not a knockoff, then any goods could be sold at reasonable prices. Lin Ming's inscription symbols were naturally the

real deal, this no one could deny, but it was just an apprentice's work so the value was low.

After the trading center's appraiser examined his goods, the fat man offered him a starting price of 100 gold taels.

Hearing this number, Lin Ming could only be stunned into silence. Your sister! What is this!

The materials for the inscription cost 7-800 gold taels, and the trading center offered 100 gold taels for one. If he sold it at 100 gold taels, Lin Ming would only receive 400 gold taels!

"So do you want to sell or not?"

Lin Ming clenched his teeth, "Yes, I will sell. I'll sell two."

Lin Ming had recently spent all his money. If it weren't for the large salary and good conditions of the Great Clarity Pavilion, he would have been starving on the streets.

Even if it was selling at a loss, he could accept selling two. As for the other two he would just wait a period. His heart wasn't willing to sell the last two at 100 taels of gold each.

"Leave your address behind" The fat appraiser said. The trading center was responsible for the sale of commission items only. Only when people have bought the item would they be paid. For Lin Ming, these two inscription symbols also didn't have a certainty to sell.

"A low rental is one gold tael, a medium rental is three gold taels, and a high rental is five gold taels for a lease of one month. If after that time period the item is unable to sell, the item goes off the shelf and the money is not refunded." The fat appraiser said.

Fuck! Even this required money, his luck was really dog shit. He turned his head and thought about it. The high rent was obviously the

best, followed by the medium rent. The low rental was probably some shady corner where no one would see his items.

Lin Ming fished out five gold taels from his pockets, and slapped three gold taels on the table, "I'll take the medium rent."

To think that matters would come to this. The inscription was without a doubt no worse than a master's, but now it sold for 100 taels of gold only, and he also had to pay five percent taxes along with a rental fee! And it also depended on whether someone bought his items!

Lin Ming sighed. It really was difficult being unknown.

He placed the two gold taels back into his pocket and forced a smile. Let alone buying any rare medicines to cultivate his martial arts, he would be lucky if there was enough food to put on the table.

Without the medicines and without any other materials, Lin Ming did not feel right asking his good brother Lin Xiaodong to borrow money. Therefore he stayed in the Zhou Mountains and practiced the "True Primal Chaos Formula". The days passed one by one like this.

Already seven days had gone.

The city square trading center had always been a bustling place. Some people with good judgment would come here and window shop for some rare goods that were misplaced at a lesser price. It was a rewarding feeling to find a hidden treasure!

However these people would not normally look at medicinal herbs or inscription symbols. It was just too difficult to see their quality, so they often skipped these items.

Because of this hundreds and thousands of customers had come, but Lin Ming's inscription symbol calmly stayed on the shelf, as nobody asked for it.

But today, a tall, brawny man with a large upper body came strolling into the trading center. His whole body was wrapped with thick muscles and he had a rugged appearance. He was simply an intimidating man. He carried a four foot long sword on his back, and walked proudly like a tiger that was looking for trouble.

The person had cold eyes. His body was crisscrossed with scars; he was a man who had experienced countless life or death experiences. This man was a true killer; those little boys who trained at the Martial Houses simply could not compare with his presence.

Seeing this person, the fat appraiser shrank. This man was at the fifth level of body transformation! A powerhouse at the peak of bone forging!

This person was only a step away from the pulse condensation period. But this one step had too many people who were unable to cross over in their entire lives.

“What does the customer wish to buy?” The fat appraiser stood up and greeted.

The man did not say a single word and just looked around, so tactfully the appraiser also remained silent.

The man looked around the store and it didn't seem like anything caught his interest, until suddenly, he pointed at two yellow slips of paper that were pressed between panes of glass. “This is the inscription symbol?”

“Yes.”

“It's 100 gold taels?” The man said with a hint of surprise. The usual inscription symbol cost more than a 1000 gold taels. 100 gold taels really was cheap.

The storekeeper said truthfully, "This is the product of an inscription apprentice. His cultivation level is only at the third level of body transformation. The increased strength it offers is probably only up to ten percent."

"Ten percent..." The man frowned. This really was a low number. But alas, he could not afford to purchase inscription symbols worth more than 1000 gold taels.

This hero's name was Tie Feng. His background was common, and his salary was dependent on what the army provided for him. He had to provide for his elderly parents along with supplying his own medicine, so he could not spend any large amount of gold. Not even 1000 gold taels, but even 100 was a pretty hefty price.

One month ago, Tie Feng had accompanied the armed forces on an expedition and had taken the head of the enemy leader, who was also at the bone forging stage! He took his sword as the spoils of war. This sword was a treasure of the human-step!

The army's rules were that treasures earned were one's own. Like this, Tie Feng obtained a treasured sword. However, the sword had been damaged; the sword's tip had broken off.

This incomplete treasure could only display a limited effect. When the martial artist concentrated his soul force in the weapon, because the sword was incomplete, the combat strength was also lowered.

Moreover, Tie Feng was also disappointed that the sword did not have an inscription symbol, so its strength was even lower by a level.

Tie Feng did not think of engraving an inscription on it, as he was unable to afford the high price, and also because the sword was damaged so one could say it was unworthy of something like an inscription symbol. But seeing this inscription symbol from an apprentice, he began to see the appeal of it.

Generally a symbol that increased the strength by 30% would take about 1500 gold taels. But this only increased a weapon by ten percent, so the price was only 100 gold taels. The ratio of effectiveness to cost was high, but more importantly, he could afford it!

Tomorrow was the third round of the army's martial arts tournament. His next opponent was a pretty difficult one. If he could raise his sword strength by just a bit, then his chances of winning would be much higher.

The tournament was required by all martial artists within thirty years of age. If one had a great result, they would obtain great rewards, or even a promotion in military rank!

Tie Feng's military exploits had already accumulated throughout the years. If he showed great results this time, he might even be raised to captain of ten thousand men. Moreover he wanted the rewards. Ten years ago his mother had picked herbal medicines so he could continue practicing his martial arts and had fallen off a cliff and broken both her legs. She had been confined to a bed since. Tie Feng swore to the heavens that he would buy the rare medicine Black Jade Paste for his mother. Black Jade Paste had the ability to heal broken bones if set properly. With it, he would be able to cure both his mother's legs, and she would be able to walk again! But the price of this rare medicine was 5000 gold taels. To the him now, it was simply an unimaginable figure.

With this in mind, Tie Feng must grasp victory with his own hands! Tomorrow was the third day of the tournament, and even Marshal Qin Xiao would attend in person. He was the number one figure in the land! There was no way he could lose with so much on the line!

For his family, for his mother!

Tie Feng clenched his teeth and said to the storekeeper, "This inscription symbol, I'll take it!"

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“No way! Somehow, you managed to get back 95 taels of gold?” Lin Xiaodong looked at the banknote in Lin Mings hand and couldn’t believe it was real. He couldn’t say what he thought in his mind, that some pitiful fool and spent 95 gold taels to purchase a piece of toilet paper.

“It’s 92 gold taels.” Lin Ming said. The city squares trading center was very quick in terms of money. The next day after the purchase they had handed over Lin Ming his profit. It was originally 100 gold taels, and after taking out five percent, and three gold taels for the rent, there was 92 gold taels left.

An inscription symbol that should have had a minimum value of 1000 taels of gold only sold for 92. It really dumbfounded Lin Ming that the person who bought it profited so, but it was true that those who bought them took the risks.

90 taels of gold was not enough to buy any sort of rare medicine. It was only enough to buy the common kind that cured wounds. Lin Ming shrugged and went to the medicine shop to look for some materials.

What he didn’t know was that at this time in the armor grounds, there was a tournament of unmatched pomp and grand that was occurring, the grand assembly of martial artists!

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At the Ten Mile grounds, wearing heavy iron armor under the blazing sun, ten thousand soldiers stood in a tight square formation. If one simply approached them they would feel the aura of war, as if they were drowning in some ancient battlefield as the god of death was galloping towards them. These were the Sky Fortune’s Kingdom’s most superb warriors. Even picking out one randomly, it wasn’t a joke to say that they could fight against ten other warriors!

Opposite of these soldiers were rows of seats. At the center of this sat a man wearing golden armor. Although the thick hairs at his temple were already greying, his expression was bright, and his eyes were sharp like a falcon. He gave a feeling of infinite power, a hero among heroes. This was the man whose strength had swept away the Eastern Sun Country 80 years ago, Marshal Qin Xiao!

His presence here showed how important this tournament was. The Qin family also came in attendance, including Qin Xingxuan and her master, Mister Mui. Mui was already 100 years old. His cultivation had reached the middle stage of houtian. He was also one of Sky Fortune highest masters, and was an inscription master. Even the King of Sky Fortune Kingdom had to treat him with respect.

Besides the Qin family, there were also thousands of other military officials.

Chapter 19: Muyi's Doubts

The Sky Fortune Kingdom held martial arts in high esteem, especially in the military. A tournament would be held every three years, for the selection of talents into higher positions, and to raise the fighting spirit of the martial warrior.

The requirements for this tournament were that one had to be less than thirty years old and had achieved at least the third level of body transformation. Thousands of competitors would enter in, and after several tests and three rounds, only fifty would remain.

Now the third and final round of the competition was beginning. The competitors had gone through their rounds, and soon there would be only fifty remaining.

This was the last battle. The contestants would put forth all their hidden abilities and fight with all their might! The stage would fill with the aura of a raging fire as each man made their last stand!

However the start of the competition had not caused the higher ups to pay much attention. The competitors on the field so far either had low strength, or too much of a disparity between them. It had reached the twentieth round so far and there hadn't been any rousing fights. All Qin Xiao cared about so far were the results.

The competition now had two sides. One was the son of a general, a handsome 29 year old man at the peak of bone forging. The past few years this man has gone on numerous missions and earned many medals and awards for his service. His strength had been strengthened by these events, and in his possession were even two treasures; a saber and a suit of armor. The saber also had an engraving on it from an inscription master; its strength was no small matter!

But on the other side was a birth soldier of humble origins. His name was Tie Feng. His talent wasn't outstanding, but he practiced diligently to the point it left one breathless. He was fearless in battle; not even the threat of death could cause him to waver. He had killed many enemies and earned himself many merits, even more so than the general's child! Now, Tie Feng was also at the peak of bone forging.

It was rare for two soldiers to have such a similar and high cultivation at their age. After slaughtering their enemies in the battlefield, in the future it was possible that they would enter the pulse condensation period and become pillars of the country!

As the referee announced the two competitors, a silver emblazoned general smiled with happiness and gratification. The one going on stage was his son!

"Haha, old man Li, your son really did you proud this time." Qin Xiao smiled as he said this. This silver emblazoned general had once been under his command and they were old friends.

"Commander is too polite. This poor son of mine has grown up with many rare medicines and still hasn't shown much promise; he really isn't making an effort to succeed." Although the silver emblazoned general said this with deprecation, he couldn't conceal his smile. He was very satisfied and proud of his son.

"Mm, this Tie Feng has had very good results, but he will find it difficult to win today."

Qin Xiao said so because of the difference in martial skills and the disparity in rare equipment.

The silver emblazoned general's son had two rare treasures, and they also had the engraving of an inscription master to bolster their strength. This Tie Feng came from a humble background; naturally he wouldn't have such things.

This battle didn't seem fair, but Sky Fortune Kingdom's tournaments have always been so. Treasures and equipment were considered part of a soldier's inherent strength! In the midst of the battlefield, because of the disparity in equipment, if you were cut down by the enemy, could you then complain that it was unfair?

It was impossible for the army to supply each soldier with rare equipment, thus if a soldier wanted to prepare, then their family background also became a part of their strength, and even an important part.

When Tie Feng came on stage, he drew out his four foot sword. Qin Xiao turned to Muyi who was sitting beside him, "Mister Mui, is that Tie Feng's sword also a treasure?"

Muyi stroked his beard and nodded, "Treasure indeed, but it is damaged."

"Oh, damaged?" After Mui said that, Qin Xiao also saw that the sword missed the tip. It really was a damaged sword.

Muyi said, "Damaged equipment is of course worse than a whole one. Not only that but it is Tie Feng's only treasure, whereas Li Qi has two. Their two levels of cultivation may be similar, but Tie Feng's martial skill manual is inferior to Li Qi's'. This battle, Tie Feng will lose.

Qin Xiao said, "Although he will lose, that this Tie Feng managed to get this far with a damaged sword is also amazing. If in this next battle he can manage to take twenty moves, I might promote into the armies martial hall. Xingxuan, take a good look at this battle; you too will enter the fifth layer of body transformation. Although you practice a specialized martial skill for women, all creatures are the same, so if you watch carefully it will help you."

Qin Xiao's last few words were to Qin Xingxuan. She politely nodded and said, "Yes, grandfather."

As soon as the referee commenced the start of the fight, that man named Li Qi rushed forwards with several fierce strikes. He hoped to end the battle as soon as possible. He had the advantage in every aspect! It would be easy to finish the battle early.

He began to utilize the secret skill passed down through the Li family, the 'Five Sacred Mountains Saber Art'! This kind of swordsmanship was overwhelming as if a mountain were falling down upon you. Each slash and thrust was accompanied by an incomparably imposing sense of power. It was able to instantly overwhelm anyone of a lesser cultivation level. Even with an equal cultivation, it was difficult to defend against this strike that crushed down on you like innumerable mountains. Most would just succumb to the demolishing heavy attack.

As soon as Li Qi wielded his saber, the air filled with the whistling of the wind, as if an entire orchestra were playing a battle song. The saber in his hand was 500 jins; it was the perfect combination to display the overwhelming power of the 'Five Sacred Mountains Saber Art!' If the enemy's weapon quality was less, then the weapon would simply break apart!

Tie Feng saw Li Qi's come chopping down and his eyes hardened, his complexion changing. He knew of Li Qi's secret move. He sunk his waist and steadied his legs. With both hands gripping the broken sword, his body erupted with a flood of turbulent true essence that poured into the blade!

Facing Li Qi's overwhelming strike, he could only meet him head on with all of his strength!

But as Tie Feng poured his true essence into the sword, his heart gave a slight skip. The true essence was flowing as if...as if it were much smoother than before!

Tie Feng had already had this sword for several months. Before now, when he poured his true essence into the blade, it was like pouring

water into a drainage ditch. The sword couldn't absorb much true essence, and in fact wasted a lot. But this time the blade was sucking up his true essence like an eddying current. The smoothness of absorption was incomparable, and there wasn't a single feeling of waste!

How can it be like this?

Tie Feng didn't have any time to think with Li Qi's saber coming down on him, so he simply cried out and cut his blade upwards!

With his common low-grade army martial skill 'Total Annihilation Strike', he met Li Qi's secret high-tier martial skill passed down through his family, the 'Five Sacred Mountains Saber Art!' Their blades collided and a loud explosion filled the air. The collision of true essence erupted into the air, and the floor of the area was smashed apart. Li Qi was forced backwards three or four feet, but Tie Feng was also forced back a few steps!

Evenly matched!

Tie Feng gasped and looked at the blade in his hand, his face filling with color of disbelief. He had never fought before with Li Qi before, and had only heard of him. After that strike now, he finally realized how fearful this man truly was! Before, he would have suffered some light wounds, not how he had managed to keep that saber of his in check!

He knew with absolute certainty that it was not his own strength that increased, but this sword of his had changed...was it because of the inscription symbol from yesterday?

Tie Feng did not understand exactly how inscriptions worked, but knew that they could strengthen weapons. Tie Feng thought they might increase the sharpness of the blade, but after testing it out yesterday on several trees he did not feel anything different, so he had

been disappointed. He had never realized that the inscription technique used true essence to enhance the strength of the weapon!

Was this really the inscription symbol of an apprentice? How could it be so fierce? Although he did not understand the pricing of most inscriptions, in his heart he absolutely knew that with such strength and such a powerful effect, there was no way that this inscription could be bought with only 100 gold taels!

With just a collision, Li Qi had been struck back down to reality. This man had taken his saber strike with that broken blade and had come out even...perhaps even higher! This man...was terrifying!

“Good!” Qin Xiao praised, “The ordinary army martial skill was able to keep off Li Qi’s ‘Five Sacred Mountain Saber Skill’ with a broken blade. This Tie Feng is good! Very good! Mister MUYI, what do you think?”

MUYI wrinkled his brow and was at a loss for words. Although he and Qin Xiao had about the same level of cultivation, he was also an inscription master, so his understanding of treasures naturally exceeded Qin Xiao. In that brief strike a moment ago, he clearly saw that Tie Feng’s broken blade was not any less amazing than Li Qi’s saber! And that was because the true essence that poured from that blade had even shocked him!

How could it be like this? Looking at the damaged blade, he could see that it wasn’t a high grade treasure.

Could it be because of an inscription symbol?

Chapter 20: Inscription Skill

“Bang!”

As Mister Muyi was thinking, Tie Feng and Li Qi collided yet again in another dazzling shower of sparks. Both of them were violent and vicious warriors; each of their moves was met head on with another! But Tie Feng relied on a broken sword to evenly match Li Qi, and even the brilliance of the true essence that burst from his sword exceeded Li Qi's saber by far!

“!”

In the next clash, Li Qi made a careless mistake and was scratched by Tie Feng's sword. Although Li Qi's armor was also a rare treasure, the opposition's sword contained a dangerous true essence that pervaded and drilled through his body. Li Qi's face instantly turned ash white as he almost spit a mouthful of blood!

Even Qin Xiao noticed that the sword was strange. He looked and Muyi and said, “It looks to me like I underestimated that sword. What rank of treasure would it be in the human-step?”

Muyi replied, “It definitely is a lower rank treasure within the human-step...” He tapped his fingers against his arm rest as he pondered what the possible cause was. At this moment, Qin Xingxuan who had been carefully observing the battle, opened her mouth and said, “Master, perhaps on this treasure was engraved a symbol by a great inscription master?”

Muyi said, “I also suspect this. I was thinking which master's skills this could belong to. Even if the sword were already damaged to this state, for it to be able to command such power...”

As they talked amongst themselves, the fight on the stage was reaching its finale. Li Qi had been injured and could no longer hold

back anything else. It was time to use sixth type of the 'Five Sacred Mountains Saber Skill.' He had just learned this skill and was saving it as his killer move in the final match, but right now he had no choice but to use it otherwise he would suffer defeat.

Li Qi crossed his saber on his chest, and the true essence within him began to rumble as he said, "Tie Feng, I acknowledge your strength, you are a true master! With your ordinary martial skills you have pushed me to the point of hurting my pride and have me use my strongest blow. But it ends now! Get ready to meet my final strike! The black dragon will descend from the mountains!"

Li Qi cried out as he poured the entirety of his true essence into his saber. The black saber suddenly shined with a brilliant and haughty orange light. Li Qi lifted the saber high up above his heads and aimed at Tie Feng, then slashed downwards in a fierce divide! At that moment, several horrifying and faint shades emerged in the air. This was the claws of the black dragon!

"He's already managed to form the black dragon' shades. This Li Qi is truly accomplished in the Li Family's saber arts. Tie Feng will find it impossible to resist this strike!"

As the black dragon rushed towards him, Tie Feng knew that this was Li Qi's strongest move. Although the black dragon contained an energy that would frighten most warriors, at this moment Tie Feng felt nothing in his heart but an incomparable calm. Without the slightest hint of fear, he gripped his sword with both hands. He could feel the thick fighting intention from the sword as if it were an old friend.

Fuck your mom! You think you've won but I will be the winner!

Tie Feng's heart abandoned all needless thoughts. He let out a tremendous roar that cracked the air and compressed every last ounce of remaining true essence into his sword. The true essence in

the blade had been compressed to its very limit! At this time it suddenly erupted with an overwhelming strength!

A dazzlingly bright light emitted from all degrees as a volcanic true essence erupted from that sword. It turned into a brilliant rainbow that shot forward like a blazing meteor straight into the black dragon's shade.

Overwhelming all opposition, overwhelming all enemies, overwhelming all creation.

This was the skill of the 'Overwhelming Rune' - Instant Violent Strike!

"Bang!"

There was a huge explosion and the inconceivable occurred. The black dragon shade had been cut in half by Tie Feng's blade! Li Qi was flung offstage upside down like a rag doll as he spit blood!

Qin Xiao's eyes lit as he saw this scene. True essence had condensed into reality! How was this possible?

That bright light was clearly true essence, but to use true essence like that required at least the pulse condensation period for martial artists to use. Tie Feng was only at the bone forging boundary, so how?

At this time on the field, as soon as Li Qi had been struck off stage, Tie Feng collapsed to his knees. His true essence had been completely spent. He supported himself with this sword as he kneeled. Both eyes gazed reverently at the flames that were traced from the inscription symbol. This symbol...did it help him itself?

He held out his hand and gently stroked the one inch wide flame inscription. A stream of fighting spirit continually transmitted from the inscription, and Tie Feng felt a very close, almost familial bond with it.

The referee hopped on stage and announced Tie Feng's victory. This was a stunning upset! The talented and rising star Li Qi had been defeated by Tie Feng!

Qin Xiao looked deep at Tie Feng, and said to Muye, "It seems I was right just now. How did the true essence change shape? How did Tie Feng do this? It likely wasn't some martial skill."

"It appears so!" Muye took a deep breath. His eyes showed a trace of shock. He said, "If I'm not wrong, then that is a skill of the inscription symbol. The inscriptions could change the flow of true essence and send out skills....in the Sky Fortune Kingdom, such techniques have been nearly all lost..."

"Skill of the inscription?" Qin Xiao was stunned. He did not completely understand inscription skills, but he had seen them before. Eighty years ago when he commanded the army to fight the Eastern Sun country, he had fought their generals and seen the skills of the inscription symbols at that time.

To think that after a period of eighty years, he would see it once again! He thought on this and then said to a soldier, "Pass down the order, have Tie Feng come to see me."

"Yes!"

...

Tie Feng had not thought that Marshal Qin would ask to see him personally. This was truly the greatest of honors! In ordinary circumstances, the military officers did not have the qualifications to see Marshal Qin directly.

Although he had passed through countless life and death situations, but as soon as he saw the marshal, an extremely heavy wave of pressure forced him to kneel. He said, "Tie Feng greets the marshal."

“Stand up.” Qin Xiao waved. “I called you here to ask you a question. Where did your sword come from?”

“Reporting to the marshal, three months ago it was taken from the enemy after a battle.”

“Oh? Let me have a look.”

“Yes.” Tie Feng presented his sword. Qin Xiao flicked a finger on the blade as a clear sound rang in the air. Thought it was long, he could tell there was a trace of disharmony.

The sword was good, but it was broken!

Qin Xiao showed the sword to Muyi.

Muyi held the sword in his hands and locked his gaze onto the flame engraving. He reached out a hand and touched the inscription. He closed his eyes as he perceived the soul force.

Muyi stood still for a very long time. He had not said a single word but Qin Xiao patiently waited.

After a good period of time passed, Muyi finally opened his eyes. He turned and let Qin Xingxuan hold it. It was impossible for her to tell anything from it, but he only wanted her to be able to feel this master’s work.

Qin Xingxuan held the sword to her body and let her soul force sink into the flame engraved symbol. Because she was so focused, her pair of elegant eyebrows couldn’t help but gently twitch.

“How is it?” Muyi asked Qin Xingxuan.

Qin Xingxuan replied, “Xingxuan’s talent is too poor. I only sensed that it was full of incomparably mysterious symbols and lines. It should stem from the hand of a master.”

Muyi said, "It's normal to not be able to tell. After the inscription is finished, the secret symbols and runes will be hidden in the treasure. It is difficult to see, especially with an inscription this complex and intricate. It is startling, but only if there were more than I could found out more secrets."

After Muyi said that, Tie Feng said, "Reporting to the marshal, Tie Feng purchased this inscription symbol at the shop. There were two for sale, but regrettably I only purchased one. If Master Muyi has a need, I shall go to the shop to purchase another."

"Mm? Qin Xiao startled. "You bought this inscription? It wasn't originally on the sword?"

"Yes. I personally engraved it yesterday."

Muyi heard Tie Feng's words and was immediately excited. He asked, "Where did you buy it at?"

"The city square."

"City square?" Muyi paused. In his impression, the goods there were at most one or two hundred gold taels. How would they sell an inscription symbol, moreover, with Tie Feng's family background, how could he afford it?

Therefore Muyi said with some doubt, "Your family is ordinary as far as I know. How did you afford such an expensive inscription symbol?"

Tie Feng hesitated and then said truthfully, "This is...at the time I purchased it, it was marked at 100 gold taels. In the end I was just able to afford this..."

"One hun-...how much was it? The usually calm Muyi's eyes widened like saucers and he panted. "100 gold taels!? This sold at 100 gold taels!?!? "

Chapter 21: ‘Inscription Apprentice’ Symbol?

Tie Feng had not expected Muiyi to react in such a big fashion. He said, “Yes, it was 100 gold taels. The city squares storekeeper said that it was an apprentice who made it...”

“Apprentice?! Like hell!” Muiyi was surprised, but thought this was impossible for an apprentice inscriptionist. It should be that the storekeeper made an error. But who would be so stupid and wasteful to just throw away gold like this. It really was a miscarriage of justice to take something of a great inscription master that was worth several thousand gold taels and to sell it like some common cabbage.

“Lead me to this place!”

“Yes, sir.”

Then, Mister Muiyi took Qin Xingxuan along with him, and under Tie Feng’s directions, they rode a horse drawn carriage straight to the city square.

The horse drawn carriage of the Qin estate might not be known by everyone in Sky Fortune City, but most recognized the four snow white horses that drew it. As they passed the streets, pedestrians stopped to watch them, and stood aside as the carriage drove past; this was the respect given to Marshal Qin.

...

The bright summer afternoon brought several hints of laziness with it; it made a person’s whole body weak and languid and not wanting to move. In the city square’s trading center, the fat storekeeper that had received Lin Ming before, was sitting in a rocking chair at the

entrance. He lay down with a leafy fan covering his face, and was in the midst of falling asleep.

Today's business was a bit slow, so the fat man was considering closing a bit earlier this afternoon. But at this moment, he heard a clear hoof beat that woke him up.

He opened his eyes uncomfortably, and was thinking of reprimanding these people. Did they not know that horses were not allowed in the city square?

However, as turned towards the sound, he saw immediately noticed the four snow white horses, each the highest breed of thoroughbreds, and also the golden shield symbol. He nearly almost rolled out of his chair.

"It's the Marshal's Quarters horse drawn carriage!"

The fat storekeeper hurried to stand. Why would the Marshal's Quarters come to the city square?

He was wondering about this, but then was astonished as this carriage swiftly came to a halt in front of his own entrance. My god... what is this...the master of the carriage was coming into his own shop?

When the carriages curtain was lifted, the fat storekeeper saw an old man and a beautiful young girl step out. His rolls began to tremble. Mister MUYI! Miss Qin! How did these two famous figures of Sky Fortune City, these living Buddha's, decide to come to his little temple?

"This is it?" Qin Xingxuan asked Tie Feng. When she had heard that the inscription symbol was on sale, she was also filled with excitement. Qin Xingxuan had an enormous interest in inscription since childhood, and after seeing Tie Feng and Li Qi fight, she yearned to learn that inscription technique!

“It is here.” Tie Feng said as he led them to the front. Together with Qin Xingxuan and Muyi, they entered the store.

The fat storekeeper had a body like a meatball, but he still stood as straight as he could as if his back was against the wall. He didn't even dare breathe the same air as these two distinguished guests.

“Storekeeper, yesterday I bought an inscription symbol, do you remember?”

Tie Feng was at the fifth level of body transformation. He also resembled a walking steel golem; his whole body was covered with scars like he came from some faraway and dangerous battlefield. Naturally he left a deep impression on the storekeeper. The storekeeper nodded. “I remember, it was an apprentice's inscription symbol, 100 gold taels...”

The fat storekeeper was afraid. Was there some problem with the apprentice's inscription symbol? If it had any problems and these people came looking to account for it, then there was nothing he could do but lay down and die. Shit! He shouldn't have let that boy rent a spot! But still, it was only an apprentice level inscription symbol, a second tier item. Why would the Marshal's Quarters be involved in this?

“I heard you have another one, where is it?” Muyi impatiently asked.

The fat storekeeper pointed at a shelf in the corner, where a rough yellow piece of paper was pressed behind a glass pane.

Muyi took three steps and arrived in front of the shelf. He lifted the glass and then cautiously held the symbol paper in his hand like a baby. He felt the soul force fluctuations that came from the paper, and then sucked in a breath of cold air; his eyes were filled with bewilderment!

“How is it Master?” Qin Xingxuan asked as she walked over.

“This inscription symbol...” MUYI took a few breaths to steady himself and calm down. Even he could not believe what he was saying. “In this inscription the soul force cannot surpass the third stage of body transformation; it...might even be lower!”

QIN XINGXUAN felt her heart jump. She took the symbol paper and also examined it with her soul force. It really was as he had said!

When TIE FENG had said the inscription symbol was the work of an apprentice, QIN XINGXUAN had not believed it was possible and assumed he had been tricked, but now she had been proven wrong... inconceivable!

She said, “Is it possible that an inscription master intentionally suppressed their true strength to the third level of body transformation, and created this symbol??”

MUYI responded, “The pulse condensation period and the HOUTIAN stage have completely different qualities of soul force than someone in the lower levels of body transformation. Not only is it immeasurably difficult to suppress, but it may also cause harm to themselves. Not only is there no need or benefits to doing so, but it would also lower the quality of the inscription symbol. I truly cannot fathom the thoughts of the elder who created this.”

That fat storekeeper listened to the two discuss the symbol, and felt his brain short circuit from all the conflicting emotions. He had originally thought that the inscription symbol had some defect so they came to deal with him, but listening to these two, it seemed the inscription symbol had some significance, so they came to investigate.

This is MISTER MUYI! He was one of the top three inscription masters in the entirety of Sky Fortune Kingdom! Even he was shocked by how strong this inscription symbol was.

The fat storekeeper felt a pang of regret. If he knew about this sooner, he would not have sold them at such a low price.

But...those symbol papers were sold by some shabby looking youth, how did he manage to obtain such a fierce inscription symbol?

“This storekeeper, do you remember who brought this inscription symbol in?”

“Yes yes, of course I remember,” The fat man nodded hurriedly, “A young boy of about fifteen or sixteen in ordinary clothing brought it in. I also have his address.”

As the fat man said this he quickly began flipping through his book of records. The trading center always kept a point of contact so they could deliver the sales of commission.

A fifteen to sixteen year old youth...as soon as Qin Xingxuan heard this, her mind jumped. Her first thought was that of Lin Ming, that young boy that had so thoroughly impressed her at the Zither Department. Was it him?

Body transformation third level or lower...inscription apprentice... this...was it possibly him?

Aware of these possibilities, Qin Xingxuan felt her heart tremble. If it was true, then the term ‘genius’ was insufficient to describe him; he could only be described as an once-in-a-lifetime monstrous talent!

The fat storekeeper was shaking as he rushed to find out the address. He looked at the shelf serial number and stuttered as he said. “Great... Great Clarity Pavilion. That boy lives in the Great Clarity Pavilion. That’s the address that he wrote down.”

“Great Clarity Pavilion? Let’s go.” MUYI said.

As soon as they boarded the carriage, Qin Xingxuan said with some concern, "This address was left down eight days ago. I don't know if he is still staying at Great Clarity Pavilion, people do not usually stay there too long."

Qin Xingxuan assumed that Lin Ming was a guest staying there. Great Clarity Pavilion was one of Sky Fortune City's most luxurious restaurants. It had a feast hall and many guest rooms, but under ordinary circumstances it was only for temporary stays.

Chapter 22: Strength and Delicacy

These days Lin Ming had been practicing deboning with the flat back of a knife. He had taken half of the 95 gold and used it to purchase medicines. Now when he was training, he was able to leave a seven inch deep indentation in the Iron Wood tree with each punch. His strength was not any lower than 1500 jins.

However, he had still not reached the boundary of formlessness as described in the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' manual, where each fist flowed like silk. The so called 'flowing like silk' was merely controlling one's own strength. As soon as he accomplished this as described in the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', then, if he were to punch at the Iron Wood tree, he would leave the bark unblemished, but the inner wood be shattered! Lin Ming had still not reached this 'flowing like silk' boundary.

Lin Ming drank a bowl of medicinal soup, and stripped off his shirt. He had practiced deboning like this every day, and through this method, was slowly beginning to understand how to control his strength.

The kitchen was hot, and using the back of the knife, the strength Lin Ming consumed was increased by several times. He even activated the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' at the same time he was cutting. Rivulets of sweat quickly flowed down his body. At this time, he did not that his inscription symbol had already caused a not-so-small controversy.

...

...

"Mister Muyi, Miss Qin, I would like to personally welcome you to our establishment. If you would like to come in we have already specially prepared a private room for you." Sister Lan had already received the

news ahead of time and arrived at the main entrance to greet the esteemed guests. The Great Clarity Pavilion and other high class restaurants and special rooms prepared for dignitaries and other high profile guests. These guests often did not like to eat in the open, so in order to create a more comfortable environment for them, there were several private rooms that were set up.

“Xiao Lian, prepare the best blue spring tea we have any inform the kitchen to prepare well. Bring out the best dishes!” Although Great Clarity Pavilion often entertained many honored guests; Muiyi and Qin Xingxuan were the absolute cream of society! Regard if it was the Marshal’s Quarters or the Imperial Palace, they had several executive master chefs that were beyond the skills of Great Clarity Pavilion’s chefs; there was simply no need for them to come here to eat a meal.

Qin Xingxuan said, “It is unnecessary, this time my master and I have come here to look for someone.”

“Oh? Looking for someone?”

“Yes, I hear you have a fifteen to sixteen year old boy staying here. About as tall as me, and his last name is Lin.” Qin Xingxuan said Lin Ming’s last only, because it was common practice for guest room’s to only have the last name registered. For instance, Mr. Lin. Qin Xingxuan guessed that Lin Ming might even be with his master, if so, the registration wouldn’t be under Lin.

“A fifteen or sixteen year old youth...” Sister Lan thought about this then asked Xiao Lian, “Have we recently had a young man stay here?”

Xiao Lian shook her head and said, “I don’t recall, but I will check the log book to see.”

After Xiao Lian left, Sister Lan entertained Qin Xingxuan and Muiyi as they sat down. After a period of time, Xiao Lian came back saying, “I checked the log books, and haven’t seen any recording of a young man coming in recently.”

The Great Clarity Pavilion was an establishment mostly frequented by professionals and top-level figures on business. They tended to be older individuals. There were very few families that came in and of course rarely young men.

Muyi frowned and said, "Not in the last ten days? How? Eight days ago the young man was at the Great Clarity Pavilion."

Sister Lan seriously thought of this and said, "Our Great Clarity Pavilion doesn't have many young boys or girls that stay here. Perhaps, if you are looking for someone with the last name Lin, our kitchen does have one and he has been here a month, but...he shouldn't be the one Miss Qin is looking for."

Sister Lan thought that Qin Xingxuan and Muyi came to look for a junior of some aristocratic family. Although Lin Ming had an interesting story in the kitchen so far, his family background was ordinary and his martial arts cultivation was not high. He shouldn't have had any dealings with the Marshal's Quarters.

"Kitchen?" Qin Xingxuan said with a hint of surprise.

"Mm. He is a deboner...he is a very responsible young boy...it's a job where one slices the meat." Sister Lan saw Qing Xingxuan did not know what the occupation of deboning involved, so she explained to her.

"Slicing meat? Not possible." Muyi heard it and did not entertain any hopes. How could an esteemed inscription master be a meat slicer?

But Qin Xingxuan did not give up. She pressed on, "What name was he called?"

"I'm not very sure; he speaks very little. We only know his last name is Lin. He should be working in the kitchen at this time. Would you like to take a look?"

“Mm. Lead the way.” Qin Xingxuan nodded as she stood up.

They followed Sister Lan and arrived at the Great Clarity Pavilion’s kitchen. Upon opening the door, Qin Xingxuan felt a billow of hot air and steam wrap around her. It was late in the summer, and combined with the kitchen heat, it was unbearably hot.

Qin Xingxuan simply revolved her soul force and scattered the dry, scalding air, and entered the kitchen along with Sister Lan. The kitchen chefs widened their eyes in amazement; some of the young men’s jaws almost reached the floor.

Great Clarity Pavilion had many esteemed guests entering and leaving, so these waiters and chefs had a broad experience and knowledge of who was important. Many of them recognized Qin Xingxuan and didn’t believe their eyes. In the entire Sky Fortune City there was nobody who had not heard of her name or knows of her outstanding talent. Why would she come to the Great Clarity Pavilion’s kitchen?

Sister Lan finally stopped and pointed at a room just off the corner of the kitchen, “Over there...”

Great Clarity Pavilion’s kitchen was very large, and Lin Ming worked in his own little room. He would slice the vicious beast meat here and then have it sent off to the freezer for preservation.

The door opened and Qin Xingxuan peeked inside. She could only see a youth wearing just a pair of green pants. His slightly muscled upper back was bare, and he was holding a common bone knife as he cut into the body of a vicious beast.

The youth’s back was facing Qin Xingxuan; viewed from behind, the young man had a symmetrically muscled and fit back, with skin tanned from the sun, and with a healthy sheen from exercise. Perhaps it was because of the kitchen heat or the maybe it was because the

boy was working very hard, but his back was entirely covered with beads of sweat, and it gave off a daunting sense of strength.

Was he Lin Ming?

Qin Xingxuan was unsure, so she approached several steps. She saw the young man's profile; it was a young and tender face with a resolute expression. At first glance it was not noticeable, but looking a bit longer could cause the heart to palpitate and leave a sense that he was an unforgettably lofty character.

Although she only saw a small side of him, Qin Xingxuan recognized that focused and sharp look, and it began to overlap with the image she had of Lin Ming from the Zither Department. She did not know why but it caused her mind to jump and a slight flush crept up her neck.

She hadn't imagined the scene in front of her. The exquisite inscription symbol that required fine control of soul force and a delicate, gentle touch, was the same as this young man that was barbarically cutting the animal meat? These two completely contradictory ideas appeared in the same boy; the complicated and mysterious noble beauty, and the simple strength in contrast with each other gave her heart a momentary sinking feeling.

At this moment Lin Ming turned around. The kitchen had many people passing through, and when Lin Ming practiced he often ignored his surroundings, but he felt a difference that there were some people observing him. It might have been that there was someone coming to look for him.

But as he saw it was Qin Xingxuan, he paused. Qin Xingxuan? Why did she come to the Great Clarity Pavilion? For him?

Qin Xingxuan had noted the simple knife in Lin Ming's hand. It was less than a foot long bone knife, and there was nothing special or particular about it, but what astonished Qin Xingxuan was that Lin

Ming had unexpectedly been using the back of the knife to cut the meat. This, this was really...

Her gaze moved to the cuts of meat that Lin Ming had sliced up. The sections were consistent, even, and neat. Were these made using the back of a knife?

“Miss Qin, were you looking for me?” Lin Ming asked. He saw Muye from behind and his heart shrank. This old man gave him a feeling of absolute strength, as if some invisible and constant force was pushing down on him. His background was most likely a top powerhouse, perhaps some master in the pulse condensation stage or even the rarer houtian stage!

“Little brother, are you Lin Ming?” The old man asked Lin Ming with a smile on his face. Lin Ming nodded; he couldn’t conceal anything from a master at this level. He guessed it was because of the sale of the two inscription symbols were brought to this old man’s attention. Although he had already assumed that the inscription symbols would be brought to others attention, he didn’t think it would happen so quickly.

This kind of circumstance might be a stroke of luck, but it could also be a calamity. If it was luck, then his inscription symbol prices would sharply rise in prestige and price, and he would be able to obtain a fortune he could use to buy some medicines to cultivate. But if it were calamity, then because his strength was low, he would be like a rhinoceros that was hunted and killed for its horn. Lin Ming had no ability to protect himself and might even be put under house arrest by certain parties and forced to create inscription symbols all day.

Before Lin Ming had entered the auction house he had considered all these points. He had thought of changing his identity and looks, but he didn’t know any profound skills to do that, and moreover was only fifteen years old so any illusion would easily be broken.

Sooner or later his inscription skills would have attracted attention and there would have been major forces investing him. He was just a young boy at the first level of body transformation, and had no great background. Using some cheap parlor tricks to disguise himself from these major powers was no different from some moron spouting nonsense.

Therefore, Lin Ming did not plan to hide his identity, and thought of a different way.

Chapter 23: Xiantian

Lin Ming knew it was useless to conceal who he was, so he decided that he would instead fabricate the identity of a master in order to placate any questions.

The inscription techniques were not possible to be self-learned, much less to the point that he had at such a young age. In the eyes of a reasonable person, it was most likely that Lin Ming had some sort of legendary inscription master backing him, even if this character did not actually exist.

Of course there were also risks. The world had many crazy people, some who would even disregard the existence of such a person. If Lin Ming ran into such a person, he would be in danger.

But Lin Ming didn't run from such risks, instead he faced them head on. He cultivated martial arts, how could he run from something just because there was the risk of danger? If he feared every shadow and shade, then it would be impossible for him to reach the peak of the martial path.

Muyi saw Lin Ming go on alert, and he said to everyone behind him, "Leave."

Quickly, everyone had left this small room included Tie Feng. Soon there was only Muyi and Qin Xingxuan.

Muyi circulated his soul force, and something an invisible bubble surrounded the entire room. "Little brother, I don't have any ill intentions, this is merely my sound sealing skill. Under it, no one will be able to hear what we are saying. I just want to ask you, are you the one that created that flame engraved inscription symbol?"

It was a tradition for the inscription master to have their own personalized image that they used on the inscription symbols. It

identified who they were, and represented the spirit behind their inscription path. Lin Ming's was a raging flame that represented his desire to tread the martial path.

Qin Xingxuan held her breath, her eyes wide and unblinking as she waited for his answer.

Lin Ming hesitated, nodded, and said, "It was me."

Since he decided to act, then he would do so thoroughly and completely. Only then would he be in a strong position and others would believe that the mysterious master behind him was a legendary figure that could not be offended.

Although they had already expected this, after hearing Lin Ming's affirmation, Muye gasped, and in particular Qin Xingxuan's eyes widened with shock.

She was also an inscriptionist, so she knew! She knew that it was immeasurably difficult to become an inscription master at the tender age of fifteen!

Qin Xingxuan understood that for every mountain, there would always be a higher one. Sky Fortune Kingdom was only a small state in the entirety of Sky Spill Continent. If though she was talented herself and considered the best here, if she had left for other lands, then perhaps she would only be one in any countless number of talents.

But, Qin Xingxuan still had not left the country before. After all, even in the surrounded few countries she was the top number one talent; there was not a single contemporary around her that could compare with a tenth of her.

Sixth rank martial talent, in addition to an inscription talent that was second to none in Sky Fortune Kingdom, Qin Xingxuan was truly blessed by the heavens and had not found a match in those of her

generation. She had never felt a half ounce of frustration at her age, so Qin Xingxuan had grown up with a self-belief of arrogance.

But today, she was suddenly defeated by a youth of the same age. Although his strength was less than hers, his talent and ability and accomplishments in inscription had outstripped her by miles.

Concerning inscription technique, it could be said that she was a little fledgling that hadn't learnt to fly, and he was a soaring eagle that rules the skies; the gap was simply too big!

She was frustrated, but Qin Xingxuan was not depressed or hopeless. She was actually excited, because now that she had found a goal, she could then strive to improve herself!

To this young boy, Qin Xingxuan was filled with curiosity. She also hoped to become his friend and compare notes with him in the future. She could learn from these exchanges and further increase her understanding of inscription techniques!

But she remembered that before, her invitation had been rejected. Qin Xingxuan felt wronged. Girls were naturally thin skinned, shy, and proud; beautiful girls from aristocratic families were all like this. Even if in her heart she wanted to become his friend, but because of that single time, she was not able to take her own initiative to invite him again.

After Muye heard Lin Ming's answer, he finally managed to compose himself from the sense of disbelief he felt. This truly was unbelievable. He had originally guessed that the inscription symbol's creator did not have a cultivation that surpassed the third level of body transformation, but it seemed he was wrong.

Lin Ming's cultivation was only at the peak of the first layer, but because of his solid foundation and the density and precision of his soul force, it had given the illusion that it was higher than it was!

Because of this dense soul force, he was afraid that this youth practiced the top tier martial skill manual. The kind of skill manual that only the most ancient and powerful of clans would have.

Moreover this young boy was extremely assiduous and dedicated...for instance he had just cut apart that vicious beast now with the back of a knife. Perhaps this young boy came from an ancient clan, or had the backing of a supreme master!

Thinking of this, Muiyi took a deep breath and asked with a respectful tone, "Excuse me for asking, by may I request the name of your esteemed master?"

Muiyi had a high and aloof position with the Sky Fortune Kingdom. Even if he approached the emperor he would no need to bow. But from this respectful expression it was sufficient to see the deep awe and reverence he had for this supreme and mysterious master behind Lin Ming.

Ling Ming said, "This...sorry, senior, but my master once told me that to speak his name was a taboo. The truth is my parents do now know that I have apprenticed myself to a master. When I was twelve years old my master found me and taught me some skills." Lin Ming had lived in Green Mulberry City since childhood, so this was easy to investigate. He only said as little as he could to avoid being suspected.

Muiyi said. "I apologize for being crass with my words. For a elder of such high skill, they tour the four corners of the world so it is difficult to glimpse their whereabouts. I should not inquire so rashly...it's just that little brother's inscription technique was so outstanding that it is unlikely to belong to someone from the Sky Fortune Kingdom. Likely is someone from an ancient sect..."

Muiyi said that he did not want to ask who Lin Ming's master was, but he was still vague and wanted to ask for some information. After all, a legendary master like this was rare to see even once; if one does, then perhaps it could be their own stroke of luck!

Muyi had already been stuck at the peak of the houtian boundary for a very long time. He had always wanted to pass the threshold to the next stage.

But without guidance, the single step simple an impassable ravine!

In the eight years of Sky Fortune Kingdom's history, there had been many pulse condensation martial artists. And in those were many talents that would even arrive at the houtian stage.

However, disregarding the peerless talents that had entered the Seven Profound Valleys, then Sky Fortune Kingdom had not had a single xiantian master!

If the step from bone forging to pulse condensation was a little stream to pass, then the path from houtian to xiantian was like a raging ocean! If one did not depend on the direction from a sect, then depending on one's own skill and personal discovery, the possibility to enter the xiantian stage was close to zero!

It was already too late for Muyi to enter into a sect. His only hope was to encounter a mighty elder who was able to give him a pointer or two, and thus also give him the hope that he could one day dream of crossing into the xiantian level.

He did not ultimately seek to enter the xiantian level; he only wanted to know the direction, to give him a goal so he wouldn't remain clueless and lost for the rest of his life.

Lin Ming said, "My master is a recluse, but he had once said that he had entered a sect."

After Muyi heard this he felt a bit envious. He did not have the good fortune to enter a sect, but Lin Ming's master had already left his sect. He said, "Your master's cultivation must have been very high if he left his sect to go travelling. He had probably reached the limit of some high boundary. Perhaps he was above the xiantian stage?"

To Muye, the xiantian stage was an immeasurably distant ideal. For martial artists that were not in a sect, let alone the xiantian stage, the stages above it must be even more unimaginable.

Hearing Muye's question, Lin Ming finally understood the intentions of this old man. His interest in this so called 'master' of his was very strong. His eyes were eager and full of earnest. He must have been looking for some answers for his own cultivation. It was very difficult to practice oneself, after all Muye was at such an old age; he had probably reached his own limits.

Thinking of this, Lin Ming considered the memories of the elder's soul fragment. These memories, although there were some memories of martial arts cultivation, they were not complete. But there was not much value, so it was easy to say a thing or two.

Lin Ming said, "I don't know what boundary master is at, but master once said the martial way is divided into two major parts. He was now contemplating the second part."

"Oh? Which two parts?" Muye's eyes lit up. He feared missing even a single word, for he knew that the opportunity to listen to the words from a learned senior were truly precious.

Qin Xingxuan's eyes were also bright, and she did not blink as she listened to Lin Ming with reverent attention.

Chapter 24: Understanding

Lin Ming said, “Martial arts are divided into two major parts. First cultivate the martial path, and then grasp the principles to attain enlightenment. To cultivate the martial path is to cultivate the body. To enlighten oneself is to cultivate the soul. Master often said that the life was a boundless sea of bitterness. Cultivating was the path of traversing the waters. To cultivate the body was to build a boat that could cross the sea, and cultivating the soul was to create oars to move the boat.”

“If one does not cultivate the body, then the boat would not be steady or strong; a storm would easily capsize it. If one does not cultivate the soul, then their motivation and will would not be enough, and even if their predestined death was near, they would be unable to arrive at the distant shores.”

“But the cultivation of the body and the cultivation of the soul is the difference in transition from the houtian to the xiantian stage. Before houtian, the martial artist will cultivate the body, after xiantian, the martial artist will cultivate the soul.”

“After xiantian, cultivating the soul! As soon as Muyi heard this he was startled, and felt that he would faint. No wonder all these years which he had been practicing he had actually been unable to take that tiny step. He realized that he had been headed the wrong direction the entire time. He had not imagined the xiantian stage to be like this. He muttered, “And what is the meaning of xiantian?”

Lin Ming said, “Master once said that the answer lies in how a baby breathes in the womb. He said that ‘when humans are babies in the womb, they cannot breathe through their nose or mouth, but must depend on the mother to give them sustenance through their connection only. This is how they breathe. This is the characteristics of xiantian. After the human is born then they can breathe through

the nose and mouth. This worldly air is filled with impurities that gradually accumulate. This is the characteristics of houtian. In the xiantian stage the soul enters a state of incomparable tranquility and peace. They body changes the way they interact with their surroundings and the soul becomes aware of the world and is able to communicate with nature, even being able to actuate the power of the heavens and earth with soul force. That is the true xiantian. But from houtian to xiantian one must cut off every root in order to pass through and return to the state of being in the womb.”

“So...I see...that’s how it is...” Muyi muttered under his breath. His eyes showed both admiration and dismay. This young boy casually tossed out a few words that were akin to ancient enlightenments. If this boy had these teachings, guided by the top tier xiantian skill manual, then he would soon become a martial arts master!

The sects and clans were able to rely on their heritage and legacies; a martial artist that tried to fumble his way through would not find it possible to think of these things. Muyi lamented, “How laughable! To think that I reached pulse condensation at thirty six years of age and then reached houtian at fifty years of age, and afterwards I spent sixty years exhausting all my efforts to step into the xiantian realm! And I had been wrong the entire time! I had started down the wrong path all this time! I have wasted sixty years! Lamentable! Truly lamentable!”

Muyi face was excited and yet his emotions were complex. Lin Ming stood at the side and watched, his heart sighing. This old man did not inherit the legacies and yet had wanted to step into the xiantian boundary; this was naturally hopeless. One needed the legacy and understandings of a sect to accomplish this, but which sect would not stubbornly control their secrets from spreading?

Not only that, but from houtian to xiantian one needed to return their soul to a state of being in a womb. This required the most precious and rare of medicines. These medicines methods of production and

rare materials were tightly controlled by the sects. Not to mention the common people, but even the royal family could not purchase it!

So even if Lin Ming told Muye these memories of his, even if he wanted to use them to advance into the xiantian stage, it was simply not possible.

Therefore Lin Ming said, "Senior, I will say frankly that master once said that if one does not have the support of a clan, even if one obtained a skill manual that allowed them to enter the xiantian stage, it would still be impossible."

Muye said, "I know...I know...it's just that I have long striven to reach the xiantian stage. It is my life long wish. Even if I cannot achieve this wish of mine, but to at least let me see its direction and to know where I was wrong, then I can also die in peace and without regret."

Even though Muye said these words easily, the tone behind them was lonely. Lin Ming also unavoidably sighed with emotion. If he hadn't obtained that mystical magic cube, then perhaps he too would be like Muye, after reaching the houtian stage he would forever try to track down that illusory lifelong dream of reaching the xiantian realm, and would eventually hold these regrets even when he died.

Muye reflected for a long time, and finally said to Lin Ming, "Little friend, I feel like old friends even after meeting for the first time. If this little friend does not mind my old age, I would like to become good friends with you."

Lin Ming also had a favorable impression of the Muye who had earnestly pursued martial arts his entire life. He said, "Lin Ming also would like to become your friend."

"Haha! Then no other day is as lucky as today! Let us go downstairs and feast at the Great Clarity Pavilion. We will drink wine and speak fast and free! How about it good friend?"

Lin Ming hesitated slightly, and then agreed. He also said, “Senior, about the inscription technique, I would like to ask senior to keep it a secret for me.”

Although Lin Ming created an imaginary master for himself, he also wanted to avoid those that were blinded by greed and took risks no matter what. It was therefore better to be low-key about these inscription techniques.

Muyi guessed correctly Lin Ming’s worries and said, “Little brother Lin feel relieved. As long as the Marshal’s Quarters of Sky Fortune City exists, I guarantee your absolute safety! As long as little brother meets any trouble at all, then just send me a sound transmitting talisman and I shall handle it personally. About this, but I may now know everything, but...why would little brother Lin have to sell the inscription symbol and also work at the Great Clarity Pavilion. Is it for practice?”

Listening to Muyi ask this, Lin Ming forced a smile and said, “It’s because of economic reasons. Master taught me but never gave me any money. My family is ordinary, so it is not enough for me to cultivate the martial path.

“Like that, it must be a true martial artist’s way. No anger, no extravagance, no greed, no laziness, and true hardship to forge the spirit. Your master must have consciously made this informed and experienced decision, as he naturally has his own reasons and truth. Such being the case, although I do not know if this goes against your masters opinion, but if little brother Lin would still like to sell your inscription symbols, I could buy them at market price. If it is that flame engraved inscription symbol, would 3000 gold taels be enough?”

After Lin Ming heard this price his heart almost leapt out of his chest. 3000 gold taels!

3000 gold taels, but since he had three, that was 9000 gold taels! Although Lin Ming had expected his inscription symbols to rise in price, he had not thought he could receive 9000 gold taels!

What concept was 9000 gold taels! Lin Ming's family's restaurant was also valued at 3000 gold taels. If he could buy that restaurant then his parents would not have to work so hard every day.

He would have 6000 gold taels left over and could use it for medicines. He could buy any body transformation pill or altering muscle pill and eat them like rice!

As for blood ginseng and other medicines, he could eat one and throw one away, because to Lin Ming, creating another inscription symbol was an easy matter.

Ling quieted the excitement in his heart and said to Muye, "Many thanks, senior."

Muye naturally saw Lin Ming's joy. When Lin Ming had been with his master he had lived a simple and poor life, but now he had suddenly arrived at this lively capital city. A fifteen year old young man would find it hard to resist all the wonders and amazements and treasures that the world had to offer.

Muye said, "Little brother Lin's inscription symbol is naturally at this price. Also, please do not call me senior. My name is Muye, my full name is Mu Yi Zhuo, by just Muye is fine."

"This..." Lin Ming hesitate slightly. Although he did not know who this old man was, he only needed to look at Qin Xingxuan attitude of respect to suspect that this man's status was high. But Lin Ming was not a person affected by conventions, since Muye said so, then let it be so. He simply nodded in agreement.

Muye smiled and said, "Xingxuan, let's have Great Clarity Pavilion set aside a room for a banquet. I'd like to have a drink with little brother

Lin.”

Qin Xingxuan had been silent. She had also been carefully listening to Lin Ming’s explanation of what it meant to be xiantian. Now she heard Muiyi say this, she said excitedly, “Yes master.”

When the staff of Great Clarity Pavilion heard that Muiyi was arranging a banquet and had asked Lin Ming to drink, everyone blanched. What kind of person was Muiyi? He was the Martial Quarter’s seat of honor official that was invited to serve at court. Qin Xingxuan’s master was also the tutor of the crown prince. The crown prince would ascend the throne in the future, and Muiyi would be the emperor’s teacher! Not only that, but Muiyi’s cultivation was immeasurably deep, and he was also skilled in inscription techniques and was skilled in astronomy, geography, and the ancient art of divination. He truly was an outstanding person! Even the emperor had to give him three points of respect.

But he actually asked Lin Ming, the deboning boy, to eat a meal. Moreover as the two left the kitchen it seemed they were speaking very familiarly like they were contemporaries. What sort of background did Lin Ming have?

If his real background was not small would he willingly come to the Great Clarity Pavilion for deboning work? As the saying goes, the gentleman stood far from the kitchen; the kitchen and especially the butcher’s job was always despised and looked down upon by martial artists and the scholar. Lin Ming had deboning skills that they admired, but it was difficult to say that it was a refined work.

“What background is that that spareribs chopper little Lin?”

“I don’t really know...”

The two waiters who were serving the guests could not help but chat amongst themselves while they were serving. They were both dedicated staff that served the high-level guests, and were each

around twenty years of age, with outstanding looks and also proficient at the fine arts of poetry and painting. They first saw Muyi and Qin Xingxuan enter the Great Clarity Pavilion and were shocked. After all, this type of honored guests was rare, and once it happened there was a reward of ten gold taels for good service which was equivalent to two months of wages. But they had not actually thought that they came to look for Lin Ming.

The banquet dishes were simple, but very exquisite in taste and texture. The liquor was several hundred gold taels and was called red dragon liquor; it was specially prepared via a secret recipe and mixed in with a variety of rare herbs. A martial artist who drank this could cure their internal injuries and promote a stronger and fitter body along with a higher degree of cultivation. However the brewing method was complex and the materials used were precious. Let alone Lin Ming, even the juniors of the aristocracy could not afford to savor it.

In the banquet, Muyi wanted to ask Lin Ming if he would like to stay at the Marshal's Quarters, but Lin Ming thought it would be inconvenient to practice martial arts there while preventing people from discovering his secrets, so he politely declined.

Muyi was forced to give up, but in light of these his opinion of Lin Ming was heightened. Before leaving, he left behind the 9000 gold taels along with a gold-purple VIP card. Through this card it was possible to receive a 10% discount from every shop that was under the jurisdiction of the Allied Trade Association, and in Sky Fortune City nearly every large shop was under them.

He had finally managed to attain 9000 taels of gold. He looked at this thick gold banknote and felt very excited. His blood boiled and finally proudly raised his head!

9000 gold taels and he would send 3000 gold taels to his parents. He would have enough left over to buy medicine to easily break into the

second stage of body transformation. If he obtained the precious medicines and increased their effect with inscription techniques, then later even breaking through the pulse condensation period would be an easy matter.

He has doomed to go far down the path of martial arts. If in the past Zhu Yan was like a mountain that Lin Ming could only cross with immense effort, now Zhu Yan could only be a stepping stone on his road of martial arts. Lin Ming would only step on it to reach a higher peak.

Lin Ming was in a sterling mood. He passed on a sound transmitting talisman to inform Lin Xiaodong. “Dongdong, let’s go, today I will treat you to some shopping. I’ll see you at the Hundred Treasure Hall’s entrance.”

Lin Xiaodong had helped Lin Ming many times. This type of sentiment was priceless! And now that his own situation was better because he had come into possession of riches, he would naturally help him back. A man must always repay favors!

“Go shopping?” After Lin Xiaodong sees the sound transmitting talisman, he thought to himself, this crazy guy also has money to use sound transmitting talismans?

Chapter 25: World Peace is My Duty

After Lin Xiaodong arrived at the Hundred Treasures Hall, Lin Ming was already waiting there. “Brother Lin, what sort of thing did you want to buy? Did you manage to sell those three symbol papers?”

Lin Ming smiled and said, “I ran into some good luck and sold out.”

“Nooooooo!” Lin Xiaodong cried out exaggeratedly. What fool was taken advantage of? This could also be an omen! He was a bit worried and said, “Brother Lin, you sold so many, if people come to look for us in the future they might beat up us brothers...”

Lin Ming snapped, “Humph! You actually think I created some fake inscriptions to trick people?”

“I’m not saying you intentionally tricked people, I am just thinking what happens if your inscription symbols don’t work. If we spent a hundred gold taels today, when the time comes we may not be able to repay the money...”

Lin Ming smiled and shook his head, “Don’t worry, there is absolutely no problem. Let’s just go shopping.”

Lin Ming was saying this as soon as he stepped directly into the entrance of the Hundred Treasure Hall. Lin Xiaodong gave him a silly look. He thought that they would only meet here, and then perhaps go somewhere else like the city square or some other small place to go shopping. He did not expect they would go straight to the Hundred Treasure Hall. This place frequently sold items at several hundred or thousands of gold; it was one of the most luxurious shops in all of Sky Fortune City.

“My brother, my own dearest big brother, are we really going shopping here?”

“Mm. It’s here.” Lin Ming said as he entered the store. The shopkeeper somewhat recognized Lin Ming as he was also in ordinary clothing, and was young and small of stature. This was a very conspicuous look, and after a little thought, the shopkeeper remembered that Lin Ming was the youth who had tried to sell him inscription symbols a few days ago.

The storekeeper was immediately impatient and said, “You again, I told you that I will not take your inscription symbols.”

Lin Ming also naturally remembered this Hundred Treasure Hall’s storekeeper. Initially when he visited the private shops none of the storekeepers had treated him with respect. These storekeepers were in truth not the owners. The bosses were usually some rich character and would not often be in the store. They would hire some clerk or shopkeeper to take charge of the store’s business. Of course, their salaries were also tied to performance, so these shopkeepers would naturally treat the juniors of wealthy families with respect in order to earn some percentage of profits. Lin Ming still remained salty from the experience.

Lin Ming said, “My inscription symbols sold. I’m here today to do some shopping.”

Sold? The shopkeeper’s eyes showed a faint touch of contempt. With his experience this inscription symbols were not worth any money. With their cost, at most it would be a few dozen gold taels. This country bumpkin was truly a hillbilly. If he thought that a few dozen tales of gold made him a rich man then that really was funny.

What a ridiculous boy. The storekeeper did not throw him out though. Hundred Treasure Hall had not listed a rule that said only those with money were permitted to come.

Lin Ming look at the dazzling pavilion's shelves that were stacked high with precious materials and rare goods; it really was amazing to see. The hundred year ginseng that Lin Xiaodong had purchased for him could only be considered inferior goods here.

There were also rare and precious medicines, materials, master class inscription symbols, even treasures that were several thousand gold taels.

Lin Ming casually said, "Xiaodong, is there anything you want to buy?"

Lin Xiaodong forced a smile and said, "Brother Lin, what crazy song are you singing today, ah. Although it doesn't cost anything to take a peek, did you not see the look the storekeeper gave us like we were some bumpkins? It really made my whole body uncomfortable."

Ling Mind said, "He's just a small minded idiot, there's no need to care about what he thinks. If you aren't going to choose something then I'll help you. Or you buy a flexible armor."

Lin Xiaodong shook his head like a rattle. "Brother Lin, let's not waste our time, if I choose something in the Hundred Treasure Hall then we won't have the money to pay and they'll come after us. Think about it. When that time comes, you will run faster, but I'm a bit fatter than you so I'll fall behind and get beat up."

Lin Ming couldn't find the words to respond, so he said, "When have I wasted your time?"

"What time have you not thought of these evil plans? Ah, look at me I am an honest and good natured person, pity me..."

Lin Ming laughed and opened his clothes a little. Near his chest pocket there were the edges of golden banknotes. He said, "Well, is this not money?"

Lin Xiaodong saw those numerous golden banknotes in a red envelope and froze for a moment. He felt his mind go blank and his eyes were sluggish.

“They are banknotes worth 1000 gold taels each.”

It actually turned out to be 1000 gold tael banknotes! Moreover, he could see from the thickness that there was more than one, perhaps up to 10,000 gold taels!

Up to 10,000 gold taels! What was this?

Lin Xiaodong short-circuited and he swayed on his feet. “Brother Lin, you robbed people? It’s not right, even with your martial arts you should not steal so much...”

Hearing this Lin Xiaodong mutter, Lin Ming’s forehead was full of black lines. My god, this guy...he reluctantly said, “I got the money for selling inscriptions, you just do not believe me.”

“Inscription symbol? You said those three toilet papers were inscription symbols? You sold...how much did they sell for?”

“3000 gold taels.”

“3.....3000!?!?!?!?” Lin Xiaodong’s chubby face began to tremble. He was shocked, but still managed to lower his voice in fear that others would hear him. “You sold them for 3000 gold taels? You said you had practiced for one month and you could somehow create an inscription symbol that could sell for 3000 gold taels?”

Lin Ming nodded. Lin Xiaodong was his best friend and good brother. He did not want to hide anything from him, and furthermore could not hide. If he wanted help Lin Xiaodong with some money, then he would also need him to understand what happened. Moreover in the future he would most likely be contacted by Qin Xingxuan, Muyi, or

other high-level persons, and it would be impossible to hide the truth from Lin Xiaodong.

“You are simply insulting my intelligence!” Lin Xiaodong exclaimed. “You’ve only practiced one month and you can create an inscription symbol like that? You think I am some little three year old that you can trick into thinking cabbage leaves are rare medicines or something?”

Lin Ming shrugged, “The facts are facts. If you do not believe me then there is nothing I can do.”

“Big bro, oh brother Lin, don’t play with me, just tell me what happened.”

Lin Ming sighed and said, “Good, I’ll tell you but you have to promise you won’t say anything.”

“This is a promise!” Lin Xiaodong immediately announced.

“Mm...well, the truth is I have a secret mater....When I was twelve years old, that year my master appeared and said that my talent was good, and I had good intelligence and a grand destiny. He wanted me to maintain world peace so he gave me the duty to do so and compelled me to work as his apprentice. Finally, I began to study inscription technique with him....”

“As if!” Lin Xiaodong felt like he had eaten a fly. “Brother Lin, can you be serious about it?”

Lin Ming said, “I’m not lying to you, I really do have a master.”

“Knock it off, if you have a master and studied inscription for many years then why did you ask me what inscription technique was?”

Lin Ming said, “My master only taught me the skills and did not give me any money. As for the inscription technique, although I studied it

I did not know if it was of any use until you told me, then I knew that I could use it to make money...”

“Damn it!” Lin Xiaodong felt as if the world had gone crazy. This is like casually picking up a little kitten to raise and feeding and petting it for several years and then finding it turn into the most beautiful woman, and then having her be the overthrown demon emperor’s legendary clan princess who just happened to fall in love with you! It was the exact same chance!

“Good. Well, uh...you understand now. Let’s go shopping.” Lin Ming pulled soulless Lin Xiaodong, and continued to select flexible armors.

Lin Xiaodong was not an ambitious person and he did not like to practice martial arts. He was just diligent enough to be able to preserve his status as a direct descendent in the Lin Family. Lin Ming thought a flexible armor would be good as a life insurance.

“What material is this flexible armor?” Lin Ming asked. The storekeeper impatiently looked at Lin Ming and said, “It is a high-quality treasure of the shop, the description is in the notes on display behind the table. Look yourself.”

His words contained a jeer that taunted Lin Ming for coming into a high-quality shop.

The shopkeeper had done enough business that he developed an innate ability to recognize who would purchase items and who wouldn’t. When some rich and powerful figure came to the store he would greet them and assist them, but those with no money he would ignore, not to mention Lin Ming would not only look ordinary but had come in a few days ago trying to sell him some toilet paper. This kind of boy was impossible to be any sort of good character, so the storekeeper was impatient.

Lin Ming went to where the flexible armor was and read the description. This soft armor was made with 10,000 six foot long day

ruler hemp. It had also been mixed with several thousand strings of Golden Wood Root silkworm silk and been made from combining over twenty advanced crafting techniques. The price was 392 gold taels.

This sort of excellent flexible armor was treasure. It could withstand attacks up to the fourth layer of body transformation. But after the fourth layer then it would be easily broken, so Lin Ming did not need it. It was something that much better suited Lin Xiaodong.

He continued to look until something caught his eye - it was a Golden Deer pill and Soul Gathering pellet.

Before now, Lin Ming had not taken any pills because the cost was simply too high.

Pills and pellets were made from combining medicinal herbs and raw materials from vicious beasts and then refining them. It was many times better than simply using medicinal herbs or vicious beast materials. Moreover, because of the formulas, it was possible to achieve effects which the medicinal herbs or vicious beast materials could not achieve by themselves.

Golden Deer pills were very rare; they were made from a hundred year old golden deer's deer embryo as the main ingredient and supplemented with a variety of herbs. Golden deer were rare and moreover mostly found in remote mountain forests. It was not easy for them to be difficult, and to take a golden deer's embryo was as difficult as it sounded.

Because the Golden Deer pills were refined from the deer embryo, they contained a rich and fragrant vitality. In addition they had not been contaminated by the houtian phase of air outside the womb. Thus it was possible to remove the impurities of the body and promote an increase in soul force and physical cultivation.

This kind of pill was a yellow rice sized grain valued at 200 gold.

The Soul Gathering Pellet also required precious raw materials to refine. Its main ingredient was hundred year old blood fungus and the main effect of the pellet was to increase the absorption of soul force and speed up a martial artist's cultivation.

This kind of pellet was at 200 gold also. Even aristocratic families' juniors had to use their savings to buy it.

Lin Ming stopped looking as he decided what he wanted to purchase.

He turned to the storekeeper and said, "I'll take this Golden Wood Root Silkworm Armor. Wrap it up for me. I'll also take six Golden Deer Pills and ten Soul Gathering Pills, as well as the materials on this list. Don't miss a single one.

Lin Ming said this and pulled out a list which had a variety of materials written on it. They were all used for inscriptions. He had taken a look a moment ago and saw that they were all sold here.

Chapter 26: Breakthrough

Having listened to Lin Ming's words and seeing this exceedingly long list, the storekeeper flushed red. Did this country bumpkin think that the Hundred Treasure Hall was somewhere that he could just play around in? Such a large order would cost several thousand taels of gold at the bare minimum! It was as if this young little boy was buying bok choy at the market! Spending a few thousand gold taels, not even the sons of those aristocratic families would be able to afford so much!

He waved the list impatiently and placed it on the counter, then said, "I'm going to give you two a warning, for anyone that intentionally causes trouble in the Hundred Treasure Halls, there will be severe consequences!"

"I'll warn your mom!" Lin Xiaodong slapped his hand against the storekeeper's hand. The storekeeper had only ever done business and did not have the talent to practice martial arts, and with a loud pat from Lin Xiaodong, he pitifully screamed.

"You!" The storekeeper could not believe this hooligan would dare to cause a scene in the Hundred Treasures Hall!

"Look you snobby little son of a bitch, us young masters have money!" As Lin Xiaodong said this, he reached into Lin Ming's robes and took the golden bank notes near his chest. He slammed them on the counter with 100 jins of strength, and the counter shook. With gold notes in hand, Lin Xiaodong's confidence shot through the roof. This storekeeper was already a sore in his eyes; how could he miss this opportunity to teach the rude man a lesson?

The storekeeper froze when he saw the golden bank notes. His eyes flashed as he fiercely calculated the total amount in that stack of bills. They were banknotes worth 1000 gold taels each! With that the total amount had to be at least several thousand taels! He

immediately realized that the golden banknotes were the real deal. As long as he went to a bank that was part of the Allied Trade Association, he could exchange them for gold taels.

The storekeeper was thoroughly shocked. He sized up Lin Ming and also Lin Xiaodong. These two little guys were by no means the children of an aristocratic family. Just a few days ago that Lin Ming was just a poor boy that was door-to-door selling symbol papers. Where did he suddenly come into so many riches? Did he actually sell those symbol papers?

It was impossible; an apprentice inscriptionist's inscriptions would be inconceivable to sell for that much money

Two upstart nouveau rich boys; he did not realize that they were suddenly high class characters and had been acting arrogant in front of them...in the storekeepers heart was only melancholy. But money was god, and this was a temple.

He rubbed his hand which had swelled like a grapefruit and put on a smile. Taking the list, he quickly scanned it. On it were listed materials that weren't cheap! In addition to those items that Lin Ming had wanted, he quickly calculated that this business transaction would almost be 6000 taels of gold!

This was equal to the price of two rare treasures! And with the commission he could earn 120 gold taels for himself!

This was not a small number! Although his heart was still a little resentful, it wasn't worth it with the amount of money on the line. So the storekeeper groveled and bowed and said, "My foolish self did not recognize such esteemed guests of honor had appeared. Please wait, I shall prepare everything immediately."

The storekeeper's keeper body was bloated like a pig with too much gas and yet he moved like the wind. Lin Ming wanted a variety of materials that were all in different sections of the store, but the

storekeeper was quick on his feet and fast with his hands and soon gathered everything together. The storekeeper had a radiant smile as he said, "Two esteemed guests, please examine the authenticity of the goods. The total is 5800 gold taels."

Seeing the stacks of goods, Lin Xiaodong asked Lin Ming, "Is this everything, brother Lin?"

Lin Ming said, "Yes, it looks like this is it."

By now, Lin Xiaodong's mouth twitched and he slyly smiled and said, "I'm sorry, this is embarrassing but I would like to see a different storekeeper to pay."

The storekeeper's happy face instantly stiffened.

In such a high class store like the Hundred Treasure Halls, it was only natural that a storekeeper's worth was dependent on his ability to sell. Therefore, all the storekeepers here took commission on all items they sold themselves.

Lin Xiaodong understood this, and decided to give the slimy man a hard time. "Please move a bit faster, we'd like to finish this as soon as possible."

The storekeeper realized that Lin Xiaodong was messing with him intentionally, and his heart ignited with fury. If a junior of an aristocratic house had decided to play a joke on him then he would bear with it, but these two were only some newly minted hicks that came into some wealth. They didn't have the right yet to be so insufferably arrogant! How could he let himself be at their mercy? His voice was cold as he said, "In this Hundred Treasure Hall, I am the only one storekeeper. Who do propose I find another?"

"You little clown, don't try to lie to us. Hurry and go, otherwise I'll complain to your boss!"

“Go ahead!” The storekeeper sneered. Boss? The idiot thought that he could see the boss just because he wanted to? He was preparing a few more harsh words when his eyes suddenly caught on something. In the golden banknotes was a purple gold colored card. It was the card that Muye had given to Lin Ming; the VIP card! Everyone who used one would automatically be given a ten percent discount on all shops that were under the government’s jurisdiction!

It was the Marshal’s Quarters and Imperial Family’s purple gold VIP card!

The storekeeper’s heart skipped a beat. This VIP card was given by the Allied Trade Association to Royal Family and Marshal’s Quarters to please them. To date, there had been less than 100 sent out!

The only ones that had the qualifications to own one of these was either a member of the Imperial Family or a top-tier figure within the Marshal’s Quarters. Any of these figures could squish him like a bug!

He was finished! Everything was over! These two little punks absolutely had the background and qualifications to do as they wished! It might even be possible that they were the Emperor’s little sons putting on some disguise and coming out of the Imperial Place to play around.

Fuck! His luck was such dog shit! The storekeeper despaired.

“Two young masters, this lowly one was wrong and foolish and deserves punishment! This lowly one will look for another storekeeper for you, please have grace and mercy and do not keep in your heart my pathetic transgressions.” The storekeeper began to slap himself, and although it wasn’t heavy, the fat on his cheeks jiggled.

Lin Xiaodong was dumbfounded. This guy, did he take some crazy pills?

The storekeeper moved with fear and trepidation and found another storekeeper to close the deal. He kept apologizing and finally also called a carriage to bring them back.

As they returned to Lin Ming's lodgings, Lin Xiaodong did not know that the reason for the storekeeper's actions was the purple gold VIP card. He thought that it was the gold that overawed the snobby storekeeper so his mood at the moment was excellent. "Haha, that was fun. Damn, remembering that storekeepers scared shitless expression really makes me want to laugh! Brother Lin, if you weren't in a hurt I would have complained to that Hundred Treasures Hall's boss and made that little snob pack up his bags and leave."

Lin Ming had actually been watching clearly, and knew that when the storekeeper had looked at the purple gold VIP card, his expression had greatly changed. He could not restrain a sigh of emotion as he thought that the Martial Quarter's power and influence that had accumulated over time was no less than that of the Imperial Family!

He said, "Little people have their little ways of living. Flattery and rudeness was what they were forced to learn in order to live. There's no need to be so ruthless towards them. Xiaodong, this flexible armor and these three Golden Deer Pills are for you." The Golden Deer Pills were able to remove impurities in the body. The first one was the most effective, and afterwards the efficacy halves. Taking more than three would generally be a waste.

As for the Soul Gathering Pellet, there was no limit to taking them, but it was only suitable for those that were diligent in practice; Lin Xiaodong naturally had no use for them.

The three Golden Deer Pills and flexible armor added to a value of nearly a 1000 taels of gold. To Lin Xiaodong this was a great sum of money, and he hesitated for a moment until he thought of Lin Ming's story. If it were true then 1000 gold taels was only a drop in the bucket compared to what he would make in the future. Thinking of

these he accepted the items and smiled with a laugh as he said, “Then I will shamelessly accept them. Brother Lin, later you will become my protective umbrella, haha.”

Lin Ming smiled and said, “We are brothers, there is no need for formalities between us. In addition...” Li Ming took out the remaining 3000 gold taels, “When the family messengers come next time to Sky Fortune City, help me get this to my parents and have them buy the restaurant.”

Lin Ming’s parents had invested more than half their lives into that restaurant, and naturally have a close attachment towards it. Lin Ming first thought of helping them by buying it.

“Alright, let me handle this matter.”

As Lin Xiaodong left, Lin Ming returned to his room alone. He looked at the calendar and saw that the Seven Profound Martial House entrance exam was fifty days away. In these fifty days, he must be reborn!

Regardless of the Golden Deer Pill or the Soul Gathering Pellet, these medicines were not able to directly increase the cultivation of a martial artist. The former eliminated impurities of the body, and the latter made it easier to train with soul force. Combined together, they could increase the rate he could practice.

As for directly increasing ones cultivation, these medicines could be bought, but they had implications in that they created more impurities in the soul force. Although cultivation would increase quickly, the foundation would not be steady, and one would have to spend a massive amount of time to consolidate the foundation in order for it to be stable.

Therefore Lin Ming did not rush to buy this sort of medicine.

...

At the moment, Lin Ming was among the treetops, and had finally begun to take the first Golden Deer Pill.

Although the Golden Deer Pill was expensive, it was not really a rare medicine. Although Lin Ming knew how to increase the potency of medicine with inscription techniques, it wasn't necessary for the Golden Deer Pill, so he ate them directly.

Lin Ming had filled a large wooden barrel with water. He stripped himself and then jumped in. In his body, the medicine began to dissolve with him. He could feel a flow of heat circulating in his chest.

Lin Ming began to meditate and revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'. The soul force stirred in his body and the Golden Deer Pull began to display their use.

With the onset of the effects, Lin Ming felt a slight tingling sensation and his body began to purify.

The body of a martial artist, ever since it comes from the womb, would constantly be exposed to the contaminated houtian air of the world. This kind of air was contained in every breath, in the grains they ate, in the rivers and streams and lakes they drank from. It was inevitable that the impurities would accumulate in the body. The Golden Deer Pills contained a hint of xiantian air from the deer embryo, and thus they could purify the body.

Lin Ming lay in the wooden barrel for the entire night. The surface of the water began to shimmer with greasy dark oil. This was Lin Ming's impurities! An aristocratic family's junior would begin this process as early as twelve years of age. They would practice martial arts after their body had been tempered and purified. Soaking in baths of rare medicines were commonplace for them, and they naturally had fewer impurities in their body, and it would be much easier to integrate the soul force. Even if they were a grade three talent like Lin Ming, he would find it difficult to keep pace with these juniors.

At dawn, Lin Ming finally opened his eyes. The Golden Deer Pill had been completely absorbed by him, and his body had been purified.

Lin Ming again revolved the 'True Chaos Primal Formula'. It really was easier to circulate the soul force in his body! Lin Ming also found something else; it seemed the soul force had spread throughout his entire body. This was the starting stage of the second level of body transformation!

Lin Ming had finally reached the second level of body transformation!

Chapter 27: Examination, Start!

Lin Ming exhaled slowly in relief. He had already long reached the peak of Body Transformation's First Stage, and was only a small step away from reaching the Second Stage. Even without the Golden Deer Pill, it would only have been a matter of days before he reached the Second Stage.

Body Transformation's First Stage was strength training where true essence mainly concentrated in the in the muscles, and with the advent of the Second Stage of Body Transformation, it began to proliferate and spread throughout the body. Not only would ones strength increase, but the body's fortitude would also rise a notch. Although one wouldn't become invincible, it wouldn't be difficult to say that the sword that would have easily pierced you before would only give you a slight injury. The combat effectiveness would also increase by a small margin.

However, Zhu Yan had only been at the peak of Body Transformation's Third Stage half a year ago. He had only reached the Second Stage of Body Transformation, and even though it was with the power of the potent 'Primal Chaos Formula', compared to Zhu Yan, there was just too large a disparity between them. And this was discounting the half year that Zhu Yan had been training. He was a fourth grade talent, so his practice speed was similarly quick.

Although he had not slept yet, Lin Ming had just broken through and was feeling refreshed and not tired or drowsy at all. He immediately ran outside and headed towards the Zhou Mountains.

The Great Clarity Pavilion was a few miles distance from the glade that Lin Ming usually practiced at. Even running there at breakneck speed, it would have taken the time to burn two sticks of incense to cross the distance. But now that he had broken through to the Second

Stage of Body Transformation, time it took was less than half. Lin Ming was exceptionally happy at this moment.

After he reached his usual spot, Lin Ming tossed his knapsack on the ground. In it was the materials for medicines and also bandages. The medicine was not the cheap stuff; they were all rare and precious medicines. Even the bandages had been steeped in black bone grass juice which provided an extra healing effect. With this kind of luxurious medicine, he did not have to worry about internal injuries. Lin Ming was able to enjoy practicing with all his heart.

Lin Ming ate a soul gathering pellet to increase the rate he absorbed true essence. Lin Ming began to practice both the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' and the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians.'

In Sky Spill Continent, within those that practiced martial arts, having the strength of a 1000 jins was considered a small accomplishment. Then the martial artist would go through Altering Muscle, Bone Forging, and Pulse Condensation. By the time the Body Transformation was completed, a martial artists strength could amount to 8000 jins, in which a small percent who were born with divine heavenly strength, there strength could amount to 10,000 jins.

This was the limit of strength. Even if one were a houtian master, their strength would not grow; they could only raise their true essence.

Then the after reaching xiantian, including the levels above, they would understand the true essence, and cultivate the soul. This was considered the correct path of martial arts.

But recorded in the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', having a strength of 1000 jins was only a beginning. Those who just entered should reach 10,000 jins, and those with a small bit of accomplishments could reach 100,000 jins of strength. As for the strength of the highest cultivators, there was no way to estimate. If they opened the Eight Gates of Hidden Celestial stems after the Nine

Stars Palace, the body could borrow power from the heavens and earth. Their feet would crack mountains; their fists would break the sky. That sort of strength was not even describable with a strength of 100,000 jins, it could only be at least a million jins or above.

When Lin Ming saw this in the memories, he could hardly believe it. If it had been two or three times stronger than normal then perhaps he might have, after all this was the legacy of countless millennia from the Realm of the Gods.

But this difference of several thousand times was just too unbelievable. He was able to recall in his memories that in the sects, the custodians that swept the entrance and the little children that ran amok would have the strength of several tens of thousands of jins of strength. As for the true disciples, their strength would be above 100,000 jins.

The memories were so detailed that Lin Ming was forced to believe them. Even if Marshal Qin Xiao was compared, he would not even be able to compare with a simple floor sweeper.

However this sort of strength was very remote to Lin Ming, because if it was said that the step from Tempering Marrow to Pulse Condensation was difficult, then the step from Tempering Marrow to opening the Eight Gates of Hidden Celestial Stems and the Nine Stars Palace was even more so. Let alone Lin Ming, from his memories he knew that these sects had many disciples that were stuck at this stage. Compared to the Sky Fortune Kingdom, it could be said to be more difficult than ascending from Houtian to Xiantian.

Lin Ming thought all this and took a deep breath. It was premature to consider these possibly. What he had to do now was practice the basic abilities of the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', and at least achieve strength training's stage of 'Flowing like Silk'.

'Flowing like Silk', where one could punch a tree and leave the bark untouched while turning the inside to pulp!

However the elder's memories were a bit blurry here, Lin Ming had not yet reached this stage and could only attempt to decipher the secrets behind it himself.

...

In the southeast of Sky Fortune City, there was a squad of armed guards that stood on alert. A youth dressed in the finest silk clothing and with a fine long sword strapped to his waist stood in the corridor and looked around as if he were waiting for someone.

As soon as an incense of time passed, another young man wearing a mail armor and helmet walked down the end of the hallway. He seemed to be a bit over twenty years old. Although his stature was not princely, his step was calm and his breath relaxed; he appeared to be a master.

The young silk robed youth saw this man and smiled joyfully. He immediately welcomed him, "Elder brother, you've returned. Father will surely be happy. He was very satisfied with your successes on the frontier these past three years."

The silk robed youth was all smiles. He was the man who had lost 1000 taels of gold to Lin Ming and had his name read in reverse, Wang Yigao.

Wang Yigao had been pitiful. Although he had tried to suppress the news and prevent it from spreading, his father had still found out. Regarding this matter, General Wang was furious.

He was not angry that Wang Yigao made a gambling bet, but that he has lost. Not only did he lose, but he had lost to a boy at the First Stage of Body Transformation and had his name called in reverse! He was simply a great shame to the family name.

Wang Juzhu had issued an order that he be confined for two months, and had just exited.

The two month confinement had been rough on Wang Yigao's life. He could not eat meat, he could not go to the brothel, he could not lead his little minions to terrorize others, and had to read military classics and complete daily schoolwork.

Wang Yigao hated these things with a passion, and all this was due to Lin Ming. He simply could not swallow this aggrievement.

But Wang Yigao didn't know of a way to deal with Lin Ming. He did not have any real power with the army, nor could he defeat Lin Ming himself. As for those scoundrels that were his friends, not a one of them was Lin Ming's match. Moreover his father had cut off his purse so he did not have the means to hire someone. Simply put, there was nothing he could do to Lin Ming.

Until today that is. His elder brother came back And Wang Yigao almost cried. He felt that his opportunity had finally come; therefore he waited a long time for his brother to arrive so he could complain.

Wang Yiming looked at the pitiful Wang Yigao. The two were both sons of the main family, and had the same father and mother. Naturally he understood his little brother. He said, "You waited for me to discuss the matter of that bet you lost." General Wang had admonished and punished Wang Yigao about this, so naturally he was very clear about it.

Wang Yigao looked up, "Elder brother is perceptive of the smallest details, truly fierce!...you do now know, that boy is just too arrogant. First he hit my servant and then cheated in the bet. Not only that but he insulted our army family...."

Wang Yiming listened and knew that his little brother was shameless and concocting irrational explanations. He impatiently said, "Cut the crap. You think I don't know what you want? You want me to take revenge for you?"

“Elder brother is truly an unparalleled hero; taking care of that guy is just like lifting a small finger...”

Wang Yiming said, “I am a dignified military commander, and you want me to help you get rid of some kid at the First Stage of Body Transformation. Is this a joke that I should laugh at?”

Wang Yigao smiled a little. “Yes it is a bit overkill. One must not use the oxen knife to kill a chicken. Elder brother do you not have four strong armed guards? Letting them go is also the same...”

“My father is the captain of Sky Fortune City’s armed forces. The throne is about to be passed down, now is a sensitive time. You want me to use the armed forces’ guards to make an arrest in the national capital? You actually want to commit this sort of absurd matter? What do you think the results will be? I think your two months of confinement were not long enough!” Wang Yiming yelled these words and paid no more attention to Wang Yigao. With a turn of his heel, he departed.

Wang Yigao was left standing there to stew in his resentment. He had not that that even his own brother would so loudly upbraid him! He clenched his fist and teeth until he was shaking. “Fuck! Never have I suffered such an injustice in Sky Fortune City. Lin Ming, if I do not cripple you then my last name is not Wang!”

...

...

Sunrise, sunset, fifty cloudy days quietly passed....

In the Zhou Mountains, a young boy was shadowboxing in a glade. The mountain wind howled, but the sounds coming from the young boys fists overshadowed the mountains.

“Bang!”

As soon as the youth punched the wooden pillar in front of him, a 'peng' rang into the air. Even though the wooden pillar had been infused with special medicines to make it more durable, it broke in half with that single fist.

As the punch finished, not even waiting for the dust to land, he whipped his leg downwards and split the wooden pillar in half.

"Although I still haven't been able to figure out 'Flow like Silk', I still have reached some small success with the first stage of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' and my Body Transformation's Second Stage has consolidated very well; my strength should be at least 2600 jins." This youth was Lin Ming. In these fifty days, Lin Ming had been constantly training in the mountains. He had unlimited precious medicines and had taken twenty of the Soul Gathering Pellets. Because of this massive gold consumption, Lin Ming had also sold an inscription symbol to pay for them.

However, even with so many medicines, Lin Ming had still not been able to break through to the Third Stage of Body Transformation, Viscera Training. 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' focused on building a solid foundation; it wasn't something where one hastily progressed.

"It's been fifty days. Tomorrow will be the Seven Profound Martial Houses entrance exam. I should have no problem in passing." Lin Ming said as he picked up his clothes from a large rock. He also took a quick wash in the river.

Under the shining sun, Lin Ming's muscles were symmetrically solid. The light made his skin gleam with luster, and it was filled with an aesthetic strength. He was like a supple cheetah at the peak of his power. Just from looking at this back, it was hard to believe that this was the physique and spirit of a young fifteen year old boy.

After washing himself, Lin Ming put on his clothes and left the mountain. He launched himself quickly like a falcon chasing after a

rabbit, his speed like a flash of light, and in a few breaths he vanished into the boundless forest.

Chapter 28: Conspiracy

Every year, at the beginning of fall and the beginning of spring, the Seven Profound Martial House would have their examination of potential recruits. This was also the most important day of those youths of Sky Fortune Kingdom who cultivated in martial arts.

To them, the Seven Profound Martial house was the final goal. If they reached it, they could become a dragon that could touch the skies with a single bound.

By entering the Seven Profound Martial House, resources were important, but it was the inheritance and legacy skill manuals that everyone obsessed over.

The inherited skill manuals had accumulated over many years and in them was the culmination of experiences that all the preceding martial art seniors had learned. Without these experiences, then if one were to try and learn martial arts themselves, it truly would be a moron talking nonsense on the streets.

But the available skill manuals were always very popular and dependable, but the true highest quality genuine goods could only be found and inherited in the sects.

This method of inheritance was strictly controlled by the sects. If they were to discover even a hint that a disciple had revealed the secrets of their skill manuals, then a light punishment would be the destruction of their cultivation. A heavy punishment would result in instant execution.

It was very difficult to inherit skill manuals. They were inconceivably hard to transcribe and duplicate. The martial arts path way profound and esoteric. The flow of essence and the feelings that followed; the route of cultivation. These true essence gathering skills were unable

to be described with words; therefore the true rare skill manuals were not recorded in books and were unable to be transcribed paper.

Skill manuals were usually recorded on jade slips. In each small jade slip contained a wealth of mysterious and arcane information. Even a manual could only contain a general idea of what can be explained inside. If one wanted to engrave the mysteries onto a jade slip, one must have complete understanding of the skill manual. This was truly difficult to achieve even then, and moreover had to spend a great deal of time and energy.

The skill manual could also not be understood by everyone. Even if they attained the jade slip, they might not be able to decipher the mysteries. It was just like a bank that released golden banknotes. Although it was money, those who did not understand it could only use it as tissue.

Therefore the jade slips that contained these ancient manuals were very few, and could not be obtained no matter the price on the market. This was also the reason that the Seven Profound Martial House were able to cause young martial artists to go crazy with the desire to enter. However, these selecting conditions were harsh, and every year there were inevitably a massive number of aspiring martial artists that failed to be elected.

Lin Ming himself had the highest quality Body Transformation skill manual - the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', so he naturally did not have any interest in the Seven Profound Martial Houses inheritance or legacies. The reason he desired to enter was not because of Lan Yunyue. After he had decided to devote his life to pursue the pinnacle of martial arts, the matter of Lan Yunyue could no longer cause turbulence in his heart.

Lin Ming desired to enter the Seven Profound Martial House because he needed the practice resources. The resources were not medicines or herbs, but were special areas where one could exercise. These

areas special areas were either created through array arrangements, or were special environmental areas which were formed by Xiantian practitioners. They were able to allow humans to cultivate with twice the result and half the effort.

But most important were martial skills. Martial skills were critical to a martial artist as they were directly linked to their level of combat strength.

Lin Ming also knew a few martial skills that he had absorbed from the elder's memory fragment. In those memories were three or four martial skills he had seen, but they were incomplete. The truth was that even though those martial skills were incomplete, they were in fact the top tier martial skills even in the Realm of the Gods. Needless to say even those incomplete versions were far superior to those of Sky Fortune Kingdom's.

But it was a pity that those three to four martial skills that Ling Ming knew were impossible to practice from the start. To even dare begin practicing them, he would need to be at least at the Xiantian stage. In those memories, the weakest of the martial skills were able to destroy mountains with a single stroke, let alone killing people, it would probably be easy to destroy the entire Sky Fortune capital city.

This sort of martial skill was almost an alien language to Lin Ming.

Therefore Lin Ming needed to take this entrance exam and enter the Seven Profound Martial House. He also had to attain a good result as with every year, the candidates with the top results were always richly rewarded.

Perhaps it was precious medicines or rare treasures. These medicines were often produced from within the sect - the Seven Profound Valleys. In Sky Fortune City, not even the richest man could buy these.

Even the juniors of aristocratic families would drool with envy at these coveted rewards. Lin Ming was also tempted. Before, his strength was low so he had low expectations, but at the present, the situation had turned so he had high aspirations for them!

At the first day of autumn, the square of the Seven Profound Martial House already had a sea of people crowded inside. Because there were too many candidates that would come to apply, the examination would always begin at sunrise and continue all day.

Lin Ming and Lin Xiaodong had not entered the square yet but were on the major road outside. Although there were relatively less people here, Lin Ming's ears still buzzed with the sound of discussion.

“They say that this time there are several top tier talents that have come, included that number one talent Wang Yanfeng. Fifteen years old, grade four talent, and his cultivation has already stepped into the Third Stage of Body Transformation. Truly a formidable man”

“Isn't it weird? Why would he not enter the Seven Profound Martial House earlier? Why didn't he come during the spring entrance exam?”

“I guess his goal is the Heavenly Abode. As soon he enters the Seven Profound Martial House he wants to enter the Heavenly Abode. How aggressive of him!”

“Hm, the Heavenly Abode is absolutely impossible. The only one these past years to enter the Heavenly Abode was Qin Xingxuan. The lowest cultivation for the Heavenly Abode is the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation, and usually inside are those at the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation. Not even this Wang Yanfeng has the qualifications to enter. I think the reason he waited such a long time is to take the entrance exam reward for first place.”

Heavenly Abode....

Lin Ming muttered in his heart. Half a year ago Zhu Yan had relied on his peak of Body Transformation's Third Stage to enter the Heavenly Abode. Without a doubt, Zhu Yan's strength was truly outstanding even among those of equal cultivation. He could absolutely not be compared to a sack of potatoes like Wang Yigao.

As Lin Ming was lost in thought, he suddenly felt the gaze of someone fall on his body. Was someone observing him?

In the large crowd, there were many that were looking at him, but the average person could simply not discover these people and their intentions. But Lin Ming had practiced the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' so his perception was acutely keen, and even with so many people, he could feel a cold eye staring his way.

He pretended to be nonchalant as he turned his head. There was a blue carriage at the origin of that sight, but when Lin Ming turned to look the carriage's curtain dropped back down.

Lin Ming sighed in his heart. He had not even begun the entrance exam and there were probably people plotting against him...

At this moment in the blue carriage, a youth in silk clothing and another gloomy looking youth were sitting inside. It was Wang Yigao and Zhu Yan.

"He...he won't discover us." Wang Yigao had been frightened the last time by Lin Ming. Even though he claimed publically that he wanted revenge, he was afraid of Lin Ming. Those three moves that caused him to suffer defeat had left a dark mark on his heart and tanked his self-confidence.

Zhu Yan frostily said, "Stop being so scared and suspicious, there are many people here, it's not as if he has eyes on the back of his head. This guy, he even managed to break through to the Second Stage of Body Transformation!"

The gap between the First Stage and Second Stage of Body Transformation was not small. A fifteen year old that could achieve this was not simple, especially when considering Lin Ming and his poor family background and mere Third Grade talent.

“I think the guy probably practiced like a freak, otherwise there is no way. Even I only hit the Second Stage when I was sixteen years old. He probably overtaxed his body and received some permanent internal injuries. This kind of idiot, in a few years he won't be any different from a vegetable.”

Wang Yigao viciously cursed. Zhu Yan despised this sycophant in his heart. Even with so many rare medicines supporting him he only hit the Second Stage when he was sixteen years old. Not only that, but his combat level a completely weak mess. If his father wasn't Sky Fortune City's army general, then Zhu Yan would be disinclined to either bother paying attention to him.

Zhu Yan said, “According to common sense it would be impossible for him to achieve this stage. Overtaxing the body and receiving internal injuries, then he would sooner or later be disabled, but if he had the support of 1000 gold taels, then it would be less certain....”

Hearing Zhu Yan say this, Wang Yigao's face instantly turned bright red. He thought that Zhu Yan did not know of the gambling matter, but it seemed he already did. Was there anyone who didn't!?

Damn! Damn it all! He really disgraced his grandmother!

Zhu Yan paid no attention to Wang Yigao. His expression was gloomy. Generally speaking, a sixteen year old boy, if his cultivation had surpassed the Third Stage of Body Transformation then he would enter the Seven Profound Martial House. Many disciples in respected families entered like this. To them, the massive amount of rare and precious medicinal herbs supported them, so this was not too difficult.

Regarding these matters, the Seven Profound Martial House did not mind the family helping. After all this too was part of a martial artist's strength. Family Background was equivalent to talent. Whether by virtue of their own talent, or virtue of medicines helping them, they were a master martial artist and could expand the strength and influence of the Seven Profound Martial House.

Those who relied on medicines had hopes to enter the Seven Profound Martial House, much less Lin Ming who's combat ability surpassed someone from the same rank, so his chances of entering were higher.

Zhu Yan did not want Lin Ming to enter the Seven Profound Martial House. He didn't fear Lin Ming surpassing him, after all he was only a Third Grade talent. Zhu Yan had absolute confidence in himself. Even if Zhu Yan jumped a level or defeated Wang Yigao it was no big deal. After all Wang Yigao was only at the Second Stage of Body Transformation and his combat level was piss poor.

He was confident that he would always keep Lin Ming under his boot. But if Lin Ming were to enter it would definitely arouse some mighty waves in Lan Yunyue's heart.

Lan Yunyue had not forgotten her former friendship with Lin Ming. Would it be the same if he entered the Seven Profound Martial House? Zhu Yan liked Lan Yunyue; half of this was because of her temperament and lovely appearance, and the other half was because of his possessiveness of all good things. He was absolutely unable to tolerate any other man being in Lan Yunyue's heart.

Because of his family, Zhu Yan had a small connection to the Royal Family, so he had some connections to the Seven Profound Martial House. However, the Martial House's inspections were a very public matter so it was impossible to prevent Lin Ming from entering. So the only plan that he had left was...to not let him participate in the entrance exam.

Chapter 29: Overturn the Cavalry

Zhu Yan pondered as he traced the ring on his finger. He said, “Brother Wang, Sky Fortune City is your domain, what kind of connections do you not have? Naturally you associate with superior individuals that are at the Fourth Stage or even the peak of the Fourth Stage.” Zhu Yan suspected that Lin Ming had a solid foundation and was stronger than he appeared. It would be impossible to have an expert at the peak of the Third Stage deal with him in an easy manner; it would be best to jump straight up and look for someone at the Fourth Stage to send him off.

Wang Yigao said, “I know many masters at the Fourth Stage, but... they are the guards of my father or brother. Because of the previous matter, my father already issued a decree. Now no one listens to me.”

People at the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation were usually not some fresh spring flower. This sort of person tended to be over thirty years old and often occupied a high position, or were some powerful persons personal guard. By Wang Yigao’s ability, asking them to deal with a fifteen year old boy was just not possible.

Zhu Yan thought of this and said to Wang Yigao, “This Seven Profound Martial House inspection, isn’t the one policing it Zhao Mingshan? He seems to have received a promotion from your father recently.”

Wang Yigao was surprised, but he nodded and said. “There is such a matter. Brother Zhao is usually very nice to me.” Zhu Yan had heard from others that Zhao Mingshan was the captain of Sky Fortune City’s Police Force. The City Police Force and the City Protection Army were two parts of a system. The City Police force was responsible for public security, such as catching thieves and maintaining law and order, and the City Protection Army was

responsible for maintaining the emperor's ruling power and suppressing rebellion.

“Ah, I know... I have an idea to make a cripple of you Lin Ming...” Zhu Yan peeked through the carriage curtain, and stared at Lin Ming like a poisonous serpent as his face began to darken.

...

Seven Profound Martial House's inspections were divided into three parts, the Strength Trial, the Dream Trial, and the Exquisite Pagoda.

This morning was the first test, the Strength Trial.

Strength Training was the First Stage of Body Transformation. It was also the foundation of martial arts. If Strength Training was not solid, then the later stages of Flesh Training, Viscera Training, Altering Muscle and Bone Forging would all become useless.

Therefore, strength was very important to martial artists. The measurement for strength was also relatively simple. As long as the trial was done well, then a large number of applicants could be eliminated.

Because of this, for the last several years the Seven Profound Martial House had placed the inspection of strength as the first test.

The test was a special stone structure the height of a man. There was a beam of light at the top that was formed by true essence. As long as someone punched the stone, the beam would transmit a light that signaled the person's strength. An inch high beam of light would be a bit less than 100 jin. If one managed a beam of light a foot high, then it would be 1000 jin and one would qualify. Anything below that was instant elimination.

But Body Transformation's peak of the First Stage of Strength Training was usually around nine stones. It was enough to break iron

wood, but generally martial artists at the First Stage had around 900 jins of strength so they had a difficult time passing the first trial.

Lin Ming had already surpassed a thousand jins of strength early on in the First Stage. Presently he was a bit stronger than 2600 jins. This was because of the overwhelming prestige of the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians.' Naturally in this test, strength was his forte, and he would be able to fight for first place.

In the square, the trial had not yet started. Lin Ming was meditating on a stone platform off the road and controlling his breath.

Suddenly a rapid burst of sound came as a loud voice shouted, "Out of the way! Out of the way!"

Lin Ming opened his eyes and was surprised to see a twenty year old man bolting down the road on a horse. He wore thick shiny armor and his hand was a two meter long lance as thick as a child's arm. He dispersed the crowd by waving the lance around with one hand while wielding a horsewhip with the other.

"Dadada." The sound of the hoof beat was crisp in the air, and the people in the crowded major road scattered. Lin Ming frowned. Today was the date of Seven Profound Martial House's entrance exam. Sky Fortune City would send the City Police force here to maintain order. How did they allow someone to wildly buck into the crowd?

Lin Ming soon noted that although this person was aggressive in his manner as he waved his lance around, he actually did not bump into anyone. It looked as though this man's martial arts was decent, and he was also skilled at horse riding.

Lin Ming originally sat on the roadside, and did not get up. But at this moment he saw that the men sinisterly smile, and flicked his reins and turned and galloped towards Lin Ming.

Lin Ming's expression sank. He realized that this man was coming for him! The horse was coming faster and faster towards him. Not only was the man wearing armor, but the thick and long lance in his hand was at least 100 jins. In addition to the speed of the horses sprint, that lance would be able to pierce through a wall!

When he was less than ten meters away, the lance in the man's hand began to glow with a faint yellow light.

Martial Skill!

'They really think much of me, to actually use a martial skill.' Lin Ming thought as his eyes turned ice cold. He slightly opened his right hand and as the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' quickly revolved in him. Lin Ming's perception instantly reached the maximum limit. In his eyes, the lance speed had slowed down, and the noisy hoof beats disappeared.

When the man was within three meters, Lin Ming sprung from a sitting position, and he unexpectedly moved towards the man. Lin Ming had not attempted to dodge, but stretched out both hands and grasped the lance!

A hundred jin lance, a horse's barreling force, it could even break down a tree. And this boy actually used his hands to grab it?!

With the lance in hand, Lin Ming circulated true essence throughout his hands and feet. His right foot took one step back and braced against the stone platform, and with both hands pulling, more than 2600 jins of strength instantly erupted!

"Up!"

Lin Ming called out, and the arms holding the lance suddenly rose up. The man only felt a brief sensation of strength as he was directly lifted from his lance and thrown off like a ragdoll!

The man felt dizzy, and there was a whistling sound in his ears as his vision blurred from twirling in the air. The next moment he impacted the ground directly from behind with a malicious pain. His organs seemed to have misplaced themselves as he crashed into a tree and spit up a mouthful of blood.

Lin Ming tossed aside the 100 jin lance in his hand and sat back down. This man only had the strength of the Second Stage of Body Transformation. Although he also had the support from the horse, but compared with the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' that Lin Ming practiced, it was far from enough!

The crowd that had been watching was simply speechless. This man in armor had sprinted at him with full speed but was still lifted up and tossed aside by Lin Ming! This youth was simply a vicious monster in human form!

Zhu Yan had been watching this scene from afar on his carriage. His face became increasingly gloomy. Wang Yigao this useless rice bucket! Even that person he knew was nothing more than a walking potato! He also had the strength of the horse supporting him yet he was the one that was thrown away!

However he had also expected this result. He just didn't think that Lin Ming's counter attack would have been so unexpectedly fierce.

Just then, a crowd of noisy footsteps could be heard approaching. "What the hell is going on, someone dares to attack others in public?!"

As soon as Lin Ming looked up, it was actually Wang Yigao that had brought a crowd to the scene. He sneered in his heart. Obviously this man had planned well for this.

Wang Yigao looked at the man who had been flung away by Lin Ming and he felt his heart jump. This strength was truly terrifying. But his mind calmed as he remembered the crowd of people he brought to

support him. Wang Yigao was emboldened; he clenched his teeth and looked at Lin Ming ferociously. “Lin Ming you bastard. Again and again you fight my men! I already wasn’t going to quibble over these small details with you, but this time you have gone too far!”

“Go! Bring him to me! Take him on! Kill him and I will take responsibility!” Wang Yigao heroically waved his arm. But unexpectedly, even after he gave the code word, no one moved!

Kill him and you will be responsible? What a shitty joke! If he kills us will you also be responsible!?

The majority of the crowd was only at the First Stage of Body Transformation and a few of them were at the Second Stage. However, they could be considered weaker than someone at the same stage. They had all seen the horrifying image of Lin Ming throwing off the man on a horse and it had been etched into their minds. Wasn’t trying to bring him down just courting death?

Lin Ming smiled and said, “How, after three months, have you group of lap dog minions not improved?”

Chapter 30: Beating the General's Son

As soon as Lin Ming mentioned three months, Wang Yigao lit on fire. This was the greatest humiliation that he had ever experienced in his life! "What are you waiting for! Go! Do you want me to deal with you later!?"

In this group of minions that followed Wang Yigao, there were those who bullied men and harassed women. Wang Yigao was the one who acted as their high umbrella! If Wang Yigao decided to kick them to the curb, not only would they not be protected, but there would be others who would take revenge and ferret out all of their criminal records. They would have no place left in Sky Fortune City.

Thinking of this, the group of people braced themselves and decided to bite the bullet. They did not dare to attack him and instead just rushed up to take a blow.

Lin Ming's eyes were cold. He used his right foot and picked up the lance. Firmly grasping it with his hand, he waved it towards the group of rushing minions. Each time he swept it towards them it was as if he were sweeping chickens! Five to six people flew into the air with each wave.

Moans of sorrow and pain began to linger in the air. These weaklings were truly pathetic; as soon as they hit the ground they began groaning.

Seeing this, Lin Ming did not have the words to say anything. He just lightly swept them, not even using a quarter of his strength, it shouldn't have hurt this much.

Although these small idiots were all just sacks of rice and were acting, when Lin Ming mowed down seven or eight people each time, it

shocked bystanders, and they began to crowd around him.

In a flash, the only one left was Wang Yigao, who had begun panicking and sliding backwards. Seeing Lin Ming walk towards him, his outwards appearance was fierce, but he was close to fainting. He said, "Lin Ming what do you want!? I warn you not to act too rashly or else your death will be very ugly."

Lin Ming looked at him as if he were some kind of bug and coldly said, "Even rotten leaves have clear veins. As someone who practices martial arts how could you lose your backbone like a coward? You bother me over and over, I've already put up with you twice. If I put up with you again, then for what reasons did I practice martial arts?"

As Lin Ming said this, he instantly arrived in front of Wang Yigao. Wang Yigao's goose hairs rose and almost pissed his pants. He had one thought on his mind; this Lin Ming, was he crazy?! He dares to hit me!?

"You dare!? My father is.....!"

Wang Yigao screamed pitifully as Lin Ming punched his stomach. Lin Ming's fist contained a hidden energy. Although he hadn't achieved 'Flow like Silk', but he drew one step to achieve a hard and gentle movement. The fist's energy penetrated into Wang Yigao's organs and he coughed up a mouthful of blood.

Lin Ming used his other hand, aimed it, and slapped Wang Yigao's right cheek with a 'pa' sound. Wang Yigao spun like a spinning top and fell with plop on the ground, seeing stars.

One side of his lip was split open by Lin Ming's palm and a tooth had fallen out.

"You...you...." Wang Yigao covered his mouth. He looked at his bloody hands and his eyes turned red with anger. He had grown up in the general's office since childhood and no one had ever dared to hit him.

He stretched out his blood-stained trembling finger at Lin Ming. "I... I will kill you!"

"Kill me? Perhaps you won't have this opportunity." Lin Ming stepped forwards, his hand holding the lance. A murderous intent began to flow from him.

Feeling this killing intent and seeing that his neck was less than half a foot from the lance, Wang Yigao's high confidence and anger completely shattered. He tumbled onto the floor and began crawling away as fast as he could while screaming, "Murder!"

Lin Ming knew that in the broad daylight he could not kill the son of the general. Although that punch was filled with a concealed energy, it was a very slow non-fatal attack and only let Wang Yigao feel pain. As for his split lip, although it would hurt, it could be cured with some medicines.

But on the main road, more hoof beats began to resound. Lin Ming looked and saw that a thirty year old man had arrived. He had a mustache and wore the clothes of a captain, with a sword hung on his waist. He rode here swiftly, and behind him were several additional officers.

Seeing these officers, it was as if Wang Yigao had seen the light. He shouted loudly, "Save me, he wants to kill me!" Then he rushed towards them.

Lin Ming saw these officers and he frowned. He suddenly understood the purpose of Wang Yigao's actions. His goal had been to stir up some trouble. The truth was, he had not expected the man on the horse or even his minions could do anything to hurt him, but he had wanted to create some trouble so that the government that maintained the Seven Profound Martial House entrance examination would come and arrest him themselves.

Once he was arrested, he would miss the entrance exam. He might even be sentenced and jailed.

“What’s going on here?” The captain Zhao Mingshan said. He was thirty five years old and was at the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation and also held the post of the captain of the Sky Fortune City Police Force.

Zhao Mingshan asked those that were crawling on the ground like pitiful bugs. Those that were wounded began to crawl towards him as if they were re-energized. This was something that Lin Ming had already guessed earlier. They began to point at Lin Ming all at once. “He beat us up! He was plotting to kill our young master!”

“Your honor, please look at our bodies injuries. That guy was fighting with a lance, I luckily had quick reflexes and only received a bone fracture.” A man lifted up his shirt. A big blue line on the chest was visible.

Right now Lin Ming was also holding the lance. It could be said that ‘the evidence was conclusive.’

“Big brother Zhao, you have to call the shots for me, ah.” As soon as Wang Yigao opened his mouth, blood began to froth out. This fellow was just too pitiful, he totally did not have a dignified appearance.

Zhao Mingshan quickly handed over medicine to Wang Yigao. As the captain, Zhao Mingshan always kept medicine with him. Naturally it was not anything that was of low value. Even as he was howling and sobbing, Wang Yigao wiped the medicine on his mouth. The medicine was effective and Wang Yigao’s pain was alleviated just a little.

“Big brother Zhao, you must get justice for me!” Wang Yigao looked at Lin Ming with hatred. He did not think that Lin Ming would hit him! He decided that he would kill him. He would just need to get him in a jail cell and then he would find some way to deal with him. Kill him, cripple him, there would be no way to escape!

No, killing him was too easy. It was best to let him wallow in suffering!

This kind of matter was not something that Wang Yigao's father cared about. He had lost the bet, and lost to a young boy at the First Stage, and had only gotten his name reversed. Wang Junzhu was of course furious about this.

And this bullying that also crippled several civilians, as long as he didn't cause his family to lose face, then Wang Junzhu would simply not pay attention. Thinking that he might possibly react to this matter was not necessary.

Thinking of this, Wang Yigao felt his heart finally be relieved. Although he had been hit, the pain was temporary. What was most important was that he release the anger in his chest. It was as brother Zhu had planned. As long as they could write 'the truth' of the incident, then they could use the hand of authority to oppress others!

Zhao Mingshan was not a fool. He had been in the Police Force for many years. He had been made captain because he was also smart and quick on his feet. He only looked at the scene and accurately guessed the majority of the situation. This young boy had offended the general's house. Although he might have only given him a hard time, this young boy had injured someone from the general's house to this degree; he estimated his life was over.

As a captain, he had to be cognizant of the influence of Sky Fortune City's major players. Zhao Mingshan's position in the government wasn't high; he absolutely could not stir up these powers, so like this, Zhao Mingshan had learned to survive in the cracks. With a matter like this in his hands, who was wrong and who was right, he did not look at the facts but at their backgrounds.

Not only did Wang Yigao's father, a general of the armed forces, promote him, but even if he did not then he would still have to look at General Wang's big name.

Wang Yigao may not amount to anything in the main house, and he may have been disciplined if he was inside, but he was outside now and so there were the concerns of face. If Zhao Mingshan gave the right order, then it would suggest that he was not one of General Wang's men.

In his heart he understood these things, so he was resolute in his decision. He waved his hand and an officer moved out and began to inspect the injuries of the men on the floor. He then inspected Lin Ming's lance, contrasted them with the scars, and said, "Yes, these wounds are from the lance."

Zhao Mingshan nodded and said to Lin Ming, "Name?"

Lin Ming already guessed what Zhao Mingshan had prepared to do. He defiantly stared at Zhao Mingshan and frankly replied, "Lin Ming."

Looking in Lin Ming's eyes, Zhao Mingshan felt a faint feeling of contempt that made him uncomfortable. He was also not feeling well as he said, "The evidence is conclusive, what do you have to say for yourself?"

"The evidence is conclusive?" Lin Ming sneered, "Have you tried asking the bystanders? You only listen to the statements of Wang Yigao's party?"

Zhao Mingshan frowned, and thought that this fellow was not clear in the head. As soon as he appeared he had guessed that events would develop along this path, but now it looked as if this boy's death was looming over him and he was still joking. This boy, why did he have to hit Wang Yigao? Did he not know that his father was the leader of Sky Fortune City's armed guard forces?

Although General Wang did not tolerate the idiocy of his son, and would even punish him frequently, this did not represent that he would allow others to hit his son, as that was equal to slapping him on the face.

This boy Lin Ming couldn't also be anyone with a background....looking at his clothes only confirmed that. This must have been some sort of personal matter.

Zhao Mingshan sighed and said, "I will certainly question the bystanders, but first I ask that you return with me to the office to record an oral confession. I will have someone stay here to record statements. You will be kept there until the examination is over." As long as people were not stupid, they would not fight with the government and speak out of turn. If someone decided to have a big mouth, then they wouldn't have a pleasant result.

"Let's go!" As soon as Zhao Mingshan waved his hand, two officers walked up, twining rope around their hands. Wang Yigao revealed a fiendish grin on his face. 'Fight with me? Haha, let's see how you die now!'

As Lin Ming saw the two officers approach with rope in hand, Lin Ming shook his sleeves and coldly said, "You want to tie me up, but once you do, there won't be a good outcome for you."

Chapter 31: Regretting Capture

As Lin Ming saw the two officers approach with rope in hand, Lin Ming shook his sleeves and coldly said, "You want to tie me up, but once you do, there won't be a good outcome for you."

"You want to get out of this situation? Don't even think about it! Once you're in my hands you'll never escape, haha!" Wang Yigao happily laughed to himself a few hundred times as the success of the situation got to his head. Even though he was the one that was injured, his smile was unsightly and moreover these would clearly contained the suggestion that he wanted some sort of 'accident' to befall Lin Ming in jail...

Wang Yigao turned his head and saw that Zhao Mingshan was staring at him with an ugly and disgusted expression on his face. Wang Yigao coughed, said with a bit of embarrassment, "Brother Zhao, I will let you investigate the situation. I was just a bit angry and overreacted. This little rat was just too damn arrogant."

Lin Ming dusted himself and said to Zhao Mingshan, "It is your responsibility to ensure the public safety of the Seven Profound Martial House entrance exam. Someone had just tried to run me through on this main road with a lance and you did not come, someone tried to plot my death by getting a bunch of morons to beat me and leave me disabled, and you did not come. And yet when I finally fight back with the lance, you finally come? And you don't even attempt to ask the crowd watching any questions and single handedly decided that I was the guilty one, are you playing with me?"

Lin Ming spoke, pronouncing each word unhurriedly, and each word was punishing and caused Zhao Mingshan's heart to sink. This kid really had some guts. How could he be so calm in this situation? What was he relying on?

Zhao Mingshan looked at Lin Ming and decided that he couldn't drag this matter on any further and began to say angrily, "This is official business! It's not up to the likes of you to comment on the process. Tie him up!"

When he issued the order, the rope had already wrapped tightly around Lin Ming's neck. Even though Lin Ming was capable, Zhao Mingshan was already at the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation, so he did not resist.

At this moment a familiar voice cried out from the crowd. "Make way, let me through!"

Lin Ming looked up and was surprised to see a plump youth twisting and squeezing his way past the mob of people. In his hand was a rattling lunch box. It was Lin Xiaodong. When Lin Ming had been meditating just a moment ago, Lin Xiaodong had gone to buy breakfast, and had just arrived back to see a commotion.

As soon as Lin Xiaodong saw the rope wrapped around Lin Ming's neck, his heart was suddenly inflamed. "Shit! Why the hell did you fuckers tie him up?!"

Zhao Mingshan did not know where this brave fat boy came from, and was preparing to wave the command to throw him away, when in the corner of his eye he saw light spark of light. As he turned his head he saw that a faint fire had ignited in Lin Ming's hand.

Sound transmitting talisman?

Zhao Mingshan's eyes widened. The talisman could record voices and transfer them; they were used to communicate. This boy had obviously used it just now without their knowledge and had recorded their conversation and transmitted it!

This guy!

Zhao Mingshan felt an inexplicable chill in the air as he looked at this youth. Today he had offended him, later he would come looking for revenge. It seemed he really did have to tolerate Wang Yigao's idiotic plans and kill him, otherwise there would be no end to his future troubles.

But...Who has he transmitted the talisman to?

Lin Ming had naturally sent the talisman to Mister Muiyi. Previously, Muiyi and Lin Ming had exchanged tips about inscription techniques and had become good friends. Muiyi had told him that as long as there was the Marshal's Quarters, then he could guarantee his absolute safety in Sky Fortune City. As long as there was any trouble, he could just send a talisman to inform him.

Although Lin Ming was brave and courageous, he was not a hothead who would let his impulses rashly dictate his actions without paying attention to the possible consequences. Before he had struck Wang Yigao, he already had a plan for this situation. He wasn't going to let a little matter like this be something that could stop him, he would just simply owe Muiyi a future favor.

Although Muiyi was in the government and serving the court as the Crown Prince's tutor, he was not a court official. In his heart he was still a man of the world, and those that dwelled in that world valued loyalty and friendship above all else. Muiyi was not a man who spoke or agreed to anything easily or thoughtlessly. When he had asked to be Lin Ming's friend, he had said so with all the conviction in his heart.

Hearing the recording from the sound transmitting talisman, Muiyi had a good grasp of the situation that was occurring. He sighed with disgust. He had always been disgusted by the government officials or lesser officers who curried favor with powerful people. Not to mention that Lin Ming was his close friend, behind him was also a

unfathomable master. Even if he were not related to this matter, he would still meddle in it.

Muyi was lax when it came to keeping up with all the bureaucratic nonsense, and didn't know many powerful people who could immediately handle this situation. The only one he could think of to deal with this was his student - the Crown Prince Yang Lin.

He sent a sound transmitting talisman to Yang Lin. Crown Prince Yang Lin had always deeply admired and respected his teacher. If Muyi requested a matter of him, he would naturally do everything possible to carry it out. So Yang Lin then sent a personal message to the minister of the Police Department.

The Emperor and the Crown prince used a unique purple gold sound transmitting talisman. At this moment, the minister was hugging a concubine and giggling and laughing while enjoying some romantic times with her. As soon as he saw the purple gold flash, he immediately rolled out of his chair.

This message was from the Crown Prince's sound transmitting talisman!

After he learned the reason why the Crown Prince had sent him a message, the minister felt as if someone had smashed a rock on his head. His legs turned to jelly and he felt suffocated as he said, "Forgive this lowly one for not being strict, my supervision was truly lacking." Each word he said caused his heart to skip a beat.

He certainly knew what sort of person Zhao Mingshan was. He was part of the General Wang's palace guard and the youth was a boy of indeterminate background. It was easy to see how Zhao Mingshan would handle this matter, but... this boy was unexpectedly a person of the Crown Prince!

Zhao Mingshan, you are your mom's drop dead bastard! You actually made I, your father, suffer such a mess!

...

“Like hell! Why did you tie him up!?” Lin Xiaodong huffed and puffed. Zhao Mingshan waved his hand and pointed at Lin Xiaodong, “Obstructing official business and insulting the captain of the Police Force! Officers, tie him up for me!”

Zhao Mingshan sent two officers to grab Lin Xiaodong. The officers were mostly at the Second Stage of Body Transformation, and they were not some walking potatoes like Wang Yigao; they had solid foundations and combat training.

Lin Xiaodong was only at the First Stage. But even though he could not resist, he still struggled a bit and screamed like an angry duck, “You dare to touch me!? You remember my face! I’ll pay this back to you with full interest!”

“Shut his mouth!” Zhao Mingshan said a bit frantically, and a man gagged Lin Xiaodong with a cloth strip between his lips. The result was that the steady stream of curses became an inaudible whining sound.

“Let’s go!” As soon as Zhao Mingshan waved his hand, they trotted down the road with Lin Ming and Lin Xiaodong strapped to the horses’ backs. In just a bit of time they were already several miles down the road.

Wang Yigao was behind them, he suddenly laughed and said, “Brother Zhao, put them down, let’s drag them through.”

He wanted to drag the two men behind the galloping horses. It was interesting, but Zhao Mingshan did not answer. At this moment, there was suddenly a red light in front of him that burst into a mass of light. It was a sound transmitting talisman.

The sound transmitting talisman directly transmitted the sounds to one’s mind, other’s would not be able to hear it.

The flash dissipated. Zhao Mingshan's voice rang with the sound of the minister of the Police Department roaring at him at maximum volume. "Fuck your mom and listen to me! Release those people! Do you even know who is behind that boy!? It is the Crown Prince! Did you want to fucking revolt against me!? You even dare to touch someone that is the Crown Prince's person!? Your fucking mom, do you even know how to spell the character 'dead'?! If you want to die don't drag me down with you! Zhao Mingshan, I swear to you if anyone comes troubling me I will kill you myself!!"

Zhao Mingshan was scolded so loudly that he thought his head would explode. His whole body stiffened and his mind blanked....Crown Prince?

Zhao Mingshan suddenly stopped the horses and looked to Lin Ming with his jaw agape. Lin Ming was also looking at him at him the same calm and indifferent eyes that he been all along, like he were some ordinary clown.

He remembered the sound transmitting talisman that Lin Ming had sent out... that was for the Crown Prince!?

What sort of existence was the Crown Prince? He was just a young police captain! He would probably never encounter anything that was related to the Crown Prince in his life! His heart was shocked with unspeakable words.

He finally understood the meaning behind Lin Ming's gaze.

"I do say, Brother Zhao, now is a good time. There isn't anyone watching, so in any case, let's drag them along, they shouldn't die." Wang Yigao said with a smile and a 'heh heh'.

I'll fucking drag your mom! When he heard Wang Yigao speak this nonsense he had an urge to draw his sword and chop him in half! If it weren't for this idiot then how could he have fallen into this predicament!?

“Everyone dismount. Release them.”

As soon as Zhao Mingshan ordered this, his men were shocked. Wang Yigao was also shocked.

Release them?

Wang Yigao was not a total fool. He thought to that sound transmitting talisman; was it related?

However Zhao Mingshan said nothing else besides the order. Wang Yigao was very unhappy about this turn of events and was preparing to argue, but at that moment, another sound transmitting talisman also burst into flames in front of him. As soon as he heard the message, Wang Yigao almost dropped to the floor. This was the sound transmitting talisman that his father personally sent out! It only had a few words, “Return immediately to me!”

Wang Yigao was able to feel the chill in his father’s tone. He had no doubt that when he returned, he would be in for a world of pain.

Since one party was the Crown Prince’s person and the other party was the son of General Wang, the Police Department naturally sent out a sound transmitting talisman to explain the situation to General Wang. General Wang hadn’t felt such anger before. The throne was changing, and it was a sensitive time, and this Wang Yigao decided to annoy the Crown Prince! Although he didn’t know what connection this boy had to the Crown Prince, even if it was too much! Because of a small matter, it was enough for the Crown Prince to decide to select someone else for his position and remove him! He really wanted to kill this good-for-nothing son!

Zhao Mingshan saw Wang Yigao freeze with terror at receiving the sound transmitting talisman. He immediately barked at his men, “Why are you still holding them, release them now!”

After being reprimanded, the men began to panic. They went to untie the rope, but Lin Ming sneered, "You want to tie me up, so you tied me up. Now you want release me? I already told you; once you do, there won't be a good outcome for you."

Chapter 32: Oppress with Others' Power

Zhao Mingshan gaped at Lin Ming. He recalled that Lin Ming had once said the words 'You want to tie me up, but once you do, there won't be a good outcome for you.'

Faced with such a superior backing, Zhao Mingshan had no choice but to lower his head and play as a dog for this boy. Even though this was a heavy loss of face for him, it was nothing in comparison to keeping his own little life.

Zhao Mingshan immediately changed his countenance. His whole face locked up with a forced smile as he said, "It appears that we accidentally fished out two dragon kings. These two fellow brothers, today was truly just a silly misunderstanding. I hope you can show some mercy and overlook my transgressions. You people, quickly untie these two fellows!"

Although he hadn't been untied yet, Lin Xiaodong's gag cloth was taken out, and he was a bit perplexed. But Lin Ming had given him all sorts of surprises these days, so he adapted quickly.

Was it that elusive and mysterious master that Lin Ming had spoken of?

To Lin Xiaodong, such a powerful and mighty being was only a foreign concept to him. But in any case, with someone like that backing them up, he had no need to fear these idiots!

"Fuck your whole family, fuck your mom and your family you little mother fuckers!" Lin Xiaodong let out a string of epithets as the officers struggled to unwind the ropes that bound his large body. They were pushed aside by Lin Xiaodong as he rolled around.

“You think that you tie me up and let me go whenever you want?” Lin Xiaodong had originally suffered a loss of face, but now that he had the upper hand, he naturally would return the favor.

Zhao Mingshan had nothing he could do but to take the words and suffer silently. He smiled and painstakingly said, “Little brothers, I was blind and foolish, would you be merciful and overlook these matters today? I would truly be grateful if you somehow allow us to compensate you...”

Lin Xiaodong crooked his neck. These officers of the Police Department only had a tiny salary with a bit of gold that they scraped up off the books. Lin Xiaodong did not have a liking for any of this money, so what was the point of offering it to him?

At this time, Lin Xiaodong happened to see Wang Yigao off to the side. He was taking advantage of the distraction to make his escape. Lin Xiaodong angrily said, “Stop! Whose mother said to let that kid go! Return here right now!”

Wang Yigao nearly fell off of his horse as he heard these words. The turn of events and frightened him silly. His father was waiting for him to return home for punishment, this was an absolute nightmare.

Now even seeing Lin Ming made his heart shudder with dread. Forget retaliating, if he ever saw Lin Ming again he would make a full effort to scamper away. Not only did Wang Yigao fear Lin Ming, but he also didn't know what kind of backing Lin Ming had. Whatever it was, it was greater than anything he could compare with!

Losing the only advantage he had, Wang Yigao finally realized he was completely inferior to Lin Ming.

“You...what do you want?”

“You want to get away? You think there is anything in this whole world that is that easy?” Lin Xiaodong had a sudden inspiration. He

turned to several officers. "You there, beat this guy up."

Wang Yigao trembled as he heard this. Zhao Mingshan grimaced; now he really didn't know if he could preserve his own head. If they hit Wang Yigao any more, he really might die.

Zhao Mingshan looked to Lin Ming with a pleading look.

Lin Ming finally said, "Consider this finished. There's no point dealing with this kind of person."

He looked to Wang Yigao and asked, "I ask you, when you came up to stir trouble, I saw that there were also people spying on me from the blue carriage. Was that Zhu Yan?"

Wang Yigao felt his stomach fall. Did this man have eyes on the back of his head?

He had already thoroughly feared Lin Ming, but now that fear was deepening as terror filled his eyes.

He still didn't speak, so Lin Ming took a single step towards him, and coldly said, "Yes, or no?"

Wang Yigao's heart stopped and he clenched his teeth. He nodded.

"Today's matter was also thought up by Zhu Yan?"

Wang Yigao nodded again.

"Good. You may go."

Lin Ming was already thinking that this was the case. Zhu Yan did not want him to enter the Seven Profound Martial House. Wang Yigao was just a pawn that had been used to prevent him from taking part in the entrance exam; Lin Ming did not want to bother with such a small bit player again. The reason was because Wang Yigao's father was the general. Lin Ming also knew discretion, and he had already

left behind some hidden true essence in him that would leave him confined to his bed for a period.

Zhao Mingshao breathed a sigh of relief as he heard Lin Ming. He hurried forward to personally untie them.

Lin Xiaodong flexed his chubby wrists and look at Zhao Mingshan who had jumped off a black maned horse. Lin Xiaodong had a sharp eye for money, and he understood at a glance that this horse was a superior breed. Although they couldn't compare with the snow white horses of the Marshal's Quarters, their value was no less than 500 gold taels.

"We're fine, you don't need to send us off. Leave behind two horses. That black maned horse is also nice. I'll take it."

Zhao Mingshao's mouth twitched as he heard this. This horse was his beloved and treasured beauty. But he clenched his teeth and said, "If these fellow brothers like my horse, feel free to ride her."

"Haha. Then don't mind me being impolite." Lin Xiaodong said. He leapt up and his pudgy body seated on the black maned horse. "Heh heh, let's go!"

As they left the group, Lin Xiaodong was in an excellent mood. "Shit, that was better than getting money! I've never felt so great in my life. Not only did that idiot 'Gao Yiwang' earn his lesson, but even the captain gave me his own horse. Haha, this is what they call the great life!"

Lin Ming smiled and said, "We borrowed others' power and influence today, but anyone can rely on connections to do that. If we really want to feel great, then we must get strong ourselves and depend on our own strength to intimidate the world. Then no one would dare to bother us. That feeling would really be great."

“Intimidate the world? Haha, Brother Lin, I don’t have such grand dreams as you; I’m fine with relying on others’ power and influence. How about this Brother Lin, when one day your name is known across the world, you cover for me. I’ll tell them your name, and frighten them off.”

“Okay!” Lin Ming laughed out loud.

The two were originally only brought three or four miles down the road. They galloped on their horses and in a short while arrived back at the square. In the square were still a sea of people; it seemed that the Strength Trial had just begun.

Lin Ming had forgotten about the blue carriage until now; he noticed that it was still sitting there. But now Zhu Yan had disembarked from it. He was holding onto a long sword while staring an ice cold gaze.

“It seems I gave you less credit than was due. You are quite talented.” In a moment, Zhu Yan had transmitted his voice to Lin Ming. They were 200 meters away, but it was as if Zhu Yan was speaking right beside him.

This was a message sent with true essence. It required an extremely high degree of control of true essence to achieve. Zhu Yan must have reached the peak of the Third Stage in the last six months.

“Don’t think that just because you reached the Second Stage of Body Transformation that you are anything special. Beating up some useless potatoes that are on the same level as you is no accomplishment at all. You said that one day you would surpass me? Good. I will wait for you. I will let you know the true difference between you and I, and you will learn that you are not destined to be an elite of this world.

“An elite of this world?” Lin Ming looked at Zhu Yan and smiled.
“Certainly not of this world...”

Chapter 33: Strength Trial

The Seven Profound Martial House had a total of twenty stone pillars for the Strength Trial. After the exam begins, the candidates would divide into twenty teams as to reduce the congestion in the square.

The twenty stone pillars were set up in in front of the doors of separate entrances to the Seven Profound Martial House. At the top of each stone pillar was a shining light which was the mark of every candidate's destiny. Whether they would pass this gate or whether they would be tossed aside would all be decided by this one number.

A roughly thirty or forty year old woman stepped in front of the crowd and stood on a platform that had been set up. "Hello everyone. I am one of the supervisors for the Strength Trial. I would like to announce that the Seven Profound Martial House's examination has altogether three parts. For those who manage to qualify through the end, they will be given a official assessment based upon their age, talent, and result. The top ten will obtain an award, and the number one will be rewarded with a Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill!"

A Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill! The entire crowd gasped in surprise; even the juniors of the aristocratic families were flabbergasted. Those among them with lower strength were filled with regret. Their faces revealed sorry and depressed expressions as they were destined to never achieve first place. Those that were stronger straightened their backs. Their eyes shone with hope and they twitched around as if they were itching for a fight. They had assumed that this Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill was prepared especially for them.

Lin Ming had read through a medicinal manual before and had a rough sense understanding regarding the properties of the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill. This pill was about the size of a grape and was created by mixing a Crimson Gold Dragon's marrow with several

species of rare and precious herbs. It would then be boiled and distilled into a pill that would be able to improve the physique, enhance cultivation, and even help break through bottlenecks.

The Crimson Gold Dragon was not a real dragon, it was a descendant that only shared some blood. Nevertheless, creatures that were related to dragons were not weak. Even Houtian experts would not be a match!

Sky Fortune Kingdom did not have many Houtian experts to begin with, and they also didn't have anyone that was capable of refining such a precious pill. Therefore Sky Fortune Kingdom was unable to produce the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill.

Without a doubt this medicine originated from the Seven Profound Valleys. Every year the Seven Profound Valleys would screen talents, and medicines were provided from the main school to attract talented youths to participate.

Perhaps to the Seven Profound Valleys, the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill was not particularly precious, but to those of Sky Fortune Kingdom, it was absolutely a valuable treasure that could not be purchased by money. Even a large aristocratic family would be terribly jealous of anyone who possessed such a treasure.

The beautiful supervisor did not seem excited or unhappy as she continued, "The second, third and fourth placed will receive a Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, and fifth to tenth will receive ten Soul Gathering Pellets!"

The Golden Snake Scarlet Pill was refined from the gallbladder of a hundred year old Golden Scarlet Snake. This kind of gallbladder was named because of its gold-red appearance. It was inferior to the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill, but it was also a rare and precious medicine which most people would never see.

But the fourth through tenth place only received ten Soul Gathering Pellets which were much less rare. Each pellet had a value of 200 gold taels, and ten of them would be equal to 2000 gold taels. But the two medicines given to those that ranked higher were at least 10,000 gold taels. In fact, even if one could pay several times over, they would still not be able to buy one.

The rich rewards made the talented candidates incomparably excited; they were impatient to go on stage and show off their skills. Looking at this eager crowd was a group of young men and women wearing silk clothing. They laughed contemptuously. In the group was a handsome youth wearing a jade belt and smiling.

The youth's entourage smiled and flattered him, "These people really overreach. This Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill is already in young master's pocket, winning is already a foregone conclusion. Do they also think to try and compete? Truly they do not know their place."

The youth faintly smiled and waved his folding fan. He didn't respond. He was a talent of the Yue Lu City's Wang family. He had a fourth grade talent, early Third Stage of Body Transformation cultivation, and had once taken the number one spot in Yue Lu City's elite competition. Yue Lu City was a big city, thus this number one spot held some weight.

On the platform the woman continued, "We will now begin the first round of the entrance exam. Please participate in the exam with your full strength. The light beam on the stone column will signal the strength of your attack. An inch represents 100 jins of strength. As long as you pass 1000 jins then you will pass this round! Each candidate will have three attempts. So long as you qualify once then you will pass. Everyone, we will now have a demonstration. Lin Sen, step forwards."

As the beautiful lady finished speaking, a man walked up on stage. He was tall and gaunt, almost appearing emaciated, with a pale, cold face

and harsh eyes.

He wore a black suit and on his back was a three foot long knife. Even though it was broad daylight, when he stepped on stage, the temperature of the crowd plummeted several degrees.

“Is that Ling Sen?”

“Someone from the Heavenly Abode of the Seven Profound Martial House!”

This Ling Sen was obviously famous, but Lin Ming did not know of him. He turned and asked Lin Xiaodong, “Who is this Ling Sen?”

Lin Xiaodong might not be diligent when it came to practicing his martial arts, but he was extremely gossipy and curious about all matters, thus he knew about matters such as these. He said, “Ling Sen is one of the senior apprentices of the Heavenly Abode which is the fiercest department in the Seven Profound Martial House. He is twenty years old and is a fourth grade talent. His cultivation is at the peak of the Fourth Stage, and he just entered the Heavenly Abode last year. On his own initiative he requested to be sent to the warfront for one year, where he slaughtered countless people. Right now his combat ability is difficult to estimate, but people say that he will soon enter the Fifth Stage of Body Transformation.

Twenty years old and Fifth Stage of Body Transformation? Lin Ming was slightly startled. Generally, martial artists were considered extraordinary if they reached the Fifth Stage, the Bone Forging stage, by the time they were thirty. This Ling Sen was also overflowing with killing intent, it seemed he had killed many people in the battlefield. Compared to those with the same level of cultivation, this man was truly a master.

Ling Sen loathed demonstrations like this. However it was a tradition that the apprentices of the Heavenly Abode would show off for the candidates. This was for the sake of letting them know that there was

always someone out there who was better, and they should never stop striving to reach the top.

Lin Sen Casually stood before the pillar and without even preparing, he casually waved his right hand. A 'Boom!' sound was heard, and the stone pillar fiercely shook. The light beam jumped high, stabilized, and finally stabilized at four feet and nine inches.

4900 jins!

In the field everyone was full of praise and astonishment. If Ling Sen had used his full strength, he might even surpass 5000 jins!

Seeing this result, Lin Ming's eyes widened. This Ling Sen's strength was almost double his own!

Lin Xiaodong said, "It's not anything surprising. He is one of the top talents in Sky Fortune City's younger generation. It would only be weird if he didn't have a result like this."

Lin Ming said, "One of the younger generation? Could Qin Xingxuan defeat him?"

Lin Xiaodong shrugged. "I don't know Qin Xingxuan's strength, but Qin Xingxuan is well rounded and studies all subjects. Ling Sen only focuses his training on fighting and killing, really he is a man who specializes in life or death battles. I don't think Qin Xingxuan could possibly win if their lives were on the line, but don't forget that Qin Xingxuan is only fifteen years old while Ling Sen is twenty."

Hearing this, Lin Ming nodded slightly.

Body Transformation had a total of six stages. The further you were, the more the gap between the stages increased. The strength of one in the Pulse Condensation stage could reach 8000 jins. Lin Ming was very far away from this state.

“Exam, begin!” At this moment on stage, the beautiful middle aged lady sent out the order to start the Strength Trial.

The young candidates were all very eager, each was itching to get up and test their strength. However when they actually tested their strength on the stone pillar, there were many who failed.

“900 jins, 850 jins, 850 jins, three times failed. Next!”

“950 jins, 900 jins, 900 jins, three times failed. Next!”

Many of the candidates had barely reached the Second Stage of Body Transformation. If they were in peak condition, then they might be able to hit 1000 jins. However they could not be at peak condition for every attempt. In addition, they also suffered from nerves and were unable to show their highest level of strength. These people were naturally eliminated.

“1000 jins, qualified!” Someone in Lin Ming’s light passed, and that man shouted happily as he danced around in excitement. The truth was that this man also understood, although he passed and barely qualified, he would most likely be eliminated during the second round. Even so, it was an honor for him to have passed the first round of the Seven Profound Martial House’s entrance exam at sixteen years of age.

“1300 jins, qualified!”

“950 jins, failed!”

When a result came out, those that failed would dejectedly leave in low spirits. The ones who succeeded were giddy. And among them were those that showed indifference. To these talents, passing this trial was a given.

A this moment, there was a commotion in front. Lin Ming looked ahead and saw that a youth wearing blue linen clothes was standing

in front of the stone pillar, and was gathering his strength.

Lin Ming was curious about who this man was. He heard some people discussing, “That is Sun Ping from East Water City. He is at the Third Stage of Body Transformation. His strength is fierce!

As the discussion was occurring, Sun Ping shot forwards. He hit the stone column with a ‘peng’, and the light beam began to tremble as it shot upwards. It stopped at two feet and three inches.

“2300 jins!”

This was the first person who had passed 2000 jins. The crowd burst into exclamation.

Chapter 34: Dream Trial

“This Sun Ping has already been at the Third Stage of Body Transformation for a period of time, but still only managed to strike out with 2300 jins. He’s also only seventeen years old; he isn’t a threat to me.” Wang Yanfeng said as he waved his fan. He narrowed his eyes as he gauged Sun Ping. The final evaluation of the entrance exam would be dependent on not only the results of the Trial, but of the age and talent grade of those who passed. The younger they were and the higher the talent grade, the higher the evaluation would be. In the many young martial artists and talents that participated in the exam, seventeen years of age was considered a bit old.

“Young master, it’s your turn.”

“Mm.” Wang Yanfeng folded his fan and handed it to his attendant.

As Wang Yanfeng stepped in front of the stone column, many people begin to recognize him.

“It’s Wang Yanfeng of Yuelu City!”

As the crowd began to spread the news, the nearby candidates turned their gaze over to him. In this group of candidates, Wang Yanfeng had the greatest chance of competing for first place. Not only was his strength formidable, but he was a youth of fifteen years of age.

And most importantly, Wang Yanfeng’s talent was high!

Wang Yanfeng was a grade-four talent, but the truth was that the grade-four talents and above, was also divided into low, medium, and high quality. Wang Yanfeng was of the rare high grade-four talents.

Wang Yanfeng stood before the stone column and let out a single breath. The breath curled into the air like twin snakes; this was a sign of the Third Stage of Body Transformation, Viscera Training.

The surrounding crowd gasped in awe. “Seriously, he has just entered the Third Stage of Body Transformation and yet he can already breathe out the twin snakes, and he is only fifteen years old. This is truly talent that defies the will of Heaven.”

“Mm. Martial artists at Viscera Training have true essence protecting their heart and lungs and other five major internal organs. They can protect their frail internal organs from attacks, and moreover, their heart and lungs are strong. They have abnormal vitality and could prolong their breathing. Their muscles would naturally strengthen under these conditions and rise. This Wang Yanfeng already breathes snakes but has just entered the Third Stage, it truly makes one jealous.”

As this discussion continued, Wang Yanfeng had already struck out at the stone column. A ‘bang’ rang through the air and the stone column shook. The beam of light jumped up and finally settled at two feet four inches.

“2400 jins!”

Generally speaking, the average martial artist who had entered the Third Stage of Body Transformation would reach about 2000 jins. But Wang Yanfeng, he had just entered the Third Stage, was only fifteen years old, and yet managed to show a strength of 2400 jins. It really was shocking to all onlookers.

However, before the crowd had recovered their composure, there were cries of alarm and surprise coming from another side. A tall and burly youth had walked in front of a stone column and punched his fist. The light beam rose and fell two feet and four inches. 2400 jins!

Wang Yanfeng’s record had just been born but was already rendered average by another youth. Lin Ming looked at that tall and burly youth and was startled to see that he was someone who was also at the Second Stage of cultivation!

It wasn't out of sorts to see someone at the Third Stage of Body Transformation reach 2000 jins, but 2000 jins at only the Second Stage? That was just too excessive.

By now Lin Ming had noticed that although the youth appeared to have a naïve and innocent appearance, his height was higher than those of his peers around him, and his muscled body seemed to be thicker and denser than an adult's.

Was this what they called inborn divine strength?

Those with inborn divine strength were several times stronger than those of their age. Although they were very rare, it appeared that this tall and burly youth was one such type.

Wang Yanfeng also saw that impressive youth and let out a light humph. He didn't give it too much thought. Inborn divine strength? Martial artists fought with not just their strength, but also with their martial arts and skills. Not only that, but the higher one's cultivation, the more important true essence becomes. Those who were born with this divine strength did not necessarily become some fierce martial arts figure.

...

The trial continued, and several youths past with a strength of 1000 jins that were at the peak the Second Stage.

The Seven Profound Martial House stipulated that the candidate's age must be between fifteen to eighteen years of age. It was easy for those of this age bracket to have had achieved the peak of the Second Stage of Body Transformation.

Occasionally there would also be those youths that had reached the Third Stage of Body Transformation. These youths had managed 2000 jins, and some even reached 2500 jins.

Now, it was finally Lin Ming's turn.

Before Lin Ming arrived at the stone column, he had already realized that this was a more serious situation than he thought. Although he was confident that he wouldn't lose to Wang Yanfeng, his natural talent was also far from his.

It was third grade compared to a high fourth grade. In the final evaluation, Lin Ming would suffer a great penalty!

In every round of this exam, Lin Ming had to put forth his whole heart and soul!

Lin Ming breathed lightly and let his entire body relax. He eliminated all distracting thoughts and sounds. The 'True Primal Chaos Formula' revolved silently in his body. Compared to a martial art at the same cultivation, his true essence was several times thicker in his muscles.

Strength Training's 'flow like silk', the principles of hardness and softness; Lin Ming engraved these thoughts onto his mind as he meditated with the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians.' His vision condensed and his relaxed body suddenly went taut like a longbow. His waist lowered and he thrust forwards with the strength of his thighs like a sleek and mighty leopard.

"Bang!"

The strike hit the center of the stone column. The light beam rose dramatically and crazily bounced up until it settled at 2700 jins.

Lin Ming's strength was 2600 jins, but if he put forth his full effort, 2700 jins was also possible.

"My god, 2700 jins!"

"This boy, this boy is simply a vicious beast in human form! A few hundred more jins and he would have caught up to someone at the

Fourth Stage of Body Transformation!”

“No, this isn’t right, it’s just not right. The young fellow is only at the Second Stage of Body Transformation. Is he also someone with inborn divine strength?”

The crowd wildly discussed this, and some people had quickly recognized Lin Ming. “I know that person! Just half an hour ago on the main road he had used his strength of arm to throw off someone on a horse like a windmill! He threw off someone that was also at the Second Stage of Body Transformation and was holding a lance on a horse! The man was thrown but the boy hadn’t been moved at all. I thought he was some demon child but it turns out he was also someone with inborn divine strength; no wonder he was capable of that!”

“Wasn’t he arrested by the authorities? How did he get back?”

As people buzzed, the tall and burly youth who had beaten Wang Yanfeng and reached 2400 jins also looked at Lin Ming. The youth revealed a friendly expression as he happily smiled at Lin Ming. He had not thought that he would also meet someone with inborn divine strength at this examination, so he was quite sympathetic towards Lin Ming.

Wang Yanfeng looked at Lin Ming and frowned. This boy also had inborn divine strength? It truly was annoying. It was like these rare youths were crawling out of the woodwork like cockroaches.

“Brother Feng, this kid came out of nowhere and dared to steal Brother Feng’s limelight. Brother Feng truly was robbed.” A man at Wang Yanfeng’s side said.

Wan Yanfeng said, “It’s not anything special. Having this result at the Second Stage of Body Transformation is decent. Battle prowess doesn’t depend on just strength. Although those with inborn divine

strength are rare, not many of them have great achievements in the future.”

Wang Yanfeng said this with a tone of exasperation. Although he had already determined that he would take first during this entrance exam, he was repeatedly overshadowed again and again by these fellow youths which made him feel extremely uncomfortable.

“What Brother Feng said is absolutely right. In the future what one will need to focus on is the true essence. The superiority of strength is only useful at the start. This kid will only be happy for a few years.” Wang Yanfeng’s entourage echoed.

After Lin Ming, it was Lin Xiaodong’s turn. As he approached the stone column he began to turn his neck back and forth and wiggle his waist. He continued this for a few minutes until the examination officials appeared to be increasingly annoyed and impatient. Then Lin Xiaodong finally cried out and punch the the stone column.

“Thud.” There was a dull thumping sound as the stone column’s light beam shook for a bit and then settled.

The examination supervisor frowned as he looked at Lin Xiaodong. “750 jins...but you also have two more opportunities.

The result was really bad considering that anyone less than 900 jins would not dare to register. No one wanted to idle in this huge crowd only to end up embarrassing themselves. But in Lin Xiaodong’s point of view this result was very good, and he had this natural shameless capability of ignoring the thoughts of others. He wiggled his waist and stretched his neck again, and then punched out again. ‘Peng!’

“700 jins.”

Another punch!

“750 jins.”

Without a shadow of a doubt, Lin Xiaodong had suffered a miserable defeat.

To Lin Xiaodong, this was a decent result. He was only fifteen years old and his father had decided that only when he was eighteen would he have any possibility of entering the Seven Profound Martial House. Lin Xiaodong had not planned on breaking through the Pulse Condensation period from the start, and his only ideal and wish was to preserve his position within the family.

“I gave you the Golden Deer Pills, did you not take any?” Lin Ming asked as Lin Xiaodong walked back.

“I ate them all; otherwise there was no way I would get past 600 jins.” Lin Xiaodong innocently shrugged. He left Lin Ming at a loss for words.

However Lin Ming also thought this was normal. After all, before he practiced the ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’, his best result was 850 jins. His diligent and tireless training was far above Lin Xiaodong who had only managed 600 jins at the time.

It was difficult for someone with only a grade three talent and no formidable aristocratic background to enter the Seven Profound Martial House at fifteen years of age. Even the first round of the entrance exam was prohibitively difficult to pass.

The Strength Trial finally finished around noon, and the candidates were allowed a short rest before the entrance exam continued.

Because the rest time was too short, Lin Ming simply ate a small meal before sitting back in meditation and then hurrying back to the square.

The second inspection was the Dream Trial. It was a test of a martial artist’s heart.

For a martial artist, they needed not only talent and support of their background, but moreover, they had to be someone with an earnest and indefatigable martial heart.

Chapter 35: The Lake's Jade Platform

The heart of martial arts was by no means anything that was greatly loyal or virtuous - or even good. Whether it be living buddhas that brimmed with righteousness or demon sect leaders with dark intentions, the truth was that the heart of martial arts judged neither good nor evil. It only resolved to ask whether one had the determination to tread the rocky path.

Practicing martial arts was a daily struggle. One's life would be filled with misery, danger, enticements; if one's mentality was not firm then it was easy to fall from the path of a martial artist and give up, thus wasting all previous efforts.

Some people only practiced martial arts for wealth and sensual pleasures. In the heart of these people they practiced martial arts without truly understanding what it meant. This would not affect them during an early period of cultivation, but as would be an insurmountable roadblock later. The Pulse Condensation Period was enough for one to have a sumptuous and luxurious lifestyle where one could drown in money and beautiful women. Sky Fortune Kingdom had many such warriors. Because Sky Fortune Kingdom would handsomely reward those who reached the Pulse Condensation Period, there were those who would suffer untold hardships to attain this goal, only to halt their path of martial arts because they could not resist the temptation of extravagance.

The Dream Trial did not examine one's cultivation; it perceived one's determination and heart of martial arts. Lin Ming had complete confidence regarding this. Even if he had not obtained the mysterious Magic Cube, he believed he still had a 120% chance to pass.

At this time, more than half of the candidates had failed the first trial, so after they had left the field, the square was much more spacious.

Pitiful and sad Lin Xiaodong had already lost the qualifications to enter so he could only stay on the main road beyond the square.

Lin Ming turned around to look at Lin Xiaodong. Although there were many people in the crowd, he still saw him.

Lin Xiaodong also saw Lin Ming and he gave him a thumbs up. Lin Ming smiled. When he turned his head he saw a figure in the crowd that caught his eye. The girl wore a form fitting daffodil yellow dress. She looked to be an aristocratic junior with a top hat made of swan feathers. She stood in an obscure corner and observed everything.

Lin Ming recognized this girl. She was Lan Yunyue.

Lin Ming quickly turned his eyes from her. He knew that if they saw each other it would only increase Lan Yunyue's embarrassment. It was better to have not seen at all...

In his heart Lin Ming had not blamed Lan Yunyue for anything. After all, there had only been a silent agreement between them, and they had not discussed marriage or anything like that to an extensive degree. Lan Yunyue had made the only choice that an ordinary girl could possibly make in her circumstances.

Lan Yunyue did not know that Lin Ming had already discovered her. Lan Yunyue had struggled in her heart for a long time as to whether to come here today or not. She did not want to see Lin Ming, but in her heart was a faint bit of worry, and she wanted to know whether or not he was well.

She could only remember back to two months ago when Lin Ming had been trying to sell several inferior and poor symbol papers. The scene in front of the shop had made her feel several points of pity.

Supporting one's own martial arts without depending on a wealthy family background, he didn't even have a particularly fearsome talent. He only had meager savings that he could use to rent a room, to buy a meal and some medicines. In these sad circumstances he could probably only afford iron thread grass, and perhaps even not that. And if so, then in his body he would have accumulated several internal injuries.

These thoughts caused Lan Yunyue distress. She liked his strength and his persistence. She remembered when she was a child; he had protected her from a large group of bullies. He had stood in front of her like a brave knight, arms spread wide, and taken the beatings. He had made her feel protected and safe.

But alas, such feelings were in the end unable to replace certain things...

She was an attractive girl and had the makings of an outstanding woman. Her natural talent was good and although she was not from an aristocratic family, her family was well off. Such a girl would inevitably have feelings of superiority, like a noble peacock confined to a playpen with chickens. She was unable to convince herself to settle in her ordinary life. A life where she would eventually marry Lin Ming and become the mistress of a family restaurant, a life where they would love each other and have little kids at twenty, and then he would gradually age and die, and she would be there by herself with even her looks having gone.

She did not want to have such a life. She did not!

Therefore she chose Zhu Yan. Not only because of the relations between the Zhu Family and the Imperial Family, but he could also help her enter the Seven Profound Martial House. He would give rare and precious medicines to Lan Yunyue and help her enter the Pulse Condensation Period. Under the enticement of the Pulse

Condensation Period, Lan Yunyue was unable to withstand her desires.

This morning, Lan Yunyue was restless. She did not want to come, but ultimately failed to convince herself. So she had arrived this afternoon. She came thinking that Lin Ming would fail the Strength Trial. As long as Lin Ming failed, he would be able to give up his dreams and go home to a safe life. With this she would be able to relax and lay down all her worries. She did not actually think she would see Lin Ming in the qualifying team. This made her simultaneously surprised and worried.

Surprised because Lin Ming had unexpectedly managed to break through to the Second Stage of Body Transformation at only fifteen years of age and having no family background.

Worried because she could not conceive that Lin Ming could reach this stage safely; she only imagined that on his body were several internal injuries, and that he would be nothing more than a cripple by the time he was thirty....

....

In the morning, the beautiful lady supervisor of the Strength Trial appeared once again. She stared down at that crowd and saw that there were still many people remaining and thought this result wasn't too shabby. "Everyone follow me. We are now headed to the Sea Jade Platform."

The crowd of about a hundred boys and girls followed the beautiful woman supervisor as she passed through the mighty and intimidating gates of the Seven Profound Martial House.

The Seven Profound Martial House was nestled into the hillsides. There were no tall buildings or massive constructions inside, but endless stretches of land and streams dotted with gorgeously designed pavilions. These pavilions were carefully crafted, with

smooth, fine lines and surrounded by a perfect blend of scenery. It really made one exclaim in amazement at the seamless craftsmanship and sense of natural aesthetic that went into its design.

The crowd people walked for about the time it took to drink a cup of tea, until they approached a deep green lake. It had a vibrant color like living jade. The surface had no trace of waves and was peacefully quiet. The lake was hedged by weeping willow trees, and even though it was autumn when the leaves of trees would fall, it amazed everyone that not even a single leaf had was floating on the calm lake surface.

In the center of the emerald lake, a jade platform had been carved out of pale white jade. The jade platform was joined to the shore by nine stone bridges. It was like a mystical fairy world come to life.

Lin Ming found that a few dozen meters from the jade platform was a pavilion that was floating in water. In the pavilion was placed a stone table that was covered with tea and dried fruits. Around the table were sitting several old men and a single girl who were looking towards them with great interest.

It was unexpectedly Qin Xingxuan and Mister Muyi.

Lin Ming slightly hesitated; why would they appear here?

Muyi had also discovered Lin Ming looking towards him, and faintly smiled back. Qin Xingxuan also had a friendly smiling face.

Lin Ming returned a smile out of courtesy. He had a faint suspicion that the other people accompanying Muyi were not simple. Among them were several, who it seemed from their breathing and appearance, were not any less strong than Muyi.

These people were masters!

Lin Ming wasn't mistaken. These people were several of Muye's friends and several officials of the Sky Fortune Kingdom's government. There were also elders from the Seven Profound Martial House. Exams were twice a year, and they would come to observe to see if there were any good seedlings among the candidates.

They were mostly looking for those with sufficient talent and who also had the pure heart of a martial artist. Every year, the candidates had to register their talent and other information in order to enter the entrance exam. Thus the elders did not need to measure as they had already looked through the files.

The candidates this time around were barely satisfactory. The strongest was a high fourth-grade talent.

Having a fifth-grade talent was a once in a decade event and wasn't a usual occurrence. The high fourth-grade talents were also good and the low fourth-grade talents could make do. The third-grade talents were somewhat inferior.

The first round of the exam was not anything important, therefore the Martial House's elders had not made an appearance. They have seen the talent already and this time they came to observe which one of these candidates had an especially strong heart of a martial artist.

"Come up. Defend your mind, sit in meditation, and once you cross the five trials then you will have passed." The beautiful lady supervisor said.

The candidates stepped onto the nine stone bridges one at a time. Their hearts began to drum wildly in their chest. During the first round their hearts had been filled with confidence. They knew the limits of their own strength. Only some of them had thought that they might be nervous and not able to display their full potential, but they knew in their hearts that they did not need to be too anxious about passing. But this time was the Dream Trial, and they were nervous.

Many of the candidates had never attempted the Dream Trial before, so they did not have an idea what sort of scene they would encounter at the end. But they had heard that this was the trial with the highest rate of elimination; it would reach as high as 90%!

In a group of ten, only one would pass!

One had to know that they were these were the most outstanding talents among those of their age. In a small town or small family or even in an entire city, they were the most splendid and majestic of their generation. They had constantly been revered and labeled geniuses since childhood, but even in such a group of people, most would be eliminated within the Dream Trial!

This trial was truly terrifying!

“Sit upon the jade platform. After ten breaths the trial shall begin!” The beautiful lady supervisor said. Even though she was separated by a far distance, her voice was clearly heard within every candidate’s ears. This method of passing messages via true essence was even more profound and powerful than Zhu Yan.

Lin Min suspected that this beautiful lady supervisor was a martial artist at the Pulse Condensation Period.

As Ling Ming stepped onto the jade platform, he scanned the distant crowd and discovered that among them was Lan Yunyue. She was leaning against a willow tree at was still gazing at Lin Ming not thinking that she had been sighted by him.

Lin Ming gave a single sigh and no longer looked. He sat cross legged on the jade platform.

Chapter 36: Lin Ming's Heart of Martial Arts

After sitting down, Lin Ming discovered that although the jade platform was built from white marble, there was not the slightest chill in the air. Instead, there was an incomparably peaceful warmth that overflowed. Looking carefully, he could see that the jade platform had been engraved with a number of different lines and symbols. These were runes.

This large jade platform was a magic array. It was said these magic arrays were created by the Xiantian masters of the Seven Profound Valleys. In them, one would not even be able to differentiate between reality and illusion.

However Lin Ming did not worry. A dream world was still only just a dream world. As long as he reinforced his mind, even if the dream world was boundless and infinite, he would stand firm on the ground!

As Lin Ming sat on the jade platform, his mind filled with a bright light.

As the tenth breath ended, Lin Ming saw a blinding flash all around him and all the candidates disappeared from his vision, leaving only himself.

An endless prairie appeared before him, extending as far as his eye could see. At this moment a pack of vicious beasts each as tall as a man darted from the high grass and ran straight towards Lin Ming.

The several dozens of beasts were the same first level vicious beasts that Lin Ming had deboned before! As they ran together, the grass and the ground began to vibrate. An imposing force rolled towards him.

Lin Ming did not even blink an eye until the first beast lunged at him.

“Fu!”

The vicious beast pierced straight through his body. Lin Ming stood there still safe and sound. But when that beast had pierced him, Lin Ming felt a very intense shock and pressure. Although he knew it was only a dream, he could not rid himself of this feeling as if it were a fear that originated from his soul.

This was the effect of a magic array? Even though he knew it was an illusion, it was still possible to lose himself in it. And once lost, he would not be able to tell that it was an illusion.

If that happened, then the illusion would turn to reality. If the illusion killed him, then he might even die in this dream.

As Lin Ming safely passed this first round, on the jade stage a dozen bright lights flashed. In an instant, several people disappeared from the jade platform and stumbled onto the store. These people all had bone white expressions and their pale eyelids trembled. They had lost themselves in the dream, and once they were lost, they had fantasized that they had been ripped up and torn apart by the dream beasts and eaten, with even their bones crushed. Their fear had grown more and more intense until their minds had been broken and they passed out into reality.

At the pavilion, the elders of the Seven Profound Martial House slowly shook their head. The first round of the Dream Trial tested courage. The martial arts path was full of danger. If one did not have courage to face it, then what was the point of cultivating the martial path?

“Muyi, do you know how ferocious that boy is? He instantly passed.” The man who spoke knew that Muyi had recognized Lin Ming and that they were acquainted with each other. But Muyi did not speak of

Lin Ming's achievements in inscription techniques. This was what Lin Ming had asked of him.

Muyi had only said he knew Lin Ming, and he had come to this entrance exam to take a look at his growth.

The beautiful lady supervisor also stood in the pavilion. Because of Lin Ming's outstanding performance in the Strength Trial, she had kept note of Lin Ming. She saw the Lin Ming had frowned for a brief moment, but had restored his calm and tranquility right after.

But looking at some other people, they had clenched their jaws tightly, and their faces were changing colors. Obviously they had been struck by these vicious beasts in the dream world and were struggling...

In the illusion, the higher one's belief in themselves, the stronger their heart would be. The opposite also held true. These candidates who struggled with the vicious beasts had some courage, but they did not have Lin Ming's dauntless heart. Lin Ming was like an immovable rock that had been tested by the passing of millennia. Whatever vicious or wild beast that jumped at him, he would remain steady and true, and the illusion had thus been broken.

"No wonder you especially came to see this boy, his heart of martial arts is indeed exceptional. It's comparable with Lin Sen." An old man said.

Muyi only smiled. He was not surprised that Lin Ming has passed the first hurdle.

Qin Xingxuan had also been secretly comparing herself. Although Lin Ming's talent was inferior to her by far, his heart of martial arts was surprisingly firm and steady. When she had participated in this trial, during this first round she has spent a period of time, but Lin Ming had only taken a few breaths of time.

At this point, Lin Ming had arrived at the second stage.

In this second trial the scenery shifted before his eyes and changed dramatically. Lin Ming instantly arrived at a battlefield that overflowed with murderous intent. Scenes of battle surrounded him. Mountains of bodies piled up to the sky and seas of blood flowed around him. Broken spears and swords littered the ground with the crushed bones of the dead.

On this battlefield, cries of war suddenly rang through the air. Vast plumes of smoke billowed in the distance. On both sides of Lin Ming suddenly appeared two armies of cavalry. Warriors wearing thick armor and grasping lances approached from his right and left. They had suddenly appeared, and Lin Ming had been stuck in the middle of them.

The two mighty forces rushed towards him. Their horrific war cries filled the air with overwhelming killing intent. Lin Ming remained motionless and focused his mind. During the first experience with the illusion, he had been surprised and his heart had fluctuated a bit. But this time he was prepared and he defended his mind.

As a result, as the armies approached him they turned into floating ashes. The illusion was broken again!

“Mm? Did he break it? Or not break it?” An elder looked at Lin Ming. This kid was weird. His expression had not changed even a bit. If he did not see the beams of light that emitted from the runes, then he would have thought the magic array was defective.

“This boy isn’t simple. I don’t know if he can continue and break the record. If he could catch up to Ling Sen then it would be a pleasant surprise.”

The five hurdles of the Dream Trial. The average person would take an hour to pass them. These past ten years, the one with the best result had been Heaven Abode’s Ling Sen. He had spent an incense

worth of time to complete the trial. This surprised the elders of the Seven Profound Martial House, because except for Ling Sen, the fastest time was half an hour.

Ling Sen originally had no wants or needs. He was in essence closest to a cold blooded killer. As sayings went, this type of person who cultivated the martial path was truly fearful.

Ling Sen had proved this point. He was only twenty years old and was a medium fourth-grade talent. With this medium fourth-grade talent he had become an elder apprentice brother within Heaven's Abode. Many prodigies with high fourth-grade talent had been left in his dust.

"Now is not the time for flattery. It only becomes hard during the last three hurdles." An old man stroked his beard as he said this, "Ling Sen's record won't be broken so easily."

This time in the illusion, Lin Ming had arrived at the third trial. The thousands of soldiers and scenes of destruction had vanished. He had arrived in a luxuriously decorated tent. The walls and roof were draped with the finest silks, and a smoky, intoxicating fragrance drifted in all directions.

But beyond all the pink silk draping, a dozen impressive young girls danced in the background. Their slim and beautiful bodies were slender and smooth. Their flawless appearance shamed the night moon and the sweetest flowers. As they bounced up and down, they began stripping off their clothes and walking towards Lin Ming. In the next moment, abundant scenery filled Lin Ming's vision. There were boundless amounts of heavy breasts and fragrant buttocks that swayed in front of him. These beautiful women surrendered themselves to Lin Ming and draped themselves around him. Between their every breath, their tempting bodies released a seductive fragrance.

In that moment, Lin Ming felt a dryness and heat from his heart, and a slight stirring in his loins as his bodily blood flow sped up. But he quickly suppressed this heat and guarded his mind yet again.

However these young girls did not immediately vanish. Instead they were not happy, and pouted as they picked up their clothes. Even their anger was charming as they sashayed their buttocks back and forth as they made their way away from Lin Ming. As soon as they left, the surroundings changed again. This time it was a warm and intimate bedroom. Against a wall was propped a mahogany bed. Sitting on the bed was a woman in a scarlet lined cotton jacket and a feathered robe. She had a jade pin in her hair that was shaped like a flower. This woman was about twenty five years old. Even sitting there she released an elegant aura and temperament. Her appearance had changed from what he remembered. Although she had a more mature and seductive charm to her, this was clearly Lan Yunyue!

...Lan Yunyue...

Lin Ming was startled in his mind. Was this Lan Yunyue ten years from now?

“Behave, don’t cry...” Lan Yunyue softly hummed a sweet nursery song to a pair of two year old babies on the bed. These babies were a pair of matching twins. These babies’ features...were also somewhat similar to Lin Ming...

As if they knew that Lin Ming was looking, the pair of babies opened their wide and beautiful eyes and smiled innocently at him. The cry of innocent children echoed into Lin Ming’s ears and directly passed into his stunned heart.

Lan Yunyue also smiled at Lin Ming. Her delicate red lips parted slightly and she said, “Lin Ming, darling, it’s very late, you should rest.”

At this moment, seeing Lan Yunyue and the twin babies' sweet smiling faces, Lin Ming's heart of martial arts shook. A wife, children, and a rich and warm home...

Had he not once wished for such a life for himself?

Now he had obtained it, he could stop...

As this thought suddenly appeared, Lin Ming woke up. He fiercely bit the tip of his tongue and let the pain restore his state of mind.

The surroundings changed, and Lan Yunyue and the babies disappeared.

Gazing at the empty darkness, Lin Ming's heart palpitated and he was covered in a sheen of cold sweat.

Almost! He had almost lost himself!

Thinking of the dream visions, Lin Ming breathed a sigh of relief. Everything, all of this and all of her were in the past!

Perhaps once in his heart he had held such desires, but those thoughts were in the past....

"In the past?"

An ethereal and faintly recognizable voice sounded from behind him. Lin Ming turned around. A woman stood there wearing an alluring cheongsam. She held a simple long sword in her hand with an imperious and mighty air, and had a brave and valiant appearance that accentuated her heaven gifted beauty.

"Qin Xingxuan?"

Lin Ming was shocked. This woman was clearly Qin Xingxuan, and was only a bit older, around twenty years old.

“Since it’s in the past, then how about you cultivate together...with me? We can explore the world of martial arts...together...how about it?” As she said this, Qin Xingxuan’s clothes unravelled into threads and vanished, revealing the most perfect and exquisite body that he had ever imagined possible. Lin Ming had a full view of this and his heart almost stopped as his eyes widened like saucers.

She slowly walked towards Lin Ming...

Chapter 37: Invulnerable to Ten Thousand Evils

As this beautiful and impossibly exquisite example of womanhood stood before him, this image was unforgettably carved into his mind and he felt the tower of his will tremble in its firmament. His breath became shallow and blood rushed to his head. After all, when it comes to matters between men and women, Lin Ming was still only a young boy.

Qin Xingxuan reached her arms around Lin Ming. She was like a warm and fragrant jade that surrounded him and the delicate fragrance of her virgin body wafted into his nostrils and left a strong impact in Lin Ming's heart.

Fabrication!

Illusion!

Lin Ming squeezed his eyes shut and in his heart he began to revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', He managed to hold down his quickly fleeing sanity.

"Lin Ming, do you not like me?"

This voice was gentle and soft like a spring rain. Lin Ming's eyelids jumped, but he remained unmoved as before.

"Ah...." With a gentle sigh, she let Lin Ming go. Qin Xingxuan stood up, her expression revealing some hidden bitterness, and she slowly departed.

The scene before him began to slowly fade away, and the world returned to tranquility.

The third hurdle had finally been passed.

Lin Ming breathed deeply, his heart still beating rapidly and his palms still wet with sweat.

This third trial was truly fierce! It had managed to find and unearth the moral flaw in his own heart of martial arts. It seems that he had been too naïve. There was no human between heaven and earth that was not without a single weakness.

“Mm. This boy has passed the hurdle. It wasn’t a short time; it took around half an incense stick of time.” An old man looked to his side where an incense burner stood. A single stick of incense in it had been burnt over halfway.

“This boy is different from Ling Sen. In Ling Sen’s trial, he only used several breaths of time, but this boy used half an incense stick. His heart was probably filled with a girl that he liked. However as it stands now, he probably won’t be able to break Ling Sen’s record.” The old man meaningfully smiled with a ‘ha-ha’ as he said this.

“Heh heh. Valiant heroes have loved beautiful woman since ancient times. This is normal. I like this normal part of a hot-blooded boy full of vigor. That young fellow Ling Sen made me feel overwhelmed; watching him only let me feel cold and uncomfortable.”

Several elder teased between themselves, because of the generational difference. Qin Xingxuan had digressed from conversation, and was peacefully sitting there while she looked at Lin Ming. In her heart a strange thought suddenly appeared; who exactly was the girl that had appeared in the dreams of Lin Ming?

The fourth trial. Lin Ming had fallen into the depths of hell. The surroundings were dark and dim. Lin Ming was immersed waist deep in a thick, crimson pool of blood. White skulls were piled high like mountains that emerged from a sea of blood. The overwhelming

shrill cries of ghosts and endless devils that blotted out the sky rushed towards Lin Ming.

“Ten thousand ghosts want to stop me?” Lin Ming sneered and revolved the ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’. His whole body began to shine with a brilliant golden light, and an overwhelmingly pure true essence emitted outwards.

‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’ originated from the Body Transformation manuals found within the Realm of the Gods. It was said to have been created by a war-god Buddha and represented the purest light and Yang; it could pierce all evils, shatter all illusions, and cut away all demons within the heart.

Lin Ming disregarded these ghosts and demons and continued to revolve the ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’ to its limit.

‘My heart is at peace; not even ten-thousand evils can break me!’

Luminous golden light radiated out and all of the malicious ghosts and devils it touched disintegrated into ash!

“Damn! It’s over?”

In the five trials of the dreamland, the first tested courage, the second tested morale, the third tested temptation, the fourth tested one’s inner demons, and the fifth tested the will.

The first two trials were rather simple. The latter three were on a different level; how they appeared differed from person to person. Ling Sen had been stuck on the fourth trial that tested the demons in his heart. Perhaps it was because of Ling Sen’s bloodthirst, but the demons in his heart had been a terrifyingly difficult trial for him. Therefore he had slaughtered in that blood sea for half an incense stick of time, and only then did he barely cut away his inner demons.

“This Lin Ming; does he not have a single inner demon within his heart?”

“His heart and mind are pure. It is truly rare. Including the first four trials, only half an incense stick of time has passed. This is a good seedling,” an old man exclaimed honestly.

...

As time went on, more and more candidates failed and appeared back on the shores of the lake. The first and second trials were easy, but from the third trial and on, the number of people being kicked out sharply rose, and the jade platform flashed with brilliant lights.

Lan Yunyue had been paying attention to Lin Ming from a distance. Lin Ming had not always been calm, but his expression was firm and did not resemble the other candidates who had fierce fighting expressions, horribly distorted faces, or were bone white.

At this moment, Lan Yunyue had a feeling that she couldn't identify. She somehow knew that Lin Ming had passed, had crossed the trials of the dream realm, and was on the last step before the end.

The last trial of the dream. Lin Ming had still not left hell. He was still soaked in the oozing thick blood, but suddenly the blood sea became scalding hot as it bubbled.

The temperature had suddenly risen! The sanguine sea seethed with a dark fury, each bubbling pocket that burst open showered the air with a crescendo of blood. It was as if the blood sea had turned into a lake of flowing lava.

Lin Ming could distinctly feel the pain that gushed into his body; it was as if he was being boiled alive in this sea of blood. Although he knew that it was merely an illusion, this kind of pain was incomparable, it was a throbbing misery that made him almost wish for death so that his suffering would end.

The first four trials were illusions, but he hadn't anticipated that the fifth trial would be true pain. Lin Ming clenched his teeth and desperately clung to his consciousness. When he had practiced with only a tiny amount of iron thread grass to ease his pain, or when he had suffered the agonizing soul tearing pain of fusing with the soul fragment, he had shouldered the pain. This scalding sea of blood was nothing but a light summer day to him!

As Lin Ming thought this, the blood sea suddenly ignited. A combustion of black flames shot to the sky in a hellish inferno!

The flames surged towards Lin Ming. Lin Ming could clearly feel the waves of hot pressure pressing down on him. Seeing this flood of flames, an average person's impulse would have been to feel utter and complete horror.

Lin Ming suddenly gave a ferocious shout!

"My martial arts path is like a moth to the flame, you wish for me to turn to ashes in an ocean of ten thousand flames? I couldn't wish for anything more!"

Flames swallowed Lin Ming. In the next moment, everything turned to nothing, the world became void. Lin Ming stood up and looked around. He had returned to the jade platform. All around him were boys and girls that were grimacing in pain, or had lost all their color.

Seeing Lin Ming suddenly open his eyes and stand up, MUYI was startled. He looked at the incense burner, that incense stick still had a tiny bit left!

Frosty Ling's record had been broken!

Qin Xingxuan was also incomparably surprised. She had experienced the five trials of this dream realm before and knew exactly how fierce and powerful they were. Although her sixth grade talent was unprecedented in Sky Fortune Kingdom, talent was not much help in

passing the trials of the dream realm. Qin Xingxuan had used less than half an hour, but Lin Ming had used less than an incense stick of time before he had awoken. Anyone would think this was absolutely impossible to believe.

“Extraordinary! Extraordinary! This is the first time I have seen someone with such a heart of martial arts! Yes, what was his score in the Strength Trial?” An old man asked the beautiful lady supervisor who had been in charge for then.

“2700 jins.” Lin Ming had taken the first place in the Strength Trial, the beautiful lady supervisor remembered with certainty.

“Oh?” The old man’s moved and he eagerly asked, “What is his talent?”

Listening to the old man, before the lady supervisor had even replied, Muyi had already said, “Grade three medium.”

“Only grade three?” The only man was surprised, and he began to shake in disappointment and sighed, “What a pity, what a pity!” A grade three talent wasn’t too bad, but it was inferior to the prodigies of the Seven Profound Martial House.

However Muyi said. “Sometimes talent isn’t everything. Just you wait and see, that Lin Ming is a dragon among humans.”

Muyi said this with confidence. When he had first seen Lin Ming’s talent grade, he had been greatly surprised and had thought that there had been some sort of mistake. But he knew that Lin Ming already had a great achievement that many people in their entire lives could not hope to reach. Since that mysterious elder had chosen Lin Ming, then Lin Ming must have extraordinary talents that he could not see!

Though Muyi spoke with confidence, the other man only shook his head. The role that talent played in a martial artist’s future was too

vital and important. It was pivotal for their future achievements. With a medium grade-three talent, even if this boy had massive financial support backing him, he would only end up stuck at the Pulse Condensation Stage.

As Lin Ming left the stage, Lan Yunyue who had been distantly looking at Lin Ming, had eyes full of complex emotions. She had long known that Lin Ming's will was firm and steady, but did not expect that he would have passed the dream trials so quickly.

She also now knew that for Lin Ming to give up the martial arts path was impossible. His own determination had reached the highest limit.

After Lin Ming left the jade platform, he was led to the resting lounge where he would later be escorted to the final trial - the Exquisite Pagoda.

Chapter 38: The Exquisite Pagoda

The Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda was constructed by the masters of the Seven Profound Valleys. The mysterious and unknown materials that made it were from beyond the borders of the Sky Fortune Kingdom, and the light that filtered through it made it glitter like translucent gems in the daylight.

The Exquisite Pagoda had seven floors altogether. Each was engraved with subtle and meticulous formations; these were a magic array.

However this magic array was different than the one on the jade platform. The jade platform's was only an illusion array that provoked harmless dreams, but this Exquisite Pagoda's magic array was a killing one.

The killing array was able to utilize illusions to kill. Those who were trapped in the illusion and died, would truly die.

Of course, the Exquisite Pagoda was only used for the entrance exam, so a death inside was not real. Instead, those that were defeated would only be kicked out from the magic array.

Inside the Exquisite Pagoda, one would not be able to use rare weapons or armor. They would only be able to use ordinary weapons. The trial would depend on one's own ability to pass.

As time passed, the number of candidates on the jade stage began to decrease. Each flash of light that appeared signified that another candidate had failed. Out of the hundred people that had started, sixty or seventy percent had already been eliminated, which even included someone at the Third Stage of Body Transformation.

When he was ejected from dreamland, the Third Stage martial artist slumped his shoulders and looked dejected. This was his third time participating in the Seven Profound Martial House entrance exam,

and he had not thought that he would be defeated this time around. He was already eighteen years old; this had been his last and final opportunity.

After less than a half hour had passed, a second person on the jade stage finally opened their eyes. That person exhaled a single long breath, and with a pale face and trembling legs, he stood up. His back was soaked in sweat.

This person was the high fourth-grade talent, Wang Yanfeng.

After he stood up he turned to look for the tall and burly youth and Lin Ming who had stolen his spotlight during the Strength Trial. However, he only saw the suffering burly youth, and did not see Lin Ming. Wang Yanfeng's lips turned up to form a proud and happy smile.

However, when the staff led him to the lounge, he saw Lin Ming already inside and meditating in silence. His face darkened. He had thought that Lin Ming had already been eliminated, and hadn't thought that Lin Ming could possibly have passed the Dream Trial first.

This guy!

Wang Yanfeng felt a deep crisis in his heart. Without resting, he left the lounge and found his hanger-ons. He whispered to them, "Look up what talent this fellow is."

Lin Ming noticed Wang Yanfeng's hostility towards him. But this was normal. Each candidate was in competition with the others, and there was only one first place reward.

Slowly, the number of people in the lounge increased, and the second trial had reached its conclusion.

In the end, out of the candidates that had participated in the second trial, only 92 remained. Nearly 90% had been eliminated!

The candidates who had just barely managed to pass the Dream Trial were not given time to rest, the last trial would begin immediately.

If they passed this final trial, then they would be a disciple of the Seven Profound Martial House. If they failed, then all of their previous efforts would have gone to waste.

“The third trial - The Exquisite Pagoda.”

A loud and forceful voice resounded in the crowd. This time the supervisor for this trial was a tall, thin, middle-aged man. Though he looked ordinary, his body had an imposing manner that made one's heartbeat speed up. Lin Ming only needed a glance to tell that this person was a master, perhaps even someone who was at the Houtian stage.

Lin Ming could not help but sigh. Before coming to Seven Profound Martial House, he had not seen many martial artists who were at the Sixth Stage of Body Transformation - the Pulse Condensation Period. But now he had seen at least five or six Houtian masters.

However this was also normal. In Sky Fortune Kingdom, Houtian masters would usually not be found at the Imperial Palace or even the Marshal's Quarters. Instead they would be at the Seven Profound Martial House. Here, most Houtian masters came from beyond Sky Fortune Kingdom, most were disciples of the Seven Profound Valleys.

“Follow me.” The middle-aged man said, and then turned around and walked away.

The 92 remaining candidates followed after him. Some onlookers also followed after. Not everyone could watch the second trial and third trial. These people following were either nobles or were students of the Seven Profound Martial House.

The middle-aged man's pace seemed slow, but the speed was similar to running. The candidates had to race forwards to keep up.

After a period of time about equal to how long it takes to finish a meal, they arrived in a valley of the Zhou Mountains. In this valley was a large and magnificent building. The building's entrance plaque had four calligraphic characters written with a large brush. 'Seven Profound Martial Pavilion'.

As they entered, they saw a building that was 200 feet high. This was the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda.

"Really high!"

This was Lin Ming's first thought as he entered. He had never seen a building that high before. It had seven floors, and each floor was about thirty feet high. It would take several men standing on each others' shoulders to reach the ceiling of one floor. The grandest temple of Green Mulberry City could only match up to a single floor of this Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda.

"Now, you can go in. There is no time limit. As long as you pass through the first floor you have qualified. The second floor is good and the third floor is outstanding. The fourth floor is for geniuses. As for the fifth floor...heh heh..." The middle-aged man slyly smiled and let the anticipating crowd hang onto his word, "It's simply impossible."

Hearing the words of this middle-aged man, some of the youths remained unconvinced. Wang Yanfeng saw these youths and sneered. What a group of idiots. As if the Exquisite Pagoda would be so simple.

The Seven Profound Martial House entrance exam had three trials. The first trial tested the foundation, the second trial tested the heart of a martial artist, and the third round was the most important; it was a practical test of combat prowess and degree of genius!

These genius talents, when compared to their contemporaries, had those with differing levels of combat strength.

The Exquisite Pagoda contained a killing array. The enemies inside came at various levels of strength. The magic array used the age of one's bones to determine which enemies would be faced. The older the bone age, the more difficult the opponent.

Because of this, there had only been one person who had reached the fifth floor. This person was not elder senior brother Ling Sen of the Heavenly Abode, but the girl who seemed to be like gentle water, Qin Xingxuan.

A sixth grade talent, this was not a joke. Many people did not know Qin Xingxuan's cultivation, but Wang Yanfeng knew. She was at the peak of the Fourth Stage of Body Cultivation.

She was similar to Ling Sen in cultivation, but she was younger than him by five years!

Although Wang Yanfeng was an arrogant man, he was not arrogant enough to think that he could match Qin Xingxuan. He would be satisfied with the fourth floor.

Looking at this Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda, Wang Yanfeng's heart surged with an overwhelmingly strong fighting spirit. For him, the first and second trials of the exam had been empty and he was unable to show his true strength, so those powerful feelings could go nowhere, but this third trial was a measure of true battle.

Strength, skill, agility, and combat skills were all involved inside. Wang Yanfeng was confident in himself. He would amaze the world with a single brilliant feat and become an overnight sensation in this third trial!

"Go in! The difficulty of the trial will be decided by your age." As soon as the middle-aged man waved his hand, the gate of the Seven

Treasures Exquisite Pagoda swung open.

Beyond the arched entrance, there was a brilliant light shining from inside. Lin Ming took a deep breath and slowly stepped in.

At this time, Qin Xingxuan had arrived and was watching the scene. She saw Lin Ming's fading back in the distance and kept her gaze on him as he vanished past the seven colored gate.

"Haha, Xingxuan, you are very concerned about Lin Ming."

Rather abruptly asked this question by her teacher, Qin Xingxuan lowered her head as she bashfully blushed. She said, "Xingxuan cannot hold a candle to the inscription technique and achievements of Lin Ming. But if we compare our fighting ability, then Xingxuan is a little confident."

"Mn, concerning fighting strength, Lin Ming is truly inferior to you Xingxuan. What floor do you think Lin Ming will reach?"

"This is...well, according to common sense, a fifteen year old at the Second Stage of Body Transformation would already have a very difficult time. But Lin Ming's strength is much stronger than average...I think he has a possibility to reach the third floor." Qin Xingxuan thought that this was already a very high appraisal of him. If Lin Ming wanted to reach the third layer he would at least need to cultivate to the Third Stage of Body Transformation.

"You're right, but.... I think that Lin Ming might be able to give us a pleasant surprise."

As MUYI and Qin Xingxuan were talking, in an obscure corner of the valley, Lan Yunyue was also distantly looking at Lin Ming's fading back, and her eyes were full of complex emotions.

As a disciple of the Seven Profound Martial House, Lan Yunyue had the authority to enter the valley and observe the entrance exam. This

was the last trial of the exam. As long as one passed, they would become an official disciple of the Seven Profound Martial House.

With Lin Ming's current condition, he would probably pass the first floor of the Exquisite Pagoda.

She had not thought that only after half a year, Lin Ming would have such an astonishing growth...

If she had to practice martial arts with Lin Ming in the Martial House, Lan Yunyue didn't know how to feel about this in her heart.

At this moment, Lin Ming could not read the thoughts of others who were thinking about him. He had already arrived at the center of the killing array.

As soon as he entered the Exquisite Pagoda, the other candidates disappeared from his vision, and only he was left.

He appeared in a dark world faded in black. The night sky was carpeted with stars and the ground underneath his foot was hard, black rock. In front of him not too far away, a shadow gray miasma gradually congealed into reality. It became a warrior holding a longstaff.

"This is the enemy?" Lin Ming judged that this shadow warrior's cultivation was around the early Second Stage of Body Transformation.

The middle-aged man had said a moment ago that the strength of the enemy was determined by one's own age. Lin Ming was fifteen years and eight months old. The enemy's cultivation was the early Second Stage, those older candidates would naturally face enemies whose strength was higher.

For a fifteen year old youth, it seemed he had to defeat someone at the Second Stage of Body Transformation in order to pass.

Lin Ming no longer wasted his time. His supple body shot forward like a ferocious and vigorous leopard. The 'True Primal Chaos Formula' revolved in him and true essence pooled in his muscles. The first strike would be a killing one!

Chapter 39: Unstoppable Force

There were many floors to pass; Lin Ming could not afford to waste his energy and stamina. He had to rush to the top in a single leap and take the first place reward - the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill!

Seeing Lin Ming flying at him, the shadow warrior raised his staff to block him. But Lin Ming was too fast and before the staff had been raised to his chest, a hard fist had already imprinted itself onto its chest.

“Peng!”

The shadow warrior’s chest collapsed and it spat blood, before it fell over dead.

Lin Ming easily passed the first floor. This was natural, as Lin Ming’s strength had greatly surpassed those of the same cultivation.

Onto the second floor!

This was still a black space like before, but this time a vicious beast stood in front of Lin Ming.

“A first-level vicious beast!”

A first-level vicious beast was equivalent to a martial artist at the Third Stage of Body Transformation. This beast was a single-horned rhinoceros. Its strength as a first-level vicious beast was relatively poor; it was about as strong as a peak Second Stage martial artist.

Although its strength was rather ordinary, it had superior defensive abilities due to its tough hide. Even if a martial artist greatly exceeded it in strength and cultivation, they must still expend some effort to defeat it.

Lin Ming had to overcome several obstacles and did not want to waste his stamina. His hand turned, and a chilly deboning knife appeared in his palm. In Lin Ming's mind appeared the single-horned rhinoceros' blood vessels and body structure, with each of its weaknesses clear as day.

Lin Ming's advantage was his familiarity with the weaknesses of vicious beasts.

The single-horned rhinoceros suddenly roared, and trampled towards Lin Ming. Although this was an illusionary realm, Lin Ming felt a rumbling vibration in the ground.

An illusion array was not the same as a killing array. In an illusion array, the illusions didn't have the power to kill you, they could also cause you to feel fear. As long as you kept your heart and mind and stood your ground, then the illusion would shatter. But a killing array was different; standing still would only be suicide.

As he watched the single-horned rhinoceros barrel towards him, Lin Ming suddenly leapt to one side. His jumping posture was odd. His body was parallel with the ground and one of his shoulders nearly touched the dirt. In the next moment, the huge body of the single-horned rhinoceros passed by him. Lin Ming slammed his hand against the ground and the force propelled him underneath the beast's abdomen.

He raised his hand and slashed with the knife!

“Puff!”

The boning knife struck just half a foot up from the center of the single-horned rhinoceros' front thigh. This exact spot was the softest patch on the beast's abdomen, and was also where its abdominal aorta was located.

The knife slid in like butter and gouged out the beast. A stream of blood jetted out like a broken pipe and the single-horned rhino let loose a keening anguished howl. The vicious beast trembled fiercely and then fell to the ground.

Seeing the success of his knife strike, Lin Ming was unable to restrain a sigh as he thought of how lifelike and realistic this magic array was. The single-horned rhinoceros phantom had a body structure and weaknesses just like a real single-horned rhinoceros. He thought that perhaps the magic array had a beast spirit of the single-horned rhinoceros sealed inside, thus its potent realism.

After the successful knife strike, Lin Ming pulled back instead of taking another cut. Although killing the single-horned rhinoceros at this point was not difficult anymore, he wanted to save his stamina. There was no resting between the floors of the Exquisite Pagoda.

The aorta had been cut open, and the single-horned rhinoceros was losing more and more blood. Its movements began to slow, but this time Lin Ming waited for another opportunity and slashed his knife down again. There was a 'puff!' sound and the abdominal aorta on the other side of the single-horned rhinoceros was also cut!

The fight has lost its suspense, it was only a matter of waiting now. The single-horned rhinoceros thrashed about as it teetered back and forth on the edge of death, until it unwillingly went still.

Lin Ming had entered the third floor!

"Oh? Someone has entered the third floor!" Outside the Exquisite Pagoda, several elders had seen that the runes and symbols on the third floor began to move and light up. The third floor was activating, but they did not know who it was that had entered.

"It should be Wang Yanfeng. He is strongest in consideration of his age. Lin Ming's strength lies in his martial heart and in his inborn divine strength. In terms of combat prowess, strength is only a small

part. Speed, skill, and fighting techniques are not any less important than strength alone.”

“Most of the candidates are still stuck on the first floor. That Wang Yanfeng has already rushed up to the third floor is impressive.”

As these elders discussed, another person had reached the third floor. This person was only thirty breaths slower than Lin Ming. This person was Wang Yanfeng.

Wang Yanfeng and Lin Ming were similar in age, and the opponents they fought on the second floor were the same; both were first-level vicious beasts that were equal to the peak of the Second Stage of Body Transformation.

Wang Yanfeng was at the early Third Stage of Body Transformation. Not only that, but his combat strength exceeded that of those his age. The vicious beast was not his match, but its skin was coarse and its meat thick and tough. Wang Yanfeng had spent much of his true essence to defeat it.

There was no rest in the Exquisite Pagoda. On the third floor, Wang Yanfeng now came head to head with two dark and shadowy humanoid figures holding two long swords. These shadow warriors were at the early Third Stage of Body Transformation.

Wang Yanfeng gritted his teeth and maintained his dignified demeanor. He could deal with these two warriors, but he also had to think carefully about how to use his true essence, otherwise breaking through to the fourth floor would become increasingly difficult.

He had to make this as quick a victory as possible. He began to revolve the true essence within his entire body, and prepared the display martial skill handed down in his family, the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’.

...

At this time, Lin Ming also confronted two early Third Stage shadow warriors on the third floor.

The Third Stage of Body Transformation was Viscera Training. He hadn't anticipated that he would face something of this level at only the third floor. And there were also two! The difficulty of the fourth and fifth floors could only be imagined and there was no rest allowed between them. No wonder the middle-aged man had so confidently said that the fifth floor was impossible to pass.

While Lin Ming revolved the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', he also cautiously kept the two shadow warriors in his line of sight. For now, the two were motionless. He would be glad to this moment to recover just a bit, although he had not spent that much true essence

But the two warriors did not give Lin Ming the chance. In a single leap they both reached him, one attacked from the left and one attacked from the right, both with vicious killing intent.

The two warriors were amazingly swift and had teamwork. Their movements seemed to be in harmony with each other like two halves of a whole. One warrior swept the ground with his long sword. Lin Ming jumped to dodge the strike, but the other warrior took advantage of Lin Ming as he was twisting in the air and stabbed his sword towards Lin Ming's chest.

"Ha!"

Lin Ming cried out and suddenly shot his foot out towards the warrior's wrist. "Kacha!" The warrior's wrist broke with a single kick!

However the shadow warriors did not feel any pain. The shadow warrior only shook his wrist and sent an open palm flying towards Lin Ming. Every movement he made left him wide open! These shadow warriors could only aggress; they could not defend or retreat. This was a suicidal form of fighting which wished for both sides to perish!

This moment was where Lin Ming's old strength would have perished, but he had a new strength now. Seeing his opponent fight with such a self-destructive style, he forcefully revolved the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' and forced his true essence to the forefront. A punch went flying out that intersected with the shadow warrior's palm.

"Peng!" The shadow warrior was forced back a few steps and spat out a mouthful of blood.

But Lin Ming's vitality only swelled up. It was easy to force them down and he didn't even have a single injury. Even so, he was secretly surprised. These two shadow warriors may not have been top tier martial artists but they were not weak either. Their close cooperation and kamikaze fighting style were really tricky and difficult to deal with. And this was only the third floor; there was still the fourth and fifth.

Although he was surprised, Lin Ming had not stopped moving for a single half second. He had landed back from the recoil, and while the injured shadow warrior was catching his breath, he slammed his fist straight into the shadow warrior's face.

Now the other shadow warrior rushed to intercept him. He wielded his long sword in his hands and cleaved downwards. This strike was to cut Lin Ming in half.

"Ha! Now it's you! Die!"

Lin Ming's fist was only a feint. He suddenly turned around with the deboning knife in hand and made a horizontal cut on the shadow warrior's blade.

"Boom!" Sparks scattered everywhere as the blades met.

As the knife met the sword, Lin Ming had not been forced back. This was a reflection of his astonishing physical strength!

“Be defeated by me!”

After Lin Ming fended off the long sword, he punched out at the center of the shadow warrior’s chest!

“Peng!” There was a dull thud as the opponent’s ribs collapsed, took a fatal blow to the heart, and died on the spot.

After defeating one, the other was already injured and no longer a threat. Lin Ming set out several kicks at the last shadow warrior’s legs, and then stabbed him with the knife.

The third floor, passed!

Outside the Exquisite Pagoda the elders saw the magic array of the fourth floor light up and they were startled. “My goodness, the fourth floor, and it only took half an incense stick of time!”

Chapter 40: Break Through the Fourth Floor

Outside of the Exquisite Pagoda, the elders saw the magic array of the fourth floor light up and they were startled. “My goodness, the fourth floor, and it only took half an incense stick of time!”

“This Wang Yanfeng, he’s not simple.” These elders had already expected Wang Yanfeng to reach the fourth floor, but hadn’t anticipated that he would do it so quickly. “At such speed, perhaps Wang Yanfeng can break through the fourth floor and step into the fifth. Certainly I had thought that the fifth floor was impossible, but he should be proud even with this result.”

“I just don’t know how Lin Ming and Liang Tieshan will perform. Those two’s results weren’t too bad. Liang Tieshan was the tall and burly youth who had inborn divine strength. He was also fifteen years old.

Lin Ming and Liang Tieshan were fifteen years old, had cultivation at the Second Stage of Body Transformation, and also had inborn divine strength. This kind of power at their age was definitely impressive.

However in the eyes of the numerous elders, if these two were compared to Wang Yanfeng, there was still a gap.

That Lin Ming had inborn divine strength was not wrong, but he was only at the Second Stage of Body Transformation. Wang Yanfeng was at the Third Stage of Body Transformation. The main characteristic of the Third Stage was infusing true essence into the visceral organs. Viscera Training martial artists’ heart and lungs would be empowered. Their breaths would be long and their endurance double that of a Second Stage martial artist.

Without a doubt, Wang Yanfeng also had superior technique and speed. Even looking at strength, Wang Yanfeng's record was only 300 less than Lin Ming; the disparity was not too great.

For this third trial, if there was no accident, then Wang Yanfeng would take first place.

The third trial also accounted for the largest proportion when it came to the final evaluation. If Wang Yanfeng came out first in the third trial, that in addition to his talent would surpass Lin Ming, and the entrance exam's first place would belong to him.

However at this moment, the truth was that Wang Yanfeng was struggling at the third floor. These two martial artists were difficult to deal with, for every few moves they traded, he would encounter one that threatened his life. Wang Yanfeng used a tremendous amount of strength and true essence to defeat one, but had also suffered a minor injury.

"Damn it, how is this so freakish. Even with the 'Nine Paths of Truth' that is passed down in my family I only managed to kill one. It seems that chances of reaching the fourth floor are getting less and less certain." Wang Yanfeng worried; he had already consumed 20% of his inner true essence. In this dreamland he was unable to supplement it with pills or drugs. He could only depend on his Third Stage viscera training to supplement his energy bit by bit.

...

Wang Yanfeng was anxious over his true essence consumption rate, but Lin Ming was also worrying over the same reason. He was not at Viscera Training, but was only at the Second Stage of Body Transformation, Flesh Training. He did not have excessive vitality and his every move consumed more true essence.

Luckily, Lin Ming had the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' and had achieved the small success of the first stage. This ancient skill

revolved within him, it allowed him to supplement his true essence with an unceasing supply. Although he could not use it endlessly, it was still able to alleviate the intense pressure he felt.

This time in front of Lin Ming, the opponents were two first-level vicious beasts - Iron Armor Bears.

There were strong and weak first-level vicious beasts. The Single Horned Rhinoceros was weak; it was only equal to a peak Second Stage martial artist. But this Iron Armor Bear was actually equal to a peak Third Stage martial artist. Not only that, but there were two.

Lin Ming was solemn. Before this he had never fought against an opponent at the peak of the Third Stage. He did not have complete confidence in victory in defeating one, and not to mention this was a pair.

But most importantly was that this battle had two strict conditions. First, he could not use up his limited true essence. Second, he could not receive a single injury.

Lin Ming took a steadying breath as he recalled every detail he knew about the Iron Armor Bear.

The Iron Armor Bear's strength was 5000 jins. Its speed was a bit slow, but the entire body was covered in thick plates of bone armor. A sword or spear would find it hard to penetrate this carapace, and it did not have any specific weakness.

Although he knew that the armor did not have any weaknesses, Lin Ming knew that the Iron Armor Bear itself had a weakness, and that was that between the numerous intersections and crosses of the bone armor were a few small slits.

The slits were located at the joints. They were thin and hard to target; if he wanted to strike at these places in the heat of battle, he must

open his eyes to his insight and utilize instantaneous judgement and peerless accuracy to have a chance.

But after practicing the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', Lin Ming's perception had risen to a new level and his judgment and accuracy had been fostered steadily by his years of deboning.

"Zhu Yan should have easily been able to deal with these two Iron Armor Bears half a year ago, not to mention now Zhu Yan must have progressed. I can't lose to him like this."

Lin Ming stared at the two Iron Armor Bears and his fighting spirit began to rise in his heart.

"Hu!"

An Iron Armor Bear suddenly leapt upwards and smashed its thick, heavy paws at Lin Ming.

The Iron Armor Bear weighed over a thousand jins. Coupled with its awesome strength, this strike would have even felled an elephant!

Lin Ming's eyes widened and he did not retreat. Instead, like a graceful bird that flew with grace and poise, he passed by the Iron Armor Bear. His eye's focused onto a point of the bear's abdomen where two bone armor plates joined with each other and struck out with his knife!

"!"

It was only a simple deboning knife, but Lin Ming had practiced its strokes tens of thousands of times. The knife accurately slid between the two bone armor plates. The knife was quick, and with only a slight hitch in the thick flesh, it slid through with extreme speed.

As soon as the blow struck, before the time it takes to snap a finger, blood shot into the air.

“Rahh!” The Iron Armor Bear became mad. The knife wound had not been fatal and it rushed crazily at Lin Ming!

...

“Less than forty people have been eliminated and more than fifty have passed. This is a decent result.” A Seven Profound Martial House elder slowly said as he watched the candidates who had been kicked from the Exquisite Pagoda.

The Exquisite Pagoda was completely sealed from the outside. The elders were not Xiantian experts and had no way to see what was happening inside the Exquisite Pagoda. They could only judge how far the candidates had gone by which layer they had been ejected from.

If they were ejected from the first floor then they were eliminated, and if they were ejected from the second then they passed.

A quarter of an hour had passed since the candidates had entered the Exquisite Pagoda, and all of them had long since passed the first floor. Some had arrived on the third floor and some were even challenging the fourth.

“Now only five people have not yet come out.” As an elder said this, the symbols began to flash on the Exquisite Pagoda and another two candidates were kicked out. They had been ejected from the third floor, so they had failed at the third floor.

Several martial artists had already ran up and were caring for the unconscious candidates.

These two candidates were at the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation and their strength results and been 2300 jins. Unfortunately they were also seventeen and eighteen. They had not been able to break through the third floor of the Exquisite Pagoda, but they were also proud of their results.

When these two people were ejected, Lan Yunyue immediately turned to them and instantly distinguished that they were not Lin Ming.

Out of the 92 candidates that had entered so far, 39 had already been ejected from the Exquisite Pagoda. Lan Yanyue could clearly see that these people did not include Lin Ming. That could only mean that Lin Ming was still within the Exquisite Pagoda!

Lin Ming... Lan Yunyue lightly nipped her lips as he eyes glazed over with memories.

She knew that this meant that Lin Ming had passed, and was at least at the third floor.

The third floor was in truth an enormous glory. In the school records of the Seven Profound Martial House, those that passed the third floor would one day achieve the peak of Body Transformation, the Sixth Stage of Pulse Condensation.

The Royal Government would bestow upon all those martial artists of the Pulse Condensation Period a rank and title within the kingdom. Although it was only a third-class viscount, it was not that different from an official position and was even hereditary.

This was a noble title! In the Sky Fortune Kingdom, this was a symbol of glory and of the aristocracy. Because of a single person's personal glory, their family would enter the lineage of the aristocracy and bring honor to their ancestors.

Just then, another candidate was expelled from the fourth floor.

This meant that Lin Ming had passed the third floor!

This tall and sturdy boy with thick features was the boy with inborn divine strength, Liang Tieshan. He had put forth his utmost effort and after taking a severe wound had broke to the third floor and was defeated nearly upon arrival.

“This Liang Tieshen is a good seedling. He’s worth cultivating with resources.”

“Mm., he’s quite good. Now there are two left, Lin Ming and Wang Yanfeng.”

“That Lin Ming can persist even with his present strength is not easy. His strength is greater compared to Liang Tieshan’s and he also has a strong heart of martial arts that helps him. But to break through the fourth floor is uncertain...”

“Mmm, let alone Lin Ming, even Wang Yanfeng will not find it easy.”

...

“Poh!” With a single stroke from his knife, blood shot out from the leg of the Iron Armor Bear. Lin Ming tumbled away as the angry Iron Armor Bear pounced on him.

By now, the two Iron Armor Bears had become Blood Bears. They each had several more knife cuts across the weak points between their armor plates. While the wounds were not fatal, loss of blood could quickly become deadly!

The motion of these two Iron Armor Bears had obviously slowed down from excessive blood loss.

Chance!

Lin Ming dodged around the two bears who tried to catch him. Their blood loss and exhaustion exposed openings in their defense, and Lin Ming sprung upwards like a cheetah.

“Roar!” The Iron Armored Bear stood up on its hind legs and threw a strike with its paws. But Lin Ming had already escaped, and while evading at the same time, Lin Ming directly stabbed his deboning knife into the Iron Armor Bear’s eye!

Blood splashed from the grisly wound and the Iron Armor Bear let out an angry and painful roar. Lin Ming closed his hand into a fist and punched down on the handle like a jackhammer, and the deboning knife sunk directly into the brains of the beast.

The Iron Armor Bear died!

Chapter 41: Fifth Floor of the Exquisite Pagoda

“Half an hour!” A Seven Profound Martial House elder said with surprise as he looked at the hour glass.

“These two have already been in the fourth floor for a period of time.”

Outside of the Exquisite Pagoda, the once glowing runes of the first three floors had already been extinguished. Only the fourth floor was left shining with a brilliant light; this was the proof that two people were still challenging the fourth floor.

“This is getting more and more interesting. I had thought only Wang Yanfeng would have this result, but even this Lin Ming can insist for such a long time. It really makes one not believe that he is a mere grade-three talent at the Second Stage of Body Transformation. Even with inborn divine strength, reaching the fourth floor with just this strength is not simple.” An elder said as he stroked his long white beard. Lin Ming’s battle prowess was peculiar; he could not find a reasonable explanation for it.

By now Muyi opened his mouth and said slowly, “Sometimes, Sir Sun, a person’s battle prowess cannot be explained nor extrapolated by mere common sense. The earlier trials cannot measure a person’s battle talent and perception.”

Muyi did not explain that Lin Ming had an ancient master behind him. The workings of a Xiantian level expert and their legacy skill manuals were far too complicated for him to comprehend.

“Mmm, what Mister Muyi said is not wrong; his fighting talent is truly extraordinary. But his cultivation is shallow and the skill manual he uses is ordinary. He can actually rely on his superior fighting skill and intuition to face a superior enemy, but in this kind of battle, skill and

intuition have their eventual limits. As they say, strength can break ten thousand skills, but with just skill alone, the most that can happen is their combat ability is raised a level. The end result will not be good.”

Muyi smiled slyly and said, “Sir Sun, please have a good look.”

...

As these elders discussed, Wang Yanfeng was struggling mightily on the fourth floor. His cultivation was at the early Third Stage, but his true strength and battle ability rivaled someone at the peak of the Third Stage. However, what he faced now was two Iron Armor Bears who were also at the peak of the Third Stage.

Although the Iron Armor Bears appeared a bit cute and clumsy, their attack method and strategies were coordinated, and their terrifying strength and near flawless defense were nothing but an incomparable headache.

Even if he were to only be scratched, his fate would be for his muscles to be torn to shreds and his bones to break.

As soon Wang Yanfeng used a secret family skill three times, he finally managed to bring down an Iron Armor Bear. However, his body’s true essence had also almost reached its limit, and the remaining Iron Armor Bear’s resisting defense was able to block his family’s secret skill.

Seeing the last Iron Armor Bear rushing towards him, Wang Yanfeng let out a roar and jumped upwards. His hand grasped his sword and with a thrust he maliciously jabbed it into the bear’s gaping maw!

The Iron Armor Bear’s entire body was covered with hard iron plates; the only two weaknesses he could see were the eyes and mouth.

Wang Yanfeng's sword pierced the bear's throat, but at the same time his wrist was snapped by the bear's bite.

"Pah!" The Iron Armor Bear angrily struck Wang Yanfeng in the chest with his paw. It felt as if he was struck by a sledgehammer, and his internal organs shook.

Wang Yanfeng was thrown backwards like a falling chicken and slammed against the floor. He was covered in dirt and only barely managed to prop himself up. His entire body was covered in blood, and this blood was mixed with meat. This meat was actually parts of his internal organs.

"Even though I'm at the Viscera Training stage, and my organs are protected by true essence, this single blow was fatal..."

Although Wang Yanfeng was severely injured and on the verge of death, the Iron Armor Bear was not much better off. Its throat was crushed and its life was ebbing; it was only a matter of how long it could last before it died. But it could still kill Wang Yanfeng!

Wang Yanfeng spat a mouthful of blood. "I have to break through this fourth floor... even though I'm number one with my results, if I pass the fourth floor my status within the family will definitely rise. Even if I'm not the eldest son I still have a chance to be the future head of the household. I can also shut up those old codgers and their stupid mouths and they'll stop bothering father to take my resources..."

As Wang Yanfeng thought of these things, his face became grim with a hideous color.

However even as Wang Yanfeng was desperately going all out, he did not know that Lin Ming was using bloodletting tactics and tricks to fight and had already pierced the second Iron Armor Bear's brains.

Fourth floor, passed!

Lin Ming took a deep breath. He had finally reached the fifth floor. This was also the final floor that Qin Xingxuan had reached! The floor that middle-aged examiner had said was impossible to pass...

...

“I did not think that Lin Ming could go this far...” Outside the Exquisite Pagoda, Qin Xingxuan looked upwards as the runes of the fourth floor glowed, and felt surprise in her heart.

She had guessed that Lin Ming would at most reach the third floor, and that had already been a high appraisal of him. But she didn't actually think that Lin Ming would stay at the fourth floor for such a long time. At this rate, it might even be possible to pass the fourth floor...

“When I first challenged the Exquisite Pagoda, my cultivation had already reached the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation. With cultivation at the Fourth Stage it is naturally not difficult to defeat the inferior beasts of the fourth floor, but with cultivation at the peak of the Second Stage it is impossible to last such a long time at the fourth floor.

Qin Xingxuan secretly compared herself and her achievements with Lin Ming. She had relied on her deep cultivation base to rise to the fifth floor. If she was at the same cultivation he was, she would not be his match.

“It's already been half an hour...” Qin Xingxuan said as she looked to her side at the hourglass.

But as Qin Xingxuan looked at the time, the fifth floor of the Exquisite Pagoda suddenly lit up, and the runes and symbols began to activate one at a time. Heavy and trembling true essence immediately fluctuated in all directions.

Seeing this, Elder Sun's teacup almost fell out of his hands. "The fifth floor!"

"Wang Yanfeng is really so fierce? He's been there less than half an hour. Did Yuelu City's Wang Family finally produce a peerless talent?"

"For the last ten years this result is only matched by lady Xingxuan." The middle-aged man spoke as he looked at Qin Xingxuan. He saw Qin Xingxuan's eyes widen but did not know what it meant.

"Absolutely incredible. This child is not a fish in a small pool. With superior fourth grade talent in addition to the Wang Family's backing, it would be outstanding even within the Seven Profound Martial House and would easily qualify to receive superior martial arts manuals and one day become a Martial House core disciple. Even entering the Seven Profound Valley is a possibility! This Wang Yanfeng, is truly a heaven gifted talent!"

As the elder said this, the rune lights of the Exquisite Pagoda's fourth floor began to tremble with a sudden burst of vibration. A figure was bounced out like a sack.

As soon as Elder Sun saw this, he immediately issued an order, "Lin Ming came out, quickly catch him and don't let him injure himself falling."

It had been less than half an hour. The martial arts catchers of the Exquisite Pagoda were inevitably tired and someone distracted, therefore Elder Sun had spoken a reminder. The Exquisite Pagoda's death was only in the dream realm. If a candidate failed and died, he would be shunted out of the dreamland and out of the pagoda and at that moment that person would have lost their consciousness. Each floor of the Exquisite Pagoda was thirty feet. The fourth floor was ninety feet high. In those conditions, if an unconscious person fell to the ground, even a Pulse Condensation expert would not be able to withstand the impact.

The men responsible for catching the ejected candidates firmly caught the falling figure. They saw that the man had a pale, contorted face covered with cold sweat.

Because the appearance was so twisted, it took a moment for the elders outside the Exquisite Pagoda to identify him. In that instant, they were all dumbfounded.

This... this person was probably...Wang Yanfeng?

Several elders' jaws dropped as they looked up and saw the shining runes of the fifth floor. This... was the one who entered the fifth floor Lin Ming?

The Seven Profound Martial House elders were shaken. They had already felt that Muye's previous praise of Lin Ming was incredible. Lin Ming's cultivation was only at the peak of the Second Stage; it was worse than Wang Yanfeng! But now he was the only to have reached the fifth floor, and had already stayed there for several dozen breaths of time.

Qin Xingxuan looked at the fifth floor of the Exquisite Pagoda. Her eyes changed with various emotions. Wonder, awe, respect... Lin Ming had surprised her yet again. Would he even slowly overtake her in martial arts cultivation?

At this time, in a corner of the Exquisite Pagoda's mountain valley, Lan Yunyue was shaken as she looked at the glowing fifth floor. She appeared lost and in a daze. "Lin Ming...he entered the fifth floor?"

In the history of the Seven Profound Martial House and the opening of the Exquisite Pagoda, only Qin Xingxuan had successfully passed. There had been those who entered the fifth floor, and this would happen every couple of years. Each one who did was a monstrous talent of their generation, and in the future, their path to reaching the Pulse Condensation Period was only a matter of time.

“Lin Ming...” A thought popped into Lan Yunyue’s mind. Even if compared with Zhu Yan, Lin Ming was no worse. Although he did not have a great family supporting him, as long as he reached the Pulse Condensation Period in the future, he as be given a rank and title.

...

At this time, on the fifth floor of the Exquisite Pagoda, Lin Ming looked at the radical scene in front of him and could only force a smile. The fifth floor unexpectedly had two second-level vicious beasts!

Although they were only the weak species of vicious beast, their strength was equal to a martial artist at the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation. Not only that, but these two vicious beasts had eight beastly little brothers surrounding them that were equal to the peak of the Third Stage.

Ten vicious beasts stood in front of him. They had hideous looking bone armor, bright red beastly pupils, and their sharp nails and teeth were stained red with blood. All of this caused a surge of evil presence to soar to the heavens. A martial artist at his cultivation would normally look at this scene and imagine himself being torn to thousands of pieces and lose any will to fight.

Chapter 42: The First Place Candidate

Lin Ming was just able to resist the overwhelming evil aura from the vicious beasts, but he also knew that it was impossible to pass this floor.

Let alone the two second-level vicious beats, he could not even deal with the eight little brothers that crowded around them. Even if his physical condition was restored to top shape, the situation would be untenable! And he had even consumed the majority of his true essence.

He knew in his heart that although he had managed to reach the fifth floor, his ability ultimately fell short of that sixth-grade talent Qin Xingxuan. Half a year ago, Qin Xingxuan was able to overcome these ten vicious beasts and attain victory. As he looked at the overwhelming presence that the vicious beasts exuded, Lin Ming sighed with emotion.

She was truly someone who possessed a sixth-grade talent, that worthily beautiful and arrogant girl.

By his conservative estimate, Lin Ming guessed that he needed to increase his cultivation over an entire level, and at least achieve the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation to stand a chance. Only then could he have a possibility of passing, and that was considering a life and death struggle to his life's limit.

But Qin Xingxuan had already passed through this hurdle half a year ago.

No wonder that middle-aged examiner was so confident when he said that it was impossible to pass.

If it truly was impossible to pass, then such being the case, he would kill as many vicious beasts as he could.

Lin Ming would not give up without a fight. This was a rare opportunity to improve and hone his combat ability while dancing on the edge of death, the feeling where his strength and will were pushed to their limits in a life or death situation where any mistake could be fatal. This was a true rare and valuable experience.

“Come on!” Seeing the vicious beasts rush at him, Lin Ming shouted and stabbed his knife outwards at a silver tiger. His mind was clear; he knew that he had no chance of injuring the two second-level vicious beasts, so his goal was their eight little brothers. Some had thick meat and fur that he could not hope to penetrate this late in the game, so he chose those that had high attack power but had an equally low defense, like this silver tiger.

“Pah!” A knife stabbed into the silver tiger’s abdomen. At the same time, Lin Ming felt a tremor pass up his arm. The silver tiger’s thick flesh held the knife tight and Lin Ming almost let go.

“Damn!”

In a split second, a whip-like tail lashed out at Lin Ming’s belly. This was an attack from the two second-level vicious beasts. Its speed was quick like lightning and it was sharp as a knife; a strike from this would bisect any normal martial artist. Lin Ming twisted in the air and barely dodged the tail, but it still scratched his thigh and left him bruised and lacerated.

Lin Ming felt as if someone had branded his thigh with a heated iron bar, it burned with an aching pain. He grimaced. Even a gentle touch felt like his skin was sloughing off.

During this time the eight first-level vicious beasts surrounded Lin Ming. In the blink of an eye, he was in the center of a deadly circle. As

long as these vicious beasts attacked together they would instantly tear Lin Ming apart.

“Not good!” Lin Ming was very clear; as long as these vicious beasts pounced on him together, there was nowhere he could run. In that crucial moment, Lin Ming kicked his feet against the ground and thrust his knife at the silver tiger; he who struck the first blow had the advantage!

“Roar!” The silver tiger howled with anger and also rushed at Lin Ming. In this dream land, the wild and vicious beasts here knew not fear within their heart.

“Poh!” The knife jabbed straight into the silver tiger’s throat. However Lin Ming was also caught by its claw and drew a gaping hole in his abdomen. His Second Stage Flesh Training’s true essence barely protected him from being eviscerated in one strike.

“One down!” Lin Ming clutched his bloody abdomen that was dripping red. He had finally suffered a severe wound now and his true essence was at less than a single percent. He had not thought that the fifth floor would be so difficult; compared to the fourth floor it was at least ten times the trouble.

...

“A quarter of an hour! Lin Ming has already been on the fifth floor for a quarter hour. This Lin Ming is still persisting on the fifth floor, it’s truly unbelievable.”

“Mm. Although he could only be running, but he probably does not have much true essence left. Even running for a quarter hour is an achievement.”

“There will probably be some great forces that will try to recruit Lin Ming. Muyi, you had talked about him earlier, is your Marshal Quarter’s not interested in the boy?”

Muyi smiled but did not say anything. This group of fellows did not know as he did that behind Lin Ming was an incredible master. He probably came here for his own experience. Perhaps this mysterious master of his would soon bring him back to the mountains for painstaking cultivation. How could his Marshal Quarters possibly hope to attract him?

But Muyi did not say these thoughts out loud. By now, an elder surnamed Xu who was playing with two jade balls in his hand slowly said, "Elder Sun, you had a somewhat high opinion of him. I acknowledge that this Lin Ming has done well, but with only a grade-three talent, to achieve this accomplishment so far, he probably had a fortuitous encounter of some kind and ate some rare and precious material and because of this, experienced an increase in his strength. As for his future accomplishments...ha-ha, I don't see much need for flattery."

The elder surnamed Xu heard these words and knew they held some truth. If a person's luck was good, and blessed by the heavens, he might be able to eat some precious and rare object or material and experience an increase in his cultivation or strength. But that sort of superiority by ingesting these things had its limits and would slowly be worn down by time, until it vanished and became not too rare.

The elder surnamed Xu rationally said, "This Lin Ming is good but his cultivation speed will not be able to follow him in the future. He'll be easily overtaken."

Several elders echoed this. Muyi faintly smiled and said, "There's no need to say anything more. Lin Ming's future achievements, everything will be seen in the future."

As Muyi's voice fell, he looked up and saw the fifth floor of the Exquisite Pagoda begin to tremble. The runes flashed and suddenly a person's shadow was ejected and floated downwards like a slip of paper.

“That boy Lin Ming finally came out!”

Lin Ming had killed a silver tiger on the fifth floor and taken a serious wound in exchange. However even on the verge of death, in his dying moment he had brought down a wind wolf and finally killed two first-level vicious beasts.

He was already proud of this result. It had to be known that on the fifth floor, being able to kill two vicious beasts while being surrounded on all sides was incomparably more difficult than the fourth floor.

In the distance, Lan Yunyue looked at Lin Ming as he was caught by people waiting for him underneath the Exquisite Pagoda. In her heart she did now know why she felt a tiny tremble. She pursed her lips, and without a pause, turned around and quietly left...

...

“Mm? Lin Ming is already awake?”

Death in the dream realm is only the imagination of the mind. The candidate's true body would be shot out of the Exquisite Pagoda upon death, but they would have already thought they were dead, thus they would be unconscious for a period of time. But Lin Ming had unexpectedly awakened so quickly, and his complexion only showed a bit of paleness. This caused the elders of the Seven Profound Martial House to feel a bit startled. Compared to Wang Yanfeng, he had still been unconscious even after a while. This was the disparity that came with such a pure heart of martial arts.

“This Lin Ming should be the first place candidate of this entrance exam.” Elder Sun said.

“You say that but the award for first place is a Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill. You do not think it is wasted on a boy with a mere grade-three talent? How much of it do you think he would be able to

absorb? The final assessment does not depend on just the results but also on the candidate's own talent." Elder Xu responded to Elder Sun's proposal in a hoarse voice.

Elder Sun said, "It is true that we must also account for talent, but that is only if there is a close tie in the final results of the exams. This Lin Ming took first place in all three trials, how can his assessment not be first in the final assessment? Otherwise everyone would only think that we are corrupt and unfair. Regarding the waste of the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill, its only use is for the main sect to attract top tier talents to come to the Seven Profound Martial House entrance exams. Can it be that you thought the main sect would create just a Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill to enter into the main sect as a core disciple?"

"Moreover, as far as I know, aren't Elder Xu and the head of Yuelu City's Wang Family good old friends?"

As Elder Sun finished his words, Elder Xu's eyes twitched and he let out a cold humph, "Sun Sifan, I was only considering all angles of the exam for the sake of argument. If you wish to guarantee this Lin Ming as the first place candidate, then I have no objections. How about we make a bet? We shall see six months from now who is stronger between Wang Yanfeng and this boy Lin Ming and who will enter the Heavenly Abode. How about it?"

Elder Sun felt shocked by Elder Xu's words and was somewhat speechless. He began to feel an angry stirring in his heart. He was only trying to act impartially for this entrance exam. He did not think much of Elder Xu and did not normally have any dealings with him, He also could not get used to his self-serving nature that only tried to advance his own interests in the guise of helping with this entrance exam, which ultimately led to this struggle.

But even as Elder Xu challenged him, Elder Sun did not dare to meet it. Lin Ming's talent was limited and only at the third-grade. It was a

very real possibility that Elder Xu was correct with his guess that Lin Ming had some sort of fortuitous encounter and ingested some rare herb or something of that nature, thus resulting in his accomplishments today. But Wang Yanfeng in comparison was actually a rare person within a hundred thousand people, with a superior fourth-grade talent. In that case, it could really be Lin Ming that would be left in his dust.

Seeing Elder Sun backing down, Elder Xu sneered and said, "How could you not accept? If you really think that this Lin Ming should be first place then we might as well make a bet. I remember that Elder Sun has a treasure of the human-step..."

As Elder Xu mentioned this human-step treasure, Elder Sun's complexion twisted. Human-step treasures were extremely rare and valuable in the Sky Fortune Kingdom; not even with several tens of thousands of gold taels would you be able to purchase one. This was handed down and granted by the Seven Profound Valley, and was also Elder Sun's most valuable belonging. How could he use it in a gamble, much less one with such an uncertain chance of success.

Seeing Elder Sun so dumbfounded, Elder Xu had a smug and arrogant look plastered on his face. He knew that naturally Sun Sifan would not dare to take up this bet, so he said this because he wanted to ruin Sun Sifan's prestige and reputation.

But at this moment, Muyi opened his mouth and said with a smile, "How about I take up that bet with Elder Xu?"

Chapter 43: Refusal to Accept

But at this moment, Muyi opened his mouth and said with a smile, “How about I take up that bet with Elder Xu?”

“Mm?” Elder Xu was startled as he heard this. He did not think that Muyi would open his loud mouth and speak such words at that time, moreover with such a smiling expression and happy laugh as if he were filled with confidence.

That moment caused Elder Xu’s confidence to shake a little. Was it possible that this boy Lin Ming had some sort of hidden card up his sleeve that he did not know of? But he could not reason out why this mere medium third-grade talent could in any way exceed the superior fourth-grade talent Wang Yanfeng. He had also spoken such high and haughty words in the presence of so many peers. He had already jumped on the tiger, how could he get off now? So Elder Xu could only clench his teeth as he said, “Good, of course, what would Mister Muyi like to bet?”

Muyi smiled and said, “For something of this nature, a casual bet should be alright. It’s best not to harm friendly relations; I think a treasure of the human-step should be fine.”

Human-step treasure! Could this still be called something casual?

The corners of Elder Xu’s mouth twitched. Muyi had been a famous inscription master for so many years that out of everyone present, he was without a doubt the one with the most wealth.

Elder Xu clenched his teeth and said, “Good, then I will bet a low-grade human-step treasure, a spatial ring.

The spatial ring was a type of interspatial storage treasure. You could carry it anywhere on your body and use it to store any type of goods that you wanted. This sort of treasure was very difficult to refine, so

its value was also several times higher than something at a similar grade. A human-step low-grade spatial ring would be approximately the same worth as a middle-grade human-step treasure.

“Great.” Muyi readily agreed. He laughed casually, giving off a feeling of self-satisfied assurance.

The matter of Lin Ming as the first place candidate was thus decided.

However the inspection had already carried on for most of the day, and it was already a late hour. The results would be announced tomorrow in the afternoon; besides Lin Ming as first place, the second through tenth place spots also had to be assessed. The age, results, and talent of these remaining candidates would have to be discussed between the Seven Profound Martial House elders to decide.

“Xingxuan, let’s go greet Lin Ming.” Muyi said as he stood up. Although Lin Ming had awoken by now, Muyi was sitting with the Seven Profound Martial House elders, so Lin Ming naturally did not walk towards them.

“Mm.” Qin Xingxuan nodded. As the Seven Profound Martial House elders had talked, Qin Xingxuan had shown etiquette and courtesy for her elders and had been sitting silently and peacefully at one side. But the truth was that in terms of status within the Seven Profound Martial House, Qin Xingxuan was on equal footing with these elders.

This was because Qin Xingxuan was the most talented core disciples who, if in the future all things went smoothly with no major accident, would enter the Seven Profound Valleys and become an official disciple.

This was the greatest glory. It must be known that even the Heavenly Abode’s number one senior apprentice Ling Sen had no chance of entering the Seven Profound Valleys. The only slight glimmer of hope he had was if he could reach the peak of Body Transformation - the Pulse Condensation boundary, in a short time.

But reaching that distant boundary was easier said than done. Ling Sen was twenty years old and was only at the peak of the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation.

In the evening, Lin Ming and Muyi chatted with each other before Lin Ming returned to his bedroom that the Seven Profound Martial House had prepared for all candidates. He rested in the bedroom and meditated.

A quiet night passed.

It was the afternoon of the second day and the weather was clear and beautiful. In the Seven Profound Martial House contest field, many important figures were gathered. Among them were the 53 candidates who had successfully passed.

Today was the announcement of results.

After an evening of debating, the final results had been decided.

When Lin Ming arrived at the field, the people gathered there sent him frequent looks filled with envy, jealousy, and even some admiration. Lin Ming had become famous after a single night. Reaching the fifth floor of the Exquisite Pagoda, even the senior apprentices of the Heavenly Abode paid attention to him.

“Congratulations.” At this time a slightly cold voice sounded. Lin Ming followed it to see Wang Yanfeng standing nearby holding both hands to his chest with a fake smile. “Your luck is truly good. A mere medium third-grade talent could reach the fifth floor, ah, incredible, incredible!”

Wang Yanfeng spoke very loudly, and the people around them heard him. They were surprised that Lin Ming was only a third-grade talent. Although a third-grade talent was a one in a hundred cream of the crop talent, in the Seven Profound Martial House this could be considered only ordinary. They thought that Lin Ming was at least a

superior fourth-grade talent; how could it be that he was just a medium third-grade talent?

The surrounding people immediately began talking, and Wang Yanfeng heard this all with a smile on his face. Yesterday he had especially sent his lackeys to look up Lin Ming's talent.

“You, the one called Lin Ming, I do not know when a stray dog like you managed to eat some rare herb in your childhood and nor do I care, but if you think that you can rely on this to pressure me and win against me, then go and daydream some more! You just have a bit of good luck and you think your combat prowess is good? Using inborn divine strength to deal with the clumsy, stupid beasts of the Exquisite Pagoda is easy, but if you want to challenge a real human? Humph, with your stupid little basic skills you probably learnt from some cow, you think you can actually defeat a real person?”

The truth was that yesterday in the Exquisite Pagoda, Wang Yanfeng had also killed the two Iron Armor Bears of the fourth floor, but he had been fatally wounded and thus kicked out. This made Wang Yanfeng feel aggrieved. If only he could have lasted one more breath, he could also have entered the fifth floor.

If only he had entered the fifth floor then he would have had the same result. Wang Yanfeng could not believe that Lin Ming achieved anything on the fifth floor even though he was there for a quarter of an hour. Wang Yanfeng believed he would only have had about 10% of his true essence left and would only have run away like a little dog with his tail between his legs to pass that time.

Wang Yanfeng's fault had been that he was too eager for quick success and to immediately pass the fourth floor. The result was that he had to resort to desperate, all out tactics. If he had slowly taken his time to deal with the two Iron Armor Bears, he would not have been fatally injured.

Moreover the most important part was that in the Exquisite Pagoda, he could not use his rare equipment!

Without his treasures, Wang Yanfeng could not fully utilize the power of his secret family skill, the 'Nine Paths of Truth'. Its might would be greatly reduced which would cause his striking power to fall, resulting in him having such a hard time passing the fourth floor.

But in battles of martial artists, treasures and equipment were not forbidden, just like pills. They were items that belonged to the superiority that one's own family would bring, and were also a part of a martial artist's total strength.

Wang Yanfeng touched his saber and looked at Lin Ming with a face colored with absolute contempt.

"If I could only use the Nine Truth Saber, then killing you would be easier than killing a chicken!" Wang Yanfeng viciously thought in his heart though he did not say these words aloud. "How could I possibly lose to you! Not even in the future, but even now I would win!"

The thick tension in the air was palpable. Lin Ming did not respond to or dispute Wang Yanfeng's words, as he did not want a needless conflict. He was also disinclined to pay any attention to this Wang Yanfeng.

"Stop. My family's son is speaking with you. Are you deaf? Are you stupid? Can you not hear? A lackey bossily said as he stood by Wang Yanfeng's side.

The servant's speech was coarser than the master's. Lin Ming stopped his footsteps, calmly turned around, and gave the man a shiver-inducing glare. "This is the Seven Profound Martial House contest field. How could a little lackey like you who is only at the First Stage of Body Transformation come on?"

“You....!” The scolded lackey turned red in the face with anger and shame. According to regulations, he really did not have the qualifications to enter.

The atmosphere was strained, but at this moment an elder of the Seven Profound Martial House walked up on a stage and said, “Quiet. We will now announce the results of the entrance exam.”

The people downstage naturally silenced themselves. Even the lackey could only curse in his heart and he silently stood there.

The elder took out a long list and said, “For this examinations results, candidates were judged on the results of the three trials, their age, and their talent. All three factors were considered and discussed for the final assessment by the elders. Now we will announce the first ten as follows. Tenth place, Zhou Zhenyang, prize: ten Soul Gathering Pellets. Ninth...”

The elder slowly announced the results in an unhurried voice until he reached the second place...

“Second lace, Wang Yanfeng, prize: a Golden Snake Scarlet Pill. First place, Lin Ming, prize: a Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill. The results have been announced. Congratulations everyone. If there are no objections, then we have invited Elder Sun to hand out the awards.”

“Wait a moment! I have an objection!” Wang Yanfeng raised his hand. The Seven Profound Martial House’s Elder Xu was his father’s good friend, so he had already known the results of the assessment. This time he had objected because of Elder Xu’s advice.

“Mm? What objection do you have?” said the elder who had read out the announcement as he frowned.

Wang Yanfeng smiled and stepped out to the front of the square. His voice was clear and resounded as he said, “As far as I know, Lin

Ming's talent is only a mere medium third-grade. My talent is superior fourth-grade. The elder earlier said that the results for the final assessment take into account the three trials, age, and talent. The final decision-making is in the elder's hands, but the subjective factor is just too big. I refuse to accept the choice for first place candidate."

To Wang Yanfeng, the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill was something he could absolutely not give up. If he had this pill, he was confident that he could break through the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation before he was eighteen years old, and even reach the peak of the Fourth Stage before he was twenty. With such strength at his disposal, he wouldn't even necessarily lose to the Heavenly Abode's senior apprentice, Ling Sen.

If this happened, then no one in his family would doubt his status anymore.

At this time, Elder Sun stood up and with a cold snort said, "You dare to question the final assessment of the elders?" This cold snort was filled with true essence. As it came out, those in the periphery were shocked with an icy chill as the temperature dropped several degrees. Wang Yanfeng could not bear the brunt of this disdainful pressure and was forced back several steps.

"Sun Sifan, an elder like you is bullying the young?" Elder Xu said as he also stood. He did not originally like Sun Sifan either.

By now Wang Yanfeng said, "Elder Sun, please calm down, I do not dare to question the elders' decisions, but I only think that it is not fair. In the third examination trial I also killed both vicious beasts. It was only because I was too hasty for victory that I became fatally injured and was unable to step into the fifth floor. If I had progressed slowly then I too would have achieved the fifth floor."

"Therefore I cannot do anything else but refuse to accept this result. I do not believe my strength is worse than Lin Ming's!"

“Then what do you want?”

“Simple. I want to fight Lin Ming. If I lose, I will completely admit defeat. But if I win, then I want the first place candidate spot to be turned over to me!” Wang Yanfeng suddenly swiveled to Lin Ming and with provocation in his voice said, “Lin Ming, do you dare!?”

Chapter 44: Killing You is Just Right

“Simple. I want to fight Lin Ming. If I lose, I will completely admit defeat. But if I win, then I want the first place candidate spot to be turned over to me!” Wang Yanfeng suddenly swiveled to Lin Ming and with provocation in his voice said, “Lin Ming, do you dare!?”

Before Lin Ming could answer, Elder Xu rose again and said with a smile, “This idea is good. The truth is that the Martial House examination trials vary, but ultimately are looking for the same attributes. The first is combat skill, the second is talent. Wang Yanfeng obviously wins when it comes to talent, but if the actual combat skill is also won by him, then the situation in principle should be his, and the first place candidate should belong to Wang Yanfeng.

The few words Elder Xu said had already blocked Lin Ming’s exit and left him with nowhere to retreat to. However Elder Xu felt this was insufficient. He turned to Lin Ming and said with a eerie smile, “Not only must a martial artist cultivate their body, and fortify the mind, the martial artist must have faith that they can overcome obstacles and win against challenges. If they feel fear and do not fight, then their heart will falter. This type of person would have no great future achievements.”

Elder Xu’s words were not wrong, but he said them with malicious intent. Under this type of situation, once someone lost then they would suffer an enormous blow to their self-confidence and psyche, especially considering that Lin Ming was only fifteen years old. If he at first place lost to the second place candidate and the gap was too large, then he might be unable to psychologically recover in light of this.

Elder Xu had already recognized that Lin Ming had the greatest chance of losing. After all, Wang Yanfeng was ahead of Lin Ming by an entire stage, and in the Exquisite Pagoda he did not have any treasures on him so he was unable to display the true strength of his family skill 'Nine Paths of Truth'. Martial skills greatly increased a martial artist's fighting ability. Sometimes high-level martial skills could let martial artists fight those that were ranks beyond them.

As for Lin Ming's inborn divine strength, it was easy to use against the slow beasts of the Exquisite Pagoda that had high defensive power. But against a real person, brute strength was not so simple a solution.

Under these circumstances, it was impossible for Wang Yanfeng to lose.

Lin Ming turned a cold eye to Elder Xu and took note of him. He then looked to Wang Yanfeng and said, "I could fight with you, but in this competition the only one to suffer a loss would be me. If I fight with you, then as the first place candidate, if I win I am still first place and I do not gain any advantage. But if I lose, then I have to just meekly surrender my spot like that? What do you think about this?"

When Wang Yanfeng heard Lin Ming already intent to compete, his heart immediately blossomed with happiness. 'This little fellow is just bargaining back and forth as if he could win just because he reached the fifth floor of the Exquisite Pagoda. Humph, he really is an idiot. I will let you know how fierce the 'Nine Paths of Truth' really is.'

Wang Yanfeng playfully smiled and asked, "What do you want then?"

Lin Ming responded, "If I win then I want you to give me your Golden Snake Scarlet Pill. If I lose, you can take first place candidate and also the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill. How about it?"

"Good! Since you said it then you meant it!" Wang Yanfeng felt a great happiness in his heart. This way he could have both precious

pills for himself! It was really a dream come true. He impatiently said, "Then let us start our competition!"

"Mm. Sure."

Seeing Lin Ming agree so readily and happily, Elder Sun could only shake his head slightly. Lin Ming would most certainly lose, or at least he had more than a fifty percent chance of losing. Undergoing the trials and fighting with a real person was different. This Wang Yanfeng came from an aristocratic family and had a special master in his youth teach him to fight, and he also had martial skills.

This fight was already a foregone conclusion, there was nothing left to say.

As soon as Wang Yanfeng arrived at the center stage of the contest field, he flicked his saber and gave it a shake as he roared, "Come up!"

Seeing Wang Yanfeng's long saber, the crowd present were startled, "a rare weapon!"

As long as it was a rare treasure, the value would be several thousand gold taels. Even aristocratic family juniors would only receive one after reaching the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation or even the Fifth Stage. Only then would they have the qualifications to receive a rare treasure like this. They had not thought that this Wang Yanfeng, who was only at the Third Stage of Body Transformation, would have one, and one that had an inscription on it. Obviously this Wang Yanfeng had a high position within his family.

The people looked at Lin Ming to see if he could also put out some equally rare weapon. Thinking of his family background, it was just not possible for him to have any rare treasures.

Although this may not seem fair, but in the Sky Fortune Kingdoms, martial artists' contests had always been like this. It was impossible

to trade weapons to momentarily use, and even if possible then they would be unfamiliar with it.

One's family was also a form of strength. If the weapon is unfair, then the pills or other medicines that increase cultivation are also unfair. It would be impossible to prohibit martial artists from assisting their cultivation with pills.

Therefore Lin Ming could only swallow this disadvantage.

“This Lin Ming probably doesn't have any sort of good weapon.”

“Mm. There is no way that he would have something worth several thousand gold taels. The average person just doesn't have those advantages. Hopefully Lin Ming doesn't pull out something too inferior and is immediately cut down. This way he might have a chance.”

As these people talked, Lin Ming took out a weapon from his pouch. This was his deboning knife that he had used to slice meat at the Great Clarity Pavilion.

Seeing this scrappy deboning knife, everyone's eyes immediately widened. This was... was this... a pig butchering knife?

Though no one had thought that Lin Ming would have a good weapon, they did not think he would pull out such an inferior weapon. It was only a foot in length. As the saying went, one inch longer one inch stronger. This one foot deboning knife compared to a three foot long saber was at a bit more than just a disadvantage. Moreover could a knife used to kill pigs even be sturdy? What would happen if it were to be cut in half by the opposition's sword?

Wang Yanfeng saw this deboning knife and laughed. “You would use that to challenge me? That's just a knife for killing pigs! You really are a daft idiot!”

Lin Ming appeared slightly surprised. He said, "I didn't notice it but it seems you were right, this really is a knife for killing pigs. I usually do use it to kill pigs, so for today, killing you is just right."

Lin Ming's scolding words insinuated that Wang Yanfeng was just a pig. This made Wang Yanfeng furious. He shouted, "You don't know the meaning of death!"

As Lin Ming slowly stepped on stage in the contest field, and Wang Yanfeng had drawn his saber, he had already been using an inscription master's soul force to study the sword's strength and its inscription. In this, Lin Ming was an expert.

Wang Yanfeng's saber looked powerful and impressive, but in Lin Ming's eyes it could only be considered common goods. Even that inscription would not even normally grab his attention. As long as an inscription master knew the proper technique they could use the soul law formula to seep their soul force into the treasure and judge whether its quality was good or bad. Lin Ming had learnt his inscription skills from the memories of an elder who came from the Realm of the Gods, thus he also naturally knew a viewing technique. Although he had only studied this technique a bit, it was already far more than enough to take a look at Wang Yanfeng's saber.

The saber was able to greatly enhance a martial artist's combat strength, but Wang Yanfeng was only at the early Third Stage of Body Transformation and had not reached Altering Muscle or Bone Forging. Thus Lin Ming was not worried, as he could only display a very limited effect of the saber.

Of course, even if Wang Yanfeng could not display the saber's true strength, compared to Lin Ming's deboning knife in hand, it would be immediately cut apart if Lin Ming used it to receive a strike. Although this was a good and trusted knife he had used for countless hours, it was just made of regular iron from an ordinary blacksmith.

But this did not matter to Lin Ming. Lin Ming had not planned on using this deboning knife originally; he would rely on the strength of his own fists. 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' was an unsurpassed almighty Body Transformation skill manual that was the essence of light and Yang. For those that practiced this, their own muscles and bones were themselves the best weapons!

With Lin Ming's peak Second Stage cultivation, his fist strength reached 2700 jins. With this strength he could punch straight through a thick iron wood tree. If this fist directly hit a person's body, even a master at the Altering Muscle or Bone Forging stage could not necessarily withstand it!

Chapter 45: Shatter the Nine Paths of Truth

Wang Yanfeng's entire body revolved with an intense aura of true essence. He did not even wait for Lin Ming to finish stepping on stage before he gave a loud shout, and the three foot long saber in his hand began to radiate with bright runes. There were ten runes in total; nine green runes were congealed from Wang Yanfeng's true essence, and the last was from the inscription symbol left behind by the inscription master.

“The ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ swordsmanship was a family skill that was given to the head of the Wang Family after he performed a great military deed. The first emperor of Sky Fortune Kingdom had bestowed this skill to Yuelu City's Wang Family so that it could be passed down and studied by future generations. This Wang Yanfeng relied on only his early Third Stage of Body Transformation cultivation to already reach the boundary of forming nine runes. Although this is almost the most basic level of green runes, it is still impressive!”

The onlooking elders commented as they watched the fight. They had vast experience and could easily determine Wang Yanfeng's martial skill, as well as its level and origin.

“The ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ can display its true power if used in conjunction with a rare weapon. The aristocratic family juniors are truly on a different playing field than others. They have martial arts handed down through their family line and also treasures that easily cost several thousand gold taels. Compared to commoner martial artists, they are much better off.”

“Lin Ming is in danger. He's just a regular boy. What kind of martial skill could he possibly have to fend off the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’?”

On stage, Lin Ming's eyes shined brilliantly as he looked at the green runes on Wang Yanfeng's saber. Before studying inscription techniques, he first had to study the soul law formula, and develop the ability to control his own soul force. Lin Ming had studied the apex level soul law formula, 'Overbearing Soul Tactic'. With this, Lin Ming was extremely sensitive to the flow of true essence within rare treasures or objects. As long as he extended his soul force, he could clearly understand all things.

"I can feel Wang Yanfeng is using some sort of martial skill, but even if I can sense it, I'm not too familiar with martial skills; there is simply no way for me to find out where the flaw is. But when looking at inscription techniques and equipment, there might be no one in the entire Sky Fortune Kingdom who can understand them better than I do. I can clearly identify vulnerability within the flow of true essence..."

As Lin Ming was thinking deeply about this, Wang Yanfeng had already grasped his sword and rushed forwards. He would close the distance and use his family martial skill, the 'Nine Paths of Truth' and in the next several moves, finally solve this problem called Lin Ming, while increasing his own reputation.

True essence gathered in the longsword and it whistled with a sharp, keening sound. This was an advantage of using treasures; once true essence was focused, it would enhance one's imposing image and strength, thereby increasing their momentum. Facing this, along with the aura of power, a martial artist with no treasures would discover that they felt incapable of any resistance, because even if they tried to compete with weapons, their own would likely break off at first contact!

"Lin Ming, prepare to die!"

Wang Yanfeng shouted out as the nine symbols on his saber began to bloom with an incandescent green light. As soon as the long sword

cut down, an immense sword pressure struck at Lin Ming's shoulder. Lin Ming's pupils widened and his both his feet suddenly slammed the ground as his body moved like a bolt of lightning.

“Bang!”

As Wang Yanfeng's saber cut into the ground, explosions scattered broken stone into the air. This blue stone stage was supported by a magic array and was as hard as iron, but still, Wang Yanfeng's blade had cut a hole half a foot deep! The power of this single strike was just too much!

Even though his saber did not hit, Wang Yanfeng did not feel any sadness, but instead laughed. “Lin Ming! You want to compare speed with me!? Not only do you have some small inborn divine strength but it seems your speed isn't too shabby either, but what a pity! You cannot use any movement martial skills!

“Speed!? How can pitiful you even think of comparing with me, Wang Yanfeng!?” As soon as he said this, Wang Yanfeng's footsteps changed. His body had changed to an indistinct, blurry afterimage.

“Seven Despairing Steps! The Wang Family's movement martial skill!”

“This is one of the Wang Family's secret martial skills. In seven steps one can appear and disappear at will, and its speed surpasses the ghosts and gods. The old aristocratic families really make one jealous!”

“The weapon is weaker, the martial skill is weaker, the movement is weaker, how can one even fight like this?”

As they were talking, Wang Yanfeng moved seven steps and instantly appeared at Lin Ming's side. The radiant green line appeared once again as the nine runes shimmered with true essence. The saber cut down at Lin Ming's arm!

It was against the law to kill others during a competition at the Seven Profound Martial House, otherwise they would receive a severe punishment from the school. Therefore Wang Yanfeng had cut at Lin Ming's arm. Although this strike would not be lethal, but it could break his bone and rip apart the tendons of his arm. Even with superior medicines to repair the bone and mend the muscles, the arm would be mostly useless and would greatly inhibit later cultivation.

This was an insidious blade filled with malice!

Wang Yanfeng's mouth traced a sneering grin. 'Are you not some kind of talent? Then I'll cut off the road of talent and see how you dare to ever struggle against me again!'

This was the reason of his blade, and he could not think of the slightest reason that he would lose. However, at this time, Lin Ming shouted, fiercely swiveled on the ball of his foot and thrust out his fist!

This was a non-flashy, even fist that would bring at least 3000 jins of overbearing might!

"Bang!"

The center of the first hit the blade edge of Wang Yanfeng's saber. This was the only vulnerability that Lin Ming had discovered in the weapon where the true essence was at its most weak and turbulent point!

With the speed at which Wang Yanfeng wielded his saber, the difficulty of striking this precise spot was inconceivable. If not for the years that Lin Ming had spent deboning and honing the accuracy of his moves until every action became a memory that was ingrained within his muscles, then even if he could grasp the flaw within the inscription symbol, it would only have been useless.

In the space of that brief moment, Wang Yanfeng only felt a sudden chaotic surge in true essence transmit through his body as the flow of energy in the saber was interrupted. If the concentration of true essence in the saber was like a deadly emerald snake, then Lin Ming's first was a hatchet that cut off the snake around the middle, seven inches up its body!

How!?

As soon as flow of true essence stagnated, Wang Yanfeng felt pain wrack his body as his blood dangerously upwelled. Before he could unravel the meaning of what had happened, Lin Ming had let loose a leg and kicked towards Wang Yanfeng's head.

Every day for several years, Lin Ming had been training his leg on tree stumps. The simplistic strength of this strike had been tempered by deeply constant pain that had only been quenched by iron thread grass. This was the terrifying strength that had been cultivated by practicing the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians'; it was no different to an explosion of pure force!

Lin Ming's leg was like a dragon's tail as it kicked out, but Wang Yanfeng also had some capability. Even as his mind reeled, he managed to stiffly raise an arm to block Lin Ming's leg.

However, when Lin Ming's kicked struck Wang Yanfeng's arm, Wang Yanfeng only could feel as if a thick iron rod struck him. His arm immediately lost feeling and he almost passed out from the pressure.

Wang Yanfeng's heart was shocked. What was this abnormal power!?

With a jolt of surprise at the change in the battle's tempo, the hearts of the elders present were equally shocked. That simple fist was not so simple! The candidates who were watching could not notice anything strange, but these were houtian masters, they had easily captured the mystery behind the meaning of that simple fist!

This Lin Ming, how could he possibly do this?

The kick sent Wang Yanfeng flying backwards into the air. Before he had even exhausted a single breath, he could see in his vision the sight of Lin Ming instantly approaching.

Not good!

“Seven Despairing Steps!” Wang Yanfeng pedaled his feet with the ‘Seven Despairing Steps’ and his body completely violated the rules of physics, as he suddenly swerved sideways and escaped Lin Ming’s fist. But with this sudden change in direction, along with the damage he had taken earlier, Wang Yanfeng could no longer control the rampaging true essence that ravaged his body, and spat a mouthful of blood. This time Wang Yanfeng felt panic seep into his heart. Initially he had thought that his strength had been weakened in the Exquisite Pagoda with the decrease in strength of the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ and thus was only able to reach the fourth floor and die together with the two vicious beasts. He had thought if only he had his rare saber with him, then he would be completely confident in reaching the fifth floor with ease and even slaughtering many vicious beasts there. Instead, he was now being suppressed so heavily by Lin Ming? At this time, could Lin Ming also kill the vicious beasts of the fifth floor?

The ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ that he was so proud of and had so arrogantly bragged about had been completely defeated; this made Wang Yanfeng feel a deep and foreboding sense of humiliation. Before he could even think about how to retaliate against the loathsome maggot, that Lin Ming had already rushed forward again. This time Lin Ming used his knife!

“I’ll cut your knife!”

Because he had just exhausted a great deal of true essence earlier, he could only use about half of his true essence. Wang Yanfeng did not have any time to utilize the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’, he could only focus all of the true essence he could muster in the saber and rely on its

strength, sharpness, and superior quality to block Lin Ming. He had already concluded that if he blocked with his saber then Lin Ming would have to withdraw his knife, otherwise his knife would be cut apart.

However he did not imagine that Lin Ming would not retract his knife, but even meet the saber head on with just a deboning knife!

“Boom!”

With a fierce explosion, in the crazy collision of true essence the deboning knife was cut apart!

“Ha!”

Wang Yanfeng did not even have time to be surprised, as Lin Ming already gave a loud shot and the deboning knife exploded into several sharp fragments.

“Puff!” These fragments were like a concealed weapon that blew up like a bomb that shot out in all directions!

With such a short distance and the immediate surprise of a weapon like this, Wang Yanfeng could not even dodge, even though he possessed the ‘Seven Despairing Steps’!

“Ah ah ah ah ah ah!!”

Wang Yanfeng cried out pitifully as his shoulder, belly, and thighs were stabbed by the fragments of the deboning knife and blood flew in all directions. A fragment had even directly pierced through his shoulder!

Lin Ming sent a flying kick towards Wang Yanfeng’s chest. Wang Yanfeng spat out a mouthful of blood as he was sent reeling backwards; that instant kick had broken his ribs and sent him flying upside down like a broken kite!

“Stop!”

As Lin Ming’s kick sent Wang Yanfeng flying, Elder Xu was flew out like a cheetah and the chair he was sitting in was smashed apart by a burst of true essence.

Elder Xu stormed onto the stage like the wind and caught the heavily injured Wang Yanfeng. He immediately took out a medicine bottle from his sleeves and applied it to him. He was old friends with Wang Yanfeng’s father, so he naturally had to look after him. With Wang Yanfeng injured to this extent, how could he explain this to his friend?

After applying the precious medicine, Elder Xu looked gloomy as he stared at Lin Ming, “You little boy, so young and yet already your actions are so ruthless!”

As Elder Xu said this, each word was enhanced with true essence and was like a steel ball striking, full of momentum.

Facing the pressure from a Houtian master, Lin Ming’s eyes narrowed as he secretly revolved the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ within himself and resisted the pressure. His expression was neutral as he said, “If you say I am vicious, then what is not vicious? Wang Yanfeng tried to cut apart my arm a moment ago, should I just extend it and let him do as he pleases? If I did not retaliate with a fist and my arm was cut off, would you then say Wang Yanfeng is vicious?”

“Good! You dare to talk back!?” Elder Xu suddenly stepped forwards as he flared with murderous intent. It felt as if this Elder Xu was like a tiger that had chosen its victim and was ready to leap out.

Chapter 46: Two Top Quality Pills

An ordinary person would be frozen in fear as if they were locked down by chains if they saw a tiger with such a murderous aura approach them in such an imposing manner, much less this vastly more dangerous Elder Xu who looked like he could launch an attack at any time. But Lin Ming had still not revealed a single hint of fear or dread on his face, even though Elder Xu's strength surpassed him by hundreds, if not thousands of times. Lin Ming had seen flying sages and kings in the dreams of the Magic Cube. These ancient elders had parted seas and smashed mountains; compared to these warriors, Elder Xu was just an ant beneath their boot. In addition, if Lin Ming was to act like a fearful ant, then how could he have the qualifications to pursue the peak of the martial artist's path?

Seeing that his imposing manner and murderous intent failed to oppress Lin Ming, Elder Xu became somewhat angry. Before he could step forward again, a shadow flashed, and a man passed Elder Xu like a ghost out of nowhere.

"Xu Fengyuan, are you planning to make a move and bully a little junior? Heh, that really is the superior air of a true master." As Elder Xu's nemesis, Sun Sifan could not let him do as he pleased, and he had already arrived in front of Lin Ming's body.

With such an elder standing in front of him, Lin Ming felt the immense pressure on him being lifted.

From the point when Wang Yanfeng had used his superior martial skills to assault Lin Ming, to the sudden change in fortune, and to when Lin Ming had severely wounded Wang Yanfeng and then the two elders had appeared on stage, the truth was that it had only been a very short period of time. Under the stage, the candidates and other guests that surrounded them were already reacting, and their voices filled the entire with chatter.

This Lin Ming, he had undergone a complete metamorphosis!

However he had managed to simultaneously offend Wang Yanfeng and Elder Xu; his future days would not pass in peace.

The majority of those present came from humble backgrounds, so they had several points of sympathy and compassion for Lin Ming. After all, their families were all similar, and some of them were the talents of their generation. Yet how many of them had suffered losses when faced against aristocratic family juniors that had vastly more resources behind them?

Seeing Sun Sifan defending Lin Ming, Elder Xu gave a cold snort and waved his voluminous sleeves. He signaled the severely injured Wang Yanfeng to follow him off stage. But at this moment, Lin Ming said, "Elder Xu, please stay a moment."

"Mm?" Elder Xu frowned. He didn't think that this Lin Ming would have the guts to call him. Any normal candidate who saw a Houtian elder of the Seven Profound Martial House would be submissive and timid, but this Lin Ming had actually compelled himself to call him out, how stupidly courageous of him. He coldly said, "What do you want to say?"

"Before I and Wang Yanfeng agreed to a duel, we made a bet. If I won, not only would I keep the first place candidate position, but I would also obtain the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill that was the second place prize. Since Elder Xu is bringing Wang Yanfeng away, when the prizes are handed out, I will receive it myself."

Lin Ming said all these things now, as it was a matter that had to be made absolutely clear. Otherwise as soon as Wang Yanfeng left, then the prize would probably not be given to him. Away from the eyes of all those present, it was unlikely that Wang Yanfeng would so easily send him the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill.

Wang Yanfeng had been unconscious until now. This loss of face truly made him wish he hadn't woken up. Hearing these words of Lin Ming almost made him cough up more blood. Exactly how precious and rare was the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill? Yuelu City's Wang Family was an old aristocratic family with massive wealth, deep ties to the country, and a long and storied history. Yet no matter how much money or power they had there was no way they could buy a Golden Snake Scarlet Pill. It just wasn't something that could be purchased by money. Moreover, all these years Wang Yanfeng had used many resources of his family and the council of elders had already been keenly critical of him. If he lost this Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, to Wang Yanfeng this was a truly deadly blow.

"He deserves death!" Wang Yanfeng cursed in his heart. He glared at Lin Ming with unmasked hatred in his eyes. But he had already made a promise, and it had been heard by everyone. In the presence of so many people, it was impossible to renege on a promise.

He spat out several words between clenched teeth. "The Golden Snake Scarlet Pill belongs to you. I wish you good fortune and luck in taking it! I hope nothing wrong goes wrong in the absorption and your veins don't implode, tearing you to shreds!"

Lin Ming heard the naked threat in Wang Yanfeng's words.

"I really have offended too many people. Until now, there is Zhu Yan, Wang Yigao, Wang Yanfeng, and all these people are from aristocratic backgrounds. Even Zhu Yan and Wang Yanfeng are talented martial artists. Wang Yigao is another matter; after last time he probably pissed his pants and would be too afraid to do anything, but Zhu Yan and Wang Yanfeng will also be studying in the Seven Profound Martial House with me and will look for every opportunity to get revenge on me. Not matter what, it seems I can't put an end to all these future troubles.

“I offended so many people and yet could not properly clean up the mess, now it’s become a huge omen. But they provoked me, it was just impossible for me to swallow all the insults and let others humiliate me as they pleased, otherwise it would wear away my heart and spirit of martial arts.

“Since it’s come to this, what’s most important is that I enhance my own strength as soon as possible. I am definitely not Zhu Yan’s match. Not even Zhu Yan, but this Wang Yanfeng also luckily underestimated me and I also underestimated him. I thought that because I defeated two vicious beasts on the fifth floor of the Exquisite Pagoda that I was much stronger than him, but I didn’t think that his strength would increase so much by combining his rare treasure and family’s martial skill. Even if I could see the circulation of true essence in his saber, it was not necessarily my victory. Perhaps I should also go to buy a rare treasure of some sort.”

Lin Ming thought about all of these things. Tomorrow he would officially enter the Seven Profound Martial House and most likely encounter Zhu Yan at some point. Half a year ago, Zhu Yan had relied on his peak Third Stage of Body Transformation cultivation to enter the Heavenly Abode, which all of the most talented students would go to. His strength most likely had its own specialty, Lin Ming would not underestimate him.

After seeing Elder Xu walk away, Sun Sifan gave Lin Ming a deep look, as his eyes were traced with surprise and a hint of disbelief.

In that fight a moment ago, if Lin Ming had used some amazing and almighty martial skill to defeat Wang Yanfeng, then he would not have been surprised, but what he used was nothing but an ordinary fist and foot. Using nothing but his own body, he had hit the exact point of the snake-like true essence seven inches up the saber and disrupted Wang Yanfeng’s true essence!

To achieve this would require extraordinarily keen judgment and remarkable accuracy. To hit a saber that was being wielded with such speed and on such a precise spot was no less difficult than catching a speeding arrow in mid flight.

It could be said that if one practiced their basic skills enough then they would be able to do this. But how Lin Ming found the weakness in Wang Yanfeng's true essence was unclear.

This could only come from an extremely high soul force strength and a breadth of experience.

This type of experience could only be accumulated by years of actual combat. This boy was only fifteen years old; it was impossible for him to have this kind of experience. Was he some genius talent?

Some martial artists were geniuses at fighting. By virtue of their intuition and godly monstrous perception, they would be able to see any opening on a battlefield. Any sort of great and awe inspiring martial skill, to them, would actually be full of holes. Meeting someone like this and not being able to understand how they would suddenly close in on you, with their sword in your face, this sort of person was truly terrifying.

Is it possible that... this Lin Ming was also this kind of talent?

It was a bit odd...

Elder Sun thought this and looked at Lin Ming, "You, come with me."

"Mm?" Lin Ming found that Elder Sun walked in a direction that was away from where the rewards were being handed out and he had some doubts in his heart.

"Lin Ming, measure your soul talent with me."

...

“To reach the fifth floor of the Exquisite Pagoda and also defeat Wang Yanfeng...”

In a quiet room patterned with a blue stone tile floor, Zhu Yan stood in the center, on top of a wooden pillar. He was topless, exposing the solid and strong muscles of his upper body. By his side stood a thin, old servant. Although the servant looked a little baggy, his breathe was even and long, which was the culmination of practicing the Third Stage of Body Transformation, Viscera Training.

Zhu Yan’s servant and Wang Yigao’s servant were like heaven and earth. This was because the Zhu Family were relatives of the emperor and their influence was bigger, and also because of Zhu Yan’s status within his family; it was not something that the useless Wang Yigao could possibly compare with.

Although Zhu Yan had not been present to watch Lin Ming’s exam, he had sent his old servant to pay attention to the situation. As soon as Lin Ming and Wang Yanfeng’s competition ended, the old servant had come back to report the situation to Zhu Yan.

“This little bastard, I hadn’t thought he had hidden so many secrets!”

“Bang!” Wang Yanfeng punched out a fist and smashed apart the wooden pillar. This kind of pillar was extremely hard, as it had been soaked in medicines that increased rigidity and density, and was several times more tenacious than normal, but it was actually smashed apart by Zhu Yan’s fist. This was a sign that Zhu Yan’s fist strength had reached a high stage.

It was absolutely above 4000 jins! Compared to Ling Sen it was just a little bit worse, but not by too much.

“Wang Yanfeng was too arrogant, but he did have some ability. As far as I can tell he had already practiced the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ to forming nine green runes, and he also had the ‘Seven Despairing

Steps' movement skill. Yet he still lost to Lin Ming? Did Lin Ming use some sort of martial skill?"

The old servant said, "Young master, Lin Ming did not use a martial skill, he only used punches and kicks. His movements were straight and basic; there were no flashy moves that he used."

"What? Then how could he possibly win?" Zhu Yan could not believe this.

"This old servant has poor vision and did not see what methods Lin Ming used, but he managed to break that little Wang boy's 'Nine Paths of Truth' and then used a series of moves to gain the upper hand. He relentlessly pursued to the end and defeated the little Wang boy without giving him the slightest opportunity to retaliate."

"He broke the 'Nine Paths of Truth'?" Zhu Yan felt shocked. Each kind of martial art had weaknesses that could be exploited, but these were absolute secrets that were never divulged. Lin Ming was only a junior of the branch family of the Ling Family. His background was normal, it was impossible for him to know any sort of decent martial skill, how could he possibly have the experience to defeat the 'Nine Paths of Truth'?

Was this a dream?

Zhu Yan was unable to understand the reason why. Then, the old servant said, "Young master, this older servant also discovered that Lin Ming's true essence was very pure. He is unlike a normal martial artist at the Second Stage of Body Transformation."

Zhu Yan responded, "I have already discovered this. There's nothing too strange about it, this boy probably found some valuable material and ate it. In addition to diligent studying and hard work and practice, even a rabid dog could show some degree of success."

“Because he had a fortuitous encounter, his strength suddenly rose to a new level. Because his talent was originally garbage, this will slowly fade away. This sort of happening is too rare; that this Lin Ming could encounter such luck, that boy is truly an eyesore...”

Zhu Yang slowly clenched his fist. He did not care at all about Lin Ming, and did not even think he had the qualifications to be remembered by him. He was after all, two years younger and at a lower level of cultivation. It was only because of Lan Yunyue that Zhu Yan felt this Lin Ming was such an eyesore.

Chapter 47: Lin Ming's Soul Talent

“This is the soul talent test...” Lin Ming thought, as he was presently standing in front of the large stone tablet. This stone tablet was similar to the one used to measure strength but with one small change, the color was different. The stone tablet to measure strength was a deep obsidian black, but this stone tablet to measure soul force was actually red, a deep crimson red that was somewhat like fresh blood.

Lin Ming was a junior of the Lin Family, and had his soul talent and martial talent grade measured as soon as he was born, and both were at medium third-grade. This talent level was decent; if Lin Ming were born in the Lin Family then he would have been worthy to raise and cultivate, but it was a pity that he had been born in the branch family. This medium third grade soul talent and martial talent was insufficient to make him an exception that was directly added into the line of male family direct descendants.

To a child, between soul talent and martial talent, the cultivation of martial talent was more important, as it directly related to that child's future achievements as a martial artist.

As for soul talent, that was negligible. This sort of talent was mainly related to occupations that needed soul force, such as inscription masters, refiners, apothecaries, alchemists, and so forth. Generally speaking, only an outstanding soul talent, such as a superior fourth grade or fifth grade would be worthy of having massive amounts of money spent by the family to raise into an inscription master, apothecary, or other niche occupations. A decent soul talent and below would be completely neglected.

Lin Ming knew this, that soul talent was completely useless in the Physical Transformation Stage. It would gradually become more useful after one reached Xiantian and began to cultivate their soul.

In Sky Fortune Kingdom, the majority of low level martial artists and warriors would not use their soul force at all.

However some of those who broke through the Pulse Condensation Period might begin to practice inscription. They would then learn soul law formulas, begin to condense their soul force, and become able to see certain things, such as the flow of true essence in treasures and would then be able to define and understand their weaknesses.

Elder Sun suspected that Lin Ming was a genius talent at soul force because of this, and brought him here to examine.

“Although you already said that you had your soul talent measured by your family, I think it might be good to measure again just in case. This sort of soul talent things is usually neglected and most of the time is a formality. Coupled with the fact that stone tablets aren’t necessarily accurate, there might be a mistake in the measurement.

As Elder Sun said this, he placed a small true essence stone in the center of the stone tablet. Although it looked somewhat similar, the cost of this small stone was much higher. This small true essence stone was actually a lavish consumable.

Lin Ming placed his hand on the stone tablet and felt the array activate with a flash. In the vast ocean of his mind he suddenly saw countless phantasmal images, a kaleidoscope of world images, and felt a tingling sensation in his innermost soul. This sort of feeling continued for several dozen breaths of time until he heard Elder Sun say, “Measured.”

Lin Ming opened his eyes and looked. He saw that the light beam of the stone pillar had risen to the fourth position and overflowed by about one-third. Primary fourth-grade talent?

Lin Ming looked a bit listless. He knew that his own soul talent had been measured at medium third-grade, how could it have randomly increased by so much?

It was just as Elder Sun said, was it a mistake when he had his soul talent measured before?

...

A sudden thought suddenly rose in Lin Ming's mind.

Is it possible that this talent change was related to the Magic Cube?

Was it because he had swallowed that soul fragment, that his own soul talent had risen from medium third-grade to primary fourth-grade?

Lin Ming didn't know anything about souls, but there was one thing he clearly knew. In the entirety of Sky Spill Continent's knowledge, talent was immutable and unchangeable. This was a fact!

Regardless of if they cultivated their martial talent or soul talent, it would never change again after birth. There were no rare material in the world that could change one's talent.

As for the memories that he had absorbed, they also did not contain any knowledge of any way this could be possible. But because the memories were incomplete, Lin Ming did not dare to affirm this as truth.

Was it possible that his soul talent had been measured incorrectly at birth? If swallowing souls could increase one's soul talent grade, then if those powerful elders of the Realm of the Gods might do so, then would everyone be sixth, seventh, or eighth-grade talents?

As Lin Ming thought this, he subconsciously traced his own chest where he could feel the Magic Cube. After the last time that he swallowed and absorbed a soul fragment, Lin Ming had been unable to enter the dreamland of the Magic Cube again.

Although he did not entertain any hope, if he did have a future opportunity to absorb a soul fragment again, then he would have to measure his soul talent to see if there was no growth.

Elder Sun naturally did not know these circumstances of Lin Ming, and he frowned as he looked at the results of the stone tablet. This primary fourth-grade talent left him feeling unsatisfied.

He originally had a little bit of hope that Lin Ming was a rare soul force talent genius, such as fifth-grade, or even the legendary sixth-grade.

If that was the case then Lin Ming would be sent to study inscription, alchemy, and no amount of effort or resources would be spared to raise them. When that time came, then the Seven Profound Martial House would be able to raise and cultivate Qin Xingxuan and Lin Ming, two genius martial soul talents, and their Seven Profound Martial House would obtain accolades and praise from the main sect. They might even have some hope to obtain precious medicines or elixirs. But now that small hope was dashed.

Elder Sun shook his head and sighed lightly with one small breath. He said to Lin Ming, "Come, I will lead you to receive your rewards."

....

"These are the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill?"

As he returned to his housing at the Seven Profound Martial House, Lin Ming looked at the two pills in the box on the table. His mood was inevitably excited. The harvest this time was just too great!

Of these two pills, one was refined from the marrow of a Crimson Gold Dragon and the other with the hundred year old gallbladder of a Golden Scarlet Snake. The Crimson Gold Dragon was a vicious beast of the fourth-grade. Even a Houtian expert would not even be a match

for one. As for the hundred year old Golden Scarlet Snake, although it was a third-level vicious beast, it lived at the apex of third-level vicious beasts and was also extremely scarce and correspondingly extremely rare.

These two precious pills were objects that had no market price, they could just not be purchased in the entirety of the Sky Fortune Kingdom. Even the Royal Family would be startled and moved by these!

“If I take these two pills, then my strength would increase by leaps and bounds, but...taking such a precious pill like this directly is too much of a waste. The memories of the elder had not only inscription techniques to increase the strength of treasures, but also to increase the effect of pills. He had studied them and learnt the inscription symbol to double the effect of a pill. He would just have to apply it to the pill and then take it...

The Realm of the Gods had unsurpassed inheritances and legacies. Regardless of whether it was Body Transformation, skills of martial arts or weapons, every skill and array had already been developed to the peak of possibility. It was not something that anything or anyone on the entirety the Sky Spill Continent could compare with, and the inscription techniques were also the same.

Inscription techniques in the Realm of the Gods were divided into four general categories; object inscription, medicinal inscription, body inscription, and soul inscription.

Object inscriptions were placed on rare treasure; it was the most simple and obvious.

Medicinal inscriptions were inscriptions for pills, elixirs, and other medicines; it would increase their effect or eliminate their side effects.

Body inscriptions were inscriptions that were placed on the body. It required absolute knowledge and attainments in inscription to use, and could increase the speed of cultivation and practice of a martial artist, and even their combat prowess.

Soul inscriptions were inscriptions of the soul. These techniques belonged to the absolute highest boundary and pinnacle realm of inscription techniques. Even the elder's memories of soul inscription were blank, perhaps they were incomplete, or perhaps he had no experience with them at all.

Sky Fortune Kingdom's inscription techniques were limited to object inscription. The overwhelming number of inscription masters had never given much thought to the idea that inscriptions could also be used in other places.

With Lin Ming's current skill, there was no need for him to even think about body inscription or soul inscription, much less try to attempt them. Medicinal inscription might be possible with more study, but first of all Lin Ming had been busy these days with his martial arts cultivation, and thus didn't have enough time to practice, and second of all, Lin Ming did not have enough money to buy materials so he had shelved that idea for future reference.

But now he had managed to obtain the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill. These two pills were miracle medicines; if he could earnestly study his inscription techniques then he would be able to greatly increase their efficacy.

Suddenly Lin Ming heard a knock on his door sound out like lightning. If not for the fact that the Seven Profound Martial House's door quality was very good, Lin Ming suspected that it might even be smashed apart!

Chapter 48: Inscription Master Examination

“Brother Lin, Brother Lin, quickly open the door!”

Lin Ming smiled when he heard this voice. It was Lin Xiaodong.

“Holy Crap! Brother Lin is my life’s idol! Dude, First place! You’re way to amazing!”

Lin Xiaodong had not been able to go to the second trial, therefore he didn’t know what sort of situation Lin Ming had been in, and had only just found out the good news.

“Mm. I was able to display some good results yesterday, and my recent progress was quite good, so I was able to attain first place.”

“Let’s walk, us brothers will drink.”

“Mmm, good idea! But now I don’t have time to have a meal, we have to go buy some things first.”

Lin Ming took out a piece of paper and began to write down the materials he needed for the medicinal inscription symbol. There were a great number and many different kinds of inscription symbols, but Lin Ming had decided on the simplest one, named the ‘Lower Spirit Cure Symbol’. This type of medicinal symbol could only be used on lower-grade pills. In the eyes of the ancient elder, the priceless Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and Golden Snake Scarlet Pill that could not be purchased anywhere in the entire Sky Fortune Kingdom could only be considered lower-grade pills.

With Lin Ming’s current ability, even drawing this ‘Lower Spirit Cure Symbol’ was already his limit. Beyond that, the many materials

needed for higher quality medicinal symbols, Lin Ming had never heard of at all.

Even this 'Inferior Spirit Cure Symbol' had many materials that were exceedingly rare.

Although Lin Xiaodong did not know much about inscription techniques, as soon as he saw Lin Ming write an entire page of materials, he was able to recognize a few of them, for instance 'fourth-grade vicious beast blood'.

"Brother Lin, you want to buy fourth-grade vicious beast blood? As if!"

It had to be known that the Crimson Gold Dragon was also a fourth-level vicious beast. Fourth-level vicious beasts were at least equal to a Houtian master. Although the rare vicious beast blood was not unable to be purchased in Sky Fortune Kingdom, it would be sold at an absolutely astronomical price. This sort of thing would only be shipped in from abroad, even one or two vials would be a thousand taels of gold.

Lin Ming continued to write, and the increasing numbers of materials made Lin Xiaodong feel increasingly fearful and apprehensive. He finally could not bear it and asked, "Brother Lin, do you have that much money?"

Lin Ming nodded. "Mister Muye gave me 15,000 gold taels in banknotes a few days ago. It was early payment for future 'Overwhelming Rune' inscriptions. I just need to deliver them to him later.

"1...15,000....heavens!" Lin Xiaodong gulped down his saliva. The last time was 9000 gold taels, this time was 15,000. He suddenly felt numb; it was as if gold had just become a number.

...

There was one place in Sky Fortune City that sold the most inscription materials. It wasn't the Hundred Treasure Hall nor was it any auction house. It was Sky Fortune City's Inscription Association.

In there were many rare and precious materials that couldn't be bought anywhere else, and the price was also a bit cheaper than the market price.

“What? Such a good place exists?” Lin Xiaodong felt this was inconceivable, even after hearing it straight from Lin Ming's lips. “This is impossible, unless the person in charge of the Inscription Association's trade union was crazy. If I were the one in charge, I would definitely hike the prices up.”

Lin Ming shrugged, “This is what I heard.”

They spent some time visiting several high-end shops and also the official auction houses, but really didn't find the rare materials that they needed there.

“Then I guess we go to the Inscription Association.”

“Mm...seems like that's the only plan left. Lin Ming suspected that shopping that the Inscription Association required the high status of an inscription master. Until his strength and cultivation had caught up to his inscription technique level, Lin Ming did not want to expose the existence of his skill at inscription. This might cause much trouble for himself and even place him in dangerous situations. Although he had Muye's protection, Lin Ming did not want to trouble him too much.

...

“Not only do I need an inscription master certificate, but I also need contribution points to purchase any items?” After Lin Ming arrived at the Inscription Association, he had inquired to an elder sister there

about how to buy rare and precious materials, and had received this sort of reply.

“I knew it! There was no way such a good deal could exist! Lin Xiaodong crossed his arms in satisfaction. This was normal.

“What are contribution points?” Lin Ming asked.

“Mm...it seems your master is not an inscription master of Sky Fortune Kingdom,” said the elder sister who managed the reception desk, as she thought that Lin Ming was here to purchase materials for his master. “Contribution points are from contributions made by inscription masters that are recorded down at our office. For instance, if they completed some tasks, or duties, or missions that the Inscription Association issued, then you could obtain some contribution points. Or, you could hold a post or office such as association president and receive some points too. Certainly you could also give and trade contribution points with other inscription masters. There are also several different ways to obtain contribution points. If you would have a look at the rules of the Inscription Association you can see them. If your master intends to join the Inscription Association, he is welcome to.

The Inscription Association was a loose organization. Many inscription masters were old men who were only interested in learning and knowledge. They were usually recluses who did not have much contact with the outside and lived sheltered lives. If they had not set up a contribution points system, then the Inscription Association’s existence would be very dreary, and probably not have many inscription masters that would have joined. Even if they did join, very few would come to the trade market.

Lin Ming flipped through the Inscription Association’s rules. As long as he joined the Inscription Association, he would be able to immediately obtain 100 contribution points. There were also many

other ways listed to obtain contribution points, such as selling rare and precious materials to the Inscription Association.

“Pfft. If there are rare materials then you would use them, why would you sell them to the Inscription Association.” Lin Xiaodong snorted contemptuously.

Lin Ming said, “Sometimes there are too many of some materials and they cannot be all used, and are just sitting around uselessly. In that case, it’s better to trade for something useful. But this way of getting contribution points doesn’t suit me. The only road possible seems to be completing some sort of mission.”

Lin Ming turned to the reception elder sister and asked, “This elder sister, where would I go to complete missions?”

“To find missions to complete, you have to go to the mission hall. But, you can only enter the mission hall if you have an inscription master qualification certificate. If your master has any interest in this, he could personally come to have a look. There are many benefits to joining the Inscription Association.” The reception elder sister said with a very warm smile.

Lin Ming thought about it and asked, “Does the Inscription Association keep member identities confidential?”

“This is certainly a possibility. If your master has need of privacy then we can guarantee that we can keep all information pertaining to him secret.”

“Mmm. That’s good. How is the examination, could you take me to participate?”

“Mm?” The reception elder sister stared at him with wide eyes.

Lin Ming shrugged and said, “I’m the inscription master.”

“...” The reception elder sister took a step back and sized Lin Ming up from head to toe. She slowly opened her mouth and asked, “Could I... ask... what your age is?”

“15.”

“15 years old...?” The reception elder sister heard this and was left speechless. She guessed that the boy in front of her was under the tutelage of some mighty inscription master and had a certain level of talent, and probably also many achievements. But a 15 year old inscription master was just a bit too exaggerated. In these 80 years of the Sky Fortune Kingdom’s records, the youngest had only been 18 years old.

The only ones who had any hope of breaking this record were Qin Xingxuan of the Marshal’s Quarters and Wang Yuhan of the Inscription Association.

“This little brother, if you want to participate in the examination to be an inscription master, you need to prepare the treasure and materials.” The reception elder sister had only good intention as she kindly reminded him. Only after creating the inscription symbol could one see its quality and effects. Generally speaking, a new inscription master’s inscription symbols would have a very poor effect, and placing it on a rare treasure would be an utter waste of resources. The Inscription Association was wealthy, but they could not afford such a wanton waste of resources and materials. Therefore, the examination required that all examinees bring their own treasures and materials, as they did not want some random half-baked inscription apprentice to come and test his luck. After all, materials for inscription symbols were very pricey.

“Mm. I knew that. If possible I’d like to purchase some good rare treasure for this examination. I can disburse the costs of purchase.” As Lin Ming said this, he reached into his clothes and withdrew several shiny gold banknotes, all of which were worth 1000 gold taels.

Seeing Lin Ming casually bring out so many gold banknotes, the reception elder sister was astonished. This was an amount of gold that not even the juniors of aristocratic families would have.

She looked to Lin Ming and saw that he wasn't treating this as some joke. The reception elder sister said, "Since you insist, please come along with me."

Lin Ming followed the elder sister and entered the interior of the Inscription Association. Lin Xiaodong also followed along. As they passed through the halls, they saw all kinds of glowing and complex symbols and runes along the walls; Lin Xiaodong was very excited by everything he saw.

The decoration of the Inscription Association was not luxurious, but it had a very spacious atmosphere. There were no murals or ornaments on the walls. Instead, there were complex and unique runes dotted around everywhere. Each rune was a metal sculpture that was full of texture and seemed as if it had come to life; it gave off a very ancient and mystical feeling.

"We're here." The reception elder sister opened a door and waved them in.

Here was the Inscription Association's inscription room, which also served as the examination space.

"Mmm, thank you elder sister."

As Lin Ming walked in, he saw that the inscription room was about 100 feet long and wide. There were several stone platforms suspended in the room. In the center was a stone platform that was covered with many different materials. Above this one was a young girl of about 15 or 16 years of age who was drawing symbol after symbol in the air.

The young girl's ten slender and jade-like fingers jumped and weaved in the air. The girl's watery eyes were fully focused on each symbol as she traced them, and her full attention was devoted to her work. She simply did not notice Lin Ming and Lin Xiaodong's arrival. The manner in which she drew the inscription symbol was extremely skilled. She was like a superbly skilled musician, and each symbol was a beat in the air that she was nimbly handling.

Near the young girl was also an old man. He sat behind her on a large round-backed wooden chair looking as if he were meditating with his eyes closed. But Lin Ming could see the reality of the situation; the older man's soul force had been placed on the girl's body to assist her, and each rune the girl drew was within the grasp of the old man.

Chapter 49: Bright Buddha Plucks the Lotus

“What a strong soul force.” Lin Ming thought with a hint of shock. Even Muye’s soul force was inferior to this old man in terms of precision. Muye was certainly someone who focused the majority of his life’s efforts on cultivating the martial path; being an inscription master was only an occupation he had on the side. But this old man was a professional inscription master. To a true lifelong inscription master, cultivating on the martial path was only a means to extend their lifespan and give them more time to study the infinite mysteries of inscription techniques. Such a person is truly awe inspiring in the achievements that they would accomplish in inscription.

Lin Ming stopped watching after a while and turned around to see Lin Xiaodong unblinkingly staring at the young girl. What a piggy little brother! Lin Ming felt a big headache coming as he saw Lin Xiaodong’s enraptured appearance. He immediately elbowed Lin Xiaodong. Lin Xiaodong was startled with some embarrassment. He was clever but had a slow mind, and scratched his head innocently.

By now Lin Ming had noticed a change in the fluctuations of the young girl’s soul force; there was a glimmer of volatility. The brilliant overlapping inscription symbols in front of her began to spark and smoke. It suddenly exploded into a cascade of colorful lights that shot out everywhere.

The young girl looked spent, and she said with a frustrated sigh, “Grandpa, I failed again.”

The old man who had been sitting peacefully as if he were meditating opened his eyes and said with a smile, “Yuhan, you already did very well. If this continues, after another few months or a year, you will be able to attain the certificate to become an inscription master. Before,

grandfather here had attained his certificate when he was 18 years old. You will probably be 16, or 17 years old at the latest.

This girl was the Inscription Association's talented inscription genius, Wang Yuhan, and the old man was her grandfather, the President of the Inscription Association, Wang Xuanji.

"Mmm... but compared to Qin Xingxuan, she is half a year younger than me and yet is already equally matched in inscription techniques with me. Also in these past few months there has been a significant reduction in the speed of my inscription progress and I don't know why."

Geniuses and talents would always end up comparing themselves with each other. Wang Yuhan admitted that there was no way she could pass Qin Xingxuan in terms of martial arts cultivation, but inscription was her main occupation and she did not want to lose to her in this.

Seeing Wang Yuhan and Wang Xuanji talking, the reception elder sister respectfully walked over and said, "Association President."

"Mm? What's the matter?"

The reception elder sister hesitated before he turned to Lin Ming and said, "This young man would like to participate in the inscription master examination."

"What's your name? How old are you?" Wang Xuanji asked.

Lin Ming hesitated a moment. He had not thought that this old man would be the Inscription Association's president. In his capacity as president of the Inscription Association, it was unlikely that he would covet anything of Lin Ming's. As long as he didn't reveal his knowledge of medicinal inscription or body inscription that the Sky Fortune Kingdom did not possess, then he should have no problems.

Lin Ming was wary against the gangsters and criminals who would covet possessing him over a few tens of thousands of gold taels. As for Wang Xuanji and MUYI and other characters like them, they would only see Lin Ming as a talented inscription genius of the younger generation.

Thinking this, Lin Ming truthfully said, "Lin Ming, 15 years old."

Hearing 15 years of age, Wang Yuhan's eyes widened as she looked over Lin Ming up and down several times. Was this young boy also a genius? His age was younger than herself and his cultivation was not high; was this young boy just whiling away his time for some entertainment?

However the Inscription Association did not provide the materials or the rare treasure, and people who looked to mess around would not come here, as it would take several thousand gold taels. If they did then they would have to have some serious brain damage.

"You will need to provide your own materials and rare treasure, do you know this?"

"Mm. I know. I would like to purchase them from the Inscription Association." Lin Ming took out a piece of paper with a small list of materials as he said this.

Lin Ming had decided upon the 'Overwhelming Rune', actually a simplified version. The simplified version did not need Sky Worm Silk and was naturally much easier. However, its effect was a bit weaker and it did not have an inscription technique in it.

His goal was only to pass the examination; there was no need to create a scene and shock everyone. The 'Overwhelming Rune' also contained some inscription techniques that had been lost in the Sky Fortune Kingdom, and Lin Ming did not want to expose these.

“If I could purchase these materials, thank you.” Lin Ming handed the detailed list to the reception elder sister.

The reception elder sister took the list in hand and received a nod of confirmation from Wang Xuanji. She said, “Very well. May I ask what sort of rare treasure you will use?”

“I want to use a sword. Yes, would the rare treasure belong to me after I place an inscription symbol on it?”

“Certainly. The treasure and the material are originally purchased by you for the examination. Please come and choose a sword with me.”

“Mm. Good.”

As Lin Ming left, Wang Yuhan was still looking at his back until he vanished, and she muttered, “Grandfather, this youth is only 15 years old and wants to test as an inscription master. If he passes the examination, then I will lose out not only to Qin Xingxuan but to him.”

Wang Xuanji replied with a smile, “The examination to be an inscription master is not some easy test. Since this young boy dares to take the test as an inscription master, then he must have his own unique ability, and is probably not someone from the Sky Fortune Kingdom. He might be a disciple of some reclusive master. Since his natural talent is outstanding and he practices diligently, he wishes to take the inscription master examination at 15 years of age and sweep away the younger generation of Sky Fortune City’s inscription talent, and create his own legacy and fame. Haha, but this is not that easy.”

As Wang Xuanji said this, he lit a sound transmitting talisman and passed a message to the two inscription masters who were usually responsible for the inscription examination, and bid them to come together.

Wang Yuhan bit her lip and whispered, "Mm, I will not lose to him. I will not lose to Qin Xingxuan."

...

The Inscription Association had rare treasures they specifically kept to use in the examinations. Lin Ming looked at his options until he selected a very good long sword and said, "This one."

This sword was valued at 3600 gold taels and was one of the more expensive treasures in the storehouse. The reception elder sister was a bit surprised; generally those that participated in the inscription master examination would choose a more modest and less expensive treasure. This young boy actually chose something so expensive; it must be that his family was ridiculously wealthy or he was confident in himself.

Lin Ming had his own ideas. Since he had to choose a rare treasure to use, he could not naturally choose something that would be wasted. It was best to choose a superior quality treasure to combine with a good inscription symbol to sell at a high price.

"Our treasures, once sold, cannot be exchanged." The reception elder sister said. She did not want Lin Ming to feel as if he would be cheated, and wanted to make sure that this sword was the one he wanted.

Lin Ming took out four gold banknotes and said with a shy smile, "This I certainly know."

"Mm. Then come along with me."

After the payment had concluded, the reception elder sister brought Lin Ming to return to the examination room before she left.

After re-entering the inscription room, Lin Ming saw that two other people were in the room who looked to be about 40-50 years of age.

One was a middle-aged man wearing a long green robe, and the other was a smiling man, who looked somewhat like a perpetually happy, very kind and very fat old man.

These two were the examination officials of the Inscription Association that were responsible for the inscription master examination. Wang Xuanji usually did not join these examinations, but this time had had some interest in staying and observing.

“Are you ready?” Wang Xuanji asked.

“Mm.” Lin Ming nodded. He placed the long sword on the inscription stone platform. The materials for this symbol began to unfold one at a time. The Inscription Associations materials had already been processed quite well, and did not require Lin Ming to grind, purify, melt, or do anything else to them.

The middle-aged man who wore a long green gown gave Lin Ming a blank look and said, “The time limit for this examination is two hours. If you have three consecutive failures then you will fail. If the end product has less than a 20% increase in strength, then that is also a fail.”

“Understood.”

“Good. You may begin.” The middle-aged man turned over an hour glass, and the sand within began to silently pass.

Lin Ming sat in repose with his eyes closed for a moment. He revolved the true essence in his body until it reached an optimal condition, and then placed his hands outwards. A few small drops of blue colored juice jumped to his palm as if they were under Lin Ming’s control.

This was only a simple gesture, but the people present were able to feel the young man wrap the blue colored juice in a strong soul force.

“This soul force... I’m afraid this young man might be a fifth-grade talent.” Wang Xuanji said with surprise.

“No wonder he dares to take the test at only 15 years of age, he has some ability.” The middle-aged man said as he slowly nodded.

Wang Yuhan pursed her lips. She naturally also noted Li Ming’s soul force and she muttered in her heart. “Fifth-grade soul talent!? That’s the same as me. Before now the only rival I had was that Qin Xingxuan, now there is another!”

Fifth-grade talent was very rare. Generally speaking, a martial artist’s soul talent and martial talent did not have too large of a difference, but the soul talent was usually lower than the martial talent. Therefore a high grade soul talent was especially rare. If a fifth-grade martial talent was only seen once every decade, then a fifth-grade soul talent would be seen once every two, or even three decades.

Wang Yuhan’s martial talent was only fourth-grade, but her soul talent was actually higher than her martial talent. This was likely something that she inherited from her grandfather.

Wang Yuhan’s medium fifth-grade talent was absolutely the top tier of inscription talents that was only seen once every several dozen years. In addition, Wang Xuanji had been gently guiding Wang Yuhan since childhood. Now in terms of inscription techniques and talent, she was similar to Qin Xingxuan, but she was also older.

Lin Ming did not have a fifth-grade soul talent, but the soul law formula that he used was the ‘Overbearing Soul Tactic’, which originated from the Realm of the Gods. Therefore he was able to congeal his soul force well and give the impression that his arms had strings on them.

If that initial movement of Lin Ming’s had made Wang Xuanji feel startled, then the following movement made everyone doubt its possibility.

When the blue colored drops reached Lin Ming's fingertips, his fingers moved in a series of movements like a blur. The droplets were gently pulled apart with the stretches of his fingers like they were glimmering azure meteors in the night sky. Faint afterimages followed each movement, like the tails of glistening meteors as they traced through the air.

In the time of a few blinks, a complex symbol had already been completed.

Wang Xuanji inhaled a sharp breath, and the smiling old man's smile also froze.

“Bright Buddha Plucking the Lotus!”

A layman would only watch for fun, but an expert would see the way. Lin Ming's hand movement was like the passing clouds and flowing rivers. There was a special term for this among inscription masters, called the 'Bright Buddha Plucking the Lotus'. The Bright Buddha was an myth of ancient times called the Thousand Finger Buddha. The fable said that the Buddha had ten hands, each with a thousand fingers. Every year in the Bright Buddha's garden, the water lotuses would bloom and he would collect the seeds. In a single move, the Bright Buddha was able to pick out hundreds of water lotus seeds. Therefore the ancient religious texts described this as 'Bright Buddha Plucks the Lotus', and the inscription masters co-opted this word to describe peerless great masters of inscription who would draw inscription symbols so speedily that there would be shadows left behind.

Certainly if they discussed only the speed of drawing, then some inscription masters with a higher cultivation in martial arts would be quicker, but if they wanted to maintain their soul force at such a high speed and not lose any stability or accuracy, then that would be more difficult than ascending to heaven. This sort of shadow that was

created, one would only be able to practice it with heaven defying perception and painstaking effort!

This young boy was how old? Even if he started to practice inscription techniques from within his mother's womb, he would not be so adept at such finger speed!

Chapter 50: Obtaining the Materials

Wang Xuanji was able to quickly discover that this youth's drawing technique did not originate from any school of learning in the Sky Fortune Kingdom. His techniques looked more complex, and were incomparably smoother.

"This youth's master's sect is not from roots of the Sky Fortune Kingdom!" The middle-aged man said.

"Mmm. And moreover, their school of training is much more progressed than we are."

Colorful lights blossomed together in midair. Their paths interweaved trails of light in the audience's widened irises, leaving a bright and shimmering blur behind. Wang Yuhan held her breath, the soul force in that symbol gave a feeling of the most exquisite and careful changes of energy.

When drawing an inscription symbol, the most difficult task to grasp was to assure that the soul force was carefully calculated for every slight nuance; the smallest inaccuracy could cause complete failure. But in this young man's hand, each small change was as if it were instinctively exact. Under his deft hands, he drew symbol like a painter who was free-hand drawing the flowers and birds, as those small birds were spreading their wings in a wish to fly.

At first, in Wang Yuhan existed a secret fear that she would be surpassed by this young boy. She had hoped that he would not be able to pass this examination. But at this point, she was already thoroughly enraptured in utter admiration and amazement. On the contrary, now in her heart she wished that he would never stop, that this perfection could continue until the end of time and in her heart was not even the tiniest shred of regret

This feeling, it was the same as musicians that longed to hear the sounds of the divine songs of nature and gods in full bloom, or the artist who yearned to see the most marvelous and splendid painting that had been handed down by the greatest painters of the past generations. Only this sort of feeling could cause a human to abandon all distractions and pursue the peak of their craft.

Seeing the dedicated facial expression of this meticulous young man, Wang Yuhua finally was able to understand why the cultivation growth of her inscription technique had come to a standstill. It was exactly because she cared too much about Qin Xingxuan, and feared that the path she walked on would be overtaken by a girl who was half a year younger than she was.

But now, seeing Lin Ming's perfect inscription technique, she was suddenly enlightened with the truth. This land was endless and boundless; there were countless peerless talents and geniuses like herself. Being number one among the youths of Sky Fortune Kingdom in inscription techniques was merely idle vanity. There was no significance in whether she was surpassed by Qin Xingxuan or not.

What she pursued would no longer be Qin Xingxuan's shadow, but beyond her. What she would pursue was not being the number one inscription talent in the Sky Fortune Kingdom, but to reach the pinnacle of inscription.

One minute and one second had passed. In front of Lin Ming, the number of symbols and runes was increasing, as they began overlapping in midair with light and dark twinkles, as if they had a living, breathing rhythm. Lin Ming was already familiar with the 'Overwhelming Rune', and drawing it was easy. The peak of the Second Stage of Body Transformation allowed Lin Ming to have enough true essence to support the entire process; he did not need to suffer hardship like he had a few months ago.

Today, Lin Ming's inscription drawing had gone especially smooth. He had invested his total attention into creating the symbol, and had forgotten that this was an examination. He fully finished the dozens of colorful and brilliant symbols and runes, and then after a flash of light, Lin Ming's soul force brought them all together as one, and they condensed into a square inch of a flame symbol.

This time Lin Ming did not place this symbol onto a piece of symbol paper, but instead took it to the table with the longsword, and with a flick of his finger, the symbol fell onto the longsword with a 'chi chi' and branded itself onto it. Its final appearance was like a raging flame.

Completion.

Seeing that sword in Lin Ming's hand, Wang Xuanji's heart was enraptured and gave endless praise. His eyes fell on the blade of the sword and he could naturally see the potential of that flame symbol as it exuded a sense of nature. He immersed his soul force into it, and felt that the true essence circulated as easily as breathing.

Wang Xuanji was able to affirm that it was a perfect inscription symbol. But the one who drew it was a mere young boy whose true essence was at the Second Stage of Body Transformation. How much could this symbol increase the strength of the weapon?

The inscription symbol's talk of 'increased strength' was not the sharpness of the blade, but the circulation and flow of true essence. If the inscription symbol was on symbol paper, no one would be able to determine how much it would increase the strength. If it was on a rare treasure like a weapon, then an experienced inscription master would be able to pour his true essence into the treasure and see how the flow of true essence was affected by the inscription symbol. They would then be able to tell what percentage of strength the inscription symbol would increase the rare treasure by.

Wang Xuanji raised the long sword in his hand and concentrated his true essence into it. He closed his eyes and let the sensations wash through him. A moment later his eyes opened, and although he had already expected this in his heart, he was still surprised.

The inscription symbol's increased strength amounted to about 32%. This was the standard of a master class inscriptionist!

"32% increased true essence strength....." Wang Xuanji exclaimed.

"Oh?" The middle-aged man's eyebrows rose and he took the long sword in his hand. Generally, the primary beginning inscription master would find even a 20% increase in strength difficult. That this youth could reach 32%... it had to be known that after 20%, every little bit further was much more difficult.

The middle-aged man had worked as an examination official for many years now. When it came to evaluating an inscription symbol, he was faster than Wang Xuanji and could obtain a more precise result. "Between 32% and 33%."

The middle-aged man laid down the long sword on the table and sized up Lin Ming. Where did this kid come from? He just came out of nowhere. Did he have any friends? Companions? Is it possible that he is the disciple of a master from some ancient sect? By why would the disciple of an ancient sect come to a small place like this Inscription Association at Sky Fortune City to apply to become an inscription master?

"Congratulations, Lin Ming. You've thoroughly passed the examination." Wang Xuanji said.

"Thank you, Association President."

"Mm. Are you willing to join our Sky Fortune City Inscription Association?" Wang Xuanji casually asked. In his view, disciples of these ancient clans would not join the Sky Fortune City's Inscription

Association. If ten were asked, ten would turn it down. He hadn't imagined Lin Ming would nod and answer, "Yes, I want to."

"Oh?" Wang Xuanji's eyebrows rose. "You want to join our Inscription Association?"

"Mm. I came here to participate in the examination for this reason."

"This..." Wang Xuanji felt strange in his mind, he could not understand Lin Ming's reasons.

"Mm. To tell Association President honestly, I joined the Inscription Association to earn contribution points to buy materials."

Buy materials? If you needed rare and precious materials then you would need contribution points. There were countless ways to use these materials. Was it this boy that wanted them? Or his master?

His master must be some senior of unfathomably high skill. Why would that sort of person look for materials in a small trade union in a small place like Sky Fortune City's?

Wang Xuanji thought about this for a long time, and with a bit of hesitation said, "You, if you sell this sword to the Inscription Association, I will trade you 3000 contribution points to purchase materials."

Lin Ming startled and was immediately overjoyed with happiness. He had worried that he would have to complete a number of missions. He didn't think he would be so lucky that Wang Xuanji would propose to trade this sword for 3000 contribution points. Before, he had looked through the list of precious materials that he needed for his medicinal inscription, and 3000 was not a small amount. It was enough to purchase the materials that he needed.

"This Association President old man probably wanted to buy my sword to study it. But the inscription techniques are complicated and

diverse. Even someone well versed in inscription techniques would find it difficult to examine, even if they were careful and spent a lot of time. Perhaps he wanted to unravel some mysteries of the inscription symbol and reproduce it, but even that is impossibly difficult. If he buys this sword, he probably won't be able to find anything."

Thinking like this, Lin Ming said, "Thank you Association President, I was sorely lacking contribution points."

"There is no need to be polite. If any day your teacher comes to Sky Fortune City, please welcome him to our Sky Fortune City's Inscription Association as an honored guest." There were two reasons Wang Xuanji gave Lin Ming such favorable conditions at the start. First, he wanted to study the sword, and second, he wanted to win over Lin Ming, and possibly have the opportunity to know the mysterious sect behind Lin Ming.

"Fourth-level vicious beasts blood, 1 jin. 1100 gold taels, 150 contribution points."

"Sky Blue Cloud Flower Seeds, 12. 600 gold taels, 80 contribution points."

"Dragon Bloodroot Juice, 1 jin. 600 gold taels, 60 contribution points."

The one in charge of the sale of rare and precious materials was a 40-50 year old middle-aged woman. She was comparing her supplies as she read down Lin Ming's list, and quoted the price each time it matched. For every match, she would stop and look at Lin Ming. This little boy, he was buying so many rare and precious things, what was he planning on doing with them in the end?

Lin Ming had listed dozens of materials, including several precious and rare ones. For instance, the fourth-level vicious beast blood, a small vial would be able to match up against a rare treasure in price. If he had left the Inscription Association to buy it at market price, it

would have been at least 3000 gold taels, and even then he would not necessarily have been able to purchase it.

If this was half a year ago, Lin Ming would not even dare to dream about such things.

The amount of gold required quickly accumulated to 10,000. The contributions points needed also almost reached 2000. As Lin Xiaodong saw the required amount of gold rise, all he could hear was the unceasing drone of the abacus as it made pop pop sounds. Each pop made him feel fearful and apprehensive of the next item, but soon all he felt was numbness. He had finally seen what people called spending money like running water.

“Total price, 10,000 gold taels and 2100 contribution points. Would you like to confirm this purchase?” The middle-aged woman let down her abacus and asked Lin Ming. Even an inscription master of Sky Fortune City who was of great learning and fame, and was also noble, would not buy so many rare and precious materials. Who was this little guy? Where did he come into possession of so many contribution points?

“Mm. Yes, I would like to purchase these.” Ling Ming said and he pulled out the gold banknotes from his sleeves and also a points card. This points card had a card number that showed how many contribution points he had in the records.

“Ok...”

Chapter 51: Ranking Stone

As he returned to his residence, Lin Ming looked at the piles of materials in his room and his heart filled with anticipation and excitement. These materials would even make an inscription master of the Sky Fortune Kingdom feel like their hand was heavy; they would be very careful in handling these rare materials and would not dare to waste a single bit. To them, an inscription symbol that used a few of these materials was already extraordinary and would be a very complex inscription technique, but Lin Ming wanted to create a medicinal inscription symbol, and that actually required the use of all these materials. Even with Lin Ming's current inscription skill, there was no certainty at all that he would be successful.

“If I can successfully use the ‘Lower Spirit Cure Symbol’ on the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, and eat them, my strength would definitely rise tremendously.” These two pills were already top quality medicines, in addition to the efficiency of the medicinal inscription symbol and his diligent practice of his Second Stage cultivation, then he might be able to break through into the Third Stage of Body Transformation.

Moreover, if he was successful in creating the medicinal inscription symbol, then his own inscription technique would advance further, and he would be ever closer to being able to create body inscriptions that enhanced speed and combat prowess!

Though Lin Ming was excited in his heart that the prospects seemed so magnificent and wonderful to him, he knew that in order to truly implement all these ideas, it would very difficult and he would have to expend at least twice the effort. Even if Lin Ming had fused the with soul fragment memories, he also needed to constantly practice the coordinations of his body movements and soul.

In order to save materials, Lin Ming used the old method that he had from the very beginning. He only used true essence, and did not expend any materials.

In training such skills, victory was attained by repeated and unrelenting practice. If 1000 times was not good, then he would practice 10,000 times. If 10,000 times was not good, he would practice tens of 10,000s of times.

Repeating these motions tens of thousands of times was tedious and exhausting of soul force. This sort of grueling feeling was like not sleeping for three days and three nights, and was the acknowledgement of support by hard work and stubborn effort.

Lin Ming had been practicing for only two days and his eyes were already bloodshot. He stopped practice to take a rest and didn't even have the strength to lift a cup.

“I used the ‘Overbearing Soul Tactic’, and I also bought pills that specialize in reducing fatigue and aiding in the restoration of soul force, and yet I still turned out like this. This medicinal inscription symbol’s difficulty is without a doubt several times higher than the object inscription symbol.”

“Tomorrow will be the admission day for the Seven Profound Martial House. It looks like it will be impossible to complete the medicinal inscription symbol before the admission day.”

From the end of the examination to the beginning of the official admission, there were three long days of relaxation in between. Tomorrow, he had to report to the Earth Hall at the Seven Profound Martial House.

The Earth Hall’s martial artists had an opportunity to challenge disciples of the Heavenly Abode once they reached the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation, Altering Muscles. Some martial artists who were at the peak of the Third Stage but had special circumstances

could also obtain the qualifications to challenge to disciples of the Heavenly Abode.

With Lin Ming's present strength, he was sorely lacking the qualifications to enter the Heavenly Abode.

Next day in the early morning, students of the Earth Hall were gathered in the back mountains. A tall, tanned, topless and red haired man walked in front of everyone with a black saber slung over his shoulder. He looked around at all of the youths present and opened his mouth to say, "Starting today, you lot have officially become disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House's Earth Hall! I am your teacher! My name is Hong Xi, but you may also call me Instructor Hong."

"This time the number of idiots who have passed the examination is 53! But standing here, 20 of you were the ones with the qualifications to actually enter the Earth Hall! Without a doubt, you are all extremely talented geniuses! I hope. But, do you think that just because you entered the Earth Hall that you are destined to become masters of your generation? Powerhouses could die early; peerless talents could fall from the sky. Only by unceasingly crawling upwards and surviving perils will you be able to have your name recorded throughout history!"

"Those of the Earth Hall have some possibility of being won over by forces of Sky Fortune City. Even though they will shower you with money and beautiful women and other sorts of enticements, you have all passed the Dream Trial test and have a heart of martial arts! But! Even a heart of martial arts can slowly be corrupted. These temptations might become the maggots that eat your clothes and gnaw at your will!"

"Remember this! Only strength is the most important! They want to win you over because you have the strength! If you do not have strength, then you have nothing! Come with me."

The red haired man said all these and then led the group to a place deep within the back mountains.

The lands occupied by the Seven Profound Martial House were broad and vast. The entire Zhou Mountain was the land of the Seven Profound Martial House. In the back mountains there were only a few buildings. The path was dotted with beautiful green grass, great mountains stones and ancient trees that seemed to come to life. Occasionally, water springs flowed to life, giving the beautiful image of spring come alive.

After they walked for about the time an incense stick takes to burn, they reached a giant cliff. The cliff was several dozen feet high, and its surface was polished as smooth and shiny as a mirror. On it, was densely engraved numerous names. The name at the top was as big as a bucket. It said: Ling Sen.

The names downwards were smaller, and they were written in lines row after row. Altogether there were 20 rows.

Lin Ming faintly guessed the purpose of this cliff. Hong Xi's words only verified his suspicions. He had said, "You saw the cliff, but the truth is that it is just an illusion. The names above are constantly changing; this is the Seven Profound Martial House's Ranking Stone. The Ranking Stone has the names of everyone from the Earth Hall and the Heavenly Abode. Their names are all listed. There are over 200 individuals, these people are you fellow senior apprentice brothers and senior apprentice sisters."

It really was some sort of ranking system. Lin Ming looked at the strange names and followed downward from Ling Sen. He read them and still did not see Qin Xingxuan.

Why didn't it list Qin Xingxuan? Lin Ming had some doubts; perhaps Qin Xingxuan was not included together with the disciples of the Heavenly Abode.

Lin Ming continued to look, and then after some time his eyes narrowed. He saw an extremely familiar name - Zhu Yan!

Zhu Yan, rank 39.

Heavenly Abode, 39!

Lin Ming took a deep breath. How long would it take for him to achieve this?

He continued downwards and was pleasantly surprised to see his own name. But immediately after him was that man, Wang Yanfeng. The rest of the 20 of them of the Earth Hall were listed. As for the others, their names were not written on the cliff ledge.

The Ranking Stone only showed the names of those in the Heavenly Abode and the Earth Hall.

Hong Xi said, "One way of the martial path is to hack your way through! If you wish to reach higher, then you must step on others underneath your boot! This land has no lack of talent! But do you know why we selected so many of you so called geniuses?"

Hong Xi spoke this far, and the disciple were stunned. One disciple said, "Instructor Hong, choosing a talent is naturally to raise them and help them cultivate."

"Raise them?" Hong Xi laughed and laughed again with unbridled impunity. You know how a beast trainer trains a vicious beast? They have the most excellent of systems. The beasts with the best qualifications and potential are chosen, and then reared. They are fed good, hearty meat daily, and trained. Then they put them in a cage and let them fight. Out of the several hundred beasts who began, there would only be one left; that is the king of the beasts."

"You lot are in this cage of beasts. On the path of being a powerhouse you will need to step on countless peerless geniuses and climb over

their corpses. Therefore the reason we chose and gathered so many talents is not to raise you, but in order to be raised for battle and slaughter! You are nothing more than stepping stones for the true talents to step on and climb higher!”

“There is no strongest, only stronger. You either step on the corpses and crawl up someone or you face the cruel death and are trampled underneath everyone else. This is the truth!”

Each of Hong Xi’s words hit the disciples like a steel ball. It made their hearts plummet into ice. The talents were not gathered together to focus on training, but only to be bodies for powerhouses to climb up and reach higher goals.

Hong Xi’s beast cage analogy planted a strong sense of crisis within the disciple. Even Lin Ming felt a surge of emotions.

“The last is the king...” Lin Ming clenched his fists and his eyes filled with thick fighting spirit.

“Good. Here are 20 jade slips. Inside are introductions to the rules and system of the Seven Profound Martial House. Your residence is arranged in the back mountains. Everything is written in the jade slip. Now you are all dismissed. We will officially begin lessons tomorrow.”

The red haired man waved his arms and 20 jade slips flew into the students’ hands. Lin Ming received one of them and he quickly sunk his soul force into it and saw where his own residence was.

“First I will find my place and settle down. Then I will create the medicinal inscription symbol and use it to raise my strength. The Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill I obtained is a miracle pill, helpful in making breakthroughs through bottlenecks. If I use an inscription symbol on it, it should be enough to break through to the Third Stage of Body Transformation.

Body Transformation had six Stages. Strength Training, Flesh Training, Viscera Training, Altering Muscle, Bone Forging, and Pulse Condensation. These six Stages were far removed from each other; wanting to breakthrough to the next would require a long period of time. Lin Ming had only been in the Second Stage of Body Transformation for over a month. He knew that making a breakthrough in a short period of time was not easy. But since he had the top tier pills, in addition to the power of the medicinal inscription symbol, breaking through was not impossibility.

“Lin Ming!”

As Lin Ming was thinking, he heard a loud voice and turned his head to look. He was surprised to see a young man in white clothing standing ten steps away with a sullen gaze staring at him.

This person was Wang Yanfeng. During the Seven Profound Martial House entrance examination, Wang Yanfeng had hated Lin Ming for snatching away his first place spot and even his Golden Snake Scarlet Pill. This was a huge blow to Wang Yanfeng and to him, the cause and instigator of all this was Lin Ming. This Lin Ming was without a doubt the pain of the flesh, the eternal thorn in his side!

“Those two pills, did you eat them?” Wang Yanfeng said with a cold tone through clenched teeth.

“What if I did, what if I didn’t?” Lin Ming answered quietly. These two pills were priceless, but he didn’t worry that others would covet them. In the Sky Fortune Kingdom, the Seven Profound Martial House was a supreme existence. They had terrible strength and an immeasurable background. If they gave a reward, then nobody would dare to steal it away.

“I know that you haven’t eaten them. Those two pills are strong and dangerous, your body simply cannot withstand them. Lin Ming, you are only a medium third-grade talent, you need to know that with your talent, those two pills - especially the Crimson Gold Dragon

Marrow Pill - would be wasted. At best you would only absorb 1/10 of it. Being eaten by you is a complete and total waste.

Lin Ming frowned. "What do you want to say?"

"I want to buy your Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill."

Lin Ming smiled. He didn't think that Wang Yanfeng would say such funny words to him. It really made one laugh. "Are you cracking a joke? You think I will sell it to you?"

"Don't reject it. Listen to my terms first."

Chapter 52: Juniors of the Lin Family

“I can lend you a jade slip containing my family’s handed down martial manual, the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’, but only for six hours. I can also give you 5000 gold taels! However there is just one condition; you cannot ever mention that I let you look at the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ or connect me to it. Otherwise, not only will I have bad luck, the Wang Family may hunt you down and kill you.” Wang Yanfeng said these words in a very low sound.

The Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill could not be bought with mere gold, and Wang Yanfeng at most had only a few thousand gold taels that he could trade with. Therefore he offered his family’s secret skill the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ as a lure. This was a skill manual handed down the generations of the Wang Family; it was very precious and was kept an absolute secret from all outsiders.

Wang Yanfeng guessed that the only thing Lin Ming knew was some heart mantra, and did not know any martial art skills. As long as Lin Ming did not mention anything about this then no one would notice. Wang Yanfeng thought that even this Lin Ming wouldn’t be so stupid as to let others discover he had learnt a forbidden Wang Family martial skill and thus bitterly experience the Wang Family chasing him down to kill him. This was why he was willing to take this risk out of desperation.

Wang Yanfeng estimated that with Lin Ming’s inferior natural talent, he would not be able to comprehend much with only six hours.

“The ‘Nine Paths of Truth’? And I can only look at it for six hours?” Lin Ming sneered. These conditions, he wouldn’t even disdain himself to glance at it. Compared to the ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’,

the 'Nine Paths of Truth' was nothing but trash. "I regretfully decline. I have no interest in this."

Wang Yanfeng blushed red like a tomato. "Lin Ming, are you even aware of your own circumstances! With your inferior talent it is impossible to breakthrough to the Third Stage of Body Transformation, even if you eat the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill! But if you practice a bit of the heart mantras of the 'Nine Paths of Truth' your control of your true essence will be enhanced and there will be endless benefits! This rare family martial skill handed down in my Wang Family cannot even be purchased by millions of gold!"

Lin Ming said, "The Seven Profound Martial House has no lack of heart mantras, and they are also much more profound when compared to the 'Nine Paths of Truth' by many fold. Why would I want to look at anything of yours?"

"Humph. The Seven Profound Martial House do have top-tier heart mantras, but these top-tier skills manuals are only passed down to core disciples. You know what a core disciple is? Those are the true disciples chosen for the Seven Profound Valleys. In the future if there are no accidents, then they will be able to go to the Seven Profound Valleys. Even senior apprentice brother Ling Sen of the Heavenly Abode does not have the qualifications to learn them. As far as I know there are only a handful of core disciples. Besides Qin Xingxuan, most aren't even from the Sky Fortune Kingdom but from some mystical cultivating martial family. You think to have any hope?! You're dreaming! Even I didn't expect your audacity!"

The large sects were brutally strict on the inheritance of their skill manuals. This was because they relied on the existence of these skill manuals to be the cornerstone of their power. Even in the Seven Profound Martial House, the majority of disciples could only learn second-tier skill manuals. Wang Yanfeng knew this as a fact.

However, Lin Ming had the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians'. Let alone the top-tier manuals within the Seven Profound Martial House, even the secret arts of the headmaster of a large sect would not make him feel a hint of jealousy.

Lin Ming said, "Just because you don't expect anything doesn't mean I don't have hope. I'm sorry but I'm busy right now. I'm going first."

"You! Good! Very good! You think that just because you managed to barely defeat me last time, you are so outstanding compared to me? You just wait, wait for me to take back everything that you took from me and I will stamp on you beneath my heel. You think that you can become a core disciple just by your own efforts? Don't make me laugh. I'll wait and watch as you become a stepping stone for others. The higher you stand, the more miserably you will fall!"

Ling Mind had completely ignored Wang Yanfeng's indignant cursing. Wang Yanfeng had already been defeated by him. In his mind, he may be weaker than others, he may be weaker than Zhu Yan, Qin Xingxuan, and Ling Sen, but he would never let himself feel inferior to someone he had already defeated. If one day, Lin Ming was beaten by someone he had already defeated, then he would reflect upon his mistakes.

Shortly before noon, Lin Ming moved all his belongings to his new residence. The lands of the Seven Profound Martial House were broad, and they had enough space to give each disciple of the Earth Hall a room of their own.

Lin Ming's room was located at a small secluded space in the back mountains. Its back faced the mountains and there was a deep, clean pool at the side. There were century old trees which formed a huge canopy that shaded the room. Even in the summer it was quiet and refreshing, it was an excellent place to cultivate in peace.

Lin Ming was satisfied with his new room. He sat cross-legged in bed and began to read the contents of the jade slip.

The jade slip explained the rules and systems of the Seven Profound Martial House, including violations, regulations, punishments, challenge rules, class hours, and practice arrangements and so on. He finally reached the end, where there were ranking rewards that were provided by the Seven Profound Martial House.

Seeing these, Lin Ming's interest was piqued. A major portion of the reason he joined the Seven Profound Martial House was for these resources.

The Seven Profound Martial House had many disciples; they were ranked on one's individual achievement in the Ten Thousand Killing Array

Several hundred years ago, the Seven Profound Valley was founded by seven supreme experts. Among them, one excelled in the creation and construction of magic arrays. Over the years, the array methods were handed down generation by generation within the Seven Profound Valleys. In the examination of the sect disciples, they would occasionally use illusionary killing arrays. The Seven Profound Martial House was under the governance of the Seven Profound Valleys; they naturally had advantages and customs associated with them.

The magic array used for ranking was called the Ten Thousand Killing Array. Once one entered, they would fight countless waves of enemies one after the other. In the midst of these enemies were vicious beasts, and also humans.

Their final ranking would be decided by the total number and cultivation of the enemies they defeated.

Among these enemies, the weakest was equal to a martial artist at the Second Stage of Body Transformation. If they defeated one Second Stage Body Transformation enemy they would receive one point, if they defeated one at the Peak of the Second Stage they would receive 5 points, Third Stage of Body Transformation 10 points, peak of Third

Stage 50 points, Fourth Stage of Body Transformation 100 points, peak of Fourth Stage of Body Transformation 500 points, and so on...

The enemies after one first entered the Ten Thousand Killing Array would be at the Second Stage of Body Transformation, and behind them the enemies would become increasingly more difficult to handle. The Fourth Stage of Body Transformation would come one after the other, unceasingly until death.

The final result was the accumulated score one had before death, and this would be demonstrated on the Ranking Stone.

If you had a high ranking, then one could obtain many advantages.. For instance, Soul Gathering Pellets. If you placed after 200, then you would receive a Soul Gathering Pellet every three months. If you placed in the first ten, you would receive 10 Soul Gathering Pellets every month. Ten Soul Gathering Pellets were equal to 2000 gold taels. This was an amount that not even a wealthy junior from an aristocratic family could disregard.

The reality was that the Soul Gathering Pellets were only secondary, after all, this was something that the rich could buy with money. But there were also resources given that not even the very wealthy could purchase, for instance, legacy skill manuals. If one placed in the top 200, then they could choose the most preliminary and basic of skill manuals. If one placed within the top ten, they could freely enter certain secret rooms of the Seven Profound Martial House and choose a skill manual they wanted to learn.

But if one placed in first placed, they could even have a chance to learn the most guarded core skill manuals of the Seven Profound Martial House. These were top quality skill manuals that only core disciples could hope to learn. Even juniors of the Royal Family and the highest ranking families would have no opportunity to ever study these.

Certainly, Lin Ming had not much interest at all in skill manuals, but instead the resources.

The Seven Profound Valleys was a sect that was proficient in creating magic arrays. At the beginning of the establishment of the Seven Profound Martial Houses, the Seven Profound Valley had once sent out Xiantian experts to place these magic arrays in many of the Martial Houses so that the disciples could use them for practice. Using these, one could practice their skills with twice the result and half the effort. But the number of these arrays was limited, and moreover they needed a massive number of true essence stones to activate and maintain. Therefore not everyone could enter these magic killing arrays, the qualifications one needed were similar to the ranking they had.

So in the Seven Profound Martial House, ranking was supreme. With a higher ranking, one would enjoy more resources. The strong get stronger and the weak get weaker. The disciples there were all talents; only by stepping on the corpses of others would they have a chance to bloom.

“I have already officially entered the Seven Profound Martial House. If I want to obtain sufficient resources, then I have first got to get a good ranking from the Ten Thousand Killing Array, but... my medicinal inscription symbol isn't ready. If I start practicing now, I might be able to begin drawing one in half a month. To display the maximum efficiency of the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, it will be worth it to spend the time doing so.”

Lin Ming said to himself, and begun practicing his inscription again...

On the morning of the second day, Lin Ming rose out of bed early and washed himself. Today was the official teaching day of the Seven Profound Martial House.

Teaching did not involve explaining skill manuals. It only involved cultivation tips, elementary basic knowledge, taking care of the body and so forth. In the core curriculum aspects, the Seven Profound Martial House was very loose. There were seven or eight possible courses they could attend and listen to. Each disciple chose based on their own interests and could even attend one at random, or even not even bother attending at all.

For today's lectures, the jade slip had already explained that it would be explanations of the foundation body techniques.

Although Lin Ming had inherited a highest quality skill manual, he was actually still very limited in the understanding of the basics. He had not received any legitimate martial arts training after all, and therefore these classes had a very high significance to him.

The location of this lecture was the Seven Profound Martial House's Martial Lecture Hall. When Lin Ming arrived at the Martial Lecture Hall, he found that it was already packed with people already sitting; there were probably around 70 or 80.

In this group were not only the 53 new disciples, but also some old ones who had come to listen.

The Seven Profound Martial House's Heavenly Abode and Earth Hall had altogether 230 disciples. The Human Hall had almost 400 disciples. Altogether the total number of disciples surpassed 600. Out of these 600 there were several dozen who came through their connections, although even though they did use their connections to enter, that did not mean they would be horrible.

In the Seven Profound Martial House, each martial artist could study for 5 years at most. 5 years later, if they were not yet 22 years old, they could apply to stay another year, and after that must graduate.

If one's strength was high enough, they could apply to graduate ahead of time, but, most students chose to stay the entire full five years, as

there were many resources that could not be found outside.

After Lin Ming entered the Martial Lecture Hall he casually strolled around for a place to sit. As he did, he noticed that there were a few people whose gazes drifted towards him.

Lin Ming looked back and saw that these people looking at him had friendly, smiling faces.

Mmm? Did these people know him?

“You are Lin Ming?” A handsome youth in blue clothes asked with a jolly smile.

“Mmm, may I ask who you are?”

“Let me introduce myself. My name is Lin Wu, this is my younger sister Lin Fengyuan.” The handsome blue clothed youth waved at a delicate young girl at his side.

Lin Wu, Lin Fengyuan, could it be...

Lin Ming was surprised, he opened his mouth to ask, “You are the direct descendant juniors of Green Mulberry City’s Lin Family?”

Lin Wu smiled and said, “You’re correct, we are all one family.”

The Lin Family was a large and respected family in Green Mulberry City. Although they did not have any noble titles that were bestowed to them, their family had several generations of doing business and thus had a very rich heritage. In such a large family, that there would be some outstanding young talents in the Seven Profound Martial House could be considered a normal matter. A few months ago, Lin Ming had borrowed a Pass Card to enter the Zither Hall; this was lent to him by Lin Xiaodong.

Chapter 53: Provocation

Although the Lin Family had a very rich heritage, if a family wanted long-term development, they had to concentrate their financial resources. The family business could only be passed onto direct descendants, otherwise the business would become more and more generation fragmented and within a few generations, more or less, the family would exist in name only.

Lin Ming was born within the branch family, and he was also separated by several generations, it was impossible for his family to be given a business; they could only be responsible for management. Since he was born, Lin Ming never had much contact with the direct descendant juniors of the Lin Family, so he simply hadn't recognized this brother-sister pair.

Lin Wu said, "We only found out a few days ago that the number one spot in the Martial House entrance examination was a junior of the Lin Family, it really gave us juniors a huge shock. And rarest of all, you were from the branch family. You managed to achieve this success without the resources and support of the main family; it really makes me feel ashamed and embarrassed.

Lin Fengyuan also interjected, she said, "Young Cousin, the news that you managed to obtain the first place result in the examination has already been passed onto the family; it even alarmed the head of the household! This is a remarkable achievement! The head of the household has already visited Young Cousin's parents and gifted the restaurant to Young Cousin's parents. He thanked the two elders for rearing such a wonderful talent in the Lin Family. When Young Cousin goes back, the Lin Family will go high and low to give you the most welcoming dinner for your reception."

After hearing these two siblings' words, Lin Ming was speechless. He hadn't thought that such a series of events had occurred. Regarding

the Lin Family, he had never felt much of a connection or sense of belonging to them, and as for the welcoming reception, he wasn't much interested.

However, what Lin Ming also knew, was that this was his parents' fondest dream and hope that he would obtain glory. For parents, who didn't want their children to enjoy the world and return home with riches and honor?

Moreover, his parents had a very strong sense of tradition, and forever hoped to bring honor to their ancestors and provide an umbrella for their descendants. The honor of being the first place candidate in the Seven Profound Martial House was an honor that would give the Lin Family bragging rights for several generations. The total population of Sky Fortune Kingdom was between 70 to 80 million. To be the first place candidate in the Seven Profound Martial House was equal to being at the forefront of all these people. Even setting a memorial for this occasion would not be an exaggeration.

Aware of this, Lin Ming felt a deep sense of satisfaction. All children naturally wanted to make their parents happy.

Lin Ming smiled and said, "When I first came to the Seven Profound Martial House, I was unfamiliar with the people here and the place here. It's my luck to be able to meet my family's elder brother and sister. Elder Sister was especially kind. Please take care of me in the future."

"Haha! Young Cousin is too polite. If you have any difficulties in the future, just open your mouth and say so. Although my own power is limited and weak, the family will still be able to bring some resources into Sky Fortune City."

"Thank you."

The two boys exchanged Sound Transmitting Talisman contact information. After this, the classroom quieted down. A voice said,

“The elder professor has arrived.”

Lin Ming looked up and saw an old man wearing a white robe walk into the Martial Lecture Hall. He grasped a thick old tome in his hand as he headed on stage. The fluctuations of his true essence was weaker when compared to Muye, he was probably at the Pulse Condensation Period.

In Green Mulberry City, Pulse Condensation Period martial artists were quite rare. But after entering the Seven Profound Marital House, he had seen Pulse Condensation Period experts everywhere. It seemed that all the instructors and professors were at least at the Pulse Condensation Period.

The old man placed his old tome on a long and narrow table and slowly said, “From today, I am responsible for lecturing all of you. This will include body techniques, sword techniques, attack skills, defensive skills, escape skills, and the most foundationary true essence and martial arts skills. If there are no further questions, we shall begin.”

The old man had a very succinct opening, and he began to delve into the topics he was teaching. He spoke with much knowledge about simple movement abilities and was able to sum up many useful skills, such as how to conserve or restore strength, when to avoid attacks or how to evade. For instance, how to forcefully reverse the body when airborne, or counter attack when being pressed upon by an opponent.

These skills were not in skill manuals, but by utilizing them, a martial artist would greatly increase their combat prowess. This was the difference between a seasoned veteran and a newbie. Of course, one had to actually engage in combat in order to realize the true art and use of these skills.

The old man spoke about these subjects for one hour, tidied up his desk and said, “Class ends here today. All new students may stay and receive your true essence stone.”

“True essence stone?” Lin Ming startled. He had heard some things about these true essence stones. They naturally contained true essence and had many uses such as activating magic arrays.

Lin Wu said, “Young Cousin, this true essence stone is a really good resource. It has true essence contained within, it can be used to speed up one’s cultivation, and is also very pure, so it is easy to refine.”

“Young Cousin, since you are the first place candidate, you can receive 10 true essence stones.” Lin Fengyuan also echoed, and in her voice was a twinge of envy.

“Oh? The true essence stone is that precious?”

“Mm. The truth is that the Sky Fortune Kingdom also had a lode of true essence stones to mine, but they have to turn them in to the Seven Profound Valleys. The large sects have many true essence stones, but only some of them trickle down into the general populace. There are very few true essence stones that you can buy in the Sky Fortune Kingdom.”

In the entire surrounding area of hundreds of thousands of miles, the Royal Family had to submit to the authority of the Seven Profound Valleys. Strength decided all; this was nothing surprising.

“Young Cousin hurry and go. Later you will be able to rank on the Ranking Stone and might even receive more every month.”

Lin Ming walked up and received his 10 true essence stones. The true essence stones looked as if they had many impurities like natural quartz, and were not transparent at all.

A true essence stone weighed about one tael after it passed through the cutting process. Lin Ming sent his soul force inside, and really did feel the pure true essence residing within.

After Lin Ming, Wang Yanfeng also received his true essence stones, but he only received five of them. The following Earth Hall disciples only received two. As for the Human Hall, they received one. Moreover they were told that if they were unable to enter the Earth Hall in the future, they would not receive any more.

Lin Wu said, "Young Cousin, we rarely meet, would you like to drink a cup or two with me?"

Lin Ming slightly hesitated, and then apologized, "I am very sorry but I want to increase my strength as much as possible before the Ranking Stone test begins. As for drinking, I will invite Elder Brother and Sister another day." The inscription technique practice required a massive amount of time. In addition to martial arts practice and attending class, Lin Ming had several things he had to do at the same time, and also needed to practise his breath control during his sleep time.

"Haha, Young Cousin is truly diligent in his cultivation. No wonder you have such high achievements at such a young age. Good, then we will gather again another day."

Lin Ming bid farewell to Lin Wu and his sister. After the lecture, he left the Martial Lecture Hall alone and came to a fork in the road. There he discovered Wang Yanfeng and two similar looking men standing together. Wang Yanfeng was frowning; obviously his relationship with these two was not good at all.

"Hey! Isn't this the amazing genius of the Wang Family, Wang Yanfeng? Haha, alas, Yuelu City's elite tournament first place winner, master of the 'Nine Paths of Truth'. Hehe, I thought you were so amazing and great, but you lost to some little boy at the Second Stage of Body Transformation. It really makes us Yuelu City youths lose face." A young man cynically said. His age looked to be 18-19, and he was at the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation. He held a longsword in his arms and had a very haughty appearance.

Wang Yanfeng's complexion immediately sank, "Liu Mingxian, you are just a cheap child of the Liu Family, and yet you also blabber on in front of me! You took so many treasured medicines and yet you couldn't even place in the top ten of the entrance exam! Even a pig that was raised by your Liu Family would do better compared to you!"

"Hey! You say that I am a pig? Very good, then how about we compare? Let's see if you can step on me beneath your foot." Liu Mingxiang said with disdain, a playful smile hung on his face.

Wang Yanfeng stopped speaking and clenched his fist. The other was a man who was at the peak of the Third Stage of Body Training, and had also been studying at the Seven Profound Martial House for two years. Compared to him, he would most likely not be able to defeat him.

However, this was how things stood. Wang Yanfeng did not want to retreat, he knew that if he did not accept this challenge today, then this Liu Mingxiang would spread this news in all directions and say he was as timid as a mouse. "The 'Nine Paths of Truth' is famous everywhere. Liu Mingxiang, you really do not know what is what! Your talent is inferior to me so you want to use your age to beat me? An 18 year old against a 15 year old? Good! Very good!"

"What a joke and a half! If you were killed on the battlefield would you also complain that the man who killed you was older? Cut the chit-chat, do you dare have the guts to challenge me?"

"Why would I not dare!" Wang Yanfeng coldly snorted. Although he knew that this guy was stirring up trouble and goading him, with his arrogant disposition he still accepted the challenge. If he retreated then his spirit would be defeated, and it would break his heart of martial arts.

"Good. Then we will duel in accordance with the rules of the Martial House. Since we're battling, then we also must make a little gambling

stake. You had just received 5 true essence stones? Use them as your gambling stake.”

Gambling stake!

Wang Yanfeng clenched his teeth. He was not dumb, he immediately understood that Liu Mingxiang came today to intentionally provoke him for these 5 true essence stones!

This was a good premeditated plan!

But even if he knew this, Wang Yanfeng could not retreat. He could afford to lose 5 essence stones, and he might not even lose!

“If you want to bet, then let’s bet!”

Lin Ming watched the scene from a distance and only shook his head. The other party had obviously grasped the flaw in Wang Yanfeng’s character, and had provoked him with his loud mouth. If Wang Yanfeng had been timid and retreated, then his loss would be even greater. If he avoided the fight and swallowed the insult, this would be a dark day for his martial arts cultivation!

Martial arts cultivation involved not only Body Transformation, but also cultivation of the mind. Cultivating the mind involved being true to you nature and living life freely. If one only kept bearing insult after insult, then their cultivation would halt.

Perhaps Wang Yanfeng would lose. These two were experts at the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation and had practised at the Seven Profound Martial House for a long period of time. Their battle prowess might be comparable to a martial artist at the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation. With this strength, even Lin Ming did not have a shred of confidence.

“This Liu Mingxiang is just too rampant and arrogant, but he is indeed an expert. And that youth standing near him is even more

unfathomable. Just with these two random people, I do not have any chance of winning. The Seven Profound Martial House is really a crouching tiger, hidden dragon.” Lin Ming thought that this was also normal. Everyone that entered the Seven Profound Martial House was a talent. They were geniuses who were older, and also had enjoyed the many resources of the Martial House. They practiced for such a long time, if they weren’t able to defeat a new disciple, then they had truly wasted their efforts.

This matter was irrelevant to Lin Ming. He turned around to leave and had just taken several steps when a voice sounded from behind. He stopped in his tracks. “Yo! Isn’t that the first place examination candidate? Lin Ming! What a fortunate meeting, a truly fortunate meeting.”

Although the words were pleasant, the provocative meaning behind them was too obvious. Lin Ming frowned. He turned his head to see that the man who spoke was the other youth who had stood beside Liu Mingxiang and Wang Yanfeng, the young man with immeasurably deep strength.

Chapter 54: Unfair Gambling Bets

Although the words were pleasant, the provocative meaning behind them was too obvious. Lin Ming frowned. He turned his head to see that the man who spoke was the other youth who had stood beside Liu Mingxiang and Wang Yanfeng, the young man with immeasurably deep strength.

This youth wore an entirely blue outfit, and in his hand he carried a long and narrow saber as wide as three fingers. It had a very short handle and did not have a hand guard, the blade was directly attached to the hilt.

Among martial artists, the number that used sabers was very few compared to the number who used swords. Lin Ming paid attention to this; with such a short hilt it would not be easy to wield. The saber didn't have a handle guard so their hand would be easily injured by the opponent. But, there was a benefit to this. The saber could display the fastest speed possible; it paid the price of sacrificing defense to pursue the limit of rapid attacks. To even dare to do such a rash thing, it proved that this youth's saber was extremely strong.

Perhaps this youth might even be fiercer than Liu Mingxiang. Lin Ming stayed on alert, because even if someone was arrogant, he would never look down on them. He hesitated for a second and then asked, "What do you want?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to experience the majesty and grandeur of the first place candidate. Have I misread, is your cultivation only at the Second Stage of Body Transformation?"

"Gee, this year's candidates are just so bad. A Second Stage Body Transformation boy could actually achieve first place. What rank of talent are you?" Liu Mingxiang echoed. The truth was that he had already inquired earlier and knew everything there was to know. Lin Ming was only a medium third-grade talent. This talent may have

been decent outside of the Seven Profound Martial House, but in the Seven Profound Martial House, it was the lowest of the low. He had intentionally asked this to provoke Lin Ming.

“What does my rank of talent have to do with you?” Lin Ming coolly replied. He knew that these two boys were just coveting his true essence stones and wanted to provoke his anger into making a gambling match with him as they had with Wang Yanfeng.

In Sky Fortune Kingdom, the authorities would not involve themselves in the scuffles between martial artists, because even if they had the mind to, there was no way they were capable of doing so. Therefore, the solution was a gambling on the martial arts duels. As long as both parties mutually consented, and agreed upon the conditions and prizes of victory, then the loser could not pursue afterwards.

This sort of proposition was very popular; even the Seven Profound Martial House was no exception.

“Hehe, of course it has nothing to do with me, I had only heard some rumors that brother Lin is a medium third-grade. I just felt this to be a bit strange. Although all the candidates of the recent entrance examination are trash, how could a useless, good-for-nothing piece of shit like you achieve first place?”

It may have been some hypocritical double talk at first, but these words directly had no consideration for face. In the view of these two youths, Lin Ming was just a small boy, to step on him, they did not even need to bother faking anything.

Lin Ming gave a frosty look and quipped, “You do this sort of thing in the Seven Profound Martial House? You depend on conniving and stealing a new disciple’s true essence stones to barely maintain your own pathetic and feeble existence? To do such shameful things, it’s best that you leave this place early, you are only losing face for your family.”

“Little boy! You’re courting death!” The youth’s complexion sank, “You are just some third-grade talent trash! Dog shit like you only managed to luck your way into the Seven Profound Martial House by eating some rare material! In my eyes, you are even less than dog shit!”

Listening to such vicious words, Lin Ming knit his brows, and felt his heart move to anger, “I originally didn’t want to meddle too much, but this is fine. Yes, this is fine. Since you really want to stir things up and make a gambling match with me, then if that’s the case...”

“Lin Ming!” At that moment a voice sounded from behind Lin Ming’s back. “Don’t fall into their trap!”

Lin Ming turned his head around to look and saw Lin Wu and Lin Fengyuan jogging towards him. The man who had spoken up and interrupted him was Lin Wu; his complexion wasn’t too good. These two were tricky. Concerning their family, Liu Mingxiang’s Liu Family was not inferior to their Lin Family. But when discussing strength, he was simply not a match for these two.

“Lin Wu, if you’re smart then you’ll immediately get the hell out of the way.” The youth with a saber coldly snorted and his entire body exuded a faint murderous intent. The boy’s saber was affected by this murderous aura and began to faintly ring.

This young man had already become one with his saber!

Lin Ming remembered, if a martial artist was able to become one with their weapon and communicate with it, that weapon would be able to sense its master’s intentions and true essence, and thus have such a response. This kind of boundary needed an extremely high level of talent and perception, as well as carefully cultivating a treasure. This was not something Wang Yanfeng could compare with. Although Wang Yanfeng also had a rare treasure, but when had usually used it, Lin Ming was able to see that it was full of flaws, and thus had been able to break through his martial skill with only a first.

Moreover this person had such a thick murderous intent; he had probably killed many people before. Such a person would not be easy to handle.

Lin Ming frowned. Whether this guy or Lin Mingxiang, they both appeared to be arrogant idiots with no brains, but they were actually hidden masters. He was definitely not their match.

Lin Wu was forced back by this strong murdering intent, and his complexion became increasingly ugly. Although he was also in the Earth Hall, his ranking was far behind these two, and was simply not their opponent. To make conflict with these two youths was absolutely unwise. He pulled Lin Ming sleeve and whispered to him, "Lin Ming, let's go."

"You want to leave? Haha! Lin Wu, you truly are worthy of the title cowardly turtle! I thought it was strange, how could a weak little coward like you infiltrate the Seven Profound Martial Hall's Earth Hall! Is Green Mulberry City's Lin Family a family that specially cultivates turtles? Especially cowardly turtles?"

Lin Wu lost his temper facing this unscrupulous ridicule, especially since it involved his family. He just couldn't bear this! He grasped his sword and stepped forward, but was stopped by Lin Ming. Lin Ming could see that Lin Wu was not this person's match.

"Don't be so impulsive. They came for me. A gambling fight isn't too bad."

"Haha! How straightforward and refreshing! This elder brother may as well be the little brother, heh heh. List the time and place you want." The youth said as he laughed with an arrogant smile.

Lin Wu urgently said, "Lin Ming, don't be tricked by him. The guy came for your true essence stones. His name Zhang Cang, he is at the peak of Viscera Training! And he is also half a step into the Altering Muscle stage. This person's blade work is astonishing. His Ranking

Stone place is 109, do you even know what sort of existence the 109th place is? A new disciple at Seven Profound Martial House who can enter above 180 is already rare. Even Ling Sen, Ta Ku, Zhang Guanyu and other characters like them that used to be first place candidates could not go above 130!”

Ling Sen? Ling Ming naturally knew this person. He was the elder senior apprentice of the Heavenly Abode. If he didn't factor in the several core disciples, then Ling Sen would be first place among everyone in the Seven Profound Martial Hall! His battle prowess might even surpass Qin Xingxuan!

Although he hadn't heard of Ta Ku and Zhang Guanyu, he guessed they were the same ruthlessly strong type like Ling Sen, and probably weren't too far off from him.

Lin Wu continued, “This Zhang Cang is the top character among those in the Earth Hall. After some time he will probably enter the Heavenly Abode too, there is just no hope of winning for you.”

Lin Ming replied, “Elder brother, I know.”

Lin Wu anxiously said, “Why are you so obstinate! You don't know where things stand! I know that you are strong and can fight someone at the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation, but which one of the disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House's Earth Hall is not a genius? You can fight others above your rank, and others cannot? With Zhang Cang's strength, outside of the Seven Profound Martial House not even martial artists at the peak of the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation are necessarily his match!”

What Lin Wu said was not wrong. The Seven Profound Martial House was where all the talented geniuses converged and gathered together. Daily battles among them were not uncommon. Although Lin Ming's current physical strength was comparable to someone at the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation and the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat

Meridians' was potent, it still was too difficult for Lin Ming to fight a fellow genius who was two stages above him.

As Lin Wu spoke, Zhang Cang crossed his arms over his chest as he watched with a grinning smile.

“Are you done discussing? Are you going to be a little turtle or are you going to bet with me?”

Lin Ming opened his mouth and said, “You don't need provoke me, there is no significance in stirring things up. I only want to know, what sort of gambling stakes will be involved?”

Chapter 55: Fight

Lin Ming opened his mouth and said, “You don’t need provoke me, there is no significance in stirring things up. I only want to know, what sort of gambling stakes will be involved?”

“Young Cousin, don’t promise him anything!” Ling Fengyuan also spoke up, but facing Zhang Cang, her words seemed a little weak.

Lin Ming waved a hand; he knew how things stood.

“Obviously we will be betting true essence stones. If you lose, then you hand those 10 true essence stones you received to me. If I lose, heh heh, then I pay you 20!”

“Good. You said just now that I could choose the time and place. For place, I choose the contest field. For time, we will duel each other one month from now, at a quarter to noon.”

“One month?” Zhang Cang asked with a stunned expression. He didn’t expect Lin Ming to decide on such a time. No matter how much time he had, it was useless. With his rotten third-grade talent, the longer the time, the more the gap between the two would grow.

“Good. If you want one month then it will be one month. I’ll let you live a bit longer.” Zhang Cang said as he looked at Lin Ming with some hesitation. He was also a young man and he was impatient to grab the true essence stones for himself.

Zhang Cang and Liu Mingxiang walked away with self-satisfied smiles, leaving Lin Wu behind to sadly shake his head and sigh, “Young Cousin, you were a bit too impulsive. New disciples that come to the Seven Profound Martial House are always full of self-confidence, but all these older disciples are also geniuses, each and every one of them. They have also studied at the Seven Profound Martial House for a long time, especially this Zhang Cang... Yeah, I

don't want to say, but these ten true essence stones bought a valuable lesson.”

Lin Ming laughed happily, and then said with a bright smile, “Thank you Brother Wu, you raised your head and defended me today. But I could not avoid this fight; otherwise it would weaken my will and disturb my heart, and distract my future cultivation.”

Ling Ming had decided to call this elder cousin of his from the family Brother Wu, as he had recognized Lin Wu. Lin Wu was a good person; when hard times had come, he had raised his head and defended him with courage.

As Lin Ming said this, he also noted Wang Yanfeng standing nearby and looking at him.

Seeing that Lin Ming looked back at him, Wang Yanfeng said, “I wish you good luck.”

“Haha, you too.” Because their situation was identical and they faced a common enemy, the enmity and tension in their relationship had relaxed.

“I won't lose. But even if I lose, I will win in the future! No matter if it's Liu Mingxiang or you!” Wang Yanfeng said these words then turned around and strode away. Lin Wu had also heard Wang Yanfeng's words. He realized that Wang Yanfeng also knew that it was almost impossible for him to defeat Liu Mingxiang.

But this was Wang Yanfeng's path of martial arts. Although he might be defeated, he would not let his heart be lost. It was not in his nature to run away.

“This Wang Yanfeng has a heart which does not concede, and his talent is also good. Later he might make something of himself. But if he wanted to enter a sect, he is still lacking...” The Skill Spill continent

was vast and boundless with countless living creatures. If one wished to pursue the pinnacle of martial arts, it was beyond all difficulty!

At this time Lin Ming suddenly remembered something, “Right, Brother Wu, did this sort of gambling fight happen often in the past? This sort of matter, it seems that the new disciple would generally be the one to lose? Does the Martial House not have some sort of regulating system?”

Lin Wu said, “No, the Martial House rules only disallow intentionally disabling the opponent, or killing them. As for all other matters, they let them pass. Therefore in the Seven Profound Martial House there are often outstanding and fierce battles that the Seven Profound Martial House is glad to see happen. However, someone bullying new disciples and taking their true essence stones is pretty rare. It causes a very bad reputation and lowers their prestige. Those that care about their reputation and their family’s will not do these things.”

“Oh? Is that Liu Mingxiang and Zhang Cang’s character that deplorable?”

“Liu Mingxiang has always been a rascal, but Zhang Cang... in truth he is a ruthless man. He stayed in the army for a period and killed many people. It is hard to determine his personality, but he acts recklessly. Betting with you isn’t too strange.”

“Right... does this Zhang Cang know Zhu Yan?”

“Zhu Yan? As far as I know, Zhu Yan and Zhang Cang are allies. They had joined the army together. Why do you ask this?”

Lin Wu did not know the relationship between Zhu Yan and Lin Ming, so he asked.

“It’s nothing...” Lin Ming lightly said. He did not want to discuss these personal matters with Lin Wu.

Lin Ming had thought it was strange that Zhu Yan hadn't acted yet. It seems that this Zhang Cang was one of Zhu Yan's men. There was no way Zhu Yan would let him peacefully enter the Seven Profound Martial House. Zhu Yan had wanted to stop him from entering, but the Seven Profound Martial House was under the governance of the Seven Profound Valleys, whose territory dominated hundreds of thousands of miles and even the many kingdoms. The Seven Profound Martial House was a supreme existence within the Sky Fortune Kingdom, and even the Royal Family would not dare to move a single hair of theirs.

So long as they were within the Seven Profound Martial House, even if Zhu Yan were a Houtian expert, he would not dare to commit murder in this crouching tiger, hidden dragon Seven Profound Martial House. Therefore the only action he could take was through the rules and regulations of the Seven Profound Martial House and look for someone to make a gambling fight with him. Then, under the guise of this, that person would intentionally cause a severe wound and ruin his heart of martial arts.

This person's strength naturally had to be higher by a mile. Zhang Cang of the Earth Hall was the most suitable candidate to crush him.

However, Lin Ming decided he would crush him instead!

Lin Ming took a deep breath and slowly clenched his fists. He hadn't thought that Zhu Yan had already been in the army. No wonder he could enter the Heavenly Abode with the strength of the peak of the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation. Without a doubt, his strength was greater than that of Zhang Cang's!

Good! Only like this would it be interesting.

Lin Wu noticed a slight change in Lin Ming's look, and said, "Brother, do you have some problem with Zhu Yan?"

Lin Ming nodded, "I do."

“This is...” Lin Wu listened with some worry, “Brother, I know somewhat of the reputation of those here. This Zhu Yan was at the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation when he defeated a 72nd ranked Heavenly Abode disciple to enter the Heavenly Abode. But that disciple’s strength was already at the early Fourth Stage of Body Transformation!”

Lin Ming was slightly stunned. The Fourth Stage martial artists of the Seven Profound Martial House could not be compared with those on the outside. Their strength was definitely number one, but yet they were still defeated by Zhu Yan at the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation. Obviously Zhu Yan was powerful.

“The Heavenly Abode has always had 72 students. Generally speaking, those that have strength at the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation have the qualifications to enter. The condition is only that they defeat any disciple of the Heavenly Abode, and afterwards they can enter, and that disciple is eliminated. Which one of the Heavenly Abode’s students are not peerless geniuses? To be able to defeat them with just the strength of the Third Stage of Body Transformation, this Zhu Yan is a dragon in human form, and is truly unimaginable. Brother, if you oppose him...”

Lin Ming smiled and said, “Thank you for the advice, Brother Wu.”

Lin Wu said, “Mm. You should end this conflict as soon as possible. This Zhu Yan also has a high status in the Zhu Family. Although he is not the eldest son of the first wife, his strength is too outstanding and he might be able to inherit the headship of the household. You may not know, but the current head’s daughter married into the Royal Palace. A real man can adapt to a situation. For a martial artist, enduring a bit of shame is also very important. When it is necessary, apologizing a bit would not lose you any face. Extending an olive branch can also be a happy resolution.”

“Mm. I understand.” Lin Ming smiled as he listened. He certainly knew Zhu Yan’s status, otherwise he wouldn’t have the ability to get Lan Yunyue to join the Seven Profound Martial House. That sort of matter could only be accomplished by his aunt.

“Well, if there is nothing else, then I will leave first.” Though they had only known each other for a short period of time, Lin Ming had a good grasp of Lin Wu’s personality. He was overcautious and a bit indecisive, and considered every angle in making a decision. This sort of disposition was actually not good to cultivate martial arts, as it would weaken the spirit and make it difficult to have great future achievements. It was no wonder he had such a horrible nickname.

However Lin Wu had a kind and good character; he was worth knowing.

“I have to say one last time Brother, you be careful. Don’t fret about those ten true essence stones; our Lin Family is not short on money. Although there are only a few of them, they can also be bought. Brother, the family will have high hopes and expectations of you in the future and will receive you well, losing a few true essence stones is nothing.”

Lin Ming laughed in his heart, and nodded with a smile, “I know.”

Chapter 56: Large Success of the True Essence Formula's First Layer

Chapter title is a minor spoiler so I've made it white, highlight it if you want to read it now, or wait and read it at the bottom of the chapter.

After he bid farewell to Lin Wu, Lin Ming returned to his residence. It felt like he was running out of time these days, as if he were in a constant race against the clock.

That Lin Ming agreed to the gambling match was not on the spur of a moment, in his heart he had already roughly calculated a plan. Lin Wu had said that the likes of Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guanyu, who were all top-tier talents, were unable to pass the 130th rank the first time they had entered the Ten Thousand Killing Array. Zhang Cang was placed 109; it seemed the disparity between them was truly enormous. Lin Ming was not arrogant; he believed that he could achieve a result that was more formidable than when Ling Sen had first entered.

Therefore he calculated that he needed one month.

Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guanyu had reached about rank 130 when they first entered the Martial House, thus, he might not even need one month!

To complete the medicinal inscription symbol would take at least half a month. The other half would be used to slowly absorb the efficacy of the pills and consolidate his strength. The Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill were two precious pills that couldn't be purchased with money. In addition to the increased pill potency provided by the medicinal inscription symbol, then it would absolutely be enough for Lin Ming to break through into the Third Stage of Body Transformation and even help him consolidate

his cultivation. Once that happened, Lin Ming and Zhang Cang's cultivation difference would be only a single stage!

If he relied on the Realm of the Gods' top-tier skill manual 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', and was still unable to cross the half boundary to the Third Stage and be unable to at least place in the top 100 of the ranking stone, then he would not feel any injustice at losing the gambling match! If so, then he would have to thoroughly introspect.

Thinking like this, Lin Ming started to practice his medicinal inscription symbol again. In terms of inscription skill, although he had obtained the memories of the elder's soul fragment, he was a junior who was still very shallow in skill. It was too early to talk about any innovation; the only thing he could do was to unceasingly practice the techniques, and allow the body movements to soak into his body like a fish in water.

Today, after Lin Ming practiced revolving his true essence as usual, he began to use materials to practice with.

The start was doomed to failure, so he had chosen the least valuable material.

Squeezing out the juice from a Jade Blue Flower, Lin Ming concentrated and used his soul force to move the juice in midair. He took a deep breath, calmed down and let his mind relax.

"Let's start! A new formula!"

Lin Ming silently hyped himself up and began to move his right hand in a succession of dim, illusory flashes that shone with a rainbow of light.

In comparison to the object inscription symbol, tracing the medicinal inscription symbol was several times more complex! Initially Lin Ming had forcefully drawn up the object inscription symbol with the

true essence's strength at the First Stage of Body Transformation. Back then his true essence had been stretched to the limit, but now that he had arrived with great difficulty at the Second Stage of Body Transformation, his true essence had increased and had congealed and thickened. But now in the blink of an eye, he had already used more true essence than it took to draw up an object inscription symbol, and his true essence was still stretched!

Luckily in this situation, Lin Ming did not feel it was too burdensome, instead he welcomingly endured it. Only by pushing oneself to the limit would they be able to progress.

An hour passed by, and Lin Ming's forehead was seeped in small beads of sweat. Each rune that had to be drawn was much difficult than the object inscription rune by several times. He clenched his teeth and persisted through the hardship. Even with the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' supporting him, Lin Ming could not withstand such consumption of true essence and was approaching his limit yet he hadn't even completed half of the 'Lower Spirit Cure Symbol'.

Lin Ming had already encountered this type of situation when he was trying to create the object inscription symbol. It was unrealistic to attempt to increase the amount of true essence in his body in such a short period of time; the only possible way was to reduce the rate of failure, increase his skill at the techniques, and save as much true essence as he could.

He could not support it any longer...

"Peng!"

There was the sound of an explosion, and the numerous inscription symbols in front of Lin Ming loudly detonated like brilliant fireworks. After these fireworks finished flashing, a deep darkness followed.

"Mm? It's evening..." Lin Ming let out a breath and sat up on his bed. The room was very quiet and peaceful, and Lin Ming could hear the

sound of his breathing and heartbeat.

He was too tired! Lin Ming sprawled backwards on his bed, too lazy to even move his fingers. The past few months he had practiced inscription techniques, he had constantly taxed his soul force to the limit, yet he had never felt as drained as he did now; he didn't even have the strength to revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' within him. If his true essence was like water in a lake, then this medicinal inscription symbol was a terribly hot and dry desert, where even the last drop of his true essence was sucked clean.

"I want to sleep...."

Although his if he practiced at this time he would have good results, his soul force and true essence consumption was too serious, and it brought a weary tired feeling that made him unable to focus his spirit.

Mm? Right! The true essence stones!

He had unexpectedly forgotten about them. With these, if he used these true essence stones to supplement his true essence, would it not be perfect?

Lin Ming struggled to sit up. He had obtained 10 true essence stones when he had attended lecture. He grabbed one from his bag and began to greedily absorb the pure true essence within.

Rich true essence continuously flowed in a steady stream through the pores in his hand. Because Lin Ming had not yet achieved the Pulse Condensation Period, the tendons of his entire body were blocking his acupuncture points and meridians, and the true essence could only enter along his pores and slowly flow from there.

If comparing the flow of true essence within him, then it was like a muddy swamp. The meridians of the body where energy circulated where just too spacious, it simply was incomparable. That was why a

martial artist's breakthrough into the Pulse Condensation Period was such a significant leap.

Along with the true essence endlessly merging into his body, Lin Ming's body was like a dry basin that was being poured into by a bubbling spring. It was an indescribably refreshing and comfortable feeling, and his fatigue completely disappeared. Lin Ming began to revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' and guide the flow of true essence slowly into his body.

Although the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' was a top tier quality true essence method, in this situation, the meridians had not yet opened so the circulation speed of true essence was limited.

As the true essence revolved again and again, it began to accumulate. The circulation in his body began to rapidly quicken; like this, half an hour passed. Lin Ming circulation speed of true essence within his body began to accelerate, until it finally passed the top speed in the past.

"Mmm? How could this be?"

Lin Ming was surprised, and he continued to revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', and the circulation speed continued accelerating.

"Pah!" At the moment with a small sound, the true essence stone Lin Ming's hand cracked open.

"Mm? The true essence stone was used up already?"

Lin Ming was not stingy. He placed down the broken stone and grabbed another true essence stone, and continued to revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'. The massive influx of fresh, pure true essence merged into his body. Lin Ming's true essence circulation speed climbed up even more than before, and the acceleration showed no signs of slowing down.

Half a month ago, if Lin Ming's 'True Primal Chaos Formula' true essence revolution speed was like a baby toddler crawling around, then at present, his true essence's speed was like a teenager running at full blast!

This...This is....

This was the Large Success of the First Layer of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'!

Lin Ming took a deep breath, and his face revealed an expression wild with joy and ecstasy. He had obsessed over the First Layer of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' for three months, and had finally broken through!

Lin Ming immediately shoved open his door and launched himself outside. He rushed towards the Seven Profound Martial House's strength measuring room. When he had received the jade slip during school admission, it had recorded an introduction about the strength measuring room. Any Seven Profound Martial House disciple could use it the stone tablets inside to measure their strength. After he had reached Large Success of the First Layer of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', Lin Ming was itching to find out how much stronger he had become.

Chapter 57: Ranking War

It was already late into the night; the disciples of the Martial House were either cultivating in their own rooms or had gone to sleep, there were only a few stragglers still on the streets. Lin Ming walked as if he was half-flying and quickly arrived at the strength measuring room.

There was no one at the strength measuring room; only an old man who guarded the door with a small flickering lamp near him. He lay exhausted on a flimsy chair, looking a little drowsy.

Lin Ming greeted him, then moved past him into the room. Inside were a row of stone pillars that were used to measure strength. They were all completely unoccupied; a normal person wouldn't idle around here so late at night to test their own strength.

Lin Ming randomly chose a stone pillar and firmly stood in front of it. He shut his eyes, relaxed his body, and let the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' revolve to the extreme. Lin Ming suddenly punched, and his fist looked like a shooting star as it fell on the stone pillar.

"Peng!"

The stone pillar wildly shook, and even the ground under Lin Ming's feet trembled a little. The light beam did not stop as it leapt up several times, 2700, 2800, 2900, 3000....

3200!

"3200 jins!" Lin Ming breathed with shining eyes.

500 jins of strength! The 'True Primal Chaos Formula', from the small success to large success, had increased his strength by 500 jins! To an ordinary martial artist, 500 jins was often the gap between stages!

But the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' was in truth only the part of the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' which revolved true essence, it was not everything!

The 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' was truly worthy of being the Realm of the Gods' top tier Body Transformation skill manual. He remembered, that of those in the sects that practiced the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' Body Transformation, there were disciple janitors who swept the floor of the entrance and little children that played near the fireplaces who had several ten thousand jins of strength. If they had reached the Large Success stage of the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', they could even rely on their strength to shatter mountain ranges, part the seas, and shatter the skies.

“Reaching Large Success of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula's' first layer was only his first step, there were also six more layers, each more difficult than the last! Beyond the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' and continuing the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', there was still the Eight Gates of Hidden Celestial Stems and the Palace of Nine Stars. At this point, I'm not even qualified to be a floor sweeping disciple of these ancient sects”

Realizing this, Lin Ming's excitement dissipated by a bit. The road that he wanted to walk on was truly long.

That night, because Lin Ming had just broken through the skill manual, his true essence was smooth and he was not sleepy, so he continued his cultivation.

After Lin Ming consolidated the boundary of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', he spent the rest of the time practicing his inscription technique. Because of the Large Success of the first layer of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', Lin Ming's efficiency of drawing the medicinal inscription was greatly enhanced, and he was able to persist until about 80% of the entire plan.

If he was able to continue like this, then with another seven or eight days, Lin Ming would be able to complete the 'Lower Spirit Cure Symbol'.

The crazy cultivation caused many true essence stones to be consumed. Just that night, Lin Ming had already used up three true essence stones. Although he had agreed with Zhang Cang to use 10 true essence stones as the gambling stake, from the start Lin Ming had never thought he would lose, so there was no way that he would be afraid of using them.

As he looked at the three split stones that had long since lost their true essence luster, Lin Ming touched his nose. This usage was just too fast, but a month later, someone would be kind enough to give him 20 more. If he knew earlier that he would use these true essences stones so quickly, he would have thought a month was too long. Half a month would have been just about right.

Lin Ming greedily smacked his lips. If these thoughts were known by Zhang Cang, there was no way of telling what Zhang Cang would make of it.

It was the morning of the second day and Lin Ming woke up early to attend lecture as usual. He listened to the elder speak on the on the fundamentals. But today he also met an old acquaintance; one who he hadn't wanted to meet in person - Lan Yunyue. Within the Martial House, there were altogether 600 to 700 disciples; meeting her sooner or later was normal.

Lin Ming didn't pay any attention to this as he listened to the elder talk about today's weapon of discussion - 'the spear', its skills and its usage.

Lin Ming listened with rapt attention. At the end of the lecture, after the elder had left, Lin Ming was still immersed in his thoughts; the elder had given him many inspirations.

As he finally snapped back from his trance, the rest of the disciples had already left the Martial Lecture Hall, except Lan Yunyue. She sat in the same seat like she was lost in thought.

Lin Ming began packing up his things and readying to leave, but at this time Lan Yunyue suddenly whispered, "Lin Ming, can you wait for a second?"

Lin Ming's hand movements slowed, he asked, "Can I help you?"

Although the tone was polite, there was a hint of the taste of alienation within Lin Ming's words, causing Lan Yunyue to lightly sigh. She said, "Congratulations on attaining the first place candidate spot."

"Thanks."

"..." After Lan Yunyue finished speaking, there was a long silence, and the atmosphere between the two began to grow a bit awkward.

"I... I heard that in one month you will have a fighting match with Zhang Cang?"

Lin Ming's eyes twitched. He said, "The news spread that fast? Well, yes, I really did make a bet with Zhang Cang." News of the new first place disciple and the old disciple gambling was sure to spread like wildfire. In addition, Zhang Cang and Liu Mingxiang had deliberately publicized it as much as possible.

Lan Yunyue bit her lip, hesitated, then quietly whispered, "Zhang Cang is Zhu Yan's former comrade..."

Lin Ming was shocked; Lan Yunyue was more sensitive and thoughtful about these matters than he had thought. She had already correctly guessed that this matter was driven by Zhu Yan.

"I know." Lin Ming faintly responded.

“Then you...” Lan Yanyue hadn’t known how she should open her mouth to say it, but today she had wanted to urge Lin Ming not to take on the gambling match. The words were floating at the tip of her tongue, but yet she feared that Lin Ming would turn a deaf ear to her pleas.

“I know that you aren’t willing to listen to me, but... I have already been in the Seven Profound Martial House for half a year, and have seen many of the gambling matches between the new and old disciples. The new disciples almost never win against the old disciples. Although you are the new first place candidate, Zhang Cang is also known as a fierce character within the Earth Hall. And because of Zhu Yan, his hand will be cruel.”

Lin Ming smiled, “You said that I may not be willing to listen, do you mean that you do not want me to go to the fighting match? Since I already agreed on the bet, it is impossible for me to now keep this appointment, otherwise I would have already ran away before the battle had begun, and this would go against my martial path.”

“But... alright...” Lan Yunyue sighed. She knew that once Lin Ming had made up his mind, it would be very difficult to change.

“Thank you for your advice. I’ll go first.” Lin Ming said as he picked up his things and left the Martial Lecture Hall.

Leaving Lan Yunyue alone, she silently kept sitting in her seat. At the moment she could not identify the taste in her heart. It was impossible to change Zhu Yan’s mind, and it was also impossible to change Lin Ming’s mind. They would one day fight, but to Lan Yunyue, regardless of Lin Ming’s strength of background, it was all inferior to Zhu Yan. The battle would happen, and there would only be a suffering party...

Time passed like running water, and it was already the fourth day since Lin Ming had arrived at the Seven Profound Martial House. That

morning, Lin Ming had been sent a gathering notice, and he arrived early at the Martial House's martial stage.

The new disciples of the Earth Hall had all assembled together. After they had all arrived, a red-haired man carrying a fencing saber showed up at the contest field. This was Lin Ming's first class Earth Hall instructor, Hong Xi.

Hong Xi gave a feeling of a swift, brave, and fiercely overwhelming power. If he was in the army, he would have been an absolute general that bravely killed all enemies, trained his troops strictly, and followed like military's laws like a mountain.

After Hong Xi arrived at the contest field, he glanced at the crowd, and with a steady and powerful voice, said, "Today is the Ranking War! Everybody, come with me!"

"Ranking War?"

They had already known that once they entered the Seven Profound Martial House, sooner or later they would have to participate in the Ten Thousand Killing Array ranking war. It had finally begun!

Of the 20 new disciples of the Earth Hall, which one wasn't a genius of their generation? They had been looking forward to this for a long time; this was their chance to prove themselves. They all thought to attack the ranks of the Ranking Stone and attain more resources.

These geniuses weren't willing to accept an inferior status under others. These people, all of them were youthful kids full of smug ambition. They had been toiling their days away, waiting for this ranking war to amaze the world with a single, brilliant feat.

"Heh heh, it's finally the time of the ranking war. I'm glad I showed up." A youth carrying a long knife said. His chest had scars half a foot long and he was cracking his knuckles together, making 'pop pop' noises.

Chapter 58: The Ten Thousand Killing Array

The youth had a long scar from an old knife wound on his face. His name was Wang Mang and he was 18 years old. He had joined the Sky Fortune Kingdom's army as a mercenary when he was 15, and had been sent to the frontier where he killed many people. On the border, he had been stabbed, and at the border, every day for three years he had lived on the edge of death - until he had finally reached the Third Stage of Body Transformation. He had rich combat experience and his strength was high. During the entrance examination, his fist strength at the Strength Trial had reached 2500 jins, and he had also reached the third floor of the Exquisite Pagoda.

“These juniors who got the top three spots really think they can surpass us with their strength. If it wasn't for the Exquisite Pagoda deciding an opponent's strength based on their skeletal age, I would have reached the fifth floor!” said a youth at Wang Mang's side. His name was Li Tie, and he was Wang Mang's ally. His had also tested his fist strength at 2500 jins and had reached the third floor of the Exquisite Pagoda.

Fist strength was not a domain in which mercenaries excelled. Fist strength mainly depended on one's own talent and cultivation based on the skill manual they followed. These mercenaries' skill manuals were very ordinary, and their strength could only be so strong. Their formidable aspects lay in their rich combat experience, skillful blade techniques, and sharp fighting instinct to surprise an enemy and kill them.

Therefore the dreadful nature of these two youths lay in actual combat, in particular life and death situations, and not tests.

“Wang Yanfeng, Lin Ming! These two kids are just little flowers that grew up in a greenhouse. Our fighting ability was learnt at the end of a knife’s blade while fighting for our lives, how could they even be our match?”

In the Exquisite Pagoda, they were restricted by their skeletal age and were stopped at the third floor. But the ranking war did not have this limit, and all participants were treated impartially! This was their turn to shine!

The Ten Thousand Killing Array that the Seven Profound Martial House used for the ranking war was in a mountain valley not too far from the Exquisite Pagoda. The mountain valley was covered in sharp bamboo, and the thick, angry bamboo leaves gave off a chilly, withering aura.

In the center of these layers upon layers of bamboo was a clearing, in which there was an ashlar square a thousand steps wide. At the center of the square was a ten by ten foot wide altar. The altar was engraved with a variety of luminescent runes and symbols; this altar was the Ten Thousand Killing Array which was used in the ranking war.

By the time Lin Ming’s group had arrived at the ashlar square, there were already many people gathered there.

Because the Ten Thousand Killing Array consumed a colossal number of true essence stones every time it was activated, it would only be opened once a month at an appointed time. At that time, all the martial artists of the Seven Profound Martial House could voluntarily participate in the ranking war, but they also needed to pay a fee of one true essence stone as collateral. If they their ranking was lower than 100 and they rose 5 spots, or if their ranking was higher than 100 and they rose three spots, they would be given back their true essence stone. Otherwise, the Seven Profound Martial House would keep it.

This sort of stipulation was so that disciples who hadn't made any significant progress would not hold the viewpoint that they should come regardless of whether they advanced or not. It would just cause too many disciples to want to be tested, and there wasn't enough time in a day to do that.

Hong Xi said, "New disciples who are participating for the first time in the ranking war do not need to pay a fee of a true essence stone. You only need to use the jade slip that you were issued to participate in the Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment. In the Ten Thousand Killing Array, your true body will not be injured. Once you die in the illusion, the assessment will end and your final ranking will be based upon the score you achieve from killing your enemies."

Hong Xi said this and then dismissed the troop. Lin Ming entered the ashlar square, as he wanted to take a look at this Ten Thousand Killing Array altar. At the same time, he discovered two people he knew; these two people were Liu Mingxiang and Zhang Cang, who had come to provoke him just a few days ago.

Meanwhile, Zhang Cang also discovered Lin Ming. He looked at him with a hint of disdain in his smile.

"Lin Ming? I had forgotten, but it seems that the Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment also allows new disciples to participate. Heh heh, I am highly anticipating your performance. I hope you can enter in the top 180, otherwise it's just too boring."

"You don't need to worry about my ranking. How come Zhu Yan didn't come?" Lin Ming pointed this out, as he knew that the last time Zhang Cang had provoked him was because Zhu Yan was pulling the strings behind the scenes.

However Zhang Cang did not mind; he just didn't care how Lin Ming came to know about this matter.

Zhang Cang sneered and said, “Zhu Yan is a disciple of the Heavenly Abode and his ranking is 39. With that ranking, every rank above it is difficult. How could he come every month? Do you even understand about these boundaries?”

Lin Ming replied, “I’m not interested in you or your crap. After the month ends, we will come to a resolution. At the appointed time, I hope you can still smile afterwards.”

“Haha, that was exactly what I was going to say to you.”

News of the gambling match between Zhang Cang and Lin Ming had been spread around, and many people knew about it. Some people took pleasure in others’ misfortune and wanted to watch the new first place disciple suffer a humiliating loss, but there were also some people who loathed Zhang Cang’s actions. Zhang Cang was bullying a new disciple after all, and the despicable action of trying to take his new true essence stones was despised by them.

At this time, Wang Yanfeng bumped into Liu Mingxiang. With Liu Mingxiang’s arrogant nature and Wang Yanfeng’s proud character, this naturally spelled disaster.

By now, the ashlar square’s altar suddenly shot out an abundance of light rays, and each rune and symbol on the altar began to blaze into existence one after the other; the ranking war had started.

In the Ten Thousand Killing Array’s altar were 12 positions, 12 people could participate in the assessment at the same time.

After the assessment, the Ten Thousand Killing Array would directly reflect the combined killing score onto the ranking magic array to get the final ranking.

Lin Mingxiang saw the Ten Thousand Killing Array revolve and light up and laughed, “Wang Yanfeng, there is no need to say anything

puerile, why don't we try our hand in the Ten Thousand Killing Array and see exactly who is inferior?"

"That's just right for me!" Although Wang Yanfeng had received a setback by Lin Ming, his spirit hadn't dropped. Although he knew that it wasn't possible to win against Liu Mingxiang, he still dared to challenge him.

"The newborn calf does not fear the tiger. This Wang Yanfeng has some guts."

"What use are guts, his age is too small, there is no way for him to win."

"New disciples that could enter past 180 are already rare. 150 is a peerless talent, and 130 could even be said to be a miracle of heaven that is rarely seen even every decade. Ling Sen and Ta Ku were unable to. This Liu Mingxiang is rank 125, and he might even advance this time, what chance does Wang Yanfeng possibly have to win?"

Lin Ming listened to others' comments. His eyes turned to the Ranking Stone and sure enough, Liu Mingxiang was rank 125. He was within the upper middle rankings of the Earth Hall.

In the entirety of the Earth Hall and the Heavenly Abode were 230 disciples. It was a very good result if a new disciple could reach at least rank 200. Wang Yanfeng could easily accomplish this, but he wanted reach a much higher and loftier goal, and Lin Ming was the same. These recent days, he had learnt about these approximate Ranking Stone requirements. If he wanted to rank above 180 he would need at least 100 points. If he wanted to rank above 150 he needed several hundred points. And killing someone that was equal to the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation only gave 50 points.

Twelve disciples stepped onto the altar and firmly stood there. The deacon who was responsible for activating and maintaining the array

said, "There is no limit to the assessment duration. If you defeat an enemy at the Second Stage of Body Transformation you will gain 1 point. If you defeat an enemy at the peak of the Second Stage of Body Transformation you will gain 5 points. A Third Stage Body Transformation opponent will give you 10 points, and the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation will give you 50 points. A fourth Stage Body Transformation opponent will give you 100 points, and a peak Fourth Stage Body Transformation opponent will give you 500 points. A Fifth Stage Body Transformation Opponent will give you 1000 points, and a peak Fifth Stage Body Transformation Opponent will give you 5000 points."

"The highest level combatant you will face is at the Pulse Condensation Stage. If you defeat one, you will gain 10,000 points. After entering the magic array, you may use your thoughts to select a weapon to wield. Death results in failure and ejection from the array."

"Now start!"

After the deacon's voice faded, the altar flashed with a bright light. The 12 disciples inside the altar blurred a little as if they were covered by some invisible force.

In the altar, Wang Yang opened his eyes and arrived in a lifeless white world. In front of him was every weapon imaginable; heavy swords, soft swords, longswords, broadswords, short swords, katanas, spears, axes, hammers, and so forth.

"Come to me, long sword." As soon as Wang Yanfeng thought this, a long sword appeared in his hand. In the Sky Fortune Kingdom, 90% of martial artists used a sword, and among those, 80% of them used a longsword. A longsword was a fantastic weapon; it was dynamic and relentless, swift and fierce.

The test finally started, and seven or eight vicious beasts appeared in front of Wang Yanfeng. There were also three or four martial artists

whose strength ranged from the early Second Stage of Body Transformation to the early Third Stage of Body Transformation.

Wang Yanfeng coldly gazed at them. He had to defeat these opponents. When the real fight began, Wang Yanfeng found that the assessment was actually very simple. Every time he killed an enemy, a new one would immediately appear to replace it, except that this new opponent's strength was more formidable!

Wang Yanfeng had only killed five or six, when martial artists at the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation began to appear.

When he accumulated 110 points, Wang Yanfeng gave a stuffy humph as he received a minor wound. When he gathered up to 180 points, a martial artist managed to pierce a sword into Wang Yanfeng's stomach. In that final moment, Wang Yanfeng sliced off that martial artist's head, and at the same time he was stabbed through the heart.

Final score - 190 points.

After dying, Wang Yanfeng was shot out of the Ten Thousand Killing Array. He looked pale, but luckily he had managed not to faint because of his previous experience at the Exquisite Pagoda. Wang Yanfeng had adapted to this sort of illusory killing realm, and his although his entire body was wracked with aching pain, he hadn't truly been injured. These aches were only because of the phantom nerve stimulations from being killed.

As Wang Yanfeng looked around the altar, his complexion sank. He was unexpectedly the first one to be eliminated! Besides him, all 11 other people were still on the altar!

Chapter 59: The Gap Between the New and the Old

As Wang Yanfeng looked around the altar, his complexion sank. He was unexpectedly the first one to be eliminated! Beside him, all other 11 people were still on the altar!

“I... how... I was the worst?”

“Don’t be discouraged.” An indifferently cold voice sounded from nearby Wang Yanfeng’s ear. Wang Yanfeng turned around and looked; the one speaking was the Earth Hall instructor, Hong Xi.

“The 11 on the altar are some of the Earth Hall’s most outstanding disciples. Your ranking is not too bad.” Hong Xi said as he referred to the Ranking Stone to his side. Wang Yanfeng’s name was now impressively arranged at rank 168. This result was far off from the top-tier talents of rank 150 and above, but it shouldn’t be forgotten that Wang Yanfeng was only 15 years old. If he studied for six years in the Seven Profound Martial House, it was already a settled matter that he would enter the Heavenly Abode. Even making the top ten on the Ranking stone was not impossible in five or six years.

Although Hong Xi said his ranking wasn’t terrible, Wang Yanfeng was discontent and dissatisfied with this result. Liu Mingxiang was at rank 125. The disparity was just too big.

He was unable to restrain himself from glancing at Lin Ming. He saw that he seemed indifferent, and was otherwise very calm.

“This fellow is stronger than me, but it’s not a ridiculous strength. If I was rank 168, then he could probably rank at 150. Zhang Cang who he has a match with is rank 109, and might even be higher this time, isn’t he worried?”

At this time, several more people were shot out by the Ten Thousand Killing Array; their rankings varied from 120 to 150.

Then after a while, a few more people were ejected, Liu Mingxiang impressively among them. His final result was a remarkable rank 122, but he was not able to jump up by 5 ranks.

Liu Mingxiang reached into his clothes and brought out a pill which he took. He recovered a bit, and smiled as he looked to Wang Yanfeng. This result was more or less what he expected.

Wang Yanfeng's face was ugly. He finally understood the gap between a new disciple and an old disciple! The Seven Profound Martial House was a gathering place for talents and geniuses. These disciples of the Earth Hall were the geniuses among geniuses. In addition to the resources provided by the Seven Profound Martial House and the lectures and tutoring by famous instructors, how could they possibly not progress amazingly quickly?

Liu Mingxiang had already been enrolled here for two years; this gap was not the least bit unusual!

Wang Yanfeng clenched his fist. He knew perfectly well that in the match between him and Liu Mingxiang, he would undoubtedly be the loser. But he would still fight. Everything he lost, he would get back in the future!

"Rank 168? Heh heh, how tender." Wang Mang taunted with a smile as he saw Wang Yanfeng's ranking.

"This position is about 100 or 200 points. All I have to do is kill four guys at the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation and I'll reach it. This father once killed six martial artists on the frontier who had the same cultivation. This time I will absolutely advance to rank 150!" Le Tie rubbed the tip of his nose with his thumb, full of fighting spirit. He was a martial artist whose cultivation was at the peak of the Third Stage of Body Cultivation. Because of his many years as a

professional mercenary who constantly flirted with death, his combat prowess was far above a similar martial artist with the same cultivation.

“Us brothers must get at least rank 150 before showing our faces to Lin Ming and Wang Yanfeng again. We will surpass them, otherwise we really are garbage.”

“The second round is starting. Step up!”

The magic array began to revolve and activate again. Wang Mang and Le Tie took a spot next to each other, and after standing there, Wang Mang turned and said, “Hey, First Place, aren’t you coming up?”

“You first.” Lin Ming replied as he glanced at Zhang Tie and Wang Mang. These two had a very heavy murderous air around them; they had obviously killed many people in the past. Generally, such a person would not be weak.

The light rays of the magic array flashed, and Wang Mang and Li Tie entered the Ten Thousand Killing Array.

These two people’s weapons were the broadsword. It was a weapon that could kill a large number of enemies in a gathered crowd and had overwhelming power. But these two people soon realized that the Ten Thousand Killing Array was much more difficult than they had first assumed. Although Li Tie had killed six martial artists who were at the peak of the Viscera Stage at the frontier, that had been done one at a time. Now he needed to simultaneously guard and fend off the attacks of ten enemies who all converged on him. Let alone killing someone at the peak of Viscera Training, even someone at early stage of Viscera Training would not be easy. As for the enemies at the Second Stage of Body Transformation, Flesh Training, he managed to fend them off and kill one, but a Viscera Training level opponent instantly replaced him. Even Fourth Stage of Body Transformation, Altering Muscle opponents began to appear. The more they killed, the more dangerous their situation became!

These two martial artists at the peak of the Third Stage could even favorably compare to a martial artist at the early Altering Muscle stage. But now they had to face them while being besieged by enemies on all sides; and after the time it took to burn a stick of incense, they had been defeated.

Final Result. Wang Mang, rank 156. Li Tie, rank 158.

They had not been able to enter the top 150 ranks!

When this pair was shot out by the Ten Thousand Killing Array, they looked at the results on the Ranking Stone and could not help but feel an agonizing sense of frustration. Their prized superior combat strength was not enough to let them reach the top 150!

Moreover, they were already 18 years old and had little room for improvement. Perhaps even when they graduated from the Seven Profound Martial House, they would not be able to reach the top 100.

Lin Ming watched as this disheartened pair departed. In his heart he already knew that to enter the top 150 in the first assessment was to be a top-tier talent. But sometimes even a top-tier talent might not always have a good result. Wang Yanfeng was considered a top-tier talent, but unfortunately it could be said that it was a pity he was too young.

He looked at Zhang Cang. Zhang smiled as he looked back.

“This Zhang Cang is a half-step into the Altering Muscle stage. But if it is just a normal peak Altering Muscle martial artist, they might not be his match. Although I have the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’s’ Large Success stage, to beat him now is not possible.”

“That Liang Tieshan is going on stage. He is the third place among the new disciples.” Some people in the crowd recognized Liang Tieshan. This fellow’s robust and large physique left a very strong impression.

“Liang Tieshan and Lin Ming both have inborn divine strength. The third place in the entrance exam this time also obtained a Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, looking at this Liang Tieshan’s performance, we can just jump up 20 or 30 ranks to guess Lin Ming’s performance.

Liang Tieshan was often compared with Lin Ming because the two were similar in age and also had inborn divine strength.

After Liang Tieshan came on stage, he gave a gruff smile and then made long strides towards the Ten Thousand Killing Array. He had already taken the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill long ago, and now he was a half-step into the Viscera Training stage. The breakthrough to the next stage was only a matter of time. His cultivation was not too different from Wang Yanfeng’s, and his inborn divine strength definitely covered a large portion of that gap.

Although Liang Tieshan’s cultivation was the same with Wang Yanfeng, he still lacked the actual combat experience that Wang Yanfeng had. He also lacked Wang Yanfeng’s martial skill, the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ and the movement skill, the ‘Seven Despairing Steps’. Finally, Liang Tieshan was also shot out a bit earlier than Wang Yanfeng from the Ten Thousand Killing Array. His final ranking was 176, and he had entered the top 180 which was quite rare, but could not be regarded as a top-tier talent.

“Liang Tieshan, rank 176. Wang Yanfeng, rank 168. I wonder what rank this Lin Ming will be able to achieve?”

As the audience talked about, Lin Ming leapt on stage.

“Hey! The number one new disciple has come on stage!”

“I don’t know anything about this guy, but I heard he has inborn divine strength and had eaten some rare and precious materials. He might be able to advance into the top 150.”

“Do you think it is that easy to enter the top 150 rankings? Except Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guanyu, there haven’t been any other 15 year olds who slaughtered their way into the top 150 rankings. He took first place in the entrance exam because he is young and had an advantage rushing up the Exquisite Pagoda. But the Ten Thousand Killing Array is impartial to age.” Said a disciple with a hint of jealousy. This disciple was already 19 years old.

“Haha, you envy others age for being young. The Exquisite Pagoda is the fairest stage; no matter your age, it only tests the degree of talent. But with this Ten Thousand Killing Array, the young martial artists truly suffer a great loss. This Lin Ming is only 15 years old, he might be able to enter the top 160 rankings. Even 170 is a top-tier talent! Achieving around 140 or 150 symbolizes a monstrous genius! Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guanyu had all achieved around those rankings when they had their first ranking war. That time was a true convergence of talents, how could the assessment this time even compare?

At the mention of Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guanyu, several present people’s expression changed. These three had a great amount of prestige and power which they had acquired over the years, even more so than some core disciples and the elusive Qin Xingxuan. They were almost selected to be core disciples themselves, but still enjoyed a massive amount of resources and did not need to participate in the Ten Thousand Killing Array ranking assessment. Even the lectures they attended, their practice, and their skill manuals were all beyond what an ordinary disciple could possess.

Because of these reasons, to an ordinary disciple, the concept of an existence of a core disciple like Qin Xingxuan was too distant and incomprehensible. She was not like a Martial House disciple at all. Therefore her accumulated prestige and fame was less than that of Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guanyu.

Chapter 60: The Tiger Enters a Flock of Sheep

Lin Ming had outstanding aural acuity, and he could hear the comments of these people. He turned his head to look at the Ranking Stone. Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guanyu were all exactly ranked in the top three positions. But of these three people, their ranking and martial talents were actually reversed.

Zhang Guanyu had the highest talent. In the entirety of the Seven Profound Martial House's non-core disciples, he was the only fifth-grade talent.

Ta Ku was next. His talent was a superior fourth-grade, just a bit away from a fifth-grade talent, and he also had extraordinary divine inborn strength.

But Ling Sen was the worst. His talent was only an inferior fourth-grade. There seemed to be something out of place about it.

After Lin Ming learned of Ling Sen's talent grade, he hadn't figured out how Ling Sen could rely on his inferior fourth-grade talent to firmly occupy the first spot on the Ranking Stone.

One's own total strength and ability depended on many factors; talent was only one of them. But talent was actually the most important. Was it possible that Ling Sen also had a fortuitous encounter, had he eaten a valuable material or something to that effect?

Although Lin Ming knew that a pure heart of martial arts was a very big factor in determining strength, Lin Ming did not actually think that a heart of martial arts would have such a tremendous influence.

Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guan Yu, these three people had entered the Seven Profound Martial House during the same entrance exam. It

could be said to be a true convergence of talent. In the Sky Fortune Kingdom, every decade or so there would be a generation of talents that could be said to be the strongest. It could be said that Ling Ming's generation wasn't filled with top-tier talents, but once one included the monstrous peerless genius Qin Xingxuan, there wasn't much of a difference.

Lin Ming stood at the altar of the Ten Thousand Killing Array and silently revolved the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'. After he had reached the Large Success stage of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', he had only measured his fist strength on the stone pillar, and how not tested how far his battle prowess had improved.

This was just the right time to experiment!

The Ten Thousand Killing Array shined with glimmering rays and Lin Ming's whole body was soaked in this glowing light. Under the stage, the audience's eyes were mostly on him.

Zhang Cang's mouth twitched with a little thoughtful smile. He was a half-step into the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation, Altering Muscle, and his combat prowess was enough to defeat an ordinary martial artist who was at the peak of Altering Muscle. This strength gave him the qualifications to despise and feel utter contempt for the cultivation of the peak of Body Transformation's Second Stage, Lin Ming.

The Ten Thousand Killing Array activated, and Lin Ming arrived in the middle of a dazzlingly bright white space. In front of him were a variety of every known weapon; the longsword, the stiletto, the saber, the short sword, it had it all.

Before entering the Seven Profound Martial House, Lin Ming had used the short sword, which was most similar to the deboning knife he had always used. But after he started to practice the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', his strength had increased, his true

essence had thickened by several times, and the short sword no longer suited him.

“The ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’ tempered my body. Now my fist is my best weapon, and I haven’t chosen a new weapon.” Lin Ming thought, and these weapons all disappeared into mist.

Meanwhile, in front of Lin Ming, there were more than ten phantom shades that appeared. These phantom creatures included vicious beasts and martial artists. Their strength ranged from the early Second Stage of Body Transformation to the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation.

Seeing this enemies rushing with killing intent towards him, Lin Ming hurried and revolved the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ to its limit. With the first layer at the Large Success stage, his whole body’s true essence shot up, and it felt as if strength was endlessly pouring from his body.

“Roar!” A first-level tiger-shaped vicious beast roared and rushed at him. This vicious beast’s skin was coarse and its flesh was thick. Its body weight was 600 to 700 jins, and its dashing increased its impact strength by several times!

As he faced this vicious beast, Lin Ming tightened his fist, and his knuckles cracked like fierce thunder.

“Die!” Lin Ming yelled. He struck out his fist and it smashed forwards, erupting with all 3200 jins of his strength.

Bang! The center of his fist struck the tiger-like vicious beast in the forehead and its skull fractured with a crashing sound. That 600-700 jin vicious beast that had rushed at Lin Ming was sent soaring backwards to its doom with a single first, but Lin Ming only stepped on the ground, and after the recoil, was steady once again.

The tiger-like vicious beast could not even let out a sorrowful howl as it soared through the air. Its skull was completely shattered into pieces, its brain turned into pulp, and it instantly died as it plummeted to the ground!

With a single fist that struck down his enemy, Lin Ming's fighting spirit rose like a rainbow after a spring shower, and the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' was revolving to its maximum limit. He shot forward and crashed into the middle of his enemies; his fist was like a hurricane, every kick was a tsunami! He was like a fierce tiger that had entered a flock of sheep; his might was overwhelming!

Blood readily splashed everywhere, and the sounds of bones breaking filled the air. The rough fur and thick meat of the beasts could simply not stand up to the devastating strength of Lin Ming's fist; the frail phantom martial artists simply melted away with one punch.

"Peak Viscera Training martial artists!" After Lin Ming killed a peak Body Transformation Second Stage martial artist with a fist, a peak Viscera Training martial artist appeared in his stead. When a martial artist reached the boundary of Body Transformation's Third Stage, Viscera Training, their internal organs would be guarded by true essence, and their defensive power would increase. Even Lin Ming would find it difficult to finish off this enemy with his fists, and not only that, but this martial artist's movements were flexible like a reed, and its attacks were swift and fierce; wanting to hit it would not be easy.

"You're 50 points!" When Lin Ming saw this peak Viscera Training martial artist, not only did he not fear, but his fighting spirit instead shot to the sky. After reaching Large Success in the 'True Primal Chaos Formula's' first layer, he needed a decent opponent to test his strength.

"!" The martial artist swung his sword out. Lin Ming lowered his body and flung himself close to the ground, letting the sword fly over his

head. With a fluid reflex, he punched out at the martial artist's knee.

After reaching 'True Primal Chaos Formula's' Large Success in the first layer, Lin Ming's true essence had thickened, and his speed had also risen to the heights of another level. The velocity with which this punch shot out was like a hidden dragon that emerged from the depths. The martial artist panicked and tried to avoid this strike, but Lin Ming pushed his hands against the ground and let loose a brutal leg sweep at the martial artist's back.

This leg came out flying out like a whip; the martial artist wasn't able to avoid it, and coughed up a mouthful of blood as he was kicked to the side.

Lin Ming relentlessly continued his attack in hot pursuit. His body sprung upwards and his fists fell like a rainstorm. The martial artist parried, but a fist managed to find a hole in his patterns and punched him. Even though his internal organs were protected by true essence, once hit by the strength of a 3200 jin fist, he took a major wound.

The martial artist vomited more blood, his sternum fractured and all his defenses were laid open. Lin Ming made one last fist and struck the center left of his chest. The martial artist's heart instantly stopped from the sheer force, and this peak Viscera Training martial artist was completely killed by Lin Ming.

In the midst of chaos among all these enemies, he had managed to kill an opponent a full stage above him; this result was enough to make one feel proud, but Lin Ming also knew that this strength was still lacking when compared to Zhang Cang!

"That was another 50 points, now I have more than 200."

"An incense stick of time has passed and this Lin Ming is still fighting in there, and his body is still standing firmly on stage. He really has surpassed Wang Yanfeng."

“He has surpassed Wang Yanfeng, but don’t forget, he obtained the first place reward from the entrance exam - the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill, and also Wang Yanfeng’s Golden Snake Scarlet Pill. He ate those two rare and precious medicines yet he didn’t manage to achieve the Third Stage of Body Transformation, His strength still increased but his medium third-grade talent really despises him.

When the disciples went on stage, those in the audience naturally dispensed their thoughts on them. This time Zhang Cang had crossed his arms across his chest and was looking up with a relaxed, casual demeanor and a sly smile. Lin Ming’s strength was as expected, otherwise it would just be no fun.

An incense stick quickly burnt down, and soon, a second incense stick also reached its end.

Chapter 61: Spear

“Two sticks of incense have already burnt down.” Li Tie and Wang Mang’s faces were ugly. They did not think that Lin Ming would be able to persist for so long; it was proof that Lin Ming had already surpassed them, that he was likely to enter the top 150 rankings!

“Big Brother, this Lin Ming is still fighting in there...” Li Tie’s mouth twitched. He never thought that they two brothers’ talents were inferior to others, but they couldn’t even keep up in actual combat!

This all made Li Tie feel depressed.

“Mm... we underestimated the Seven Profound Martial House’s youthful talents. When this Lin Ming fought with Wang Yanfeng, he must have hidden his true skills, either that or his progression has been amazingly quick.”

At that time, a ray of light shot out as the first person was ejected from the Ten Thousand Killing Array. This person was not Lin Ming, but an old disciple of the Earth Hall. His final result was 147.

“147! My goodness, this Lin Ming is relying on his age of 15 to advance past the 150 top rankings! This is the same result that Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guanyu had achieved!”

Saying that Lin Ming was on par with these three existences, many present people’s hearts turned cold. These three men had always been the unshakeable and ineffable existences that occupied the top three ranks of the Ranking Stone. Their strength was a level higher than those of the fourth and fifth rank. And to say that Lin Ming shared this honor with these three people? It didn’t matter if he had managed to scrounge around and eat some rare material, or if he had met some sort of fortuitous encounter as a child, as long as he managed to be on par with these three, his future fame would echo in the world.

“Don’t draw conclusions so quickly. It’s only time that’s passed. Maybe this Lin Ming is very slow at killing, and he’s just spending most of his time running away. If that’s the case then he wouldn’t have 200 points yet.

“Mm, that’s reasonable. Being in there a long time doesn’t mean his score is also high. That old disciple that came out was just rank 147 and had just entered the top 150. Let’s wait and see.”

In the illusory world of the Ten Thousand Killing Array, even if one fended off enemies and did not kill them, their number would still slowly increase. So even if a person was strong, they could not stay inside for an indefinite period of time. Of course, if their power exceeded that of a Xiantian expert, they could directly break through the barriers, but that was a different matter altogether.

Lin Ming hadn’t done any useless dodging. From the moment he started with that first kill to now, he hadn’t stopped to take a single breath of rest, the only thought on his mind was to kill, kill, kill!

The ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’ was a Body Transformation skill manual that was the extreme essence of light and Yang. Its every style and move was to march forward and defy all enemies with courage, it wasn’t a skill manual that favored dirty dogfights.

Lin Ming’s fists were already dripping wet with blood!

Every time an enemy died, a more formidable one took its place. These phantom beings started at the early Third Stage of Body Transformation and became the peak of the Third Stage, and onto even the Four Stage of Body Transformation - Altering Muscle.

There were already three Altering Muscle level enemies that had appeared, and with the Viscera Training level enemies serving as a distraction, even Lin Ming was finding it difficult to keep up.

Fortunately, Lin Ming had support from the first layer's Large Success of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'. Lin Ming's true essence was rich and lively, and it continued to grow. His physical strength hadn't dropped by much. Even a durable martial artist who had reached the Large Success stage of Viscera Training and could breathe like a serpent would find it hard to compare with his resilience.

The enemies became stronger and stronger, and finally a Body Transformation second-level vicious beast appeared. It was a Crystal Backed Spider! Lin Ming felt an enormous pressure on him when this beast appeared; a Crystal Backed Spider's defensive capabilities were astonishing; it was difficult to wound it even with a sword! It could also launch its spider silk in a long-range attack. The spider's silk was durable like steel wire; once he was entangled by this silk in the midst of all these enemies; he would immediately die.

"This spider is difficult to deal with!" Lin Ming tightly frowned. If this was one-on-one he could wear this spider down until it died, but in his present situation with danger on all sides, he couldn't take this tactic into consideration.

At the same time he had to deal with the attacks of multiple enemies, he also had to dodge this spider's long-range attack. Lin Ming was surrounded by peril.

"Che!"

A sharp sword light flew at him. Lin Ming immediately backed up and the dangerous sword light just barely missed his chest. This sharp sword aura really made one's hairs stand up.

Lin Ming gradually found that his own fists were insufficient weapons.

In it was against a single enemy there would be no problem, but in this midst of a chaotic crowd, he found that he lacked the ability to

move as he liked. If he attacked an enemy, especially with a close-range attack, he would be vulnerable to the enemy intercepting.

Maybe he should choose a weapon?

If so, what should he choose? Lin Ming's mind began to race with thoughts and ideas.

Sword?

In the Sky Fortune Kingdom, 90% of martial artists used the sword. The reason was that sword's use was diverse and its attacks were sharp and fierce. Although it was difficult to reach the pinnacle of swordplay, the barrier to entry was not high.

A sword could attack and a sword could defend, and it could be heavy or it could be light. It was a versatile weapon that had gained a top reputation with soldiers among every weapon in the world.

But Lin Ming felt that the sword did not suit him. What he cultivated was the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', the most Yang of all Body Transformation skill manuals. If he reached the Large Success stage, then his aura would be like a billowing tsunami that swept through heaven and earth. If he saw a god then he would kill a god; if he saw a demon, then he would kill a demon!

But a sword master was different. They were known for their agility, ever changing styles, complex moves, and cunning attacks. Their style did not match him.

Then what about the saber?

If 90% of Sky Fortune Kingdom's martial artists used a sword, then of the left over 10%, more than half most likely used a saber. The saber was less dexterous than a sword, but its striking power was strong. Its attacks were relentless and unceasing. In the hands of a powerful martial artist it would be especially dominant. In a battle with many

opponents, its endless attacks would be irresistible and unstoppable; in those cases it could be called the tyrant of weapons.

But Lin Ming also felt that the saber did not suit him. Although the saber had overwhelming offensive strength at times, it had few attack methods. Though it could chop and divide with unprecedented aggression, it lacked an impression of irresistible force.

Lin Ming suddenly remembered several days ago when he had met Lan Yunyue in the Martial Lecture Hall. When the elder there had been discussing the basics, he had gone on length about a weapon... the spear!

Very few martial artists used a spear in the Sky Fortune Kingdom. It wasn't because the spear wasn't strong, in fact, it was just the opposite. Every spear's attacks were mighty and indomitable. But spears were difficult to learn, and even harder to master.

A spear took a long time to practice, more than any other weapon. A spear could divide, it could pierce, it could draw, it could push, it could dance like a flower, it could kill an encirclement of enemies. Its imposing aura was unrivaled and its attacks were unstoppable.

To sweep away an army of a thousand, there was only the spear!

The spear was called the king of a hundred soldiers. To be titled this, it was obviously formidable.

But the spear was difficult to practice, and it was also difficult to wield. Even the construction of a spear was many times more complex than a sword or a saber!

For blades like sabers and sword, as long as the steel was fine, then it could be incomparably sharp.

But the spear shaft needed to be rigid, yet flexible like a willow branch. Steel and iron simply didn't have the elastic properties

required, and could not be used to make the shaft. But wood and bamboo, although they were flexible, they weren't stiff enough and the weight was also too light, and its lethality would only be ordinary. In a real fight it could easily be chopped in half by a bladed weapon.

Therefore a high quality treasure spear's value eclipsed that of a treasure sword or saber by five to six times, and there weren't many of them!

Lin Ming fought on one hand, and on the other quickly deliberated on a choice of weapon. His mind ran through the elder's lecture on a spear's merits.

However in a life or death fight like this, to be distracted was only inviting disaster. As Lin Ming finally decided, a bolt of spider silk came flying at him like an arrow. Lin Ming jumped into the air, barely evading this danger, but in the moment when he was turning in midair, a sword came madly cutting at him from a tricky angle. Lin Ming only felt pain in his back as his blood shot into the air.

"He's injured!"

Outside the Ten Thousand Killing Array, Lin Ming's main body showed a reaction. There was a stuffy cough, and his face paled.

"This boy cannot last much longer!" The observing martial artists let out a collective breath and relaxed. Most of the martial artists here didn't want to see others doing well. The Seven Profound Martial House already had three holy cows pressing down on them; they did not want another one pressuring them.

"It's already impressive that he lasted this long. Two sticks of incense have been burnt, if he goes any longer than it will go against the will of heaven."

"He's done for. He might be able to reach a ranking around 150."

Also outside the Ten Thousand Killing array, even the dignified and haughty Zhang Cang was showing a change in complexion. Although Lin Ming's ranking now was nothing compared to him, but what rank one could achieve at their first time ranking war symbolized their potential. That a 15 year old could reach above around rank 150 with only a third-grade talent, it really made one alarmed and afraid.

“This Lin Ming definitely ate the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill and that's why he has such strength. Although this is only strength that came from taking pills, I cannot look down on him.” Zhang Cang clenched his fist as he felt pressure descending on him.

Chapter 62: The Final Grade

“This wound isn’t light!” Lin Ming revolved the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ to suppress the injury, but it still bled.

“The wound’s bleeding. My strength will slowly fall... it’s impossible to wage a battle of attrition. If that is the case...” Lin Ming’s eyes were cold as he locked onto an early Altering Muscle martial artist and the Crystal Backed Spider. “You two, I’m going to put my life on the line to kill you both. I will make the most of my remaining strength in the time I have left to obtain the biggest victory I can and try for my highest possible final score.”

“Spear, to me!”

As Lin Ming thought this, the rows of weapons that had disappeared before reappeared in front of him. An overlord spear appeared in Lin Ming’s hand.

“It turned out to be the overlord spear!”

This overlord spear was crafted with potent darksteel. Such a spear sacrificed its elasticity in exchange for devastatingly destructive power!

The overlord spear’s shaft was eight feet in length and the spear head was eight inches long. The barrel was thick as an arm, and because it was made with heavy darksteel, the spear’s total weight was 580 jins. With a sweep of the spear, even trees would be smashed apart.

Lin Ming’s arm strength was 3200 jins; wielding this heavy spear was just right.

“Good spear!” Lin Ming laughed out loud as soon as he saw it. He tightly gripped the overlord spear and swept outwards in a great arc. A martial artist at the early Third Stage, not realizing the change in

circumstances, raised a sword to block the strike, but was only sent flying backwards!

“Hah!” Lin Ming shouted out and his entire body erupted in an imposing aura. A surge of overwhelming Yang aura covered the entire area as it blotted out the sky with killing intent. The group of over ten strong enemies were stunned by this cry, and were unexpectedly so shaken that they dared not step forward.

The floor beneath Lin Ming shattered as he slammed his feet against the ground and shot forward like a beam of light. With an unbelievably imposing aura and a 580 jin overlord spear in hand, he thrust out at the Crystal Backed Spider.”

“Hiss!” The Crystal Backed Spider reacted and spat out spider silk straight at Lin Ming’s chest. This spider silk could bind a human and it was also keenly sharp! It may not seem like an arrow, but it could pierce through a person’s body!

Even a master at the Altering Muscle stage could only evade when facing this spider’s silk. But once dodged, the Crystal Backed Spider could also retreat and continue its long-range attack.

Lin Ming did not dodge or evade; he ran at the spider silk and cut towards it with the overlord spear! How slender and thin was the spider’s silk? The spearpoint was only a point, hitting it at high speed was easier said than done!

Although Lin Ming didn’t know marksmanship, he had spent years delicately working with a deboning knife; with his keen eyes he had accumulated experience and precision. With just this, he had defeated Wang Yanfeng’s ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ with just his fist!

But regardless of whether it was a fist or deboning knife, with this 580 jin overlord spear in hand, it was essentially no different than wielding anything else!

“Break for me!” Lin Ming angrily shouted. The overlord spear hit the spider’s silk. The spider silk was quick like an arrow, but its weight was actually like fluttering cotton. The 580 jin overlord spear meeting the spider’s silk was like a galloping horse running into a fly.

Its momentum not reducing at all, the overlord spear thrust straight into the Crystal Backed Spider’s eight eyes!

The Crystal Backed Spider hadn’t expected that its silk would be blocked by a spear. At this moment it was vulnerable to the cold, killing point of the spear!

Speed was not a Crystal Backed Spider’s strength. Its true power lay in its armored body, and its defensive abilities were comparable to stone pillars. It usually depended on this amazing defensive power to keep off its enemies.

But even so, how could it block the 580 jins overlord spear that was combined with Lin Ming’s 3200 jin strength?

“Pah!” The Crystal Backed Spider had no idea at all as its brain was pierced by Lin Ming’s spear!

“Tsee Tsee Tsee!” The spider that was as big as a small cow was nailed to the ground with its eight legs still twitching. A single spear had killed the enemy!

Green mucus liquid shot out as Lin Ming pulled out his spear and rushed towards the other Altering Muscle martial artists to kill them. However at this moment, there was faint sensation at the back of Lin Ming’s mind, as if a poisonous viper was preparing to strike at him from behind.

He dodge to the side, and a shining electric light ripped through the ground where he had been.

Martial Skill?!

Lin Ming immediately turned his head. Behind him was a phantom man holding a longsword and wearing a bamboo hat.

“Peak of Altering Muscle!”

This enemy was the one that appeared after he killed the Crystal Backed Spider! Not only did its cultivation reach the peak of Altering Muscle, but it could also use martial skills.

Seeing that his enemy was someone at the peak of Altering Muscle, Lin Ming’s heart was filled with a surge of heroic pride. This was the first time he would fight an enemy at the peak of Altering Muscle!

“Wasn’t Lin Ming injured? Why hasn’t he finished by now?”

“This guy is too tough, the third incense stick is already half burned! After he was injured he still managed to last another half stick of incense!”

“There are only six people left on stage. The last person’s result was 139. It’s incredible that he is continuing to persist in there!” Most of the present audience didn’t want others to succeed.

“This Lin Ming is already injured. It’s inevitable that his battle prowess will drop. Even if he’s managing to stay in there because of his own stubbornness, it’s not known how many points he could have gotten.”

As these people talked, two people on the altar gave a cough, apparently seriously injured. They were unable to last any longer and were shot out by the altar. One of them was shockingly Lin Ming.

Lin Ming was pale, and his every breath was heavy. Overall his performance this time was not perfect, or he would have been able to advance a few more ranks. But he didn’t care. At his final moments he was able to wield a spear to slaughter his enemies, including two

enemies at the early Altering Muscle stage. He had immensely benefitted from such a fierce battle.

“Lin Ming finally came out. It took two and a half incense sticks of time; it’s not too unreasonable.”

“Mmm. Looks like he will be able to enter the top 150 ranks. The Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and Golden Scarlet Snake Pill are truly incomparably wonderful medicines. This boy was similar to Wang Yanfeng just a few days ago, but now after taking these two wonderful medicines he’s at this level, yah, it would be great if I could eat it too.” The crowd said. Many were envious and could not mentally accept Lin Ming’s results.

At this moment the Ranking Stone magic array flashed. The first light was a person who had come out at the same time as Lin Ming. After the flash, his name appeared in the 136th ranking. After the youth saw this result he was utterly ecstatic. He was only 17 years old and had practiced martial arts for two and a half years at the Seven Profound Martial House. To have this result was quite good.

Then, Lin Ming’s name flashed, and it suddenly vanished from the original place at the 210 ranking. More than 100 pairs of eyes were staring at the stone tablet as it updated the results.

The Ranking Stone had altogether 23 rows. Each row had ten names. Most people’s eyes were looking at the 15th row, as this was the ranking of 140 to 150 and it was where Lin Ming’s name would most likely appear.

However this section of the magic array’s image was tranquil like water and did not have the slightest change.

“Mmm?”

It was too late for anyone to feel surprise. The Ranking Stone’s 13th row actually fluctuated. The 125th rank and 126th rank were pulled

apart by an invisible force, and then the two characters 'Lin Ming' impressively appeared among them.

Lin Ming. Rank 126!!

Chapter 63: Divine Weapon Hall

“126?!?”

“By heaven! He’s only 15 years old!”

After the more than 100 disciples saw Lin Ming’s position, there was a collective gasp among the audience.

Even Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guanyu did not achieve such an abnormal ranking! During their first ranking war, Ling Sen had been ranked 145, Ta Ku 142, and Zhang Guanyu had destroyed them both and passed through the top 140 rankings to reach the 138th spot, and even that was a far inferior result to Lin Ming’s rank of 126. It had to be known that every step up the ranking was increasingly more difficult!

This was truly a monstrous genius!

Some people were still stubbornly staring at the Ranking Stone, as if they did not believe the results shown above. “Is there a problem with the cliff’s magic array? It’s only been two and half incense sticks worth of time, there is no way he could have reached the 126th rank!”

“The Ranking Stone’s inscriptions were drawn by a Xiantian master from the Seven Profound Valleys, how could there be a problem? The result wasn’t wrong, if one wanted to advance past the 130 rankings, they would usually need to spend about three incense sticks of time. The only scenario in which they could have gotten more points is if their strength was high, and they didn’t engage in an extended melee with the enemy, but instead killed them with only a few moves...” A person slowly said. This person was Lin Ming’s instructor, Hong Xi.

Listening to Hong Xi’s words, a few people’s Adam’s apple spasmed as they gulped down dry mouths. Strength that far surpassed the

enemy, enough that they could not even retaliate... does this little kid even have such a great power!?

This was too terrifying!

Zhang Cang had an ugly facial expression as he stared at Lin Ming. 126! Although it was far from his current position, this youth was three years younger than him!

“This Lin Ming, I don’t know what sort of godly material he’s eaten to be powerful to such an extent, but he is only at the peak of the Second Stage of Body Transformation! Was he really able to absorb the so much of the efficacy of the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and Golden Snake Scarlet Pill with only his medium third-grade talent?”

Lin Ming stared back at Zhang Cang, and a hint of fighting spirit glimmered in his eyes. With the rest of a month, surpassing Zhang Cang was not a problem!

“Good... you very good!” A voice resounded in Lin Ming’s ear; it was a greeting from Zhang Cang sent by true essence, “You really managed to give me a good surprise. Although you’re only a trashy medium third-grade talent, you managed to absorb so much of the efficacy of both the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and Golden Snake Scarlet Pill and achieve rank 126. But you are far too naïve if you think with just this measly performance that you will be able to defeat me in the leftover time you have. You also had some sort of ability to be able to get such wonderful medicines like the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, but your luck ends at me. Even if you got this far, this kind of massive growth brought by the pills only means your true essence is impure. Do you really think you can purify it in the short time you have? You really think you can do that, boy?”

“You will lose!”

Zhang Cang angrily said as he moved towards the Ten Thousand Killing Array. He was unable to recover his calm again.

The last disciple who had participated in the assessment with Lin Ming was finally shot out by the Ten Thousand Killing Array. Although he had been inside the illusion for a very long time, his ranking was actually inferior to Lin Ming's. He had also managed to pass the top 130 ranks, but his was only 129th.

The Ten Thousand Killing Array began to activate again as its symbols and runes lit up. Among the disciples sitting in the 12 spots was Zhang Cang. The assessment would begin!

When the magic array began shining with light, Zhang Cang sat tranquilly on the altar with a calm appearance, motionless and every breath even and long, as if here were in a peaceful meditation.

Although the Ten Thousand Killing Array was a magic array, the illusory world inside was inseparable from reality. Consuming true essence or physical strength would cause one's breath to accelerate and their heart rate to hasten. Even injuries would cause their bodies to pale and ache all over.

With Zhang Cang so relaxed, the enemies he was facing in the Magic Array were not his current match at all.

"This fellow apprentice is Zhang Cang, he is a master at rank 109. Truly a fierce martial artist!"

As a new disciple heard this, his eyes filled with excitement and awe; this was the first time he had seen such a high ranking old disciple.

"Yes, I heard that the last time he participated in the ranking war was three months ago. He should have made more progress by now. He might even make it to the top 100..."

Lin Ming watched the incense burn, and soon the second stick of incense was reaching its end.

In the time it took for these two sticks of incense to burn, the Ten Thousand Killing Array had already ejected several disciples. One of them was one of the new disciples of the Earth Hall. His new ranking was 215, which wasn't too terrible a performance for his first ranking war.

The third incense stick began to burn down, and it quickly burnt to half. With this, Zhang Cang had surpassed Lin Ming's time. But with his strength and age, it was natural that he would be able to persist in the dream world longer.

No one present thought this was a mistake, only if Zhang Cang failed here would it be extraordinary.

When the third incense stick completely burnt through, Zhang Cang finally appeared to feel weak.

When the fourth incense stick started to burn, Zhang Cang coughed. He had clearly been injured in the Ten Thousand Killing Array, and when the fourth incense stick was half done, Zhang Cang was ejected from the altar.

Final ranking, 103!

After Zhang Cang emerged from the Ten Thousand Killing array, he glanced at his new ranking and frowned, as if this result wasn't satisfactory. Although he had surpassed his old ranking by more than 5 positions, his original hopes had been to attack the top 100 rankings.

He looked at Lin Ming, and said with voice transmission, "In the decisive battle one month from now, I'll wait for you there."

But Lin Ming had not paid attention to Zhang Can's words, he was thinking of the weapon he had chosen - the spear.

He had to go find a good spear!

The inspection continued through the entire morning. During the morning, most of the martial artists that came to be assessed were at lower level of cultivations, Second Stage and Third Stage of Body Transformation, and their rankings were outside the top 100.

Shortly before noon the more senior disciples finally started to arrive at the Ten Thousand Killing array. These were the masters at the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation, Altering Muscle, and their strength was on a completely different level from the previous disciples. Several of them attained rankings in the top 50.

Many of the new disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House were enthusiasm-filled youths who stayed to observe the ranking war, but Lin Ming instead departed early. If he could actually see these masters fight in combat then he would certainly have stayed, but the only thing he could see at present were all of them sitting on the altar of the Ten Thousand Killing Array, so he wasn't able to glean anything from that and thus had no inclination to stay.

Shortly before noon, Lin Ming made his way through several alleys and streets and arrived at Sky Fortune City's largest and most prestigious weapon shop, the Divine Weapon Hall.

The Divine Weapon Hall was Sky Fortune City's most ancient weapon shop. It had been managed and handed down generation to generation from the previous dynasty; its storied history might even have been more glorious than Sky Fortune Kingdom! 200 years ago the Sky Fortune Kingdom had been founded as a nation, but the Divine Weapon Hall had already been there for at least 100 years.

Lin Ming peered at the Divine Weapon Hall from a distance. The massive pavilion style building had nine decorated stories, and there

were soldiers scattered around that gave a feeling of supreme morale. The entrance was wrought with finely fashioned gold gilding. Above the entrance was a wooden banner with dignified characters brushed on with thick, black strokes and hooked by silver chains. Just by catching a glimpse of the entrance, it felt like there was a relentlessly imposing aura that rushed out at him. Without a doubt, the man who wrote the characters was a master of martial arts.

There weren't many guests in the store, but of those there, more than half were martial arts experts, and several of them were powerhouses at the peak of Bone Forging. This made Lin Ming secretly startled. These experts were only a step away from the Pulse Condensation Period, of course, wanting to take that one step forward and reach that realm was an incomparably difficult step.

Before Lin Ming had left the Seven Profound Martial House, he had put on the unique uniform of his school. So even though his age was still young, he managed to attract the sales clerk's attention. He was only a disciple of the Seven Profound Martial House, but their status was still very high.

"Young hero, what sort of weapon would you like to purchase?"

"Spear!" Lin Ming replied.

"Oh?" The sales clerk said, slightly stunned. There weren't many people who came to purchase spears. Even if they did, it would usually be a tall and burly man. 99% of young men and students who came here would come to look at their swords. He hadn't thought that as soon this 15 or 16 year old young man entered, he would open his mouth and ask to buy a spear.

Chapter 64: Complex Craft

“What sort of spear would this young hero like to purchase? And what sort of price are you aiming for?”

“Do you have any rare treasures here?” Lin Ming opened his mouth to ask.

“Treasure spears?” The sales clerk didn’t expect that this young man would surprise him again with such an astonishing question. A treasure spear was expensive, it often cost 10 to 20 thousand gold taels, and high quality spears sometimes even 30 to 40 thousand. Was this young man that wealthy?

The reality was Lin Ming did not currently have that much gold on hand, but if he was given time he could plan for it.

“Young hero, our shop currently does not have any treasure rank spears on hand. If you would like to take a look at treasure-rank swords or sabers, we have a wide variety that you could choose from.

“...” Lin Ming felt a little disappointed at this turn of events. He hadn’t thought that even the Divine Weapon Hall wouldn’t have any treasure spears. There just were just too few treasure spears.

The sales clerk continued, “For a treasure-rank spear, there are just too few of those and the demand for them isn’t low. Two months ago we had a spear, but it was already reserved in advance and sold.

“Oh? From what I know, there aren’t many martial artists in the Sky Fortune Kingdom who use spears. Are these treasure-rank spears really that marketable?”

“Mm. Yes, they are a very hot commodity. There aren’t many martial artists that use them, but... the army will. Some generals will purchase a treasure-rank spear, but because there aren’t enough

treasure rank spears, even generals with illustrious careers and many meritorious military services do not have a treasure-rank spear. If this young hero wishes to purchase a treasure-rank spear in the Sky Fortune Kingdom, it will be very difficult.”

So that’s how it was. Lin Ming immediately understood that the spear was the best weapon to use in the army. Since ancient times, as long as they were a famous military leader, 80% of them would use a spear in battle. The other 20% would use weapons like the large guandao, trident, halberd, and other weapons that were similar to a spear. There weren’t many famous generals who relied on a sword or saber to lead an army.

When marching an army to war, frequently one would be riding a war horse. During these times a sword or saber was just too short and limited in its range atop a horse. Therefore one had to use a halberd, pike, spear, or weapons like a spear that had good reach. With a spear in hand, even if they fell into a swarming mob of enemies, they would be able to kill their way through. A ten foot long spear could aggressively kill all enemies in a large circle. This was something that the sword, saber, axe, or other weapons could not hope to hold a candle to.

Therefore the style that could sweep away an army of a thousand was in the sole possession of the spear!

That’s why the generals of Sky Fortune Kingdom, even if they had cultivated as a martial artist with a sword, and fought with a sword, had no choice but to learn the spear.

“Well, for the treasure-rank spear, I’ll come back later when they have a good one on sale. A high quality spear will probably cost several tens of thousands of gold taels, and I don’t have that much money at the moment. The gold I spent before came from Mister Muyi, and though the inscription symbols are very expensive, I don’t think he needs any more. I’ve been troubling Muyi so often, several

ten thousand gold taels is not a small number; I shouldn't approach him about this. Also a treasure-rank spear is difficult to use, and my martial arts cultivation isn't that high at the moment. Even if I had a treasure-rank spear, I wouldn't be able to display its full strength."

Thinking this, Lin Ming said, "Then consider that matter settled. Could you bring me to look at some spears, a good spear.

"Very well. Young Hero, please wait a moment." The sales clerk turned around and took out a thick spear shaft from a wooden chest. The spear shaft was an inky pitch black and seven feet long.

When a store sold a spear, often the spear shaft and spearhead were sold separately. The spear shaft was placed in a wooden chest to protect it against erosion. The spearhead was soaked in a vat of tung oil to preserve it and guarantee that it would always be luminous and reflect the light. The customer would come choose the appropriate spear shaft and spearhead that they liked, and the two objects would be composed together to form the final product.

"Young Hero, please have a look." The sales clerk said as he handed over the spear shaft to Lin Ming.

Lin Ming hefted the spear shaft in his hand. Its weight was probably somewhere around 30 jins, and was not made from metal. With a flex of his hand, Lin Ming could tell that the spear shaft was quite flexible. Lin Ming had no doubt that if he dropped this spear shaft in a full moon arc, it could crack open an animal's skull.

Although this spear shaft wasn't made of metal, the damage it could cause on a person's body was equivalent to what a metal pole could do.

"How much is this spear shaft?" Lin Ming inquired.

"1200 gold taels."

Even though his heart was prepared, Lin Ming was still flabbergasted when he heard the ridiculous pricing. The spear shaft was just too expensive! It had to be known that a normal treasure-rank sword would only be several thousand gold taels. This spear shaft was not a treasure!

The waiter saw Lin Ming's astonishment and explained, "This spear shaft was made from black iron wood. It was carefully selected from several hundred year old high quality black iron wood that was soaked in spring water for 7 weeks, each week 7 days for 49 days to let it be reborn. Afterwards, it was boiled in a giant wok with explosive oil for three days. All the bark was stripped leaving only the hardest and most durable wood core, and then mixed and twisted with the silk from a Golden Silkworm, then wrapped around with cloth from a Golden Silkworm that was soaked for three years in tung oil.

"Whether it is the black iron wood or the Golden Silkworm silk, both are precious materials that are hard for a sword or saber to damage. In addition to special crafting process technologies involved, this spear shaft will absolutely not be cut off in battle, even if it meets a treasure rank sword. This young hero may feel relieved that you will not be disarmed in any way whatsoever."

Hearing the sales clerk's passionate explanation, Lin Ming also felt his heart jump. He hadn't thought that this common spear shaft would unexpectedly have such a complex and advanced crafting process. Golden Silkworm silk was inferior, and cheaper than Sky Worm silk, but it was as an absolutely expensive material. The black iron wood was also very expensive, and it was even from a tree that was several hundred years old.

Moreover, if there was a single mistake in the manufacturing process then it would have been ruined. For instance, if there was a problem in soaking it in boiling oil, then the black iron wood would be ruined. The spear shaft also had to be straight and rigid, like a perfect ruler. If

there was even the slightest diverging angle, it would be eliminated. This caused the spear shaft's value to increase many times.

No wonder it was so expensive. Even if a common person did not eat or drink, and worked hard for his entire life, he would still not be able to afford one. If this kind of spear shaft was given to the normal folk, it would be passed down through generations as a precious family heirloom.

The sales clerk said, "The most expensive part of a spear is the shaft. If a spear is good, then 80% of the reason would be because of the shaft and 20% because of the head. The spear head crafting process is comparatively simple; a good spear head is also only around a few hundred gold taels. This young hero, even if you chose a spear head made from cloud vein wrought iron, it would only be 800 taels of gold. The total price will not be over 2000 gold taels. What does the young hero think of this?"

Lin Ming played with the thick shaft as he held it in his hands. He felt a slight sense of something like love towards it and found it hard to put down. Not to mention the shaft's elasticity and durability, it absolutely felt like a first-rate product.

What a pity it was too light!

"Do you have anything heavier? For instance, a spear shaft that's several hundred jins."

"Oh?" The sales clerk was slightly surprised. For a spear shaft that was several hundred jins in weight, to be able to wield it with dexterity like you were dancing, you would need at least many thousands of jins of strength. Did this youth have such a strong body?

But even with his doubts, the sales clerk pulled out another spear shaft that was made from pure darksteel. This spear shaft was quite thick and was seven feet long and weighed more than 400 jins. The

sales clerk had obviously practiced moving this, as he strained a bit in taking it out but somehow managed it in the end.

“This spear shaft is 800 gold taels.”

Darksteel was expensive, but to produce a pure darksteel spear shaft was a relatively simple production process, therefore the metal spear shafts were also cheap.

“Young Hero, please be careful, it is very heavy.” The sales clerk felt some trepidation as he handed the darksteel spear shaft to Lin Ming. But he was shocked to see that Lin Ming gripped it like an ordinary wood club, and did so while looking very relaxed.

The sales clerk’s eyes jumped. This young man had great strength! He was simple a vicious beast in human form.

Lin Ming held the spear shaft in his hands and thought over it, then he asked, “Do you have anything heavier?”

Heavier? He wants something heavier?

The sales clerk said, “We do have heavier options but the price is also very expensive.”

“It’s all right.” In order to avoid any future unnecessary troubles, Lin Ming flashed the gold banknotes in his chest pockets. Right now he still had 8000 gold taels. As long as it wasn’t as expensive as a treasure-rank spear, he would be able to afford it.

The sales clerk saw that thick wad of golden banknotes and was surprised. Such a thick stack of banknotes! This young man is really rich! He respectfully said, “Young Hero, please come with me.”

With that, the sales clerk walked up to the second floor.

Note:

This is what it means by saber.

<http://www.shenyunperformingarts.org/learn/article/read/item/oezDW80X6Io/chinese-saber-dao.html>

Not the version you're probably thinking of (not the Fate Stay/Night character either).

Chapter 65: The Heavy Spear, Penetrating Rainbow

When they entered the second floor, there was suddenly far less people. There was a huge space with only a few customers milling around. A pessimistic middle-aged man wearing a long, grey robe was sitting behind the counter drinking a cup of tea.

The sales clerk gave a respectful salute to the middle-aged man, then walked over and said a few words in his ear.

“Oh? This young hero must choose such a heavy spear?” The middle-aged asked with interest as he looked at Lin Ming, “How heavy a spear were you looking for?”

“800 jins.”

“800 jins?” The middle-aged man’s eyes flashed a glint of light. “An 800 jin spear would take at least 4000 jins of strength to use. Can you?”

Lin Ming said, “Even if I can’t freely wield it now, I will be able to later.”

“How bold! I will look for a spear for you.”

The middle-aged man stood up and moved to the side. A moment later, he returned, carrying a long wooden chest. Although he appeared as if he was taking light steps, Lin Ming discovered that every step the middle-aged man took on the wood paneled floor would cause a creaking sound. The wood panels were unable withstand the weight of the load that the man was carrying.

The wooden chest in his hands was clearly very heavy!

The middle-aged man placed the wooden case on the counter and flipped open the lid. Inside was an eight foot spear wrapped in a thick cloth.

The middle-aged man unraveled the cloth strip, suddenly revealing a dark purple shaft and a deep red spear head. On the dark purple shaft's body was engraved two characters that were written in inscription symbols - "Penetrating Rainbow."

The two plain words combined with the massive spear made it feel as if there was a boundless gas rushing out.

Good spear!

The middle-aged man said, "This spear is named the Penetrating Rainbow. Its shaft is eight feet long and the head is eight inches long. It is a half-treasure."

"Mmm? Half-treasure?"

The middle-aged man said, "Only the spearhead is a treasure, the spear shaft is not, thus it is a half treasure."

Lin Ming was suddenly enlightened. The crafting process that went into the spear shaft was complex; therefore it was too difficult to place an array on it. But the spearhead was the same as a sword or a saber, so it was easy to set an array on it and make it into a treasure.

But alas, it was impossible to connect his true essence through the spear shaft due to it lacking an array, so its power was greatly reduced.

The middle-aged man said, "Although the spear shaft is not a treasure, but if comparing the toughness, it could be equal to an ordinary human-step low-grade treasure."

The difference between a treasure and an ordinary weapon was that that a treasure was inscribed with an array, and thus one could channel their true essence into it. It was not a fact that a treasure would be more durable or solid than an ordinary weapon.

This weapon could not concentrate true essence. During an actual fight, as soon as martial skills were displayed, the disparity between the two would be evident. The treasure would be a step more powerful than an ordinary weapon.

The middle-aged man continued, "This spear shaft was forged with dark purple elastic iron, and the spearhead was made from cloud vein wrought iron. Both sides of the spear's edge have been mixed with profound gold and are incomparably sharp. The spearhead and spear shaft originally came as a pair, they cannot be separated. The total weight is 820 jins."

Dark purple elastic iron?

When Lin Ming had attended the lecture, he had heard the elder talk about this strange metal. This wonderful metal was unmatched in weight and also had a high degree of elasticity to it. It was even used to make strong bows. With a bow made from it, combined with the sinews from a high-level vicious beast to make the bowstring, it could easily project an arrow 2000 steps away and pierce fine steel plates!

If this dark purple elastic iron was used to make a spear shaft, even the thick spear shaft would be able to bend into a half-moon and snap back with enough force to crack open a tree. If a martial artist with 5000 jins of strength shook it, even the light vibration from the oscillations alone could kill a person.

However, for all its thousands or tens of thousands of good points, dark purple elastic iron had to be hammered innumerable times during its molding in order to forge it. It was impossible to inscribe an array upon it, as an array could not be hammered. Therefore this metal could not be used to make treasure weapons.

Even so, dark purple elastic iron was cherished and loved by many refiner masters, because it was just too great and fitting a material to make a spear or strong bow with.

Lin Ming took this spear made from dark purple elastic iron into his hand. He shook it a bit, and all along the spear shaft it began to quiver. But the quivering was not too intense, because Lin Ming's strength was insufficient and could not shake the dark purple elastic iron.

Even so, the middle-aged man was suddenly startled. This young boy! What an abnormal strength! If he could still shake the spear like that, his strength must not be less than 3000 jins! And he was only at the peak of the Second Stage of Body Transformation, what a good physique he had!

Lin Ming made a few spear movements with his hand. Even if he was able to raise a 820 jin spear easily into his hand, he could not wave it around with a high degree of fluidity. If he fought with such a weapon, even if Lin Ming had the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' supporting him, it would quickly exhaust his strength.

But Lin Ming did not worry. Soon he would break through his bottleneck, and this weight would be just right in his hands.

"How much is this spear?"

"9000 gold taels!"

9000... Lin Ming wasn't too surprised. This spear was worth the price. The cloud vein wrought iron treasure spear head's price was 3000 gold taels and the dark purple elastic iron spear shaft's price was 6000 gold taels. Both of these prices were absolute bargains.

Lin Ming pulled out all the gold banknotes he had on him, and even the gold purple VIP card, and placed them on the counter. The Divine Weapon Hall was part of the Allied Trade Association, thus the VIP

card could give him a 10% preferential discount benefit and cause the price to become 8100 gold taels. Even so, with all the gold Lin Ming had on his body, he was still missing 50 gold taels.

The middle-aged man saw this VIP card and his eyes brightened. “Young hero, are you someone from the Marshal Quarters?”

Lin Ming thought about it, hesitated, and said, “No, it’s just from my friend at the Marshal Quarters.”

Although Lin Ming lightly said this, the middle-aged man knew that this young boy was definitely some important personage of the Marshal Quarters; otherwise it would be impossible for him to have a VIP card, much less have one given to him. He said with a smile, “So that’s how it is. Since this young hero is an honored guest of the Marshal Quarters, for this spear, 8000 gold taels is good enough.”

“Many thanks.” Lin Ming was not too sentimental. 100 gold taels, was not much of anything, to either him or the Divine Weapon Hall.

The sales clerk bound the weapon in the cloth strip and placed it back inside the box. Lin Ming carried the box on his back, and after saying goodbye, returned to the back mountains.

The shaft was made from dark purple elastic iron, and the treasure-rank spear head was made from cloud vein wrought iron. Such a wonderfully superb spear, it simply made Lin Ming too excited!

After he arrived at the back mountains, he went to an open space. Because he was carrying a 820 jin spear, as soon as Lin Ming stepped on the grass with his feet, each step made a dent in ground.

Feeling a heavy pressure on his back, Lin Ming’s heart filled with a surge of heroic pride. He aimed at a big stone, and suddenly the spear cleaved downwards. There was only a ‘bang’ sound as that giant stone was immediately pulverized by the heavy spear. Because of the spear shaft’s elasticity, Lin Ming didn’t feel any intense shaking in his hand.

This was an advantage of the dark purple elastic iron. If this was a pure darksteel spear shaft, then this vibration would cause his thumb and forefinger to be numb. If the rebound force were any larger, then maybe his entire hand would be numbed.

“Ha! What a good spear!”

Ling Ming recklessly waved the spear around. He didn't know any spear techniques, and simply followed the same routine as his fist techniques. With an 820 jin spear in hand, his spear dance was a little haphazard. Lin Ming practiced for a quarter of an hour, and gradually felt his arm begin to swell, and his strength was somewhat weakening.

“This spear is heavy!”

At this time, in front of Lin Ming, a bright flame burst into life. Mmm? Sound transmitting talisman?

Chapter 66: Martial House's Resources

At this time, in front of Lin Ming, a bright flame burst into life. Mmm? Sound transmitting talisman?

“In a quarter hour, arrive at the Seven Profound Martial House's martial stage! The Martial House shall be allocating resources to disciples based upon their ranking in the ranking war!”

The Martial House's resources!

With his heart full of delight, Lin Ming strapped the long spear to his back and flew down the mountain as quickly as he could. Although he was moving at his fastest speed, he was still 30% slower than before because he was carrying such a heavy spear on his back. Before, he might have jumped his way through the tree branches with impressive force and agility, but at the present he could only run through the thick, knee-high grass, each step flattening the foliage underneath him, while he carried the spear on his back.

But this failed to cause distress to Lin Ming. In fact, he was even more excited! Carrying such a heavy spear was also a form of practice!

After a quarter of an hour, Lin Ming arrived at the martial stage at the Seven Profound Martial House. Instructor Hong Xi had already arrived there long before, and most of the 20 new students of the Earth Hall had also arrived. Seeing Lin Ming come, Hong Xi lifted a hand and tossed a jade slip to Lin Ming.

“Resource details are inside. Look yourself.”

“Yes, Instructor.” Lin Ming poured his soul force into the jade slip. Inside was a detailed map of the Seven Profound Martial House, and

the sections of resource locations at the Martial House were outlined in detail.

Inside the illumination of the jade slip were killing arrays used by martial artists to cultivate. They were the Golden Soldier Hall, Wood Puppet Lane, Lava Cave, Boulder Slope, Icy Pond Waterfall, Violent Wind Tunnel, and Thunder Valley. These seven were known as the seven major element killing arrays of metal, wood, water, fire, earth, lightning, and wind.

These seven major killing arrays were constantly in operation all year round, and they consumed a massive amount of true essence stones.

Although the killing arrays were constantly in activation, they could only allow 12 people to cultivate at a time together. The Seven Profound Martial House had too many disciples; it was impossible to allow all of them to come as they pleased, so the only method to allocate time was for disciples to gain it for themselves by struggling their way up the Ranking Stone. Disciples that weren't on the Ranking Stone were not eligible to enter, and disciples followed the rankings to be allotted time

According to Lin Ming's ranking, every month he could practice at any killing array for three days.

In addition to this cultivation practice, Lin Ming was also qualified to enter the Seven Profound Martial House's depository and select a low-grade human-step cultivation method and two low-grade human-step martial skill manuals. Lin Ming could not bring the cultivation method and martial skill jade slips outside of them Seven Profound Martial House, but he could bring them out of the depository and back to his own residence to study them in his own time.

“Martial skill and cultivation methods, and also arrays to cultivate at, these are the most valuable resources that the Seven Profound Martial House can provide. Martial skills can increase a martial artist's combat prowess and versatility, the cultivation method is the

fundamental of martial art, and being able to practice in a killing array can speed up a martial artist's cultivation and enable them to achieve twice the results with half the effort. Many disciples come to the Seven Profound Martial House for these three resources. ”

“Out of these three resources, the most important is the cultivation method manual. But, I have the ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’, so the cultivation methods they have here are of no significance for me. What I need most right now is a martial skill and a cultivation room. It's a pity that I can only practice three days per months, it just isn't enough time. I have to rise as fast as I can on the Ranking Stone.”

Lin Ming outlined everything he needed in his mind, then withdrew his soul force from the jade slip.

Hong Xi said, “Everyone has finally arrived. Now all of you follow me, we are going to the depository.”

The Seven Profound Martial House's depository was a pavilion that was divided into the inner and outer rooms. Only core disciples could access the inner pavilion; the outer pavilion was for the rest of the disciples.

The inner pavilion contained top-secret cultivation methods and skill manuals that were left behind by masters and sages of the Seven Profound Valleys. These manuals and jade slips were not permitted to be handed to outsiders, under great penalty. Lin Ming was only able to enter the outer pavilion at the moment.

Although the outer pavilion's cultivation method manuals were a grade lower than the inner pavilion, they had a much larger collection and higher level of variety than the inner pavilion did. Inside were several thousand jade slips that had been collected and accumulated by the Seven Profound Valleys over 600 years. Occasionally, a Seven Profound Valleys disciple would undergo a mission, and on the way, they would come into disputes with other martial artists and kill

them. These martial artists often had cultivation method jade slips on them. Although these jade slips were useless to the disciples of the Seven Profound Valleys, they were able to sell them to the sect and this would increase the number of cultivation method jade slips that the Seven Profound Valleys had. However these cultivation methods were not the legitimate original methods of the Seven Profound Valleys, therefore they would distribute these to the regional Martial Houses so that the disciples there could study them.

Even so, all these cultivation methods were extremely precious within the Sky Fortune Kingdom. Out of the 20 new Earth Hall disciples, many of them had never practiced a cultivation method, so once they came into this outer pavilion and saw such a vast collection of options to choose from, many people grew breathless and colored with excitement.

After Lin Ming arrived at the depository, he handed his jade slip in his hands to the warden elder who guarded the outer pavilion. Not only did this jade slip contain the distribution information on resources, but it also served as a record of Lin Ming's data and results.

The warden elder examined the jade slip with his soul force, and then said to Lin Ming, "You may proceed. You may choose a cultivation method and two martial skills. You may bring the three jade slips out of the depository but they cannot leave the Seven Profound Martial House. Also... if there are too many people wanting a jade slip, you will need to reserve an appointment, and the length of time you can study it is based upon your rank on the Ranking Stone."

It was too difficult and troublesome to duplicate a cultivation method's jade slip; therefore each copy was rare and unique. Some cultivation methods were much more popular and coveted than others, and if many other disciples chose to study that specific one, then there would be a conflict in time and resources. To arrange the reservation time, that would depend on one's own ranking. Therefore the low ranking disciples often didn't choose a well-known or

prominent cultivation method; otherwise they would not have many opportunities to study it.

“The Seven Profound Martial House really is where strength reigns supreme. Here, ranking is all that matters.” Lin Ming sighed with feeling, and then walked into the depository.

At this time, there were many disciples gathered in the depository, but none of them were making even the slightest sound. If one carefully listened, they could hear that these disciples were even holding their breath for the space of half an incense stick of time, as they were single mindedly studying the cultivation methods in the jade slips.

“So many masters...” Lin Ming lightly breathed. The Seven Profound Martial House was really a den of crouching tigers and hidden dragons. Zhu Yan was a top-tier talent who ranked among the best in Green Mulberry City, but here at the Seven Profound Martial House he was only able to be in the top 30.

Hong Xi said, “Start to choose. Don’t be anxious, there is plenty of time. Make your choice wisely. Jade slips that don’t have a mark are the most basic of skills and cultivation methods. Those with marks on them have a grade. Red marks are low-grade of the human-step, and purple marks are medium grade of the human-step. Near each jade slip is a record that shows how many people have chosen that one. If your ranking is too low, I suggest you to not choose one that is too favored, otherwise, since time is assigned according to your ranking, you may not have much of an opportunity to study it.”

According to the regulations of the Martial House, between ranks 100 to 200, they could only chose a low-grade human-step cultivation method manual. Lin Ming’s ranking was relatively high, so he could chose a popular cultivation method.

However not even mentioning low-grade human-step cultivation methods, even if it was a high-grade human-step cultivation method,

Lin Ming would be completely uninterested in it. But, he still had to appear as if he wanted one.

So he began to browse around all the shelves. Near each cultivation method was a label that was made of symbol paper which had the names of the disciples who had chosen that cultivation method. The popular cultivation methods often had 4 or 5 names, but the less popular ones often didn't have any names at all.

The gap between various low-grade human-step cultivation methods was just too great, thus the disciples who were over rank 100 learned cultivation methods far superior to those below them.

Lin Ming looked for a while, and suddenly moved as he saw Zhang Cang's name.

"Shadowless Art! I guess this is the cultivation method that Zhang Cang cultivates."

As soon as Lin Ming looked at the label, he was stunned to see seven names written on it. This cultivation method was truly welcomed by all!

Lin Ming sank his soul force into the jade slip and saw the overview of these cultivation method pop into his mind.

'The 'Shadowless Art'. Heavy offense, light defense. The cultivator's true essence density and purity would be extremely high; they could even compare with a martial artist a whole stage above. This is truly one of the best and most outstanding low-grade human-step cultivation methods among its peers; it is not too far from being a middle-grade human-step cultivation method. However this cultivation method is not easy to practice, and those that reach the Large Success stage are too few, thus please be prudent in your choice.'

Seeing this overview, and reading that it was too difficult so one had to practice it with caution, Lin Ming only smiled and laughed. All of those in Earth Hall over rank 100 were talents, the more difficult it said it was to cultivate, the more those brave and arrogant geniuses would desire it. This cultivation method was also one of the best ones within its rank, how could they not want it?

But certainly, in this cultivation method, Lin Ming had no interest.

He continued to look around, and was preparing to casually choose one, but then his footsteps paused as he wandered near a bookshelf in a corner.

“Spear arts?”

Chapter 67: Unknown-Grade Martial Skill

“Mmm? There is a cultivation method that contains spear arts too? That Wang Yanfeng’s ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ was a cultivation method that had sword skills. It seems some cultivation methods are particularly focused on certain types of weapons and they will have techniques related to them.”

Lin Ming reached up for a jade slip on the shelf named ‘Foundation Spear Technique’. Although the two word foundation didn’t have a glorious appearance of something of high quality, Lin Ming didn’t mind. He sunk his soul force into the jade slip and saw the summary for this ‘Foundation Spear Technique.’

‘The ‘Foundation Spear Technique’ is the foundation for all spear skills. It teaches the straight thrust, the wide sweep, the flower dance, the killing circle, and other such primary spear skills. It does not contain any spear martial skills, and is one of the simplest low-grade human-step cultivation methods.

Seeing this, Lin Ming remembered Wang Yanfeng’s ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ when they had fought. Wang Yanfeng had used the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ and his true essence had transformed into nine shimmering green runes on the blade of the sword. This martial skill was incomparably gorgeous and pleasing to the eye. Compared to the exquisite beauty of the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’, the ‘Foundation Spear Technique’ just seemed too commonplace and ordinary. It only had the simplest style of spear skills, and that was why it was called the simplest kind of low-grade human-step cultivation method.

But Lin Ming didn’t think that there was anything wrong or bad with simplicity. The more complex a cultivation method was, the more mistakes and flaws there would be, and spending a massive amount

of time to practice this sort of cultivation method wasn't necessarily wise as later he would have to throw it away. If that was the case, then it would be best to practice the most basic foundation skills. Learning the straight thrust, the wide sweep, the flower dance, the killing circle, and other such basic skills could never go wrong, as they related to all future spear techniques.

As long as he practiced this simple style to the Large Success stage, he would be able to display its greatest strength. Lin Ming also had the top-grade Body Transformation manual, the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' to make up for any disparity in martial skills.

"I'll take this one!" Lin Ming decided. He glanced at the side label of the 'Foundation Spear Technique' and saw that it was completely absent of any names. The word 'Foundation' really caused others to not be able to feel any interest towards it, in addition to it being spear related, which not many others practiced.

"It's great that no one cultivates this; now I don't have to reserve time."

After choosing this spear art, Lin Ming began looking to choose his movement technique.

He glanced over the available ones, 'Lost Steps', 'Heaven Passing Ladder', 'Cloud Hanging Rope', 'Seven Star Drifting Cloud', 'Swan Feather', and so forth. Each of these cultivation manuals were dazzlingly impressive and had kick-ass names.

For instance, the 'Swan Feather Fall', it was said that after cultivating it to the Large Success stage, then one could use their true essence to fly unhindered into the deep blue sky, as if they were on a feather from a soaring swan.

As for the 'Seven Star Drifting Cloud', it was said that after reaching the Large Success stage, one could take seven steps at once, without being able to tell where it began and where it ended. It was as if every

foot was passing on the seven stars of the Big Dipper, and one would be able to tread on clouds and achieve godly speed within those seven steps.

However, Lin Ming shook his head as he examined all these. He wandered around the corner and chose a cultivation method named the 'Foundation Movement Technique'.

Lin Ming's idea was very simple. Reading between the lines of these movement techniques, they used some special way to circulate true essence and coordinate it with the strength of the leg and foot muscles, and thus create a method to move around. Although cultivating these movement techniques would make it possible to increase one's speed by several times, once he had a high-grade movement technique, then he would have to discard his old method and practice from a fresh start. Lin Ming did not want to waste his time on some low-grade human-step movement technique; although they had awesome sounding names that were sweet to the ear, they were ultimately manuals that were discarded as trash by the Seven Profound Valleys and ultimately wound up here.

He selected his movement technique, and now it was time to choose a martial skill. In truth, the martial skill was similar to the movement techniques; once he had learnt something superior, the old one would eventually be replaced. But as of right now, Lin Ming lacked a true attack method, so he was prepared to select one that was good and combine it with his spear skills.

Lin Ming's requirements were many. He didn't want anything fancy or pompous. He didn't want something flashy but lacking in substance. It had to be something that could be used in various situations, something that didn't use deceit or illusions to strike, something that wasn't low power, and something that could be used with the spear...

Lin Ming examined almost all of the martial skills and couldn't find one that matched his criteria.

No wonder, the outer pavilion's martial skills were trash that were eliminated by the Seven Profound Valleys. The Seven Profound Valleys was responsible for reviewing jade slips once they received them. The elders responsible definitely had great insight; how could anything left over be good?

While he continued to search as he felt some disappointment, Lin Ming suddenly stopped.

"Mmm? Why are there broken jade slips here?" Lin Ming found that hidden on a bookshelf were placed a number of broken jade slips.

"Are these also cultivation methods and martial skills?" Lin Ming randomly picked up a jade slip piece and seeped his soul force into it and the summary appeared in his mind: 'The high-grade human-step martial skill. Martial skill is unknown. Loss rate is 90%.'

Once a jade slip had been broken into pieces, most of the information inside would also be lost. No matter whether it was a cultivation method or martial skill, once the loss rate reached 90% there would be no way for even the most talented of talents to be able to practice it.

Lin Ming continued to look and found that most of these broken jade slips were high-grade human-step cultivation methods, and there were also several low-grade ones mixed in too. This was normal, after all, if it was only a low-grade cultivation method or martial skill, in addition to it being incomplete, then it definitely would have been thrown away long ago. Why would it be kept here?

But too bad, even if it was a low-grade Earth-step cultivation manual, compared to the top-rank 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' which came from the Realm of the Gods, it would be like comparing the

heavens and earth. It was also incomplete, so what sort of value would it have for Lin Ming?

“Although these cultivation methods are high-level, the talented disciples will not choose these because they are just impossible to practice. I have the ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’, there is just no point in wasting my time attempting these martial skills.”

Lin Ming did not care too much about this and was just about to give up looking, when he suddenly saw something in the corner of his eye and turned. It was a jade slip with a martial skill named the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering First’. This martial skill was missing its opening section, and therefore could not be given a grade. It was only the elder who was responsible for evaluating the jade slips that had placed it as a low-grade Earth-step martial skill.

‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ was really a vulgar name; compared to elegant and appealing names like ‘Swan Feather Fall’, ‘Cloud Hanging Rope’, and other such grand atmospheric cultivation method names, it was simply a dirty beggar. But Lin Ming actually knew that the martial skill and cultivation method names were chosen by the creator. Some weaker cultivators were stuck at certain bottlenecks and could no longer progress, these weaker martial artists would spend their entire life creating a set of cultivation methods or a martial skill, and even though it was limited in ability, they would rack their brains to think of a charming and magnificent name.

Superb martial skills and cultivation methods would never depend on the grandeur of their name to attract attention. This ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ could be said to be completely honest with its plain and vulgar words.

However, Lin Ming noticed this manual not because of its name, but because of the effect its attacks would have on the enemy body. On the jade slip it described; ‘The skin would show no wound, but the

interior would be destroyed, therefore it is named the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist.’”

The skin would show no wound, but the interior would be destroyed!

Lin Ming suddenly remembered the soft rigidity concept described in the ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’, Strength Training’s ‘Flow like Silk’.

Strength Training’s so called ‘Flow like Silk’ referred to complete control of one’s strength and was the ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’ Strength Training’s Large Success stage. With ‘Flow like Silk’, as soon as one punched an iron wood tree, the bark would be fine, but the core would be turned into cotton fibers.

Because there were missing sections in the memories of the elder, Strength Training’s ‘Flow like Silk’ had been a bit fuzzy and incomplete; therefore Lin Ming had not reached the absolute threshold of that stage.

“This ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ is a bit similar to ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’ Strength Training’s ‘Flow like Silk’. As they say all living things are connected to each other, perhaps the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ also has the same principles behind it as ‘Flow like Silk’.

Lin Ming continued to examine the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’. Although this martial skill had many missing sections, the parts that were there were still able to give Lin Ming many enlightenments.

“Let true essence vibrate along the fist. If the vibration frequency is consistent, then resonance will occur, and this vibration can be transmitted to the interior of the enemy, and destroy their body’s... so that’s how it is! The senior who created this ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ must have had a very deep and comprehensive understanding of the relation between true essence and its utilities in strength!

“Although the Realm of the Gods’ cultivation methods are absolutely exquisite and peerless, it can’t be said that the skills of the Realm of the Gods are all things that the people of Sky Spill Continent cannot dream of or come up with. The history of Sky Spill Continent’s inheritances and legacies has already surpassed ten thousand years. For ten thousand years there have been many peerless talents and monstrous geniuses. For them to achieve the same results in certain aspects of the Realm of the Gods is nothing strange!” Thinking like this, Lin Ming chose this martial skill manual, and thus his set of one cultivation method and two martial skills was completed.

Chapter 68: Lin Ming's Wonderful Selection

As Lin Ming brought up his three jade slip choices of 'Foundation Spear Technique', 'Foundation Movement Technique', and 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering First', to register with the warden elder, he saw that there were several people waiting at the counter. They were Wang Yanfeng and several others. Hong Xi was waiting at the side, and checking which cultivation methods and skill manuals they had chosen.

As the instructor for the newbie disciples of the Earth Hall, Hong Xi was only responsible for their general direction and had no specific obligation or duty to help them any further. However, this cultivation method choice was very important, so Hong Xi came here, fearing that the disciples in his care would make a bad decision and choose a cultivation method poorly suited for them.

"Wang Yanfeng, you've determined that you choose these three jade slips?" The warden elder inquired.

"I do." Wang Yanfeng affirmed and nodded.

"You chose the 'Divine Yang Power', 'Swan Feather Fall', and 'Thundercloud Strike'; these three manuals are very difficult to cultivate, particularly the 'Swan Feather Fall'. It is very exacting in its true essence precision. If we are talking about reaching the Large Success boundary when you will be able to fly, it will be exceedingly difficult for you. Are you sure about your choice?"

"Elder, I have already thought about this clearly." Wang Yanfeng had his own plans. His family had the movement technique 'Seven Despairing Steps'. However, the 'Seven Despairing Steps' was just a fraction worse than the 'Swan Feather Fall'.

But he would not give up the 'Seven Despairing Steps'. The 'Seven Despairing Steps' would be the martial skill he would use to accelerate and move in short distances, but the 'Swan Feather Fall' was able to make one's body light like a swallow and was good for long distance movement. Both complemented each other and filled the other's weaknesses, therefore he chose the 'Swan Feather Fall' as it suited him the most.

As for the 'God Yang Power', its difficulty was not as high. This was because his ranking was too low, otherwise he would have chosen a cultivation method that was more difficult and had greater rewards in power, such as the 'Shadowless Art'.

"Alright." The warden elder reluctantly shook his head and registered the jade slips for Wang Yanfeng. These young geniuses all had aspirations that were higher than the sun. They would often choose the most powerful cultivation method and martial skills as soon as they could; however, such powerful martial skills and cultivation methods were not trifling in their difficulty.

However, it was hard to question them about this. Young geniuses never considered the difficulty of a martial skill or cultivation method when selecting them, in fact, it could be said that they liked to use the difficulty as proof of their budding talent.

But what they had forgotten was that in the Seven Profound Martial House, everyone was a talent. In the cultivation method, if there was a note that said 'EXTREMELY HARD TO PRACTICE' that was naturally directed at these clueless talents! It's true that you are a genius, but how can you compare with all these other geniuses?

After Wang Yanfeng were the two brother-in-arms Wang Mang and Li Tie. These two also had an outstanding display on the Ranking Stone and so their choices in martial skills were similarly not easy.

"You've decided on these three cultivation methods and martial skills?"

“We’ve decided.”

“Okay, then next... mmm? Lin Ming?”

“Yes.” Lin Ming placed three jade slips onto the counter. Wang Yangfeng, Wang Mang, and Li Tie were naturally unable to not glance at them, and this included even the curious Hong Xi. Lin Ming’s strength was evident to those that had met him, and they wanted to know what kind of ancient and supreme martial skill he had chosen.

Wang Yanfeng gazed at the three jade slips on the counter. “This Lin Ming, his ranking is 126. He might choose ‘Shadowless Art’, or even the ‘Absolute Nine Yang’, or some other top level cultivation method. My strength is already behind him; if I suffer a loss even in cultivation methods, it will be even more difficult to catch up. I will only be chasing his shadow my entire life.”

Because he had suffered setback after setback, Wang Yanfeng no longer mentioned or even thought of Lin Ming’s talent when gauging his strength. In his opinion, Lin Ming was a freakish existence that disregarded the talent barrier, and was the strongest match he had met in his life so far.

Even though Wang Yanfeng had some apprehension about which cultivation method Lin Ming chose, the warden elder’s next words left him dumbfounded.

“The ‘F...Foundation Spear Technique’, ‘Foundation Movement Technique’, and an incomplete ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’... are... are these the three manuals you have chosen?”

These were the three sets of cultivation methods and martial skills? What even was this ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’? Wang Yanfeng had never even heard of it. But he did know the ‘Foundation Spear Technique’ and ‘Foundation Movement Technique’. Wang Yanfeng had also passed by these two manuals when he was looking. These two set of foundation cultivation method and movement

techniques might even be the most basic, simple, and ordinary low-grade human-step manuals in the depository. Why would Lin Ming choose these?

Does he have no confidence in himself? That's not right. His heart of martial arts was so firm, how could he not have confidence and belief in his abilities?

The warden elder was unable to understand this choice. This foundation cultivation method manual was only ever selected by disciples of the Human Hall. In all the years the warden elder had worked here, he had seen disciples who had aimed to high and chosen a cultivation method that was far too difficult for them, and although mighty, inevitably were unable to master it and had wasted all their time. This kind of phenomenon was nothing unusual with talents and geniuses. However, this was the first time he had seen a new first place disciple of the Earth Hall choose a cultivation method that was too simple, as if they were afraid to cultivate at all.

And that low-grade Earth-step martial skill 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' was incomplete, it in fact was only graded that as a reference value, it was simply completely impossible to practice. Did this Lin Ming know that? What was he thinking?

The Earth Hall instructor Hong Xi was standing on the side, and he also couldn't understand. He had come here today to help direct and guide these new disciples to choose a suitable cultivation method. He hadn't thought that the first one to go astray would be Lin Ming. He opened his mouth and warned, "Lin Ming, have you clearly thought about this?"

Lin Ming nodded and said, "I thought about it. I want to build a firm foundation so I chose a foundation cultivation method and a foundation movement technique."

Hong Xi said, "Good. It's not wrong to want to form a solid foundation. You chose the 'Foundation Spear Technique' and the

'Foundation Movement Technique'. But this 'Body Tearing Body Shattering Fist' is missing more than 70% of its manual. Even if it is an unabridged low-grade Earth-step martial skill, it still needs extremely high perception and talent to practice; much less it is also missing 70% of it! Let alone you, even the elders of the Seven Profound Martial House would find it impossible to gain an understanding of it to cultivate, otherwise do you think that a low-grade Earth-step manual would be randomly found in the middle of nowhere in the outer pavilion? Would you like to change your selection?

Lin Ming replied, "I just wanted to meditate and ponder on it; not cultivating it is not a problem. Also, I want to look at it to see if I can obtain some inspirations."

Obtain some inspirations?

Hong Xi frowned. Lin Ming was a 15 year old youth whose cultivation was only at the peak of the Second Stage of Body Transformation. And he wanted to be 'inspired' by a low-grade Earth-step martial skill that was missing 70% of its contents? He was nothing but a moron who had gone too far in his idiocy, but his ambition was aiming at the top.

"Lin Ming, you really have to guard against the mindset that you are going to get lucky. Don't take chances like this. Even peerless monstrous geniuses would not be able to cultivate the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist'. The opportunity to select a martial skill is very valuable; if you choose this, you will have wasted a chance. Although you will later enter the top 100 rankings and have opportunities to choose more, even one less martial skill is a huge pity!

Lin Ming smiled and said, "Thank you Instructor Hong. I have already thought about this and am clear in my decision."

"Good, then do as you like." Hong Xi shook his head. These geniuses were just too stubborn. They wouldn't change unless they endured

grief. So he would let him do this and then eat his regret. If he didn't suffer, then he wouldn't remember this.

Like this, Lin Ming selected his cultivation method and martial skill jade slips. His name was written on a jade slip note, and then he received three keys. These three keys were actually three small ash grey stones, and at the top of each was a red marking.

Each key corresponded to a set of manuals. Once a new disciple chose a cultivation method, the jade slip would be sealed on a shelf for storage. Without the key to open the array, even if they entered the depository, they would not be able to look at anything.

Chapter 69: Strength Training

‘Flow like Silk’

In a quiet, secluded clearing at the back mountains, Lin Ming sat in his yard on a stone table. He was meditating in tranquility, as spinning autumn leaves slowly fell around and on his shoulders. In the peacefully quiet autumn morning, Lin Ming had risen out of bed before sunrise to breathe in the fresh mountain air and get his mind into its optimum condition.

Lin Ming had placed the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ jade slip on the stone table. This was an incomplete Earth-step martial skill. Even if Lin Ming had the ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’ as reference to help guide him, he still needed an extremely high level of perception to be able to fuse the two.

Perception had nothing to do with one’s martial talent, but it did touch on one’s soul talent a bit. Lin Ming’s soul talent was primary fourth-grade. Martial artists’ soul talents were generally low; Lin Ming’s soul talent could be considered top-tier in the Sky Fortune Kingdom, and was equal to superior fourth-grade talent in cultivation.

Lin Ming was adjusting his mind and emptying his useless thoughts. He was ready to use the entire day to perceive and understand the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’.

He sank his soul force into the jade slip, and in Lin Ming’s mind appeared the incomplete scripture of the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’.

“This ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’, the very beginning is incomplete...”

The ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ was missing 70% of its information. If this debilitating flaw was only in the second half of

the manual, then an unrivalled talent might be able to practice a small part of it. But currently, the missing sections started at the beginning, moreover, the flaws also passed through the entire heart mantra, which made this simply impossible to practice.

“No wonder this ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ was lying out on the corner and no one asked for it. Even though the concept of vibrating one’s own true essence was simple, there wasn’t even an explanation on how to begin practicing the hand movements. The passage from the introduction which describes this is missing!”

However, in Lin Ming’s memories from the elder’s soul fragment, there was a vaguely basic and fuzzy memory of what Strength Training’s ‘Flow like Silk’ was like.

Lin Ming took these two sets of manuals as one and began to reflect upon them together. He began to have a faint feeling as if he was just tracing the beginning of Strength Training’s ‘Flow like Silk’.

“Breathing...” Lin Ming mumbled as he pondered, “The true essence vibrations’ start is... breathing!”

In the soul fragment’s memories, he had learned that the human body was composed of millions upon millions of tiny units. Whether it was the skeleton, or muscles, or blood, or anything else, they were formed from these small units that were smaller than dust. However, they actually had a very complex structure, and played different roles in the human body. When cultivation had reached a high enough realm, true essence would condense in the eye, and their vision would be improved to the limit of limits, and they would be able to discover these tiny units.

Each of these tiny units was alive. Each could breathe!

The average person’s body’s tiny units would have a breath disorder from all these tiny units breathing at different times, but if they managed to reach the Large Success stage of Strength Training’s

'Flow like Silk', they would be able to control the breathing rate of these tiny units so that they were consistently unified, and it would then resonate...

This was the beginning of Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk', and was also the beginning of true essence vibration!

According to that elder's memories, when a human was first conceived, in their mother's womb they would be just a tiny unit that would grow. At that time, because the tiny unit is just one, their breathing frequency was consistent, and thus an embryo's breathe was purest at that moment.

Lin Ming was suddenly enlightened.

Was it possible that the senior who created the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' had also discovered the secret behind the tiny units of the human body? This 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' was missing its beginning portion. The grade of low-grade Earth-step was assigned to it by an elder at the Seven Profound Valley who was responsible for examining the jade slips before deciding where they went. Now, it seemed that it hadn't been wholly accurate.

It was very possible that this was an even higher order cultivation method.

But adjusting the whole body's tiny units so that their breath was consistent was not a simple matter. The 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering First' was completely missing this part in its instructions. Lin Ming could only diligently try to recall bits and pieces from the fuzzy memories he had.

"Adjust the body through true essence to control the breathing of the tiny units, and finally achieve the goal of changing the tiny units' breathing rate until they are consistent."

Lin Ming sat down cross-legged and began to revolve the true essence within his body. He unendingly tried to match his own breathing with that of the tiny units inside his body.

Once. Twice. Lin Ming felt his breath become longer and longer. Gradually, he felt his own breathing begin to enter a subtle boundary. He began to feel his consciousness fade away, and his body become empty nothingness. The uncountable tiny units within his body began to move along with Lin Ming's breath as if they were vibrating. He felt a scalding, burning sensation as if he were being swept away by a tide.

Lin Ming was in constant meditation and reflection; like this, he sat in the courtyard for an entire day.

That day, Lin Ming was like a still pond. Leaves fell on his shoulders, his head, and his arms, but Lin Ming remained motionless throughout. It wasn't until the sun set over the mountains that Lin Ming woke from his long period of contemplation and slowly opened his eyes.

"This true essence vibration and Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk' boundary are just too mysterious. I have used an entire day but only managed to finally touch upon a clue. This true essence vibration involves the hidden secrets of the human body; the average person would simply not think of this. It is too fantastic!"

Although he hadn't progressed much, Lin Ming had clearly seen the approximate direction to go. If he slowly perceived this through mediation, he would sooner or later be able to find out the mystery!

Lin Ming put away the jade sleep. Strangely, though he hadn't eaten the entire day, he didn't feel any hunger in his belly at all.

Martial artists before the Pulse Condensation Period had to eat meals and drink water just like the average man. Even someone at the Pulse Condensation Period could only stand hunger a few more days that a

normal man, if they didn't eat for a long time, they could also starve to death.

"I'm also not hungry at all. It seems the tiny units in my body have already breathed in true essence and are full. Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk' is too wonderful! It's only today that I realize that perhaps the so-called strength of Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk' is not physical strength at all, but true essence strength. If I practiced true essence strength until I could freely wield it at will, then this would be the Large Success of Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk'.

Lin Ming was unable to restrain a sigh filled with emotion. The 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' were broad and profound. Over the countless long years, the Realm of the Gods' sect seniors had been unendingly revising and cultivating the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians'. Each method inside was the sum of endless experience and had been time-tested. He had practiced it until now and had reached this level of cultivation, but it was only the tip of the iceberg.

"This is as far as I go today. Tomorrow I'll have a look at the Seven Profound Martial House's seven large cultivating rooms. I wonder what sort of mysterious effects these places will have on cultivation."

In the time that Lin Ming had practiced Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk', Zhang Cang and Zhu Yan had walked together into the Seven Profound Martial House depositories. "This Lin Ming just chose a cultivation method. But with only one month, his practice will be inadequate regardless." Zhu Yan said as he held a purple jade slip in his hand. This color represented a middle-grade human-step cultivation method.

Zhang Cang said, "I wonder what kind of cultivation method that boy will choose."

Zhu Yan sneered, "This Lin Ming is too confident in his own strength. When he was at the First Stage of Body Transformation, he had threatened to overtake me. He will certainly choose some popular

cultivation method that is difficult to cultivate. If so, even if his perception is good, I will let him have no time to practice...”

The popular cultivation methods needed an appointment in order to see them. But a time reservation's length was arranged according to one's own ranking. Sometimes a cultivation method had 5 to 6, or even 6 or 7 disciples waiting in line to study it. At this time, the allocated time would depend on ranking to be given out. If your ranking was low, then you would be at the end of the line and see very little of it.

But usually, of these 6 to 7 people, there were always several that were senior disciples. They had already studied these cultivation methods for a long time, to the extent that improving their own cultivation method by seeing the jade slip was useless. What they needed was more and more practice and actual combat.

However there was also no stipulation that said that senior disciples could not continue taking advantage of the jade slip. As long as Zhu Yan abused his relationships with people, Lin Ming would have to frequently let other people borrow the jade slip, and Lin Ming would not have the jade slip to practice.

Obstruction was within the regulations of the Seven Profound Martial House. Zhu Yan could not flagrantly deal with him, but he could do something that would hinder and disgust him.

Zhang Cang and Zhu Yan went looking through the bookshelves for Lin Ming's name. They examined the jade signs for names. Naturally, the first ones they looked up were 'Shadowless art', 'Absolute Nine Yang', and other such top heart mantras and cultivation methods. However they could not find Lin Ming's name among any of these. They retreated and thought for a moment, then continued looking through the lower-level cultivation methods, but still hadn't found Lin Ming's shadow.

“Mm? What's going on?” Zhu Yan frowned slightly.

Zhang Cang suddenly said, “Zhu Yan, here, I found it.”

Zhu Yan walked over and saw Lin Ming’s name on a very short note. Mmm? The note only had one name?

Zhu Yan was slightly stunned. That this note only had one named proved that this cultivation method was a skill that received very little attention.

“Foundation Spear Technique?”

This Lin Ming actually chose this cultivation method? What the hell was he thinking?

“I also found the second.”

Hearing Zhang Cang, Zhu Yan looked again. This time, he was shocked once more. “Foundation Movement Technique?!?”

Lin Ming had chosen the ‘Foundation Spear Technique’ and the ‘Foundation Movement Technique’?

Zhu Yan was mind boggled. This was inconceivable.

Seeing Lin Ming had chosen these cultivation methods, Zhang Cang said, “Zhu Yan, you really overestimated this Lin Ming. After he attained the rank 126 on the Ranking Stone I thought that he was some sort of impressive character, but it seems like only his luck is good. He had some sort of fortuitous encounter, so his strength rapidly increased. But sooner or later that will be useless. Look at these two sets of manuals, relying on these, how could he possibly hope to face other experts?”

Chapter 70: Icy Pond Waterfall

Seeing Lin Ming had chosen these cultivation methods, Zhang Cang said, “Zhu Yan, you really overestimated this Lin Ming. After he attained the rank of 126 on the Ranking Stone, I thought that he was some sort of impressive character, but it seems like only his luck is good. He had some sort of fortuitous encounter, so his strength rapidly increased. But sooner or later that will be useless. Look at these two sets of manuals, relying on this, how could he possibly hope to face other experts?”

Zhang Cang believed that with Lin Ming’s talent, even if he practiced the ‘Foundation Spear Technique’ and ‘Foundation Movement Technique’, there was no way that he would have any decent results with it. If he insisted on practicing these garbage skills, the only thing that would grow was the disparity between them!

“Haha, he is self-aware that his qualifications are inferior to others, so he dares not select a cultivation method that is difficult. This kind of person that lacks any semblance of self-confidence, what martial skills could he possibly cultivate?”

Hearing Zhang Cang’s derisive words, Zhu Yan frowned as his brows knitted tightly. He laid down the jade slip and said. “Zhang Cang, I advise you not to have a low opinion of your opponent and underestimate him. Maybe this Lin Ming lacks confidence, but don’t forget, he broke Ling Sen’s record for passing the Dream Trial that tested one’s heart of martial arts in the entrance exam.

When Zhu Yan said this, Zhang Cang stopped talking. When he had first participated in the Dream Trial, it had taken him three quarters of an hour. He had done far worse than Lin Ming. He knew what it meant to pass that hurdle in less than a incense stick worth of time.

“Let’s continue looking. I want to see what sort of martial skill he chose.”

They pair turned to look again, and after a long time, they only found Lin Ming's name on an incomplete jade slip's note.

“Missing 70% of its contents, ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’?” Usually Zhu Yan was calm, but after seeing this note with Lin Ming's name, his eyes widened. Was this Lin Ming insane?

He didn't know what grade or rank this ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ was, but he estimated it to be a low-grade Earth-step skill. With a manual of this grade, even if it was at the Seven Profound Valley main sect, it would be a martial skill that wouldn't be passed down to outsiders. If there was even the smallest chance at all that someone could find inspiration from this, it would absolutely be impossible for this to be found in the depositories of the Seven Profound Martial House!

Having seen this martial skill, Zhu Yan didn't hesitate to give up. Let alone himself, even if it was the Seven Profound Martial House's Heavenly Abode's number one talent Zhang Guanyu, and also core disciples like Qin Xingxuan and so forth, they would not be so presumptuous to consider this ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’. That was simply biting off more than they could chew!

This Lin Ming was just too crazy. If he had just chosen the ‘Foundation Spear Technique’ and the ‘Foundation Movement Technique’, then Zhu Yan might have guessed that there was some profound and immeasurably deep meaning behind these choices, but since he chose ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’, Zhu Yan only thought that Lin Ming was a half-baked idiot.

“This Lin Ming, not only are his qualifications poor, but it seems he has some problems in the head. Only if he had the mind of a pig would he choose a martial skill like this.” Zhang Cang quipped. This time Zhu Yan didn't argue; he just didn't know what this Lin Ming was thinking.

Zhu Yan said, “Zhang Cang, although the martial skills and cultivation methods Lin Ming chose aren’t normal, there is no need to not be careful. There’s nothing wrong with not taking an opponent lightly. This Lin Ming is still rank 126 on the Ranking Stone. The reason is he should have eaten the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill and the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill, and was able to absorb these two pills so well that it even startles me...”

“Rest assured, he is not my match by far. After 20 more days, it will be the day of the match. I will completely and thoroughly defeat him.”

“Mmm. Not only must you win, but you have to destroy his confidence. Let him suffer humiliation as much as you can within the rules. You can even severely wound him and disable him. Even if his body was cured with some rare and precious medicine, it would still leave behind a hidden injury and affect his future martial arts cultivation. This Lin Ming relied on some fortuitous encounter to want to fight with me and he wants to take my woman, I will grind him under my foot and make him unable to ever recover!” Zhu Yan said this with a cold eye. He subconsciously gripped his fists as if he were crushing Lin Ming into dust.

The Seven Profound Martial House’s cultivation rooms were divided into the seven major killing arrays that each represented metal, wood, water, fire, earth, wind, and lightning. They were the Golden Soldier Hall, Wood Puppet Lane, Icy Pond Waterfall, Lava Cave, Boulder Slope, Violent Wind Tunnel, and Thunder Valley.

These seven major cultivation rooms were not normal magic arrays, but true killing arrays. A magic array could only create illusions in the mind. No matter how real these illusions seemed, they weren’t like killing arrays and could only kill a person in their mind. Once they awoke, the illusion would be broken, and it could thus not serve to cultivate Body Transformation. Only a true killing array could be used to cultivate and achieve the body’s potential.

Of these seven major killing arrays, each could have 12 people practicing on them at once. Because the killing arrays' activation and maintenance consumed a large quantity of true essence stones, many times more than magic arrays, the spots were limited. Therefore the time allotted was based upon one's ranking on the Ranking Stone.

If one was lower than rank 180 on the Ranking stone, they could practice for half a day every month.

If they were between rank 150 and rank 180 they could practice for an entire day.

As for ranks above 150, there were many stipulations, and the time allotted was accurate to the hour. For ranks higher than 50, the time was increased every ten ranks, and as for the final top three ranks, they could practice for ten days every month. Factoring in rest and time to cultivate, they could be practicing inside a major killing array whenever they wanted to.

Lin Ming had checked his jade slip. His own rank was 126. He could either practice for two days all day, or he could take 24 hours and divide it as he liked. If he did, Lin Ming would have to make an appointment and then come at that time. Naturally that spot would be emptied for him for that period. But if he didn't arrive for his appointment, then his time for that period would still be used.

The seven major killing arrays were located at seven different places within the Seven Profound Valleys. To get there, at the center of each array was a total transmission array. All disciples' practices were arranged by the transmission array's administrative office.

"All new students, you have the chance to enter any one you like for one hour. This time does not calculate into your total time. Before entering the killing array, you may let the elder responsible for the arrays help you choose an appropriate difficulty. Here is a reference chart with approximate difficulty levels and their relative rankings. You may have a look." The elder responsible for the transmission

array slowly said. He then registered everyone's scores, and slowly passed them a reference chart.

Lin Ming look at the chart. His own rank was 126. This corresponded to a seventh level of difficulty.

Out of the metal, wood, water, fire, earth, wind, and lightning arrays, which one should he choose?

As Lin Ming hesitated, Hong Xi said, "I'm warning you, these seven major killing arrays are the real deal. If you mess up inside you will be severely injured. So do not choose a difficulty level that is too high, or more than you can handle. Also, of the seven major killing arrays, do not choose the Thunder Valley. The others are okay. If you have any Soul Gathering Pellets you should consider taking one. Although you only have one hour of test time inside, this time is also precious. This practice may be able to stimulate your body's potential."

Lin Ming just happened to have a Soul Gathering Pellet on himself. He listened to Hong Xi's advice and ate it.

And he couldn't choose the Thunder Valley? Was the Thunder Valley too difficult? Or were there other reasons? Lin Ming didn't ask, but instead finally decided upon the Icy Pond Waterfall!

The seven major cultivation arrays created the realm using the local environment, and their designs were specialized to the terrain and topography of the land. The construction design was very ingenious.

Lin Ming chose the Icy Pond Waterfall. Originally it was a natural waterfall of the Zhou mountains, but after being transformed by the array, the pouring water of the waterfall now contained a formidable pulse and energy. The pond that lay underneath the waterfall also became incomparably and extraordinarily cold, with a bone-piercing chill.

As he arrived at the canyon where the Icy Pond Waterfall was, Lin Ming could distantly hear a sound like thunder as if an underground earthquake was happening. The Zhou mountain waterfall was the highest waterfall in the Sky Fortune Kingdom, and the height from top to bottom was 300 feet. The current of water above directly impacted down below, and the strength of the water was similar to being hit by a sledgehammer. The deep pond below was a result of then thousand years of that waterfall impacting below; the depth of the pond had already reached 1000 feet. Under that terrifying water pressure, even a master at the Pulse Condensation Period would shrink back at the sight.

As Lin Ming arrived at the Icy Pond Waterfall, there was giant curtain of water as if the entire pond was steaming. This was from the torrential downpour and immeasurable amount of water that was splashing dozens of feet into the air. The rumbling sound of the waterfall even faintly shook Lin Ming's heart with its resonance.

“Great waterfall!” Lin Ming shouted with his heart filled with emotion. This was the first time that he had seen such a marvelous wonder of nature.

Chapter 71: Cultivation Method Complete

As Lin Ming walked before the waterfalls array, a deacon was there waiting, who appeared to be around 20 to 30 years old. The deacon had already been given advance notice. He said to Lin Ming, "Junior Apprentice Lin, you may go in. There is a one hour time limit. The array was especially for new disciples today. The difficulty has already been set at level seven. Are there any questions?"

'Mmm, what a troublesome fellow senior apprentice!' Lin Ming thought, but he did not care too much. This seventh level of difficulty corresponded to the ranks 110 to 130. His ranking of 126 was near the bottom of that. He would start from the foundation, and then come back again for a more difficult challenge later.

"You can enter, although you just barely suffice to enter the seventh level of difficulty - your cultivation is limited. If you cannot handle being inside, come out to rest. Generally, one cannot stay inside for too long. If you are in there longer than your body's limits, you may end up damaging your health." The deacon senior-apprentice reminded Lin Ming.

"Thank you fellow Senior Apprentice. If I cannot bear it, I will say so."

"Mmm, good." The deacon senior apprentice said as he opened the array.

Looking in from the outside, the Icy Pond Waterfall was an ordinary waterfall, just a massive one. But as he made a few strides towards it, the scenery suddenly changed. Lin Ming arrived at a new space, and was unable to sense anything from the outside.

Although the Icy Pond Waterfall was a killing array, it also contained an illusory magic array inside. Because of this, 12 people could

practice in the array at the same time and yet not be able to see anyone else. This was because the illusory magic array would isolate one from all 11 other people as they cultivated, after all, no one was willing to cultivate next to others that were watching.

Lin Ming turned around for a moment, and behind him had already become a completely dark, jet-black world. It was as if the waterfall was suspended in the starry night sky. The icy pond of the waterfall was a thousand feet wide and deep blue like glacial ice. Although it wasn't too far from the waterfall, it was unusually quiet and still, and not a single waterline was seen. There was a dense fog that floated over the surface and covered half of the icy pond.

“Just look, you can feel the chilling cold. This cold air is even frostier than the winter north wind!” Lin Ming took a deep breath, revolved his true essence to the limit, and then plunged into the frigid pond.

“Good cold!”

After jumping into the icy pond, Lin Ming felt the freezing cold. He had no doubt that if this was in the outside world, the water would already have frozen over. But in the Icy Pond Waterfall array, this frigid water actually remained liquid, it was just amazing.

Lin Ming circulated the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ to the extreme. His muscles also continuously trembled, as they were trying to give off a feverish heat in order to resist the cold.

“This water, how does it feel a little like mercury?” Lin Ming began attempting to dive, but found out that the water contained a bewildering resistance. As he splashed some water around, it was just as if he was playing with mercury. The water was obviously much thicker and denser than ordinary water, and also more sticky. If this was a normal pond, then if he exhaled deeply all the air in him, he would naturally sink into the water. But in this icy pond, it easily felt as if as if he were being pulled downwards; even swimming forward was slower.

“It was said that this icy pond was a thousand feet deep. I don’t know who could have possibly measured it. With my current condition, let alone diving a thousand feet, even a few dozen feet would be extremely difficult. The man who could dive all the way down is truly a master!”

The deeper the icy pond was, the colder it would be. The chill felt as if it had a faint spiritual intellect to it. It was as if it were trying to worm its way into his skin through his pores, sneak into his blood, and penetrate to his marrow and freeze it. Lin Ming didn’t doubt that if someone who didn’t know martial arts came in here, they would instantly be frozen to the point where they would be unable to move, their blood would then turn to ice also, and they would die.

“My hands and feet are already starting to freeze, what an amazing fierceness.” Lin Ming had already submerged himself 30 feet down. At that depth, Lin Ming felt countless cold needles stabbing his body. Because the cold here was to the extreme, the cold feeling became an aching pain. He was unable to dive further than here; otherwise he would be in danger.

“Although I cultivate the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ and my true essence is much more condensed than a normal martial artist’s, my cultivation is still too weak. Others that can come to the seventh difficulty level are usually those at the Third Stage of Body Transformation or above.”

“Mmm? Is that a stone platform?” Lin Ming found that several dozen feet away, there was a flat stone outcropping on the wall. He made an effort to swim over, concentrated his true essence, and then stood on the stone platform.

Martial artists could take deep and long breaths. Although Lin Ming had not achieved the Viscera Training stage, with one breath he could stay underwater for about the time it took to burn an incense stick.

He sat down cross-legged on the stone platform and began to use his full energy to revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'.

As everything all around him was unusually quiet, it was as if Lin Ming had entered into a separate space and time that had paused. Even as the chilly water of the icy pond flowed past him, Lin Ming could only hear his long and slow rhythmic heartbeat like a pendulum that was swinging back and forth, without a trace of chaos.

At that moment, it seemed as if Lin Ming's soul had risen from his body. His body had not even the tiniest bit of sensation, he didn't have a shred of perception, and had completely become absorbed in a trance-like state. Each and every inch of his muscles were resisting the chilly water. His true essence didn't seem to be completely under his control; it was as if it was revolving by itself. It was like it had fused to the inertia in his body, and the circulation of true essence in his body was running down incomparably exquisite lines. It was far more accurate than Lin Ming's revolution of true essence and was also several times faster!

Lin Ming had just reached 'True Primal Chaos Formulas' first layer's Large Success stage and the speed at which he could revolve his true essence had increased. But now, it had even hastened more than before. It could be said that this was double the threshold of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'. It was a pity that this circulation speed was not something that Lin Ming could consciously drive, but was being done automatically which he could not achieve.

After an unknown amount of time, Lin Ming suddenly woke up from this trance state. "Mm? What's the matter with me?"

There was a slight tightness in his chest from holding his breath. Lin Ming exercised his true essence and surfaced from the water, gasping for breath. As he breathed in the icy air, this air was also similarly bone-chilling, and when he breathed in the air, it coated the edges of his mouth with a layer of frost.

Lin Ming recalled the state he had been in a moment ago. That feeling was similar to the feeling of all the tiny units in his body resonating together as was described in the “Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist”, the marvelous boundary when the breathing of his entire body and all its tiny units would be consistent. If a normal martial artist’s breathing exercises were due to their conscious decisions and thoughts, then Lin Ming’s breathing just down was as if the tiny units in his body had all breathed spontaneously, as if Lin Ming’s consciousness was separate from it. His true essence has deferred to its instinct and revolved completely of its own will, and its revolution route could be called perfect!

Lin Ming returned to that stone platform, as he wanted to reproduce that state. However, he couldn’t realize this state again.

“Mmn!?! The ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ seems to have improved further and achieved the Perfect stage! When Lin Ming revolved the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ to resist the cold, he impressively discovered that his true essence circulation speed had increased by 40%. This was the Perfect stage of ‘True Primal Chaos Formulas’ first layer!

Large Success is easy; Perfect is hard! Lin Ming thought that he would achieve the Perfect boundary of the first layer of ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ faster than normal, but he did not think that he would achieve it so quickly!

“Was this because of the state I was in a moment ago?” Lin Ming’s heart jumped crazily.

It was said that sometimes a martial artist would enter a mysterious state, for instance what they called ‘sudden enlightenment’ and so on. The ancient books had recorded that a martial artist would sit under a Bodhi tree, and meditate under a cliff for one night. Overnight their hair would turn white, they would awaken and discover that their cultivation method had reached the Large Success stage, and their

cultivation had progressed by leaps and bounds! There were even ancient legends that said one could obtain enlightenments and become an immortal, and break from the mortal void.

Perhaps just now he had entered a similar state to that 'sudden enlightenment' or some other marvelous boundary!

Sadly, he had only been in that state for a very short time. Even so, he had obtained enormous benefits from it.

A martial artist's strange conditions were elusive. It had nothing to do with a martial artist's talent, only a martial artist's heart, consciousness, and other mysterious and profound things. Although Lin Ming's talent was ordinary, but concerning the heart of martial arts, he did not lose to any other talent in the history of Sky Fortune Kingdom!

Since he was unable to enter that state again, Lin Ming continued to use the chilling water of the icy pond to temper his body, along with circulating his true essence. The efficacy of the Soul Gathering Pellet was also stimulated. Lin Ming's inner true essence gradually flowed from his muscles to the edges of his viscera...

True essence covering viscera was the symbol of the boundary of the Third Stage of Body Transformation, Viscera Training!

Lin Ming had accidentally half-stepped into the realm of the Third Stage of Body Transformation. The breakthrough was only a matter of time!

A martial artist that practiced Body Transformation to the Second Stage of Flesh Training would have true essence moisten their muscles and perfuse the surface with it. In the Third Stage, Viscera Training, the true essence would cover the internal organs and protect them. Onwards to the Fourth Stage and Fifth Stage, the true essence would penetrate deeper and deeper into the body, until it would alter muscles and forge bones.

Nevertheless, in practice, it was impossible to cover each and every inch of a martial artist's flesh and blood with true essence.

Generally, a martial artists would pour true essence into their muscles. This sort of force-feeding mechanism was limited in its ways. A spot of muscle that absorbed too much true essence would arrive at a bottleneck. On the other hand, because of oversight, some muscle areas would not be moistened or exposed to true essence at all. Like this, it would leave behind an 'empty point' in the body.

But in actual combat, every 'empty point' was also an exploitable weakness. Also, later in the future when one tried to reach the peak of Body Transformation, the Pulse Condensation Period, these 'empty points' would become a huge hindrance.

But it was different in the icy pond. The icy pond stimulated each and every inch of the body's flesh. The cold chill entered through the pores and stimulated the whole body; muscle, blood, and even the marrow!

To deal with this kind of cold, one had to revolve true essence and tremble the muscles to resist. This required that each tiny unit in the body would resist the cold too, and absorb true essence!

Gradually, every inch of blood and flesh would be tempered by true essence, and thus remove the 'empty point'!

Realizing this, Lin Ming took a deep breath. It was no wonder why all these years the Pulse Condensation Period martial artists of Sky Fortune Kingdom had almost all come from the Seven Profound Martial House. They had such mysterious and profound resources, in addition to outstanding talent and outstanding cultivation methods. To reach the breakthrough to the Pulse Condensation Period was just far easier than it was for a normal martial artist. Not even mentioning the likes of Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and other top-tier talents, even if it was only a third-grade talent, as long as they spared no

effort in supporting them with rare and precious medicines, they could also break through to the Pulse Condensation Period!

“Before, if I had chosen to enter the first-level Sky Fortune Martial House, even if I had the ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’ I still would not be able to train each and every inch of my flesh and blood! Just this icy pond has such miraculous effects. The other cultivation rooms must also have other mysterious effects. These seven major killing arrays are just too precious!”

“I must increase my rank as soon as possible so that I can freely enjoy the resources of the seven major killing arrays!”

Chapter 72: Large Success of the Spirit Cure Symbol

“Mmm? I have a question. What if this seventh level of difficulty is not suitable for my ranking?”

The deacon senior apprentice gave a wry smile and said, “You ask that, but you do not need to stay inside. The icy pond has a chilly pervading cold. If you go in for a quarter hour you will be frozen stiff. Coming out to rest is also normal. Junior-apprentice Lin you went in and didn’t come out. While it’s impressive that you persisted inside, please be sure you do not damage the health of your body.”

“Thank you Senior Apprentice Brother for your advice; I truly did have some problems supporting myself inside.” Lin Ming casually said in a perfunctory tone.

“No need to be polite. My name is Xie Dong. Two years ago, I was also a disciple of the Seven Profound Martial House. I graduated, but afterwards I stayed at the Seven Profound Martial House to be a deacon. Junior Apprentice Brother, you have such strength at such a young age, really you have boundless prospects in the future. Senior Apprentice, I, although I am considered somewhat stupid, have some accumulated experience and knowledge in cultivating. If later Junior Apprentice Brother has any questions or unclear areas, feel free to ask me.

Xie Dong’s cultivation had paused at the peak of Bone Forging. For Pulse Condensation Period martial artists, as long as they were willing to devote their life in service to the Sky Fortune Kingdom, they would be given a title. Naturally they would not remain here to be a deacon. Xie Dong had already heard of Lin Ming’s name, and now that he met him, he saw that this young man’s strength was as the rumors said. Although Lin Ming’s talent was reported to be ordinary, Xie Dong

believed that for Lin Ming to create such miracles at 15 years of age, he definitely would be able to do so again in the future. Thus this gave birth to a wish in his heart to become friends with Lin Ming.

“Thank you Senior Apprentice Brother.” Lin Ming courteously said a few words, and then excused himself and left.

The day was getting late. After Lin Ming returned to his residence, he grabbed the spear, Penetrating Rainbow, and shot straight towards the martial arts room. He had to digest the day’s harvests.

The days at Seven Profound Martial House were boring and fulfilling. Every morning, Lin Ming would wake up before sunrise and get out of his bed. He would sit in the courtyard by himself and breathe the pure air of the early morning. After he adjusted his body’s condition and mind to an empty state, he would begin to cultivate Strength Training’s ‘Flow like Silk’.

After unifying with the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’, Lin Ming would compare the martial skill to the memories in his mind. He discovered more and more of the marvelous of this true essence vibration. This was not solely an ingenious method to utilize strength; in a way it could be said to compare favorably with the ‘sudden enlightenment’ state. If he was able to grasp this boundary, then his profit from it would be boundless!

Lin Ming often sat like this for the entire morning. He would not eat or drink or even move a single half-step. In the evening, he would eat a bit and take a short rest, and then he would head to the Icy Pond Waterfall to temper his body in the freezing waters. Lin Ming could only cultivate in the killing array for 24 hours a month. Each minute of these 24 hours was precious. For Lin Ming to save time, he only spent a half hour in the Icy Pond Waterfall before he came out. But for Lin Ming, even a half hour as an enormous advantage.

During the night, Lin Ming would start to practice his medicinal inscription symbol, because although Lin Ming had more options to

cultivate and practice, the time that he had to practice his inscription symbol had reduced. However, because Lin Ming had achieved the Perfect first layer of the “True Primal Chaos Formula”, his rate of improvement hadn’t slowed down by much.

In the process of practicing the medicinal inscription symbol, Lin Ming also practiced the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’. The consumption of true essence stones was very quick; every day he would have to consume at least one true essence stone.

Lin Ming entered his tenth day at the Seven Profound Martial House.

Late at night, as stars flickered in the sky of the Zhou Mountains, there was a deep silence. Lin Ming sat in a log cabin in the back mountains, his fingers moving as if they played a beautiful melody on a zither in the air. Each movement formed a colorful inscription symbol as they floated and overlaid each other.

Within these last ten days, after undergoing countless defeats time and time again, Lin Ming had finally lowered the error rate to 31%. With the increase in his true essence from the Perfect first layer of the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’, Lin Ming was just barely able to support the time it took to draw up the medicinal inscription symbol.

As each material was dragged flying into the air by Lin Ming’s true essence, they were guided together under the influence of his soul force, where they formed dazzling lines and symbols. Lin Ming’s forehead slowly became covered in beads of sweat, however, his expression gradually revealed an excited color.

“Fourth-level vicious beasts blood, last inscription symbol... completed! I’ve finally completed it!”

In the moment Lin Ming withdrew his true essence, there was a flash. The several dozens of floating inscription symbols and lines beamed with light as they reflected off of each other in midair, and finally

condensed into a sublime flame image. This was the 'Lower Spirit Cure Symbol'; it was finally finished!

Lin Ming took a piece of symbol paper and the medicinal symbol branded itself onto the symbol paper. For this little thing, Lin Ming had spent a tremendous amount of time and money. When all was complete, Lin Ming gratefully took that small slip of symbol paper and felt its energy fluctuations. He had an enormous feeling of complete satisfaction.

How could he not be excited? As long as used this medicinal inscription symbol on either of those two top quality pills, their efficacy would be multiplied by several times!

Those two pills were originally top quality goods that had no market price; what kind of concept was it was to increase its efficacy by several times? Perhaps now, even the Seven Profound Valleys would value it as precious!

It had to be known that after a pill's efficacy doubled, that pill's value would increase by ten times, or even several tens of times!

This was because whenever a martial artist took a pill, their body would grow resistance. For instance, when Lin Ming had taken the Golden Deer Pill, the first one he ate had the best effect. The second Golden Deer Pill only had half the effect as the first one, and third only had half the effect of the second. Therefore even if Lin Ming was wealthy, he had only bought six Golden Deer Pills; three for himself and three for Lin Xiaodong. This was because once he had too many, the effects would be negligible and there might even be no effect. Even if he had eaten ten thousand, the last 9999 pills combined would be inferior to the first!

The Golden Snake Scarlet Pill and the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill were also like this. But if a pill's efficacy doubled, then its grade would also be increased and it would be the same as taking a higher-

grade pill. Its effects would increase over the original by several times!

Understanding these truths, Lin Ming was naturally excited in his heart. But he did not immediately use this medicinal inscription symbol. Instead, he put it away, then took a good, deep bath. Afterwards he sat in meditation and breathed, adjusting the breathing of all the tiny units in his body, and adjusting his mental condition to its top form.

Lin Ming was very clear on what would happen. If he ate this pill, he would surely undergo a breakthrough to the next stage, Viscera Training. This was a very major event, and if something went awry, his internal organs would suffer damage. But this Golden Snake Scarlet Pill's efficacy was increased several times, it had become a genuine, dangerously potent drug. Once something went wrong, his body would not be able to support the extreme effects of the pill, and his organs would burst and he would die.

Therefore before taking the pill, Lin Ming had to guarantee that his mind and body were at optimum condition, without even the tiniest flaw.

Lin Ming practiced full breathing for half an hour, then took up a true essence stone and revolved the Perfect first layer of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', letting his body's true essence slowly restore and return to peak condition.

After all conditions had reached the peak of what they could be, Lin Ming pricked his ears to listen. After practicing the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', Lin Ming's keen perception had risen by several fold. It was late at night now, and all was quiet. In a radius of a hundred feet he could hear nothing but the call of insects. After determining that there was nobody lurking nearby, Lin Ming took the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill along with the 'Lower Spirit Cure Symbol'.

“The ‘Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill’ is far more formidable. If its efficacy increases by several times I may not be able to withstand its effects. I will start with this ‘Golden Snake Scarlet Pill’!”

Chapter 73: Viscera Training Time

Lin Ming took a deep breath, and then crumbled the 'Lower Spirit Cure Symbol' in his hands. At that time in the dark room, a beacon of light lit up as the flame symbol blazed to life. A wreath of flames wrapped around the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, and this continued for several blinks of the eye, before it finally coalesced into beautiful lines of fire and formed a tiny flame brand on the golden red colored pill. A brilliant flash of light lit up the entire room for a brief moment, and finally the room was restored to darkness.

Done.

Lin Ming slowly raised the pill and placed it into his mouth, then swallowed.

With such a potent and dangerous pill like this, after eating it, it was impossible to be relaxed like when he had taken the Golden Deer Pills. The effects of the drug would suddenly leap in his body, and attack him like a violent, fierce storm. This utterly painful process was what Lin Ming had psychologically prepared for.

The pill was cool like a piece of ice as it easily slid down his throat and into his stomach. There it subsided quietly, without anything occurring.

Lin Ming knew that this was only because the pill had not melted. He silently revolved the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' in his body.

After a quarter hour, Lin Ming's body began to turn cold, and a chilly current converged in his blood and spread through his whole body along his bloodstream. His body felt as if it were lost in the Icy Pond Waterfall of the seven major killing arrays. The deep arctic chill broke out in all directions of his body.

Cold sweat dripped down from Lin Ming's forehead, and flowed past his arms and shoulders. It was as if Lin Ming's body had become a leaking water bag.

The Golden Scarlet Snake was a cold-blooded animal. Its nature was that of the extreme cold elements, and the snake's gall bladder was where all this frosty cold air converged in its body. To cultivate with a pill made with this snake gallbladder was to feel an incomparably intense frosty chill!

To suppress this wintry chill in his body, Lin Ming began to revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' again. However, it was as if his true essence had been frozen, and his entire body was shivering with cold trembles, and the operation of his cultivation art slowed significantly.

At the Icy Pond Waterfall, Lin Ming had felt the numbing chill of the icy pond enter through his pores and permeate his body, but this Golden Snake Scarlet Pill was eaten directly! The cold energy melted in his insides and infused through even his marrow!

If this was a normal Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, Lin Ming would have easily been able to resist this bone penetrating chill with his thick and deep true essence. However, Lin Ming had used the 'Lower Spirit Cure Symbol' to enhance the efficacy of this Golden Snake Scarlet Pill by several times. If another martial artist with this cultivation had eaten it, they would probably have already died from having their blood freeze.

Facing such potent side-effects, even with Lin Ming's amazingly strong will, he found it hard to resist!

If true essence was like water that flowed through the pipe, this chilling cold was freezing that water! The circulation of true essence was blocked everywhere!

Lin Ming's mind was clear on this, if he could not supply the flow of true essence to his entire body, then some parts of his body would

freeze, and they would begin to necrotize and rot.

Although Lin Ming was able to defend the majority of his body with true essence, if even a small part of his body necrotized from freezing, then it would be a waste of the efficacy of the pill. Not only that, but if with those injuries, even if he managed to prevent a permanently debilitating disability, he would also need to temper his body with true essence again and would waste a massive amount of time.

Thinking this, Lin Ming clenched his teeth and forcefully stimulated his true essence to vibrate through his entire body. With the vibration of true essence throughout his entire body, he would break the chilling cold which had halted the flow of true essence in his body.

Originally Lin Ming thought that his whole body would be in agonizing pain, and he would be in a situation where he would find it difficult to focus and concentrate his consciousness to cause all the tiny units in his body to achieve true essence resonance. However Lin Ming didn't think that at this moment he would smoothly enter into that elusive state of Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk'!

This was because the frost chill had penetrated into his marrow, and all the countless tiny units in Lin Ming's body had to spontaneously resist this invasion of cold energy. Together, they shared hatred for a common enemy!

"In breaking down this pill, my body actually had this sort of change?" Lin Ming was too busy to be joyful about this. He started to urge his true essence to break past the frost chill that had gathered in his body. At the same time, these tiny units in his body also independently began to absorb true essence and temper his body.

This change wasn't only on the surface of his muscles, but also in his organs.

True essence Viscera Training!

Lin Ming had already touched the threshold of the Third Stage of Body Transformation, but after taking this Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, Lin Ming was finally able to take that final step and pass into and officially enter the Third Stage of Body Transformation

In the Third Stage of Body Training, true essence would temper the organs and protect them. One's fighting capacity would increase, and not only that, but a martial artist's internal organs would be moistened by true essence. The heart and lungs would be strong, and blood and vitality would be rich. Breaths would be long, and endurance would greatly increase. With the muscles under the irrigation of such rich blood, one's strength would also gradually increase!

After the breakthrough into Viscera Training, true essence began to pass into his internal organs. Lin Ming felt the pressure on him plummet at the same time. The impedance of the cold energies on his true essence's circulation was also broken one at a time. The cold, chilling energies within his body were dispersed and absorbed by him to use to temper himself.

At this point, Lin Ming had survived the cold air's attack on his body. The Golden Snake Scarlet Pill's efficacy had been perfectly absorbed.

The only step left over was the consolidation process.

After about two hours, Lin Ming opened both his eyes. He let out a long breath, but because this breath was too cold, as soon as it touched the outside air, it immediately turned the water humidity in the air into a white fog. This single breathe of Lin Ming's had unexpectedly formed a straight, gassy arrow in the air that reached out five to six feet.

Breathing in was like a serpent, breathing out was like an arrow; this was exactly the sign of Viscera Training. However, not all Viscera Training martial artists could achieve this step. Some martial artists' Viscera Training was not thorough or complete, and their true

essence only covered a small part of their body's internal organs, or might even just be on their surface, and not throughout. With martial artists like these, even though they were also at the Viscera Training stage, their strength was far weaker than those whose Viscera Training was complete.

Strength Training, Flesh Training, Viscera Training, Altering Muscle, Bone Forging, Pulse Condensation; these six stages were all the basis for the foundation for every step ahead of them, and had to be done step-by-step in an orderly fashion. Drawing an analogy, if a martial artist's Flesh Training was not thorough and complete, and then the true essence on the surface of their muscles would be limited. This limited true essence would be a major weakness and flaw that would cause even more problems down the road in Viscera Training. As a result, with each mistake on each step, it would be worse and worse, and finally it would be impossible to step into the Pulse Condensation Period. This was the fundamental reason that the majority of martial artists in the Sky Fortune Kingdom were unable to achieve the Pulse Condensation Period for their entire lives.

Therefore, with the Sky Fortune Kingdom's martial artists, even if they were at the same stage, there would be massive disparities between their individual strengths. To the disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House, jumping past these challenges was not an unusual occurrence. If instead you couldn't do that, then that was simply just too disappointing.

For seven days after reaching the Third Stage of Body Transformation, Lin Ming didn't go anywhere. He stayed in his dwelling to digest the remaining effects of the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, and to consolidate his cultivation. During this time, Lin Ming had completely and cleanly consumed all the rest of his ten true essence stones.

Seeing these true essence stones that had completely lost their luster, Lin Ming forced a smile and shook his head. These things, he feared he would need hundreds, if not thousands, and even that might not be

enough. If he wished to reach the higher levels of martial arts faster, then these true essence stones were essential! But if he wanted to exchange for more true essence stones, then he would need unbelievably massive sums of gold. It was most probably a futile attempt to get that much gold by selling 'Overwhelming Rune' inscriptions.

'The date of the match with Zhang Cang is getting closer and closer. I wonder how much my strength has increased. How high can I reach on the ranking stone?'

Lin Ming was faintly anticipating the next ranking war at the Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment. He didn't have an opponent now to test his strength, so he could only go to the strength measuring room.

Chapter 74: Steady Spear At The Waterfall

When Lin Ming arrived at the strength measuring room, it was the afternoon, and there were only four or five people inside testing their might. Lin Ming walked over to an obscure corner, took aim at the stone column, and freely let loose a punch!

“Peng!”

The stone pillar began to fiercely rock as the light beam jumped up and down crazily. Finally it stabilized at almost four feet.

3900 jins!

It was only a casual punch, and yet it had this result.

With this result, Lin Ming was quite satisfied.

Initially, during the Strength Trial at the entrance examination, the Heavenly Abode’s elder senior apprentice Ling Sen had come to demonstrate for them. He had also casually punched the stone column which had a 4900 jin result.

Lin Ming remembered this moment crystal clear, thus this time he intentionally had also casually punched the stone column to see how vast the gap between him and Ling Sen was still.

“Lin Sen is at the peak of the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation, and is a half-step to reaching the Bone Forging stage. I am just at the early Third Stage of Body Transformation, but the difference is only 1000 jins... after I achieve the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation, my strength will definitely surpass his!

“But, a martial artist cannot just look at strength only. Strength is my strong point, but I can’t let the other aspects fall behind...”

With that in mind, Lin Ming took a deep breath and wholly relaxed his body. He stood there with his eyes shut for a moment, and subtly adjusted his breathing. The tiny units of his body gradually became consistent in their breathing rhythm, and had achieved a slight resonance frequency. Then, Lin Ming jerked his eyes open, sent his strength rolling up from his thighs to his waist, and instantly erupted forwards from his static condition.

Bang! The fist pounded the strength measuring stone column like a malicious steel weight. And the vibration did not end! The light beam first shot up to 4200 jins, then oscillated up and down between 4200 jins and 4300 jins, back and forth!

When a normal martial artist measured his strength on the stone column, the light beam would flash several times, rise high and then fall. But Lin Ming’s fist actually caused the light beam to fly up and down between 4200 jins and 4300 jins for over 20 breaths of time!

This was true essence vibration, the effect which was achieved by cultivating Strength Training’s ‘Flow like Silk’!

“My fist strength is between 4200 jins and 4300 jins. But using this ‘Flow like Silk’, I can actually send my fist strength into my opponent’s body and attack his vital organs. Also it continually attacks! A martial artist who didn’t completely undergo Viscera Training would just die. Even a martial artist at the Large Success of Viscera Training, or even a powerhouse of the Altering Muscle stage would be severely wounded and spit blood after receiving my fist!”

“The ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’ had recorded that the ‘Flow like Silk’ stage was both a marvelous and purely terrifying destructive power! What a fearsome cultivation method! But the nameless senior who left behind the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ only managed to achieve the formidable destructive power, and didn’t find out how

to resonate all the tiny units in the body. Like that, it would be useless for cultivation; it really was incomplete.”

It was the 21st day since Lin Ming had arrived at the Seven Profound Martial House.

In the early morning, Lin Ming carried his long spear, Penetrating Rainbow, to the Icy Pond Waterfall of the seven major killing arrays. The deacon who was responsible for managing and protecting the array, Xie Dong, saw Lin Ming arrive and greeted him with a smile. “Junior Apprentice Brother, you are here quite early. You are truly diligent.”

“Good morning Senior Apprentice Brother.” Ling Ming politely greeted. Lin Ming preferred to come to the Icy Pond Waterfall in the mornings and evenings, because during these times there were fewer people who reserved an appointment, and he could usually make an appointment during this time whenever he wanted.

“After a quarter hour the array will open again. This Junior Apprentice Brother will be at the third position, seventh level of difficulty.” Xie Dong said.

“Mmm...so, I want to adjust the difficulty today to the eighth level.” This was the first time Lin Ming had come to the Icy Pond Waterfall after reaching the Third Stage of Body Transformation. The truth was, at the seventh level, Lin Ming could dive deep to reach an area that was cold enough. However this time Lin Ming carried the Penetrating Rainbow with him. The Penetrating Rainbow was 820 jins; if he dived too deep, it would be difficult to swim back up.

“Mmm? Eighth level of difficulty? Xie Dong said with surprise. The eighth level of difficulty corresponded to between rank 80 and rank 110. Lin Ming even wanted to challenge this difficulty? Xie Dong wanted to urge Lin Ming not to advance so recklessly, but at this moment he noted differences in Lin Ming’s true essence fluctuations. “Junior Apprentice Brother, you broke through?”

Xie Dong certainly remembered that the last time Lin Ming had come here, he was only at the peak Second Stage of Body Transformation. He didn't think that he would reach the Third Stage of Body Transformation so quickly.

"Mm. I just broke through recently."

"Haha, congratulations. But Junior Apprentice Brother, you just broke through, strength growth is actually a very slow and steady process and takes time to accumulate. Are you sure that you want to enter the eighth level of difficulty?"

"Mmm. I've already decided. I won't change my mind."

"Alright." Xie Dong shrugged and complied with Lin Ming's request.

After a quarter hour, Lin Ming carried the Penetrating Rainbow and moved towards the Icy Pond Waterfall. Xie Dong looked and discovered that Lin Ming's footsteps were very heavy. Every time Lin Ming stepped on the mountain valleys grass, it would leave a deep impression in the ground.

Xie Dong's eyes narrowed in suspicion. His vision focused on the long box that Lin Ming was carrying. "Such a long box is probably a spear or a halberd or something like that. For each step to make such a deep impression in the ground, that must be a very heavy weapon, at least 700 or 800 jins. For this Junior Apprentice Brother Lin to choose such a heavy spear or halberd as his choice of weapon, how rare!"

As Lin Ming entered the array, he placed the Penetrating Rainbow on his back and jumped into the icy pond.

The eighth level of difficulty icy pond's chilliness was really turned a notch, but with Lin Ming's new breakthrough, this cold was just about right for him.

Before, when he had dived into the icy pond, when he was submerged in the water he could feel that the icy pond had a formidable resistance similar to mercury. But now, shouldering the 820 jin heavy long spear on his back, Lin Ming actually plummeted straight down!

Fiercely revolving his true essence, Lin Ming slowed down in the water. He kicked his legs together and with the Penetrating Rainbow long spear on his back, he arrived at a rock protrusion near the surface of the icy pond.

Leveraging the rock, he sprung upwards. Lin Ming jumped onto a second rock protrusion and continued this several times into he arrived under the waterfall.

The Icy Pond Waterfall not only had the icy pond, but it also had a waterfall. The waterfall was equally incomparably cold, and not only that, but there was a current of water that crashed downwards from a height of 300 feet. That force's strength was no less than 1000 jins!

Under this waterfall was a giant rock that was immersed in the water. It was for martial artists who wished to cultivate under the waterfall. This giant rock was specially left there by the master who had created this Icy Pond Waterfall, otherwise how could there be such a rock underneath that raging waterfall, it would have already been worn down and broken into pieces by the years of endless impact!

“What a tremendous crushing force!” Lin Ming tried to stand up atop the rock, but discovered that it was very difficult to steady himself. Although Lin Ming had taken his time to find a small place that wasn't too affected by the waterfall, the Icy Pond Waterfall water here was especially heavy, and the flushing of it underneath his legs and over his body caused him to not be able to stand up straight.

“Hah!” Lin Ming directly thrust his spear into the rock. He gripped onto the Penetrating Rainbow's spear shaft and came to a stop. A thousand jins of water impacted down on Lin Ming's upper back and shoulders. The pain felt as if iron hammers were continuously

pounding on his back, and it was as if his body was being torn apart. Moreover, this waterfall was also incomparably cold, and because of the rate of water flow over him, the heat of his body dispersed even quicker. Even as Lin Ming revolved the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' he could feel the chilling cold unceasingly penetrate even into his marrow, as if he was being stabbed with countless, painful needles.

Lin Ming grasped the long spear and adjusted all the breathing of the tiny units in his body. He adjusted his body to touch the 'Flow like Silk' boundary, and then used this vibration of true essence to barely stand firm.

With each breath he took, Lin Ming's inner true essence circulation started to become peaceful, and he found himself more and more stable, until he could finally stand up straight.

Lin Ming withdrew the Penetrating Rainbow from the rock. He did not sweep out with his spear, or thrust with his spear, or make any movement with his spear. Instead, he simply stood there with his spear in hand.

The spear was the king of a hundred soldiers. It could sweep, cut down, dance like a flower, thrust straight; although these spear moves seemed simple, but to practice to the Large Success stage was not easy at all! Spears were difficult to learn, and even harder to master!

A spear was a long weapon. An inch longer, and inch stronger, the spear followed this rule. Spearplay's Large Success involved the coordination of true essence and martial skill to display its truly terrifying striking power and killing scope. Therefore all the generals that fought on a battlefield used the spear or a halberd. A sword could only be used by the military strategist.

But in reverse, an inch shorter would be an inch weaker. Although swords and sabers were inferior to a spear's striking power and their killing rage was smaller, they won in accuracy. And more so a dagger! That was why many assassins used daggers! This advantage was easy

to hide. A dagger was fast, accurate and easy to fatally strike an opponent! That was why it was unheard of for an assassin to carry around such an obvious weapon like a spear.

That's why to practice a spear, the first goal was accuracy!

Lin Ming had been deboning for years. Regardless of whether it was a saber or a spear, he was already very accurate. In the Ten Thousand Killing Array, he had the accuracy to cut the spider's silk as it rapidly flew at him. However, this was in a situation where there was no resistance at all. In actual combat and facing an enemy's martial skills, the energy flow of true essence would be wreaking havoc everywhere. To use a spear to break that energy flow and thrust towards the enemy's weak point was not easy.

Therefore, the first step of practicing a spear was neither the spear skills nor the spear moves, but to keep the spear steady at all times!

At this time, Lin Ming gripped the Penetrating Rainbow with both hands. His hands were wrapped around the latter half section, and 70% of the shaft was soaked in the crushing force of the waterfall, as it resisted the unending 1000 jins impact!

Penetrating Rainbow was originally 820 jins. The spear shaft was eight feet in length, and the spearhead was eight inches. With such a long spear, in addition to its weight, to maintain steadiness underneath the maddening force of a 300 foot waterfall drop, was easier said than done!

Even with Lin Ming's arm strength of 4200 jins, the end of the spearhead was wobbling up and down, as if confused!

"It's really heavy!"

Lin Ming gritted his teeth. He stayed like this awhile, until he began to feel his arms go numb, and the spear tip was starting to be pressed downwards by the force of the waterfall.

Chapter 75: Day of the Gambling Match

Lin Ming was simultaneously controlling his arm strength and also revolving his true essence to resist the bone-chilling cold of the waterfall. Even if he had the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' supporting him, it was not something he could support!

His arms began to shiver and blue veins started to clearly stick on out his forearms. After half an incense stick of time, there was a dull thumping sound as Penetrating Rainbow's spear point struck the rock, it was finally pushed down by the endless waterfall. Lin Ming half knelt on the rock, gasping for breath in big gulps. He felt as if both of his lifeless arms weren't his anymore. He tried to stand, but found that the true essence in his body had been mostly consumed.

"Splash!" The waterfall was rushing down the rock and swept him off. He raised his spear and stabbed the rock, steadying his body in the water.

"About a quarter hour. It seems that's my limit. What a pity, if I had true essence stones I would be good. I could quickly restore my true essence and continue practice. My gambling match with Zhang Cang is approaching. Even if I win his true essence stones, I can only use them for a while until they're gone. Afterwards I have to try to find a solution to this."

Time passed day-by-day. Lin Ming practiced his spear for two hours every day in the Icy Pond Waterfall. While practicing the spear, he also tempered his body at the same time. The efficacy of the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill had been completely absorbed by him at last. Although Lin Ming's cultivation had paused at the early Third Stage of Body Transformation, he had thoroughly consolidated this stage.

After eight days passed, Lin Ming had used up all 16 hours of practice time that he had saved up. On the last day, Lin Ming was already able to carry the Penetrating Rainbow and stand under the waterfall with one breath for one hour. From the beginning, his long spear would be nearly motionless, but only half an hour later would there be a small vibration.

After, two days passed. It was exactly one month since Lin Ming had arrived at the Seven Profound Martial House. Lin Ming rose from bed early like he usually did. He stood before the wooden door of his residence under the canopy shade of the century-old trees. He grasped the spear, Penetrating Rainbow, in his hand and stretched out both hands in front of himself while holding it. Like this, he held 820 jins completely and evenly perpendicular to his body.

At the spear point of Penetrating Rainbow, he had placed a small porcelain bowl. This bowl was filled to the brim with water. Under Lin Ming's deep and steady strength, this bowl of water hadn't even lost the tiniest amount of water. It was as if it were placed on a flat tabletop.

Since he had exhausted the remaining hours he could use the seven major killing arrays for, and could not go to the Icy Pond Waterfall, Lin Ming had practiced with these self-created methods.

Lin Ming practiced until it was almost noon. He ate a very simple meal and took a small rest, then he carried Penetrating Rainbow and went straight to the Seven Profound Martial House's martial stage. Today was the day he had his gambling match with Zhang Cang...

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Although it was already the fall season, the high noon sun was blazing intensely hot. This was the time of day at which Yang energy was thickest in the air. The most sinister baking sunlight was at three quarters to noon. The average person would usually opt to not go out at this time, and instead stay at home and take a nap. However, right

now at the Seven Profound Martial House's martial stage was actually gathered a large crowd of people.

Most of these people were disciples from the Seven Profound Martial House's Earth Hall and Human Hall. There were also some disciples of the Heavenly Abode that had arrived. Although at this time the sunlight was smolderingly hot, these people's faces didn't have the slightest hint of sweat. It was as if the skies were clear and they were leisurely looking around with an unflustered appearance. Obviously none of these disciples were mediocre.

Today was the day that the four people, Lin Ming, Zhang Cang, Wang Yanfeng, and Liu Mingxiang, had their gambling match. In this group of four, two of them were the first and second place of the new disciples that had taken the entrance exam, and the other two were strong old disciples. This stunt was enough to arouse the attention and interest of many disciples in the Seven Profound Martial House.

The disciples of the Human Hall had come to take a look at the liveliness and have some fun, but the disciples of the Earth Hall and Heavenly Abode had come to take a look at their future rivals. Whether it was Lin Ming or Wang Yanfeng, their later rankings would certainly rise. Even a disciple of the Heavenly Abode would not look down upon them. Of course, that was a matter for later. Right now, their strength was still in its infancy.

"There isn't much suspense in the outcome of these matches. In the past battles that the new disciples participated in, the newbies almost never won against the old disciples, much less this time; they are up against Liu Mingxiang and Zhang Cang who are both experts. Lin Ming and Wang Yanfeng really do not have any hope at all." A disciple of the Heavenly Abode slowly said as he looked at the sundial near the martial stage.

"Indeed. But don't underestimate this Lin Ming. When he first entered the Martial House, I didn't care about him at all, but in the

last Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment he was able to reach rank 126. This is an extraordinary result. This time he is up against Zhang Cang. If he were matched against Liu Mingxiang, then that Liu Mingxiang would not do well and might possibly fail miserably.”

“You think that Liu Mingxiang would lose to Lin Ming? Come on, Lin Ming’s talent is limited. Although he managed to get a high ranking in the Ten Thousand Killing Array, he is still far from Liu Mingxiang. He may have taken the two top-quality pills that were rewarded from the entrance examination and absorbed some of the effects, but do you think that in a month he would be able to overtake Liu Mingxiang?”

“Talent? You are only staring at Lin Ming’s talent? No matter what sort of fortuitous encounter Lin Ming had, or what sort of precious pills or herbs or medicines he had, the strife that he was able to manifest so far has completely disregarded his talent. Those who look down on him just because of his talent will suffer a loss!” A disciple of the Heavenly Abode firmly said.

“Hehe, you sure think highly of that Lin Ming. Last time I went to the depository, I specifically paid attention to the cultivation method that Lin Ming chose...” The Earth Hall disciples deliberately dragged out his tone as he saw how much attention he had attracted, “This Lin Ming chose the cultivation methods for ‘Foundation Spear Technique’ and ‘Foundation Movement Technique’. He also had some incomplete ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ martial skill that he picked up. With just these, how much progress could he have with just one month? Before this, he was able to obtain rank 126 because he took the rare and precious Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and Golden Snake Scarlet Pill at the same time. Even a pig would find its cultivation increased. This Lin Ming’s talent is limited. He cannot practice higher-grade cultivation methods and martial skills. Depending on these two foundation manuals, on what basis would he be able to surpass Liu Mingxiang?”

Lin Ming had raised a ruckus at the Ten Thousand Killing Array, so it was very easy for him to arouse the interest of the other Martial House disciples. Many people had taken a look at the cultivation method that Lin Ming had selected. This matter was very easy; his name was the only one on the jade slip note, and those who wanted to see could see it.

“What? ‘Foundation Spear Technique’ and ‘Foundation Movement Technique’? Lin Ming chose those two? How could that sort of cultivation method have any sort of formidable might? I thought for sure that he would choose something like the ‘Shadowless Art’ or the ‘Absolute Nine Yang’ and so on...”

“Ha, ‘Shadowless Art’? ‘Absolute Nine Yang’? Those cultivation methods are certainly good but do you think an average person can cultivate them? Have you forgotten Lin Ming’s talent? I think that fellow’s perception is also limited; all he knows is his own self-knowledge, therefore he chose these two sets of simple skills to learn. Wait and see, this Lin Ming’s rising halo will be put down!” The disciple’s tone and smirking expression indicated that he took pleasure in Lin Ming’s misfortune. Lin Ming had only been at the Seven Profound Martial House for a short time, and yet his ranking was already ahead of this man. This really made him feel sick in his heart.

At this time, there was a commotion in the ground. A distant group of people parted to make way. Two men, both about 20 years old, walked up side by side.

One of the two was a gaunt and pale looking man. His facial expression was cold and resolute. A black, heavy sword was strapped to his back. Although he was just walking, his entire manner seemed as if it were a razor. He was like a cold treasure sword that had been drawn out. It really gave those around him a huge feeling of pressure as he walked past them.

The other man was robust and tall, with a vigorous expression. His whole body was thickly corded with muscles, and he carried an eight foot long dark purple staff on his back. Each step this person took was steady and silent. If each footprint was measured, it would be discovered that the spacing between every two steps was completely consistent. It was six feet every time, no more and no less! This was the result from cultivating the top movement technique from the Seven Profound Martial House's depositories, the 'Six Foot Step'!

"Ling Sen!"

"Ta Ku!"

"These two people also came to watch the match!"

Among those who came to watch the gambling match, most were disciples of the Earth Hall. Disciples of the Heavenly Abode had come, but most of them were around rank 50 and 60. This was around the very end of the Heavenly Abode rankings. They had come out of fear that they would be pushed out by those in the match today, so they came to take a look at the situation.

But Ling Sen and Ta Ku were the top two unshakable existences on the Ranking Stone. They also came to see an internal gambling match of the Earth Hall?

Chapter 76: Ling Sen, Ta Ku

In the Seven Profound Martial House, Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhuang Guanyu were the three existences that held absolute authority. Even the several core disciples could not compare with their fame and reputation. After entering the Seven Profound Martial House, starting from the third year, these three people had been situated in the top three ranks of the Ranking stone and had maintained that until the present. There was not a single person yet who had been able to pressure them from those coveted positions!

The Ranking Stone only showed one's rank, they did not display the score. Therefore, of these three top-tier geniuses, no one knew how many more points they had achieved over the fourth ranked disciple. There were rumors that Zhang Guanyu had more than ten thousand points over the fourth place disciple, but whether these rumors were real or fake, no one knew.

In brief, Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhuang Guanyu were three people of immeasurably deep and profound strength. They whispered that Ling Sen, who was half a step into the Fifth Stage of Body Transformation, could compare with the strength of a martial artist at the Pulse Condensation Period!

Such a dominant and compelling person, who could they possibly pay attention too?

It was impossible for it to be Zhang Cang or Liu Mingxiang. Although they were strong, but in the past two years they had not managed to crack into the Ranking Stone's top 100. They were absolutely not anyone that Ling Sen or Ta Ku would bother paying attention too. Wang Yanfeng was also unqualified. Although he had a superior fourth-grade talent, but in Ling Sen and Ta Ku's eyes, he was also an insignificant existence that had barely entered the top 180 for the first

time. He was just pathetic. So the only youth here worth concerning over, it could only be Lin Ming!

They must have come to take a look at him. During the first Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment he had participated in, he had managed to reach rank 126. Even that Zhang Guanyu was inferior to him in this regard. They came to see just who this young man was!

At this moment, in the crowd, Zhang Cang and Liu Mingxiang had also arrived. But because Ling Sen and Ta Ku were here, their limelight had been completely snatched away. No one even paid attention to these two who were in the gambling match.

Zhang Cang wasn't narcissistic enough to think that these two people, Ling Sen and Ta Ku, would come here to a gambling match to watch him. They were certainly here to check out Lin Ming. As Zhang Cang realized this, he felt very uncomfortable in his heart. Even if he did win, Ling Sen and Ta Ku's focus wouldn't be on him!

"Humph! How dare you look down on me! I will let you know that your judgment was stupid and wrong!" Zhang Cang secretly clenched his fists.

Liu Mingxiang also gritted his teeth, "Zhang Cang, not only do we have to win, but we have to win cleanly and perfectly. In five moves we will step these reckless kids underneath our feet, otherwise others will really think we are worthless trash!"

"Humph. I will leave a memento on that Lin boy's body. I will let him regret this gambling match!" As he said this, Zhang Cang traced the hilt of the slender knife in hand, and his cold eyes flashed. This was also a request of Zhu Yan; not only attack his heart of martial arts, but leave him a severe wound that would hinder his future cultivation.

By now, Ling Ming and Wang Yanfeng had also arrived. Today, Lin Ming came dressed in black clothes, and carried an eight foot long

dark purple spear on his back. This 820 jin spear, Penetrating Rainbow, did not bend Lin Ming's back in the slightest. His posture was like the Penetrating Rainbow, he was standing just as straight!

Although his cultivation was only at the Third Stage of Body Cultivation, the thick true essence combined with his domineering manner, gave birth to a feeling among the crowd that this young man was truly unshakable!

“This Lin Ming, good!” Ta Ku opened his mouth to say. “That spear he is carrying, it looks like the shaft is made from dark purple elastic iron, just like my staff. With such a pole, the spear weight is definitely above 800 jins. The shaft contains a horrific strength. If he dares to use this weapon, then he must be very self-confident in his own strength.”

Ta Ku's weapon was a staff. It was a weapon which very few martial artists used. Not many of them used spears either, but you could still see them in the army. But a staff had no use in the army. Only some temples that did not speak of taking lives would use them.

A staff was known as the virtuous man among soldiers. Ta Ku's staff was 860 jins, and the staff body was made from dark purple elastic iron. Two golden bands made from cloud vein wrought iron circled both tips. Although it was not a treasure, if it was used to hit a human, there would be a horrific force.

Describing the power of top staffs and clubs, they were described as 'a hit is a wound, a touch is death'. This was because a staff body contained a terrifying trembling crushing force! If they were struck they would be wounded, but if they were directly pounded, even iron armor would explode open!

Therefore, for this kind of staff-like weapon, a treasure staff's might was instead inferior to one made from dark purple elastic iron!

The spear was equally wonderful in certain aspects like the staff, but the style was more complicated and diverse.

Ta Ku used a staff. To someone like Lin Ming who used a spear, it gave birth to warm feelings. After all, these two weapons were similarly rare.

“What a pity. He’s up against Zhang Cang. I cannot see this Lin Ming’s situation. I don’t know if in the future he will soar into the skies, or if he will vanish into the masses. But right now, he is not Zhang Cang’s match. Do you think that this Lin Ming can exchange several moves with Zhang Cang?” Ta Ku turned to his side and asked Ling Sen.

Ling Sen looked at Ta Ku and responded with a question, “You’ve determined that Lin Ming will lose?”

“Oh? You really think that this Lin Ming can win?” Ta Ku thought that he had already given Lin Ming a high appraisal. Ignoring his talent, he could be a possible rival. But he didn’t think that that Ling Sen would give an even higher appraisal!

The reason that Ling Sen was paying attention to Lin Ming was partly because he had achieved rank 126 on his first Ten Thousand Killing Array Assessment, and partly because Lin Ming’s heart of martial arts in the Dream Trial had managed to break his record! This was the proof that Lin Ming’s heart of martial arts had already surpassed him!

Ling Sen’s innermost feelings and thoughts were firm and resolute like iron. He had no desires and was also just. But that didn’t mean he was without flaws. His flaw was his killing heart. Ling Sen’s bloodlust was too great, his deathly aura was too heavy, and it was difficult for him to eliminate the evils within his heart.

Certainly, Lin Ming also had a flaw. There was not a single person in this world that did not have a flaw in their heart, so it only depended on whose flaw was smaller.

Ling Sen's talent was an inferior fourth-grade. In the Seven Profound Martial House where geniuses gathered, this talent could only be considered decent. What he actually relied on to achieve his current position at the Seven Profound Martial House, was his formidable heart of martial arts. He had seen his own shadow in Lin Ming, and wanted to have a look at him and see whether he could create a miracle.

Ling Sen said, "I'm not sure if Lin Ming will win or lose, but what I know is that when Lin Ming was in the Ten Thousand Killing Array, his cultivation was at the peak Second Stage of Body Transformation. Now he is already at the Third Stage of Body Transformation."

"Mm? It seems so."

Unless the gap in strength was too large, a martial artist could tell another's cultivation at a glance. Naturally, Zhang Cang and Liu Mingxiang also noted Lin Ming's growth.

"This boy, he has such dog-shit luck. He actually made a breakthrough during this time!"

"It's because of the efficacy of the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill. If he ate these two miracle pills together, the drug's efficacy would slowly release into his body. It's not too strange that he would breakthrough to the next stage, otherwise it would have been impossible to reach Rank 126 on the Ranking Stone. Zhang Cang, you have to be careful. Don't be careless and suffer a loss."

"Humph. You think too highly of him. He cultivates the 'Foundation Spear Technique' and the 'Foundation Movement Technique'. There is no depth at all in these skills. Even if he practiced them to the Large Success stage, they wouldn't have any power. Only because he has no self-confidence would he be an idiot and choose these two manuals. My knife skill is quick. Compared to his unwieldy spear, he won't even be able to touch the hem of my clothes!"

By now, the sundial's shadow was at quarter to noon. Time was up!

Chapter 77: When I Need to Draw it, I Will Draw it

Liu Mingxiang was the first to jump on stage. He pointed his longsword at Wang Yanfeng and said with a smile, “Wang Yanfeng, come up to die!”

“Humph.” Wang Yanfeng coldly snorted and fearlessly walked on stage. Today was the day that he and Liu Mingxiang’s match had also been decided upon.

“This Wang Yanfeng has some backbone after all.” Lin Ming could see that Wang Yanfeng wasn’t faking his confident manner. The gap between Wang Yanfeng and Liu Mingxiang was just too wide. Even if Wang Yanfeng’s talent was gifted, it was impossible for him to catch up to Liu Mingxiang in just one month. But confronted with even the slimmest chance of victory, he also faced this with a courageous manner. This was quite a rare and commendable feat.

Wang Yanfeng drew out his own treasure sword, and poured his true essence into it. The green runes of the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ came shimmering alive one at a time. Its brightness and solidity was many times more than when he had fought with Lin Ming.

During this month, Wang Yanfeng had cultivated like a madman with nothing to lose. Although he hadn’t been able to reach the peak of the Third Stage of Body Transformation, his true essence Viscera Training had reached a much more thorough and complete degree, and he had consolidated his cultivation at the Third Stage of Body Transformation.

Seeing Wang Yanfeng’s ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ swordsmanship, Liu Mingxiang smiled, “Looks like you’ve made a little progress, but it’s a pity, you’re still far short of reaching me.”

“Now die!” Liu Mingxiang shouted. He drew his sword and slashed at Wang Yanfeng. As it cut through the air, his sword turned purple-gray and began to glitter with a strange phosphorescent light.

Peng peng peng! Liu Mingxiang’s sword let loose three strikes. The treasure-rank sword howled with a piercing sound as Liu Mingxiang sent his true essence flowing into it.

Wang Yanfeng stepped back slightly, the symbols of the ‘Nine Paths of Truth’ began to dazzle with light on the sword blade. With a stroke of his sword, Liu Mingxiang’s sword wind was split apart and weakened. With another cut of his sword, Wang Yanfeng broke apart Liu Mingxiang’s first sword wind slash.

Cha cha cha! Wang Yanfeng wielded his sword as he stepped backwards. He cut down Liu Mingxiang’s sword wind again and again and again. By the end of this terrible onslaught, the wind strokes had shredded his clothes to tatters, but Wang Yanfeng’s step was calm, and though his true essence was rapidly fluctuating, it wasn’t chaotic.

“You have some decent skills, but you are far from ready! ‘Heavenly King’s Crushing Chakram Blade!’”

Liu Mingxiang took a step forward. The haze of true essence around his body began to glow with a rich purple light. It billowed off of him like a cloud of steam. His three foot long sword began to glow with a glorious light that ran up the blade’s length. True essence congealed together and formed a rapidly spinning Dharmic Wheel at the end of the sword point.

“‘Heavenly King’s Crushing Chakram Blade’! This is a high-level martial skill from the depository. Practicing it is beyond difficult, but this Liu Mingxiang actually succeeded in doing so!”

“Wang Yanfeng is in danger!”

Lin Ming narrowed his eyes as he looked at this martial skill 'Heavenly King's Crushing Chakram'. It was true essence that had formed a strange self-contained system. Just looking at it, there appeared to be no flaw, but Lin Ming had discovered that Liu Mingxiang was forcefully using this martial skill; he had only reluctantly managed to use this 'Heavenly King's Crushing Chakram'. In Lin Ming's eyes, he could see that there were too many flaws in the circulation of true essence in the treasure sword.

If Wang Yanfeng wanted to win, his only path was to rush forward right now and interrupt Liu Mingxiang from supplying his sword with true essence. However, Wang Yanfeng was not an inscription master and he did not know the 'Overbearing Soul Tactic', and thus it was impossible for him to see the path of true essence in Liu Mingxiang's sword.

At this time, Wang Yanfeng moved. Although Liu Mingxiang's aura was intimidating, Wang Yanfeng had resolved to swim against this stream! He was clear; this was his only chance. He must attack before Liu Mingxiang's Dharmic Wheel had condensed to its top form, and defeat his 'Heavenly King's Crushing Chakram'!

Wang Yanfeng brandished his sword. His target was not the 'Heavenly King's Crushing Chakram', nor was it the weak spots in the flow of true essence of Liu Mingxiang's treasure sword. Instead, the point he would strike was Liu Mingxiang's chest. Wang Yanfeng's sword infused with true essence and it seemed as if lightning was flashing up its blade, carrying with it the crashing sound of wind and thunder. This was the martial skill 'Thundercloud Strike'!

This move was the high-grade martial skill that Wang Yanfeng had chosen at the depository!

At that time, Wang Yanfeng had chosen three manuals at the depository; 'Divine Yang Power', 'Swan Feather Fall', and 'Thundercloud Strike'. These three cultivation methods and martial

skills were not simple at all; even with Wang Yanfeng's outstanding talent, it would be impossible for him to learn them in a short period of time.

'Divine Yang Power' was a skill used to enhance one's cultivation. It would take more than one night and day or even a month with this to improve one's cultivation and strength. The 'Swan Feather Fall' was a movement technique, but it also could not increase his combat prowess immediately. Therefore Wang Yanfeng had used most of the remaining month to cultivate the "Thundercloud Strike'. Now, his 'Thundercloud Strike' had finally shown some results, and he believed that with this move he would create a miracle!

"Naïve! You've only practiced the 'Thundercloud Strike' for one month, how could you even think of comparing it to my 'Heavenly King's Crushing Chakram'!?" Liu Mingxiang shouted. The longsword that held the 'Heavenly King's Crushing Chakram' slashed down. The spinning Dharmic Wheel fell down as if it were a black hole that could swallow all of life.

Bang! The 'Thundercloud Strike' and 'Heavenly King's Crushing Chakram' smashed into each other. The intense collision of true essence became a ballooning force of air pressure, as if it were the epicenter of a tide that was rushing outwards. In the air, lightning flashed and the sound of thunder drowned out all noise. Wang Yanfeng and Liu Mingxiang were both tossed backwards flying upside down!

Liu Mingxiang cartwheeled several times in the air before he finally managed to stab his sword into the ground and stabilize himself. Blood roiled in his chest, almost sending him tumbling; he was almost seriously injured in that last collision.

However, Wang Yanfeng's situation was miserable. His body was tossed backwards like a rag doll for several dozen feet before he

hazardously slammed into a big tree. His leg was stained crimson from an injury. He opened his mouth and coughed up blood.

“Wang Yanfeng lost!”

“Predictable. But it’s already very impressive that he could force Liu Mingxiang to this degree.”

“How can a new disciple beat an old disciple? Isn’t everyone here a talent? We have stayed here at the Seven Profound Martial House for several years, if we lose to a new disciple, then the years that we spent here cultivating are all useless! This Lin Ming will also absolutely lose! These newbies, we don’t beat them around and they think that they can ride on our heads! An old disciple of the Earth Hall said with disdain as he curled his lips.

Wang Yanfeng supported himself with his sword as he fell down on one knee. He wiped away the blood on his lips with his left hand. He coldly stared at Liu Mingxiang, and with a wave of his arm, threw five true essence stones at him!

“What you took from my hand today, I will demand double in the future!”

Wang Yanfeng fiercely spat out these words. Each word was heard by all as it echoed on every surface. He turned and propped himself up with his sword, and dragging his broken leg, left step by step.

Lin Ming gazed at Wang Yanfeng as he left. He couldn’t help but feel a sense of admiration towards him. Wang Yanfeng just had horrible luck. Ever since he entered the Seven Profound Martial House, he had suffered setbacks again and again, and was repeatedly frustrated and defeated. Arrogant geniuses had their breaking point, and would find it impossible to recover from all these disasters. But this Wang Yanfeng had persevered through all this, it really was worthy of admiration.

“Lin Ming, come up, it’s your turn! You are going to share the same fate as that loser!” After Liu Mingxiang had left, Zhang Cang stepped onto the stage. Zhang Cang’s Ranking Stone rank was 103. His strength was most likely far superior to Liu Mingxiang!

Lin Ming carried Penetrating Rainbow strapped to his back onto the stage and stood opposite to Zhang Cang.

The match between Wang Yanfeng and Liu Mingxiang was only the appetizer. This match between Lin Ming and Zhang Cang was the main play that most of the people present had come to see!

Among these people, the new disciples naturally hoped that Lin Ming would use everything he had to win. Even if he lost, he couldn’t lose too horribly. But the old disciples wished that Zhang Cang would win with an overwhelming superior victory, and teach these new disciples who believed themselves to be infallible, the gap between the new and the old!

Seeing Lin Ming come on stage, Ling Sen and Ta Ku immediately stood at attention. The reason why Lin Ming had reached rank 126 on the ranking stone would immediately become clear!

Before the match officially begun, Zhang Cang took out a slender, thin saber. The handle of the saber didn’t have a hilt guard; the saber blade was directly linked to the hilt. The saber blade was two feet and eight inches long, and no wider than three inches. The blade edge was thin like paper, and it could be seen with a single glance that this saber was to be wielded at the extreme limits of speed.

Without a doubt, this saber was a treasure. In the Seven Profound Martial House, if a disciple was in the top 100 ranks, even if they were not part of an aristocratic family, they could easily be recruited into a major power and receive certain perks. To them, giving away a treasure was simply nothing!

“Draw your spear, Lin Ming. I want to take a good look at exactly how well you’ve practiced the ‘Foundation Spear Technique’. Have you reached Small Success? Such a simple cultivation method, one month should be enough to reach Small Success.”

Zhang Cang’s smiled sardonically. Let alone Small Success of the ‘Foundation Spear Technique’, it would be no threat to him even if it were Perfect. Since Ling Sen and Ta Ku paid so much attention to Lin Ming, then he would jump over Lin Ming by maliciously stepping him underneath his foot!

Zhang Cang let his true essence flow into his slender saber. He saw Lin Ming standing still and his brow wrinkled. “Are you going to draw your weapon?”

Lin Ming slowly responded, “When I need to draw it, I will draw it!”

“What did you say!?” Zhang Cang’s heart burned with rage. To think that as a superior disciple of the Earth Hall, he was actually looked down upon by a new disciple of the Martial House. Moreover, this Lin Ming’s strength was less than his. He simply didn’t know what it meant to die! “You will draw it when you need to draw it? Good. Good! Very good! Today I will have a very good look and see if you even have the chance to draw your spear!”

Chapter 78: Empty Hand Meets The Naked Blade

“This Lin Ming, he’s too crazy!”

“He’s facing Zhang Cang and not immediately bringing out his weapon. Zhang Cang’s saber is famous for its speed, and Lin Ming’s weapon is actually a heavy spear. That kind of weapon is originally slow, and he’s also carrying it on his back. I bet he will be too dazzled by Zhang Cang’s cutting force to even respond. He might lose without even having the opportunity to draw out his weapon!”

Ta Ku also quietly shook his head. “This Lin Ming is too careless; does he want to use his empty hand to meet the naked blade? Zhang Cang’s saber is a treasure that can slice apart hairs. After he pours his true essence into it, it will be able to cut through iron like mud. Even if Lin Ming were at the Large Success of Bone Forging, it would be impossible to receive it with his bare hand!

Ling Sen silently looked at Lin Ming. Although he didn’t understand Lin Ming’s reasons, but he knew, with Lin Ming’s heart of martial arts, he wouldn’t be someone who was arrogant and underestimated his opponent. He must have some idea of what he was doing; he would see what was happening soon enough.

“Since you want to die so much, let me help you!” Zhang Cang fiendishly grinned. From his still condition, he suddenly and violently moved. His body on the martial stage turned into a black phantom, and the sounds of ta ta ta footsteps could be heard; it was like pouring rain hitting a lotus leaf.

This was fast to the extreme! This was the top movement technique - ‘Seven Star Drifting Cloud’!

Zing! Suddenly, the chilling sound of a blade vibration was heard ringing in the air. Zhang Cang's saber rushed out from a cunning angle straight upwards from the bottom of Lin Ming's ribs!

The saber wasn't using any martial skill; however it was still a thin, narrow, treasure saber that Zhang Cang had poured his thick true essence into. The speed was too extreme, almost to the point of disbelief. This was truly an impeccable, irresistible saber!

Even a martial artist skilled in movement would not be able to dodge this blade faster than the knife. Even a light weapons master would find it difficult to block Zhang Cang's knife that attacked from such a cunning angle at the armpit's side!

Much less with Lin Ming's movement abilities, which were only from the 'Foundation Movement Technique'. His spear was also insufficient in terms of speed, and this spear was actually strapped onto his back!

How could he dodge this? Ling Sen's pupils had dilated; his full concentration was completely on Zhang Cang's saber. He could not predict what would happen next!

But at this moment, Lin Ming suddenly stretched out his right hand and reached out to that slender saber with his palm!

Seeing this, Ta Ku's eyes immediately widened like a full moon. This Lin Ming was too insane!

Hand against knife! Empty hand meets the naked blade!

That blade was a treasure saber that had true essence poured into it! Did this Lin Ming not want his hand anymore!?

The corners of Zhang Cang's mouth twitched. He grinned like a demon. 'Using a hand to block? Haha, if I do not cut off your hand, then my 12 years of saber practice are all in vain!'

In that split second, no one should have been able to respond in time. But Lin Ming's palm had already touched Zhang Cang's saber.

In that moment, the countless tiny units in Lin Ming's body breathed in a complete, consistent rhythm. True essence resonated as the exhalation and inhalation became one. This true essence was like a gushing tide!

True essence vibration; this was Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk'!

For an instant, that intense true essence vibration was transmitted onto that slender saber. The saber unexpectedly began to violently tremble! At that moment, Zhang Cang's true essence was washed out of the blade and replaced with Lin Ming's true essence!

Zhang Cang's grin suddenly froze. He only felt his hand go numb; he almost couldn't hold the saber!

"What!?" This turn of events was too sudden. Before he could figure out what was happening, Lin Ming's fist had already punched out. The fist directly impacted towards Zhang Cang's chest. Although this fist seemed ordinary, it was actually filled with vibrating true essence, and was the so-called 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist'. If this fist made solid contact, at best Zhang Cang would only be left with half a life!

Zhang Cang had been in the army for many years. The long time that he had spent killing and slaughtering on the battlefield had formed a natural intuition towards danger. Facing Lin Ming's fist, Zhang Cang's instinct told him that this fist was an inconceivable danger! He immediately moved his feet and fiercely used the Large Success of 'Seven Star Drifting Cloud'. Zhang Cang's body suddenly and violently drew back and avoided that danger hidden within Lin Ming's fist.

But although he had managed to dodge the fist, Zhang Cang had been scratched by the fist wind. With just the little fist wind touching

his body, Zhang Cang felt as if his heart jumped, his lungs shrank, and his stomach was affected and moved by some strange frequency. It made the blood in his body violently surge and up well, and he wanted to spit blood!

“This... what is happening...?” Zhang Cang was frightened because of the reversal of blood in his body, and he staggered a little before almost stumbling onto the ground. He took a few steps back, and only by using his saber could he support himself to stand.

Seeing this exchange, the audience could only foolishly look on. Just what had happened in that split second a moment ago? Lin Ming’s empty hand had blocked Zhang Cang’s saber! Then a punch had shot out, and with only the fist wind, Zhang Cang was forced back a few steps and almost collapsed on the floor!

The old disciple of the Earth Hall subconsciously rubbed his eyes. He almost thought that he was going blind.

“Heavens! Did I see this correctly? Is Lin Ming really a human? Are his arms and legs made from iron? Is he invulnerable? How could an empty hand meet the naked blade!?”

“Zhang Cang dodged that punch. How was he forced back several steps?”

“How is it possible? Lin Ming was only rank 126 on the Ranking Stone one month ago. In this short time, how could he become so fierce?”

“No kidding. When he had entered the Seven Profound Martial House, he was not much stronger than Wang Yanfeng, but several days later at the Ten Thousand Killing Array ranking war, Wang Yanfeng only got to around rank 170, but Lin Ming was rank 126!”

As soon as these words spread, there was nothing but quiet. Everyone felt a foreboding chill in their hearts. This speed of improvement was simply too horrifyingly monstrous!!

Before, the old disciple of the Earth Hall had looked down on Lin Ming for studying the 'Foundation Spear Technique' and 'Foundation Movement Technique'. He still did not dare to believe what had happened a moment ago. He continued muttering under his breath, "It's not right... not right... something's wrong... what he cultivates is the 'Foundation Spear Technique'... this is impossible..."

"Big Brother, did you clearly see that fist just now?" Ta Ku asked Ling Sen who was standing on his side. His face had an imposing expression.

Ling Sen wrinkled his eyebrow. "I didn't clearly see. Lin Ming's hand that touched that saber must have some profound and abstruse mystery inside. But it wasn't so exaggerated. The palm touched the saber body but not the blade edge, therefore his palm was uninjured. But this Lin Ming is truly too bold. With such a fast saber, he still dared to do that! If something went wrong, then he would have lost his hand!"

Ta Ku said, "Even if it's just the flat part of the blade, with just a palm, the blade edge would definitely hurt the hand if he tried to grab it, not to mention that Zhang Cang's saber was infused with true essence. It can cut iron like mud. This Lin Ming dared to do this; he must have absolute confidence in himself. No wonder Lin Ming said he would only draw his spear when he needed to. He simply believed that Zhang Cang was not worthy of his spear!"

As Ta Ku said this, he could feel his heart tremble. When he had first arrived at the Seven Profound Martial House, with only a month of time, there was no way that he could challenge disciples who were rank 100 on the Ranking Stone.

Lin Ming's palm had been just like Ling Sen had said. He did not touch the saber's edge. Lin Ming's strikes had always been accurate and precise. It was only with the support of Strength Training's 'Flow

like Silk' and protection from the vibration of true essence that Lin Ming had dared to use his hand to block the saber!

By now, Zhang Cang had already moved several dozen feet away from Lin Ming. There was already a faint horror and alarm that was creeping into his eyes. That palm and fist that Lin Ming had displayed a moment ago had left an unfathomably deep feeling in his heart!

Zhang Cang's advantage was in close-quarters combat. To deal with a weapon like a long spear, close-quarters combat was the best way to win. But now he didn't even have a smidgen of confidence to face Lin Ming's fist and palm.

Clenching his teeth, Zhang Cang gripped his saber hilt with both hands. "Lin Ming! You truly gave me a good surprise! But don't think you'll win, you will meet my strongest blow!"

Even if he could not fight in close-range combat, Zhang Cang also had a martial skill!

Chapter 79: Flood Dragon Goes to Sea

Even if he could not fight in close-quarters combat, Zhang Cang also had a martial skill!

With a shout, Zhang Cang's aura suddenly erupted. True essence flooded into the slender saber, and that dazzlingly bright saber began to be covered with a dark red sheen the color of blood!

"It's the 'Sunset Cut'!"

"This Zhang Cang actually managed to cultivate this high-grade saber martial skill!"

The entire audience's eyes were wide with awe. This match that should have been an easy victory for Zhang Cang had turned into a fierce struggle between two evenly matched opponents. Now even with Zhang Cang utilizing the 'Sunset Cut', no one present thought that Lin Ming would lose.

Zhang Cang lifted that slender saber above his head. A burst of light the color of fresh blood surged from Zhang Cang's saber. Zhang Cang's surroundings had been illuminated by a deep red brilliance that converged together into a blooming sunset glow. This phantasmal image continuously streamed into Zhang Cang's body.

Seeing this, Lin Ming slowly drew the spear that he had carried on his back. He had crossed the threshold of Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk' that allowed him to let his empty palm meet a naked blade, but he hadn't reached the level of empty palm meeting martial skill.

He held the spear with one hand, his forearm parallel to the spear shaft, and his elbow pressing against the spear end. This 820 jin Penetrating Rainbow that was eight feet eight inches long was kept

steadily horizontal. The spear stood motionless, as if he were a general cast in iron. This was a basic starting stance of the 'Foundation Spear Technique' - 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River'.

"Lin Ming brought out his spear!"

"This is a starting stance of the 'Foundation Spear Technique'! Heavens! It really is the 'Foundation Spear Technique'!? This Lin Ming wants to use the 'Foundation Spear Technique' to resist the 'Sunset Cut'? He's too crazy!"

Everyone's eyes widened without exception for fear of missing a single detail of this fight. If Lin Ming had been using a top-tier martial skill, they would not have anticipated this so much!

'Foundation Spear Technique' to 'Sunset Cut'! What will the result be?

From this point on, none of them dared look down any longer at Lin Ming's 'Foundation Spear Technique'. Because of Lin Ming's domineering aura, this set of foundations that were the most simple spear skills had become deep and inscrutable as well!

The 'Foundation Spear Technique' was not some profound high-grade cultivation method. In the entirety of spear arts, it was only the most basic foundation for spear moves. It was because this most basic foundation had been combined with Lin Ming's terrifying 4200 jin strength, and with the thick true essence from the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', and the boundary of Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk', that the power of this spear had reached such an intensely horrifying level!

Zhang Cang clenched his teeth. The muscles of his face had been completely twisted and made him unrecognizable. With his current strength, he barely managed to utilize this 'Sunset Cut'. This was pushing his limits.

“Lin Ming, go die!”

Zhang Cang gave a loud shout and the slender saber in his hand released an inexhaustible rose-red cloud. The air around him began to resound with deep rolling sound as if a fierce current were rushing back and forth. The wind of this red saber formed a billowing red cloud that seemed as if it would blot out the sky. Some of the nearby disciples of the Human Hall had weak cultivation, and their faces discolored as they could not withstand the berserk pressure of this strike.

Too strong!

These disciples of the Human Hall gushed with a feeling that they had no way to resist this strike. If they stood in front of this blow, it was possible that just the pressure and aura of the rose-red cloud would overwhelm and crush them!

Turbulent red energy surged forwards like an endless raging sea. In contrast, Lin Ming's 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River' was simple and unsophisticated; there was not even a half point of gaudiness to it!

He was as strong as he was, 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River'!

“Since you want to see my 'Foundation Spear Technique', that's good, I've only practiced one move of the spear arts - 'Flood Dragon Goes to Sea'!”

Lin Ming shouted and suddenly thrust out the Penetrating Rainbow. This so-called 'Flood Dragon Goes to Sea', was in truth, simply a plain straight thrust!

The long spear had many styles. It could chop, dance, point, circle, sweep, and many other such moves. But the most basic, was the thrust!

The thrust was the spear's soul!

A 820 jin heavy spear, a single thrust had the potential to crack open a mountain. An eight foot spear; breaking through all!

With just a simple straight thrust, Lin Ming's aura skyrocketed. Turbulent mountain rivers appeared around him and converged from all directions. They melted together and flowed into Lin Ming's body.

Lin Ming had practiced this 'Flood Dragon Goes to Sea' less than a thousand times. However he had done so underneath a waterfall. Lin Ming had practiced day after day until he had reached the stage where his spear was completely steady.

Zhang Cang's 'Sunset Cut' blotted out the skies above, just as if it were a turbulent and mighty current flowing in the air. But no matter how raging the current was, it could not match up to a waterfall created in an array that was setup by a Xiantian master. How could this possibly shake Lin Ming's spear?

Iron snowflakes began falling from the red clouds that were spread all over the sky. They were melting apart as if they were fading clouds. Lin Ming's spear had a majestic and boundless aura, breaking through all!

The slender saber relied on speed to win. No matter how or when, if it competed head-on with a spear, it would be defeated without a doubt!

Bang!

The red clouds dissolved. Zhang Cang spat a mouthful of blood and flew backwards. He hit the ground with a cruel thud. It couldn't be seen whether he was alive or dead.

Lin Ming withdrew his spear. He stood at the center of the stage. At this moment, he was similarly straight just like his spear, the Penetrating Rainbow, with a sharp and unshakeable aura!

"This is too terrifying, this Lin Ming really won."

“Foundation Spear Technique’... ‘Foundation Spear Technique’ has that much power behind it? Lin Ming really used the ‘Foundation Spear Technique’ just now? I want to learn it too!”

“You want to learn it? You really think the ‘Foundation Spear Technique’ is really so fierce? This is just because that Lin Ming is way too strong, so anything he does will be strong. The move he just used was the ‘Foundation Spear Technique’s’ ‘Flood Dragon Goes to Sea’, but it is plainly just a straight thrust. If you want, you can enroll in the army. The soldiers practice this every day and I’ve never seen a soldier use it in such a kick ass way. This straight thrust is nothing fancy at all, but under Lin Ming, this simple move can break the ‘Sunset Cut’.

“Someone who just entered the Viscera Training stage against someone who was a half-step into the Altering Muscle stage, and Lin Ming won. It’s not strange to defeat someone a stage ahead, but what is scary is that the one he beat is Zhang Cang. Zhang Cang is also an extreme talent that can beat those a stage ahead. If Zhang Cang left the Martial House, it wouldn’t be impossible for him to defeat someone at the peak of the Altering Muscle stage.

“Have you noticed that from when Lin Ming came on stage to when he won, he hasn’t moved a single step...”

It wasn’t known who said this, but the audience looked to where Lin Ming stood. Sure enough, after Lin Ming came onstage, he had used a palm, a fist, and a spear thrust. But he had not moved a single step!

Realizing this, even the disciples of the Heavenly Abode felt a chill crawl down their spines. Although Lin Ming’s ranking was far away, sooner or later he would enter the Heavenly Abode. With such a future rival pursuing them from behind, it made them all feel nervous and uneasy.

Liu Mingxiang faced Lin Ming and felt his throat twitch as he took a dry gulp. He was completely scared, and his one consolation was that

at the start of all this, Zhu Yan had looked for Zhang Cang, and not him. Otherwise, the one lying motionless on the ground would be him.

He felt Zhang Cang's pulse and found that he was alive and his life wasn't threatened. However, his whole body was covered in severe injuries and several bone fractures. Even if he had top medical treatment, not to mention any permanent damage, he would still be bedbound for over half a month!

Lin Ming was not a murderer. In the Seven Profound Martial House, it was strictly prohibited to kill the opposite party in a gambling match. As for the heavy injuries from the collision, there was some suspicion, but Liu Mingxiang did not dare to investigate. In a panic, he carried the unconscious Zhang Cang on his back and prepared to leave. But at this moment, Lin Ming said, "True essence stones? 20 of them!"

Chapter 80: Rudimentary Martial Intent

Initially, when Lin Ming and Zhang Cang had made their gambling match, Zhang Cang had bragged, and said that if he lost he would pay 20 true essence stones. Thinking back on this, it really made Liu Mingxiang's heart cry.

Zhang Cang didn't have 20 true essence stones on him. Liu Mingxiang hadn't brought such a large number of true essence stones here either. He gently placed Zhang Cang down and rifled through his clothes, and gathered up what they both had, but was still missing five. So he turned and borrowed from the people around and finally scrounged up 20.

After giving them to Lin Ming, Liu Mingxiang placed Zhang Cang back on his back and left as if he were running away.

“Lin Ming won, and from beginning to end, from when he used his palm to this spear move, he only used his left foot to tread the ground. His right foot hadn't moved. Truly it is a worthy reputation of the 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River', it is unshakable!” Ta Ku felt the long staff on his back, and his eyes flashed with a hint fighting spirit. Although Lin Ming was still incapable of being his match right now, perhaps that time where he could stand as his equal wasn't too far off in the future.

Ling Sen said, “Zhang Guanyu will regret not coming to see this match. After this battle, Lin Ming will draw high-level attention across the Sky Fortune Kingdom to himself in the Martial House. If we wait for him to grow up, he will really be a powerful rival. If we do not diligently train, perhaps this young junior apprentice will crawl up past our heads.”

“It’s only interesting if there’s competition. Competition is always competing with you; I just don’t have the confidence. But this Lin Ming, he will be perfect to be my match.”

“It is true that he will become a rival of mine in the future.”

“Big Brother, I find it strange, how could Lin Ming progress so quickly? In the last Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment he reached rank 126, which should have been because he ate the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill and digested their efficacy. But this time, how could his strength rise so dramatically?”

Ling Sen responded, “Everyone’s encounters of good or bad fortune are not clear. If I’m not guessing wrong, this Lin Ming should have comprehended a special cultivation state, a martial intent similar to my ‘Ashura’. Also, this Lin Ming’s heart of martial arts is above mine! It’s nothing unusual if he had managed to comprehend a martial intent like my ‘Ashura’.”

Ta Ku’s complexion changed and in exhaled a puff of cold air, “His is stronger than Big Brother’s ‘Ashura’?”

Ling Sen’s talent was only an inferior fourth-grade. In the Seven Profound Martial House, there existed many other geniuses whose martial talent surpassed him, especially in Ling Sen’s generation, which was truly an astonishing one that brimmed with natural talent. For instance, there was Ta Ku, whose talent was just shy of fifth-grade, or Zhang Guanyu, who was a true fifth-grade talent.

However, regardless of whether it was Ta Ku or Zhang Guanyu, they had been firmly pressed down by Ling Sen!

Most people, including Lin Ming, had assumed that Ling Sen had some sort of fortuitous encounter, or that he had eaten some sort of precious raw material, but that was not the truth. The truth was, Ling Sen had comprehended ‘Ashura’.

'Ashura' was a particular and unique cultivation state. When a martial artist cultivated, sometimes they would enter into some wonderful and marvelous state, which could be considered a certain type of ideal 'martial condition', the most famous of which was the 'sudden enlightenment'. This state was widely recorded in the ancient texts.

Legends said that three millennia ago, there was once a great elder who had sat underneath a Bodhi tree and meditated for seven days and seven nights. When he awakened, he had shattered several fetters of martial arts and had become an immortal Buddha, piercing the martial void!

Though the legends were recorded in the ancient texts, no one knew whether they were true or false. But in reality, there were martial artists that were truly able to enter certain states of cultivation. Although this state didn't have something so exaggerated as 'sudden enlightenment', it could greatly increase the cultivation speed of a martial artist. The martial artists that had comprehended these states often had a heart of martial arts that were a cut above everyone else!

Depending on a person's heart of martial arts, or some elusive quality of their soul, these states of cultivation would have different conditions. These conditions could only be comprehended as ideas, they could not be expressed. Many shockingly talented individuals, such as Qin Xingxuan, have not managed to comprehend such a particular state of being.

But Lin Ming, when he had been submerged in the Icy Pond Waterfall, he had touched upon this fleeting state of cultivation. His true essence had revolved of his own will and had taken a route in his body according to its most basic instincts. This path of circulation was close to being perfect and was several times faster than Lin Ming's own speed. While cultivating under this condition, Lin Ming had achieved the Perfect first layer of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'.

Of course, although Lin Ming had stumbled onto this state, it was because of his formidable heart of martial arts. But, not every martial artist who had an outstanding heart of martial arts could comprehend a 'martial intent'.

Before now, the only person in the Seven Profound Martial House who had comprehended a 'martial intent' had been Ling Sen.

His 'martial intent' was 'Ashura'! Once he had entered the state of 'Ashura', Ling Sen's consciousness would awaken to the Ashura battlefield. There, he would experience countless life and death battles. In these battles, he would die many times, and he would also be reborn many times. What was most fearful was that Ling Sen's comprehensive instinct, which he learned from being on the edge of life and death, would be integrated into his soul!

A martial artist could obtain unimaginable advantages in every life or death battle; their cultivation progress would truly be quickened! However, there weren't any martial artists that could do it like Ling Sen, because no one could guarantee whether or not they would live or die in the next moment.

Therefore Ling Sen had a truly substantial murderous aura. Regardless of whether it was battle talent or battle instinct, he was far above other martial artists at the same level of cultivation. In the entire Sky Fortune Kingdom, Ling Sen was invincible within those of his level, to the point that his real combat strength approached a martial artist at the Pulse Condensation Period.

Certainly, such a thick murderous aura had advantages that were accompanied by disadvantages. Although this aura had taken Ling Sen's combat prowess to a formidable new degree, it had also crushed his feelings and gradually enabled him to become a cold-blooded killing machine. That was why in the Dream Trial he had broken through all the trials in the blink of an eye, except the one that tested the evils in his heart. To break through that, Ling Sen had used most

of an incense stick of time, and this was because the killing nature of his heart was too heavy.

It was because Ling Sen's 'Ashura martial intent' was so heaven defying, that when Ling Sen had said that Lin Ming's own cultivation state might even surpass his own 'Ashura', that Ta Ku was surprised.

"Don't be so dramatic. Even if it is a person whose heart of martial arts was superior to everyone else, only a chosen few can comprehend 'martial intent'. Would this Lin Ming, who is only a 15 year old boy, be able to already comprehend something so fierce like Big Brother's cultivation state?"

Ling Sen said, "This is the only explanation. Lin Ming's heart of martial arts is much stronger than mine, so his comprehension of 'martial intent' might also be stronger than mine. Lin Ming's progress this month was too amazingly quick; I think it is due to this special cultivation state. When just understanding this cultivation state, his power should increase by leaps and bounds, but it will stabilize and gradually slow down."

"So that's how it is. This Lin Ming is more and more interesting! He's worth waiting for to grow up. I will certainly fight with him then!" As Ta Ku said this, he subconsciously cracked his knuckles together.

Ling Sen said, "In just several days it will be time for the next assessment of the Ten Thousand Killing Array. This Lin Ming will definitely participate. Want to take a look?"

"Good idea. Always cultivating is just too boring. Let's take a look at this Lin Ming and see how high he'll be able to go."

The Seven Profound Martial House opened the Ten Thousand Killing Array every month. The last time Lin Ming had participated was 27 days ago.

Lin Ming would naturally participate in this month's Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment. A higher ranking meant more resources.

At first, just some time in the Icy Pond Waterfall had benefitted Lin Ming greatly. With six other major arrays, what sort of astonishing advantages would they have to practice in them? Lin Ming was looking forwards to seeing. In particular, Hong Xi had once recommended that he not enter Thunder Valley, so there should be something special there.

Lin Ming did not know yet, but what had helped him break through to the 'True Primal Chaos Formula's Perfect first layer was exactly that cultivation state known as 'martial intent', which Ling Sen had said was in its formative stage.

....

Sky Fortune City, in a top-class pavilion -

First Taste Pavilion was a restaurant that shared the honor of being one of the top dining establishments, along with the Great Clarity Pavilion. At this time, in an elegantly furnished room on the second floor, Zhu Yan was eating lunch, and opposite of him, wearing a snow white dress, was Lan Yunyue.

Lan Yunyue ate quietly, the silence in the room created a stiffening and awkward atmosphere.

Zhu Yan took a sip of soup made from the flesh of a flood dragon. He set the small, gold-threaded bowl onto the table and took up a snow silk napkin to wipe his mouth. He suddenly asked, "What are you thinking?"

"Nothing. I'm not thinking of anything." Lan Yunyue hurriedly shook her head. In front of Zhu Yan, she felt as if some invisible pressure was bearing down on her. Between the two of them, it didn't seem as if they were lovers, but instead an emperor and his concubine. In the

presence of the emperor, a concubine would always be cautious and scared.

Lan Yanyue clearly knew that even if Zhu Yan liked her, he could also leave her. If he wanted to, there would be any number of women rushing at his doorstep and he could pick any one of them. This was the disparity in their positions brought about by the difference in their strength and status.

Zhu Yan smiled, and although he seemed friendly, there was actually a deep cold hidden in his eyes. He knew what Lan Yunyue was thinking about; today was the day of the gambling match between Zhang Cang and Lin Ming, it was impossible that Lan Yunyue didn't know.

She was worried that Lin Ming would be severely wounded, and in fact, Zhu Yan really had looked at what Zhang Cang could do in the context of the rules. Zhang Cang would leave behind a debilitating mark on Lin Ming's body. This was the best way to hinder his future martial arts cultivation.

Of course, this was just the beginning. He would deal with Lin Ming one step at a time. He would destroy his martial arts cultivation, and then let him spend the rest of his life as an invalid.

Zhu Yan fiddled with a snow-white porcelain spoon in the bird's nest soup before him as he waited for Zhang Cang to transmit some good news to him. However, at that time, a sound transmitting talisman hadn't yet been lit.

Chapter 81: Strength Training's 'Flow Like Silk'

Zhu Yan fiddled with a snow-white porcelain spoon in the bird's nest soup before him as he waited for Zhang Cang to transmit some good news to him. However at this time, a sound transmitting talisman hadn't yet been lit.

As lunch was winding down, there was a knock on the door.

"Come in." Zhu Yan said.

The door slowly opened, and Zhu Yan's old servant respectfully walked over. This old servant was at the Viscera Training Stage. He bent over to whisper into Zhu Yan's ear.

As Zhu Yan heard, his complexion abruptly changed!

Peng!

The small gold-threaded bowl in his hand was broken in half by him!
"What did you say!?"

Lan Yunyue jumped in fear, but the old servant was used to these reactions. The old servant took half a step back and said once more, "Young master, Zhang Cang was defeated by Lin Ming in three moves. He was severely wounded to the point of spitting blood, and still remains unconscious."

With such an unexpected result, Zhu Yan was startled and angry, but Lan Yunyue was completely and utterly shocked. Lin Ming actually won? And he defeated Zhang Cang in three moves? He was injured bad enough to make him spit blood?

How could this be? She had been originally been worrying that Zhang Cang would be too cruel with his hand, and did not think that the results would be so bizarre.

Zhu Yan seemed somber and terrifying. Although he had already given Lin Ming a high appraisal, he didn't that in just one month after coming to the Martial House, Lin Ming would be able to defeat Zhang Cang who was ranked around 100 on the Ranking Stone. If he gave him more time, would this Lin Ming even climb over his own head?

Before now, Zhu Yan had only treated this Lin Ming as an amusing pastime, a cute little prey that he could tease if he were bored. Lin Ming's talent was inferior, his strength was inferior, and even his family background was inferior. If he had just eaten some valuable and rare material or had some fortuitous encounter, he wouldn't have thought for a second that Lin Ming could threaten him. Even when it came to coping with Lin Ming, he didn't want to lower himself to personally doing it, so he had set up traps for him and placed obstacles in his path. None of them had stopped him! And right now, Zhu Yan had a deep, foreboding sense of crisis!

Lin Ming's growth was just too quick! It was unimaginably fast! Four months ago, he was only at the First Stage of Body Transformation, a pathetic little martial artist who was worrying about how to obtain medicine to cure his wounds. But the next time they had met, he was already the first place candidate of the entrance exam!

Even this did not cause Zhu Yan any concern, but what he did not expect was that in just the span of one month, he had defeated Zhang Cang!

This Lin Ming absolutely had a problem!

There was no mistaking his talent; he was undoubtedly a medium third-grade martial talent.

To progress so quickly in such a short time, what kind of valuable material could he have eaten!?

Or... has he been relying on his heart of martial arts, and actually managed to comprehend a special state of cultivation?

If it was the former, then it wasn't anything to fear. But if it was the latter...

Thinking of this, Zhu Yan subconsciously clenched his fists, and his knuckles cracked. His heart flowed with a strong sense of unease. This Lin Ming would likely become the enemy of his entire life!

"I must kill him before he grows any further! But... if he stays in the Seven Profound Martial House, even if I use my aunt's influence, there's nothing I can do. How should I handle this...?"

At the Seven Profound Martial House's back mountains, a round and bright moon was hanging in the sky as stars twinkled around it.

It was a late autumn night, and the sky was a unique, limped dark blue. It gave one a clear and lofty feeling as they gazed at the wonders of nature.

Under the luminescent curtain of night, Lin Ming stood on a cold rock. He held a spear in one hand, and his forearm was parallel with the shaft. His elbow pressed into the spear end, and the long spear was extending horizontally from his body. This was the basic stance of the 'Foundation Spear Technique' - 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River'.

However this time the spear shaft wasn't straight, but slightly curved downwards as it trembled lightly. Lin Ming had hung a 100 jin boulder onto the end of the spear point, and it was the stone that was bending down the long spear.

Although the boulder was only 100 jins, because it hung on the tip of the spear, the true weight of it was ten times that. In addition to the

weight of Penetrating Rainbow, the total amount that hung on Lin Ming's arm was above 4000 jins. With Lin Ming's early Third Stage of Body Transformation, supporting this weight of over 4000 jins as it was pulled down by gravity was already his limit.

As Lin Ming held the spear in his right hand, his left hand was grasping onto a true essence stone. His eyes were closed shut as he circulated its true essence throughout his entire body. This pure true essence flowed continuously into his body where it subtly transformed Lin Ming's circulation system.

Martial artists usually cultivated the body, rather than their true essence. True essence was water, and the body was a reservoir. Martial artists would constantly cultivate by forging their bodies to build up their strength. Their true essence capacity would then become increasingly large. Therefore no matter how one consumed true essence, even if it was to the very last drop, it would not affect cultivation. As long as they cultivated for one or two days, their body would be restored to peak condition. However, as for the body, once the body suffers damage, then there would even be the possibility that their martial arts cultivation would drop an entire stage.

If Strength Training and Flesh Training stage martial artists' bodies were like small water puddles, then Viscera Training stage would be comparable to a pond. Altering Muscle and Bone Forging would be like a lake, and after that would be the Pulse Condensation Period, where the meridians would condense, and true essence circulation would accelerate, and the body would be like roiling rivers and raging streams. If all the true essence of the body gathered together and flowed at the same time, it would turn into a vast ocean. This would be the Houtian and Xiantian stages.

With the true essence stone's true essence transforming the body, it was just like a reservoir that had water forcefully poured into it. This would broaden and expand the reservoir. This sort of cultivation method had far less side effects than using pills, but the difference

was that it was much slower, and the requirement of resources was much higher.

In two days, Lin Ming had already used three true essence stones. As Lin Ming's cultivation grew, the rate at which he would consume true essence stones would only become faster and faster, and it was possible that not even the Seven Profound Martial House could sufficiently supply enough.

“Even if I was a Heavenly Abode disciple like Ling Sen or Ta Ku, who are the top ranked, I might still not have enough true essence stones to cultivate.”

According to the regulations of the Martial House, new disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House would receive true essence stones according to their results on the entrance exam. Afterwards it would depend on one's rank on the Ranking Stone. If one's rank was lower than 150, one could receive one true essence stone each month. Rank 120 to 150 would receive two true essence stones per month. Rank 100 to 120, three essence stones per month, and rank 72 to 100, four true essence stones per month... even at the rank of Ling Sen and Ta Ku, they would only receive a dozen or so every month. Although it was many more than an ordinary disciple, if one wanted to depend on true essence stones to cultivate, they would not have enough for daily use.

“How many true essence stones would a core disciple like Qin Xingxuan receive per month? How many can a true disciple of the Seven Profound Valleys receive?”

To the common folk of the Sky Fortune Kingdom, a large sect such as the Seven Profound Valleys was simply like a distant mirage, and equally as elusive. This distance from Sky Fortune Kingdom to the Seven Profound Valleys was said to be 100,000 miles. With such a vast distance between them, even if one rode a top-quality horse day

in and day out, and swapped horses at every location, it would still take more than half a year of time to cover!

To the common folk who depended on their feet to travel the wide world, a distance of 100,000 miles was enough for them to walk an entire life.

Shaking his head, Lin Ming no longer thought about such remote matters. He had to concentrate on his immediate concern; the next Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment. Lin Ming would certainly participate and strive for a good result. The higher he was, the more resources he could attain!

There were only three days left until the ranking war would begin. To sharply increase his strength in these next three days was unrealistic, unless... Lin Ming ate the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill.

If Lin Ming wasn't planning on using the medicinal inscription symbol to increase the effects of the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill, then he would have already eaten it. But if the medicinal inscription symbol were placed on, the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill's efficacy would multiply several times over. Lin Ming had taken the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill and the efficacy hadn't been fully absorbed and wasn't completely purified yet. If he ate the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill during this time, then a light consequence would be that the drug efficacy would be wasted. A heavy consequence would be that the true essence he refined would not be pure, and it would cause the foundation of his cultivation to destabilize. It wasn't worth such a dangerous risk just for a ranking assessment. He intended to use the few days he had left to consolidate the realm of Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk'. He continued to practice his spear skills. As for tempering his body with true essence, he would first reach as high a ranking as he could to receive more time at the seven major killing arrays, and then he would decide how to proceed.

Bang!

Lin finally couldn't hold it any longer, and the 100 jin boulder dropped to the ground, forming a dust cloud as it hit. Lin Ming grabbed ahold of the spear with his left hand, aimed at the boulder, and thrust his spear forwards!

Peng! There was a loud bang as the metal struck stone. An incredible scene occurred; not only was the boulder pierced by Lin Ming's spear, but the boulder was also shattered into pieces, as if explosive gunpowder had been detonated in the center of the stone. The stone blew up into tiny fragments and scattered all around!

Chapter 82: Powers Far and Wide

Seeing all the scattered stones, Lin Ming let loose a light breath.

The 'Flow like Silk' recorded down in the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' was at a stage far more profound and advanced than the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist'. The highest boundary

of the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' could only touch the threshold of 'Flow like Silk'. If he achieved Large Success in Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk', then with that spear thrust, the boulder would have exploded into fine powder, and scattered into the air with just a gust of wind!

At this point, Lin Ming was able to use his empty hand to block Zhang Cang's slender saber and use his own true essence to disperse Zhang Cang's true essence. If his 'Flow like Silk' was able to go a step further, then Lin Ming might even have been able to use his empty hand to block a martial skill. His vibrations would shock the gathering of true essence and scatter all of it that had condensed into the martial skill, just like that boulder!

If the true essence scattered, then there would be no martial skill. No matter how unpredictable a martial skill an opponent had, or how gorgeous and magnificent, as long as their cultivation was not too far from Lin Ming's, then he would be able to shatter it with a single move! It could be said to be a single move that could break through a thousand variations!

"This Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk' is just too heaven defying!" Lin Ming sighed with emotion. The longer and farther he cultivated, he discovered more and more how truly terrifyingly powerful the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' really was. He had only reached the Perfect first layer of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula' and reached the beginning stages of 'Flow like Silk', and other such starting skills. If he managed to cultivate these to the Large Success stage in the

future, and learned even more ingenious and wonderful skills, there was no telling how strong he would become.

In the memories of that elder, he remembered that once he reached the Large Success stage of the 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians', he would be able to open the Eight Inner Hidden Gates and the Nine Stars of the Dao Palace in his body. Once that happened, his vitality would be like a rainbow that passed through the world, every roar would be like giving birth to thunder, and every fist would be enough to destroy moons and sink stars. A martial artist who had reached this stage had never appeared within the history of the Sky Spill Continent, and probably never would.

“This time I defeated Zhang Cang and the commotion from it wasn't small. My strength has risen too dramatically these past few months; it really is a bit too high profile. But if I want to maintain this indomitable spirit, then I have to struggle for resources in the Seven Profound Martial House. With such exposure, I might have drawn others' attention to me who want to see if I'm hiding anything. But if they really want to check me, then they will probably only find that there is some master behind me...”

...

The gambling match between Lin Ming and Zhang Cang originally hadn't seemed like it was an important matter, but now, the truth was that the details about this match had spread like the wind across the Seven Profound Martial House, and subsequently been passed on to the information network of every major power in the Sky Fortune Kingdom!

The name Lin Ming had also appeared on every major power's internal meeting's conference table!

Lin Ming. 15 years old, Seven Profound Martial House Earth Hall disciple. Current Rank, 126. Weapon: Spear!

To defeat Zhang Cang who was rank 103 on the Ranking Stone wasn't considered a great deed, but the one who defeated Zhang Cang was Lin Ming! Lin Ming had only been in the Seven Profound Martial House for one month; this really was cause for startle! This was an even more terrifying growth speed than any old disciple of the Seven Profound Martial House!

It had to be known, that even if it was Ling Sen, Ta Ku, or Zhang Guanyu, they would not have such strength with only one month at the Seven Profound Martial House!

And what was most astounding, was that Lin Ming had defeated Zhang Cang with the 'Foundation Spear Technique'. From beginning to end he had used a single spear move - 'Flood Dragon Goes To Sea'!

Although this move, 'Flood Dragon Goes To Sea', had a resounding and impressive name, the reality was that it was just a single plain straight thrust. In an army of several hundred thousand soldiers who thrust the spear together, they would let out a shout in unison, and the imposing aura that would emanate from them would be like a flood dragon that was rushing out the sea, that was why the move had such a name.

However, that indomitable aura was from an army of several hundred thousand thousand soldiers wielding spears together. It was unheard of for just a single person to have such a display of grandeur that their spear would be where a 'Flood Dragon Goes To Sea', but Lin Ming had actually achieved this state!

The competition was witnessed by many experts. An amateur would go to enjoy the fun, but an expert would go to observe the truth. Ta Ku had personally affirmed the potential of Lin Ming's spear thrust.

Ta Ku was the top-tier talent who had been the second-ranked disciple on the Ranking Stone for years, so his words carried a certain importance. But Ta Ku had not mentioned that before that spear thrust, Lin Ming had also used his palm and fist that had an elusive

force to them. Even Ling Sen, who Ta Ku deeply admired, was at a total loss of what it meant.

Many people had seen that fist and palm. However, not many of them were able to see that there was a profound and mysterious force that was contained within. Even if they did see this abstruse force, they would still not associate it with the “Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist”, because there were some differences between Lin Ming’s fist and palm, and the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’. Beyond that, most importantly, no one dared to believe that Lin Ming would be able to comprehend it; a jade slip that was missing 70% of its contents, and use that to succinctly complete the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’.

Because of this bright halo that surrounded Lin Ming, the common talents and geniuses began to be pushed into his shadow.

Results were everything. No matter Lin Ming’s talent, or if he was just a 15 year old boy, his achievements were an established fact, and he was already pressuring the likes of Ling Sen and Ta Ku. Who could know whether or not Lin Ming would obtain even more glorious achievements than Ling Sen and Ta Ku in the future?

All the major powers, influences, and organizations would naturally not miss this kind of rising talent. However, the Seven Profound Martial House had a rule that any family, even the Royal Family, could not enter the Martial House during the school period and attempt to recruit disciples. This was in order to avoid affecting the normal teachings of the Martial House and the disciples’ cultivation.

Therefore, some major powers and great families’ scouts would hover around the Seven Profound Martial House year-round, and wait for Lin Ming to leave school!

Not only were they waiting for Lin Ming, but they were also keeping an eye on the new Ten Thousand Killing Array ranking war. They were waiting to see; just how high could Lin Ming reach this time?

Of course, they would also appropriately look at all the other new disciples of the Earth Hall. At the last assessment, they hadn't seen anything, but after a month of class, if one were a true blue genius, they would inevitably stand out.

It was only that under the light of Lin Ming's rising and shining bright halo, the other disciples could only take a modest supporting role. Even the champion of the Yuelu City elite competition, the Wang Family's number one talent, Wang Yanfeng, could only be as such.

...

Lin Ming had already been at the Seven Profound Martial House for 34 days, and it was time for the second Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment, as had been scheduled.

The Ten Thousand Killing Array was in a valley that was covered by seemingly arrogant sword bamboo. Because this bamboo had been nourished over a long time with effort, the bamboo was tall and straight, and its leaves' edges were sharp.

The ashlar square was located in the center of this sword bamboo grove. In the center of the ashlar square was an altar. At this time, many people were already gathered here and milling around. Most of these people were disciples of the Earth Hall. Of the 20 new Earth Hall disciples that had been here last month, only 7 or 8 of them had come again.

In order to not have disciples come to the Ten Thousand Killing Array just to see if they could chance their way up another rank, and to not waste time in vain, the Seven Profound Martial House had a stipulation. This stipulation was that each time one wanted to challenge the Ten Thousand Killing Array; one had to mortgage a single true essence stone. If they could not rise at least 5 ranks, then their true essence stone would not be given back.

For a new disciple of the Earth Hall, they would only receive one true essence stone per month. This was the amount of true essence stones it took to enter the Ten Thousand Killing Array. Therefore those disciples that didn't have the confidence to advance at least 5 ranks would not come participate in this assessment, as a true essence stone was simply far too valuable for them.

The pair of Wang Mang and Li Tie did not make an appearance today. The last time, these two people had relied upon their mercenary and fighting backgrounds to reach rankings in the 160's, but that was already their limit. Even if they wished to progress 5 ranks, it would not be easy in such a short period of time.

In the crowd were not only disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House who had come to participate in the assessment, but also outside personnel who had come to the Seven Profound Martial House. They had gathered in a corner of the valley and were distantly looking on at the situation at the Ten Thousand Killing Array. These were intelligence operatives, detectives who had been sent by the major powers. Their job was to report to their masters the change in Lin Ming's ranking as soon as possible.

According to the regulations of the Seven Profound Martial House, areas such as the Ten Thousand Killing Array and the Exquisite Pagoda, or the seven major killing arrays, were restricted areas within the Seven Profound Martial House. Unauthorized people were not allowed to enter or wander around.

That intelligence operatives could arrive at the mountain valley showed that their masters' hands and eyes could reach the sky and were of the highest authority. For instance, the group of four ash-clothed men who were quietly waiting in the sword bamboo grove, their lord was the current dynasty's crown prince!

Chapter 83: Struggle of the Princes

That these four ash-clothed men could enter the Seven Profound Martial House and directly view the ranking war was by the virtue of the Crown Prince's relations. This was already the limit; they could not break the customs of the Seven Profound Martial House and contact Lin Ming in private at the Martial House, and try to win over talents.

In the Sky Fortune Kingdom, the Seven Profound Martial House was an aloof existence that was not under the jurisdiction of imperial authority. They were even without any legal restraints at all. This was mainly because the Seven Profound Martial House was under the subordination of the third-grade sect, the Seven Profound Valleys. The Seven Profound Valleys was a terrifying colossus that dominated the imperial authority! To put it bluntly, the Seven Profound Valley could easily abolish any crowned ruler of a country within a surrounding area of 200,000 miles!

If one didn't obey orders, the Seven Profound Valleys could directly send out 3 or 4 Xiantian masters. These masters could enter and leave the Royal Palace with no resistance, and simply sever the emperor's head as if it were just another day

To take a broader view of the entire Sky Fortune Kingdom, the most powerful warriors such as Qin Xiao, Muyi, and others, were around the middle Houtian stage. But this kind of person was already exceedingly rare, and most of them were gathered clustered together at the Seven Profound Martial House. Who they helped would be hard to say. With only a handful of middle Houtian stage masters to resist three or four Xiantian level powerhouses, how could they even think of retaliating?

So once the emperor revolted against the orders of the Seven Profound Martial House, he could only wait to die. Then the Seven

Profound Valleys would appoint the Seven Profound Envoy to set up a new emperor. If the entire royal family were to revolt, then the Seven Profound Valleys might even exterminate the emperor's entire clan!

With such a terrible existence that was beyond all common sense, the Sky Fortune Kingdom, including all nearby countries, regarded the Seven Profound Valleys as a sacred, inviolable temple and carefully tread around them without the least bit of resistance. And every countries' precious medicines and true essence stones had to be sent in chests and given to the Seven Profound Valleys. They even had to send out manpower and labor to help the Seven Profound Valleys in mining.

As long as the Royal Family obediently followed all orders, and gave the resources, then the Seven Profound Valleys would not interfere in the internal affairs of the nation, and would even occasionally help them get rid of rebellions.

Of course, there was also a limit to their restrictions. If a monarch was dissolutely wicked and evil, or the government was incompetent, or the common folk could not live and would constantly rebel, then the Seven Profound Valleys would give up on the current government and set up a new dynasty.

The significance of the Seven Profound Valleys setting up Seven Profound Martial Houses in each country was for searching for talents and geniuses to bring to the Seven Profound Valleys, but it was also to monitor the various nations and to preside over them.

The main duty of the Martial House Master was not the daily teachings of the Martial House, but was instead taking care of the responsibility for the mining and acquiring of the country's resources, such as true essence stones, rare and precious medicines, vicious beast blood, and other resources and materials that were constantly shipped back to the Seven Profound Valley

The Martial House Master and the Seven Profound Envoy had enormous authority in the Sky Fortune Kingdom. The Martial House Master was responsible for the gathering and collection of resources and management of the Seven Profound Martial House, and the Seven Profound Envoy was responsible for overseeing the Imperial authority. Their status even dominated that of the emperor!

It could be said that the Seven Profound Valleys was a gigantic blood sucking vampire that drew in all the resources of numerous countries in a 200,000 mile radius. However, this blood sucking vampire was just far too powerful, so no country dared to revolt. In fact, to the ruler of these countries, they would gladly sacrifice their country's cultivation resources in exchange for stability in their land. To mortals, inexhaustible wealth, bebies of beautiful women, and supreme authority were perhaps more appealing than some true essence stones.

So facing the Seven Profound Martial House, the Royal Family did not dare to interfere, and also had to be careful around them.

But as long as there were people, there would also be relations and connections. The Seven Profound Martial House was built in the Sky Fortune Kingdom after all, and it was appropriate to spare the Royal Family a few conveniences, such as allowing some of the emperor's relatives and juniors to enter the Human Hall as an exception. For instance, at present they had allowed two princes to send scouts into the Seven Profound Martial House to observe and watch the Ten Thousand Killing Array's ranking war.

"Keep your spirits up; do not lose to the lackeys of the Tenth Prince!" The head of these four ash-robed men said. He appeared over 40 years old and looked completely ordinary.

"Yah!" The other three people said.

If the Crown Prince had sent people, then the Tenth Prince, who was competing for the throne, would naturally send some too.

The ones who need the support of powerhouses the most, was often not the large families, or the Allied Trade Association, but the generals and princes!

The generals guarded the borders and frontiers. When they marched to war, they needed powerhouses to deal with the enemies and accomplish missions. They also needed to be strong enough to protect themselves and avoid assassinations.

As for the princes, they competed for the landscape of the state, and also needed the support of powerhouses to sweep clean all of their enemies!

Therefore, how could the people of the Crown Prince and Tenth Prince be absent?

Before Lin Ming, the ones who had received the most attention in the Seven Profound Martial House were Ling Sen, Ta Ku, Zhang Guanyu, and several core disciples.

Of the Martial House core disciples, if there were no ominous accidents in the future, they would undoubtedly enter the Seven Profound Valleys. Afterwards, they might stay at the Seven Profound Valleys, or even be appointed as a Seven Profound Martial House Master, or sent on other causes for the Seven Profound Valleys.

If they stayed in the Seven Profound Valleys, then their existence would be aloof and distant, and their relations with the Sky Fortune Kingdom would not be too big. But if they became a Seven Profound Martial House Master or a Seven Profound Envoy, then that would be extraordinary!

In the Sky Fortune Kingdom, the status of the Seven Profound Martial House Master and the Seven Profound Envoy exceeded the emperors!

It can be said that if a prince managed to win over a core disciple who one day might become a Martial House Master or a Seven Profound

Envoy, then their chance of inheriting the throne would increase by 50%!

If they won over a core disciple who had already become a Martial House Master or a Seven Profound Envoy, then the matter of them inheriting the throne could already be considered settled.

However, all of the Seven Profound Martial House core disciples besides Qin Xingxuan had come from ancient martial families that had come to cultivate. They did not even belong to the Sky Fortune Kingdom; there was simply no hope in attempting to win them over.

Moreover, since they did not belong to the Sky Fortune Kingdom, in the future it was most probable that they would not return to the Sky Fortune Kingdom, regardless of whether they became a Seven Profound Envoy or a Martial House Master. As for Qin Xingxuan, she was in a similar situation. With a sixth-grade talent, she had resolved to pursue the Xiantian path, and most likely would later stay at the Seven Profound Valleys.

Since there was no chance of winning over core disciples, what was left over were naturally the top Ranking Stone masters of the Heavenly Abode.

However, it was a pity that Ling Sen and Ta Ku were people of the military. They were talents of the southwest armed forces of Eighth Prince Yang, and had no chance of being won over.

As for Zhang Guanyu, this person's family background was the Allied Trade Association. The Allied Trade Association had been able to exist for a very long time to the present day. A behemoth that could stand so long naturally had a self-preservation instinct to not stick their head out in places they shouldn't, so they would never under any circumstances participate in battles of the throne.

For matters like this such as where struggling dragons fought to snatch the throne, if they succeeded they would be able to make a

name for themselves, but the Allied Trade Association was already fabulously wealthy. They simply did not need any rewards of titles. Instead, if they overreached their influence and failed, then their entire family's properties would be confiscated, and all nine generations of their family would be put to death. So Zhang Guanyu would not join any major powers, and instead devote his life to only the Allied Trade Association.

In this time where the throne was changing, suddenly appeared Lin Ming who came out like a dazzling supernova. Even if Lin Ming's talent was limited, he might surprise everyone in the future. Some of the princes would spare no expense in winning over Lin Ming. If this miracle continued, then in the end he would become a preeminent master who would surpass Ling Sen and Ta Ku.

As for becoming a core disciple, they had never considered this. After all, Lin Ming's qualifications were just too ordinary.

A quarter hour before the Ten Thousand Killing Array was about to start, the ash-robed leader of the four detectives under the Crown Prince's command suddenly moved his face, and whispered, "Lin Ming came."

"Cheer up!"

"Yah!"

"For this mission, we must be successful, we cannot fail! Even if we do not win over Lin Ming, we absolutely cannot let him fall into the hands of the Tenth Prince, otherwise, we will bring our heads to the Crown Prince!"

"Yah!"

Chapter 84: Gathering of Masters

A few breaths after that ash-robed detective said those words, Lin Ming appeared in a corner of the bamboo grove. That detective's eye was like a hawk that was sizing up its prey, Lin Ming. "Really young, not even 16 years old. His face still appears to be a little naïve, but if I look carefully, I can see that there is a shocking sharp and proud aura on his forehead. This face and aura, is certainly not something that comes from a little pond!"

"That is a 820 jin long spear called the Penetrating Rainbow. Yesterday I specially went to the Divine Weapon Hall to ask the storekeeper who sold this spear. That a 15 year old youth would choose such a heavy weapon that is difficult to learn, his boldness and courage is really praiseworthy."

"If the day ever arrives that a prince tries to stage a coup d'état on the Crown Prince or plot a rebellion, then Lin Ming can take hold of this Penetrating Rainbow to protect our lord the Emperor. This spear, with a single sweep, can take the lives of several scores of people. This Lin Ming, I absolutely must win him over for his highness the Crown Prince!"

When Lin Ming arrived carrying the Penetrating Rainbow, he almost instantly attracted the gaze of everyone present. Some of these stares were particularly burning, as if they were imprinting the image of him into their mind.

After Lin Ming studied the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', his perception was exceptionally keen. He followed this scalding gaze to see an ash-robed man standing in a corner of the sword bamboo grove.

The ash-robed man slightly hesitated, "Did he sense me?"

His location was very distant and blended in, there was no reason that he should be spotted in the crowd where everyone was looking at him. Unfortunately, he was noticed, because he felt that this stare was significantly different.

“This Ling Ming, his observation of others is as if he has some kind of special sensor. It’s just too inconceivable. Is his soul force much stronger than others?” The ash-clothed man said as he secretly noted this characteristic. Later, he would prepare a report with all of the information for the Crown Prince.

After Lin Ming arrived, he chose a place to sit down and laid the Penetrating Rainbow flat on his knee. He closed his eyes and meditated as he controlled his breathing.

The other disciples of the Martial House frequently cast their vision over to him. Even some of the disciples of the Heavenly Abode felt a faint fear towards Lin Ming’s growing strength. Although as of now his strength was inferior them, maybe soon he would catch up very quickly.

The Seven Profound Martial House regulations stated that as long as an Earth Hall disciple entered the top 80 ranks of the Ranking stone, they would have the opportunity to send out a single challenge to any disciple of the Heavenly Abode. Once they won, then they would displace that disciple and become a new disciple of the Heavenly Abode! The loser would be eliminated.

The number of disciples of the Heavenly Abode was fixed at 72 members. In these 72 people, there were changes every month. At the end of every ranking war every month, it was normal for 2 or 3 challenges to be sent out.

The disciples of the Earth Hall were always aiming to push out disciples of the Heavenly Abode. After all, the difference in treatment between disciples of the Earth Hall and the Heavenly Abode was just too big. Once they entered the Heavenly Abode, they would

immediately receive an extra reward, including top-quality pills, 15 true essence stones, and 30 hours of time to use the seven major killing arrays.

Lin Ming would reach the top 80 this time or next time, and then challenge one of them!

So how could these people not be worried? Nobody wanted to be expelled from the Heavenly Abode. Not only did this mean losing the massive amount of resources, it was also a huge loss of face.

By now, the crowd was in a tumultuous uproar.

“Li Yan, Wu Weidao, Zhu Yan...three masters in the top 50 rankings suddenly appeared!”

“This time’s Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment is really a gathering of masters...”

As the crowd talked, Lin Ming’s eyes fell upon Zhu Yan. Together with Zhu Yan, was of course Lan Yunyue.

Lan Yunyue had just entered the ashlar square where she stopped. She hid in a corner of the sword bamboo grove, obviously not willing meet Lin Ming and be put in that embarrassing and awkward situation.

Lin Ming did not even spare Lan Yunyue a glance. His eyes were locked on Zhu Yan.

‘Zhu Yan, you have finally appeared. I’ve already been at the Seven Profound Martial House for more than a month, and this is my first time seeing you!’

Zhu Yan also looked at Lin Ming. Very few people knew of the ongoing feud between them, so their stares were not brought to anyone’s attention. This was also because Li Yan and Wu Weidao

were similarly looking at Lin Ming. This newer generation disciple would possibly become a powerful rival after all, paying attention to him was normal.

Zhu Yan only looked at Lin Ming in a deadpan manner, having no expression on the surface, as if he did not know who Lin Ming was. He looked at Lin Ming for a moment, then turned away.

However at that moment, Lin Ming actually felt that within Zhu Yan's eyes was hidden a cold and murderous intent.

His battle with Zhu Yan had started because of Lan Yunyue, but now, it no longer had anything to do with Lan Yunyue. Lin Ming regarded Zhu Yan as a hurdle in his road of martial arts that he had to cross over in order to continue forward.

But Zhu Yan, because of his repeated defeat and frustrations, regarded Lin Ming as a thorn in his side that had to be removed, otherwise his heart of martial arts would never be whole, and it would always have a thorn!

At the start, both sides only wanted to step on the other, and step on them so that they could never stand up from the failure. But now, they wanted to directly destroy the other party, in particular Zhu Yan, who was already planning on how to kill Lin Ming.

“Look! Bai Jingyun and Murong Zi, they are also two masters in the top 50 rankings!”

“There are more and more masters coming. This time's Ten Thousand Killing Array ranking war is truly a convergence of dragons.”

With the appearance of Bai Jingyun and Murong Zi, they had all captivated the eyes of everyone present. They caused a stir that was even larger than Lin Ming. Lin Ming had only drawn everyone's eyes, but these two Bai Jingyun and Murong Zi made all of the male

disciples too excited and uncomfortable to stand, and sent their fighting spirits soaring to the sky. The reason for this was because these two people were extremely beautiful women.

There weren't originally many female disciples at the Seven Profound Martial House. Female disciples with formidable strength, superb temperament, and the looks of a goddess were even fewer. Girls like Bai Jingyun and Murong Zi were really the cream of the crop when it came to girls. In the entire nation, it would be impossible to find many like them!

The two women were collectively referred to as the 'Seven Profound Proud Pair'. It could be said that a thousand myriad graces were set in one body. Many sons of the major powers and large families had hopes to kiss their perfumed hair, however, they always returned in utter failure.

As beautiful, proud women, they were very arrogant and were not necessarily willing to marry and become a man's wife. Even if they did, they would look for a dragon among men. Status and wealth were not enough; they also wanted strength with a good, moral character!

Zhu Yan and others like him were insufficient. Even the princes who wished to marry the two girls as their royal concubines were unable to do so.

After the two girls arrived, Bai Jingyun looked at Lin Ming and then sat down on a clean grass patch in a clearing of the bamboo grove, along with Murong Zi. They discussed some secretive girly things, and no longer cared about other people's attention.

Before the aftermath of the arrival of Bai Jingyun and Murong Zi had cleared, there was another stir among the crowd.

"Ling Sen! Ta Ku! Heavens! My heavens! Those two also came today!"

For Ling Sen and Ta Ku, there was no longer any significance in participating in the Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment. Their rankings were unshakable, and they were already at the first and second place; there was nowhere for them to advance in the rankings.

“They are not necessarily here to participate. They probably came to watch the ranking war.”

“Mmm. There is the possibility... this time too many masters have appeared. The rising star Lin Ming is shining too brightly, it's natural for them to pay attention to him.”

Lin Ming silently looked at Ling Sen. Although was the third time they'd met. The first time they had met, Lin Ming hadn't felt just how terrible and frightening a person Ling Sen was. With the improvement of his cultivation, he increasingly felt Ling Sen's fearsome aura.

Although Ling Sen's cultivation could be compared equally with Qin Xingxuan, Lin Ming truly believed that Qin Xingxuan was not Ling Sen's match. This Ling Sen was a complete cold-blooded killing machine, simply a murderous beast!

On the field, more and more masters began to gather. As the Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment was about to start, nine masters in the top 50 rankings had already arrived. This number was already quite high. In the entire year, only at the final examination that took place at the end of the school year would one see a scene like this where all the top masters had gathered.

Chapter 85: Murong Zi, Bai Jingyun

“The assessment shall officially begin. All those present who wish to participate in the assessment must pay one true essence stone to enter the Ten Thousand Killing Array.”

Before the deacon senior apprentice who was in charge of the Ten Thousand Killing Array finished his words, Wang Yanfeng was already the first one to jump onto the altar.

“The Wang Yanfeng, he really gets braver the more he’s frustrated.”

“I wonder how many ranks he will be able to rise this time.”

The audience under the stage was discussing Wang Yanfeng’s previous assessment performance. Before, he had managed to attain rank 168, but after his assessment was over, several others had already surpassed him, and they had pushed Wang Yanfeng down into the 172nd position.

Wang Yanfeng calmed his mind in meditation as he sat down on the Ten Thousand Killing Array altar. He had realized that today, he would only be playing a small role. Even in the next year or two, this would not be his stage. All he could do was steadily fight, one step at a time.

“The assessment shall begin!”

A cover of light fell down on the stage, and Wang Yanfeng began his killing. Most of the 12 people on stage were around rank 120. As the assessment began to wind down, Wang Yanfeng was the third to be defeated. His final ranking was rank 145.

“This Wang Yanfeng managed to pass rank 150.”

“This is only temporary; he will be pushed down later. However, being able to enter the top 150 ranks in the second month is very good.”

Wang Yanfeng truly was a very good talent, however, Lin Ming’s halo was simply too abundantly bright, and he was completely neglected.

“Second Round. If you wish to participate in the assessment, come on stage.” The deacon senior apprentice said once again.

As the 12 positions emptied, a young girl in purple clothes flew onto the stage like a gust of wind. She stood firmly on a spot. This girl was Murong Zi.

“Sister Jingyun, let’s finish the assessment early.”

“Alright.” Immediately, Bai Jingyun also appeared on stage.

Some from the crowd called out in excitement and alarm. These two beautiful and arrogant women were 17 and 18 years old. Putting their heavenly appearances and temperaments aside, these two girls’ martial arts talent could be considered in the top ten of Sky Fortune Kingdom’s younger generation. Moreover, these two also had outstanding family backgrounds; others could only sigh at them as if they were the clouds above them.

Murong Zi had attended the Seven Profound Martial House for two years, and her ranking was 36. Bai Jingyun had been at the Martial House for three years, and her ranking was 26. These results, especially Murong Zi’s, were just as good as Zhu Yan’s!

When beautiful women came to the assessment, it was always very easy to attract the attention of many. Even the many spies turned their heads, as the major powers that they worked for, such as the Tenth Prince, had always wished to marry these two girls.

Certainly, compared to these two girls, Qin Xingxuan was a far more splendid existence. But Qin Xingxuan was too distant an ideal. She

had resolved to pursue the road to being a Xiantian master. A Xiantian master was truly a legend from stories; mortals could not even hope of touching them. To marry Qin Xingxuan was only a fool's dream, thus Murong Zi and Bai Jingyun became increasingly wanted by all men.

If they married them, then not only would they enjoy the bliss of being their husband, but they would also receive a big boost in their life from their support. With this and so many other advantages, who wasn't moved by this?

If they could marry them together, that would simply be the pinnacle of life. Not even the royal princes dared to dream so greedily!

The light cover of the Ten Thousand Killing Array fell over them, and the assessment of these two girls officially began. Some male disciples of the Human Hall were staring at these two girls' bodies as they were bathed in light, and their fists tightened and lips mumbled, as if they were even more anxious than them about this assessment.

Seeing this, Lin Ming had a slight feeling in his heart. When someone knew perfectly well in his heart that they could not obtain something, and that something had nothing to do with them, then they might even more earnestly pay attention, and even worry. This was the sorrow of the irrelevant person.

Irrelevant person... even if they entered the Seven Profound Martial House, if they could not bloom like a spring flower in this talented crowd of steep competition, then they would eventually become an irrelevant person regardless!

Six incense sticks' worth of time had already passed. On the altar, Murong Zi lightly coughed, and her small face paled as she came down from the stage. This scene alone made all of the numerous staring males grip their hands with a worried expression. If they could suffer this pain for Murong Zi, they would gladly endure it.

Murong Zi's final ranking was 28. This ranking was truly startling!

Shortly after, Bai Jingyun also stepped down from the altar. Her final ranking, rank 22!

These two proud and beautiful women were becoming increasingly dazzling. If another year passed, it would be possible for them to even enter the top 10!

All the scouts quickly lit their sound transmitting talismans and reported to their masters. This matter was enough to be brought to the attention of the princes.

These two girls were really the highest quality of women. However it was a pity that no matter how the princes' hearts were moved, they could not force themselves upon them. They feared the power behind them, and although their own influence wasn't small, they had to respect and obey the orders of the Royal Family.

These princes could simply not disregard the Seven Profound Martial House. No one, no organization, not even the Royal Family, had the courage to force a disciple of the Seven Profound Martial House. If they aggressed the rules of the Seven Profound Martial House and bullied a disciple, that would be tantamount to treating the Seven Profound Valleys with contempt. The terrifying power of the Seven Profound Valleys was enough to bring the Royal Family trembling to their knees in fear!

"The third round of the assessment shall begin. Those disciples who wish to participate, come onstage." The deacon senior apprentice announced once more.

After the positions were vacated, Zhu Yan shot Lin Ming a subtle glance, and then slowly stepped onto the stage.

"Zhu Yan went on stage!"

With his talent, Zhu Yan was not necessarily in the top ten geniuses of his generation, but the differences weren't far off. He was 17 years old, with a superior fourth-grade talent. He had attended the Seven Profound Martial House for two years, and his Ranking Stone rank was 39. The result was only inferior to Murong Zi.

Certainly, to reach this point, Zhu Yan had to expend much more effort and time than the playful and not so serious Murong Zi.

Therefore this talent was truthfully somewhat bad.

With Zhu Yan's strengths and talents, he had certainly attracted the attention of many major powers. However, Zhu Yan was doomed to never be a person who could be wooed and won over.

The Zhu Family household head's daughter was Zhu Yan's aunt. She had married into the Royal Palace and had later become a royal concubine empress. She was the mother of the enormously influential Tenth Prince!

So Zhu Yan had been doomed to be a person of the Tenth Prince.

According to Sky Fortune Kingdom's rules of succession, the son of a concubine could not be an heir. However the Emperor was not young, and the Empress had no child, therefore the Emperor had set the first son of the Royal Concubine Empress, the Third Prince, as heir and Crown Prince. The Third Prince began reading and writing at an early age, but his martial arts talent was only a mere second-grade. His strength was limited, and though he had a good and kind heart, it was not possible for him to safely inherit the throne.

But the Tenth Prince's, martial talent was the highest among all of the Emperor's sons at an inferior fourth-grade. In addition to this hard work, his cultivation was also very high. In his twenties, the Tenth Prince had commanded troops at the border and had become renowned as a valiant warrior who had repeatedly won many military

exploits. He was then given the title of the Cloud King, and bestowed a Purple Gold Crown, and a royal robe with a four clawed dragon.

In the Sky Fortune Kingdom, not every emperor's son would be conferred a grand title. There were two different titles, the first was a prince, and the second one was a duke. The prince was a first rank title, for instance the Tenth Prince's Cloud King, and they could also possess territories and have such power equal to a national treasure like the royal jade seal. But the duke was only a second rank title, and they could only possess a manor.

Concerning power and influence among the ruling parties and opposition parties, The Tenth Prince's might was even superior to the Crown Prince.

It was anyone's guess of whose hands the throne would fall into in the future.

Once the Tenth Prince ascended the throne, then Zhu Yan would be a younger cousin of the emperor. Zhu Yan's mother was only a concubine of the Zhu Family, and could only be known as a concubine's son. But his aunt was actually the Royal Concubine Empress, and she was related to him through his father. Although their blood relation was a bit distant, with Zhu Yan's outstanding strength, he would definitely be able to obtain the valuable trust of the new emperor!

“Assessment start!”

After Zhu Yan entered the Ten Thousand Killing Array, people immediately lit an incense stick to measure the time.

Incense sticks began burning out one after the other, and soon the fifth incense stick was half gone. Zhu Yan only now had a slightly weakened complexion. As the sixth incense stick was lit and almost burnt through, Zhu Yan let out a cough and was sent out from the Ten Thousand Killing Array.

Final ranking, 32!

Lin Ming quietly looked at this rank and didn't think it was surprising. Zhu Yan had already been in the Seven Profound Martial House's Heavenly Abode for more than half a year. At that time, his cultivation was only at the peak Third Stage of Body Transformation, but now he had broken into the Fourth Stage of Body Transformation. It wasn't unusual for his cultivation to increase by leaps and bounds.

"32! Last month my rank was 126!" Lin Ming traced the shaft of the Penetrating Rainbow he carried on his back and unconsciously licked his lips. "Then, I will go on stage, to see how wide the gap is between myself and Zhu Yan."

Chapter 86: The Limit of Killing Speed

The several detectives sent by the princes immediately burnt their sound transmitting talisman. The Crown Prince was informed of Zhu Yan's status; after all, Zhu Yan was one of the important figures who served under the banner of the Tenth Prince.

Murong Zi saw Zhu Yan's ranking and curled her lips in disgust. She wasn't too satisfied or happy with this Zhu Yan sticking to her footsteps like melted candy.

"Humph, next time I will leave him in my dust." Murong Zi said with some satisfaction.

"Haha, then you must work diligently. Your talent is better than Zhu Yan; it's almost fifth-grade." Bai Jingyun said with a smile.

"That doesn't mean anything. In the entire Seven Profound Martial House, not counting the core disciples, only Zhang Guanyu is a fifth-grade talent. But that fellow Zhang Guanyu is just an oily playboy with nothing in his head. I don't like him very much. Well... Sister Jing, are you concerned about Lin Ming?" Murong Zi discovered that Bai Jingyun had been watching Lin Ming.

"Mm. He is going to go on stage now."

"There is nothing about him that's worth paying attention to. His talent is limited, he just happened to have a spot of good luck and ate some valuable material, and that's why he has his current strength."

Bai Jingyun shook her head and said, "Luck is also a kind of strength. Isn't being born with a good cultivating martial talent also a kind of luck? Being born in an aristocratic family is similarly also a kind of luck. Like that, you and I can be considered very lucky people also."

Nobody can say that Lin Ming won't be able to continue this streak of good luck. Also, he wasn't so strong when he had entered the Seven Profound Martial House. It must be the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill that allowed his cultivation to progress so quickly. Perhaps his physique is particularly suitable for absorbing the efficacy of precious medicines..."

As Bai Jingyun was speaking, Lin Ming had already stepped onto the altar.

The eyes of everyone present turned to Lin Ming. They wanted to see whether or not this Lin Ming would be able to create a new record today, and have his name written down as the miracle among the new disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House.

The operatives sent by the major powers also rallied their spirits. In these groups of people were intelligence veterans as well as seasoned lobbyists. They were waiting for Lin Ming to leave the Seven Profound Martial House, and then persuade him with their eloquence to support their master.

The cover of light from the Ten Thousand Killing Array came down, and Lin Ming's entire body was bathed in a glow. In the next moment, he was transported to a vast, white world.

Like last time, there were a variety of weapons that were presented all around him. The sabre, the sword, the spear, it had it all.

"Spear. Spear shaft, 8 feet. Spearhead, 8 inches. Dark purple elastic iron spear shaft, cloud vein wrought iron spear point, total weight 820 jins!"

Lin Ming devised the weapon in his mind, and in the next second, a dark purple colored long spear almost the same as the Penetrating Rainbow appeared in Lin Ming's hand.

Lin Ming's casually shook the spear in his hands, and the dark purple long spear began to hum. The strength of the vibration that flowed down the spear shaft could easily crush rocks!

At this time, in front of Lin Ming, a dozen phantom shades appeared in front of him. These phantoms included martial artists and vicious beasts. The majority of their strength was at the early Second Stage of Body Transformation to the early Third Stage of Body Transformation. There was even one who was at the peak Third Stage of Body Transformation.

To the present Lin Ming, these opponents were nothing at all!

Lin Ming steadied his feet and took his stance. His right hand held the spear horizontally, and his elbow was pressed up tight against the spear's end. This stance he exhibited now was the 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River'.

"Roar!" The dozen phantom shades rushed forwards together. These were just phantom illusions, but they had the ability to coordinate, and they dispersed into a semi-circle around Lin Ming, and then lunged at him at the same time!

Generally a martial artist, even if they were a master, being encircled by so many bloodthirsty enemies, could only evade first, and then dodge left and right in the crowd and defeat them one at a time. Because unless there was a great disparity in strength, nobody was able to simultaneously deal with the attacks of a dozen enemies that came from all directions!

However, to Lin Ming, he was able to completely disregard all these attacks!

With a cry, his left hand slapped the spear's end, and his right hand gripped the spear shaft and suddenly sent it flying out horizontally. The long spear lashed out like a dragon's tail; it could sweep away an army of a thousand!

As the spear swept out, the dark purple long spear hit the first enemy's body. This was a first-level vicious beast. Because of Lin Ming's formidable strength, as the spear head smashed into the vicious beast, the spear bent like a bow. Then, with a popping sound, the spear shaft straightened, and the vicious beast's spine was directly crushed!

The momentum of the dark purple long spear did not lessen, and it swept on and hit the second vicious beast's body!

"Cha!" The vicious beast was torn in half!

Followed by the third!

Lin Ming's strength was more than 4000 jins. Combined with an 820 jin dark purple long spear, a single sweep contained an invincible surging might. In that moment, of the dozen enemies, more than half were all swept away by Lin Ming's spear!

"Roar!" Of the dozen phantoms, only the vicious beast with strength equal to the peak Third Stage of Body Transformation was able to dodge Lin Ming's long spear. In that moment, it suddenly accelerated forward like a meteor and charged at Lin Ming's chest.

Lin Ming's long spear was out, and his defenses were open. He had no weapon to defend against the sharp fangs of this second-level vicious beast!

As Lin Ming saw these sword-like fangs come forward to stab into his neck, Lin Ming cried out. His right hand held onto the spear, and his left hand was suddenly formed into a fist.

"Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist!"

"Peng!"

Lin Ming's fist pounded into that vicious beast's chest, and with a loud crack, the body of that giant vicious beast which weighed several hundred jins was instantly split apart!

Lin Ming's whole body was bathed in blood. His right hand drew back his long spear. He turned his body and gripped the spear in both hands. A red full moon suddenly appeared at the end of the cloud vein wrought iron spear point.

“Killing circle!”

“Pah pah pah pah!” Suddenly what seemed to be like several leather blood bags exploded in the air, showering the entire area with rich red blood. All of the remaining enemies had blown up!

From when these vicious beasts and martial artists had thrown themselves forward, to when Lin Ming had made his strike and completely destroyed all of them, the time had been no more than two breathes!

Lin Ming had used two spear moves and one fist. The Ten Thousand Killing Array did not even have the time to create new phantoms!

The entire illusory magic array had been completely cleared by Lin Ming!

This killing speed was completely abnormal!

After two blinks, there was a distortion in the space, and new phantom shades appeared. This time, whether it was a vicious beast or a martial artist, their strength was a level higher than before!

“He who strikes first has the advantage!”

Lin Ming did not even wait for these phantoms to stabilize their form and had already shot towards the nearest one. “Flood Dragon Goes to Sea!”

The dark purple long spear thrust out with indomitable momentum.

“Pah!” The peak Third Stage Body Transformation martial artist was pierced by Lin Ming’s spear!

With a wave, Lin Ming threw the corpse off of his spear. His spear seemed filled with an epic spirit, the eight feet eight inch dark purple long spear was just like a dark purple flood dragon that swam in a sea of bloodshed. Everywhere the spear went, blood would flow!

To sweep away an army of a thousand, there was only the spear!

In the chaos and midst of battle, the spear was the absolute best weapon!

Of course, the prerequisites were that one must have thick and vast true essence, as well as the physical strength to support such a terrifying rate of strength consumption.

“Killing circle!”

Lin Ming wielded his spear, and three vicious beasts were blown flying backwards, their hands cracked open. At this point, Lin Ming’s muscles corded and his veins bulged like twisting worms. Lin Ming was rapidly revolving the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ in his body, and with every breathe, the air current condensed into a large snake that floated in the air.

Only with the Perfect first layer of the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ together with the true essence provided from the Third Stage of Body Transformation, was Lin Ming able to kill the enemies with such demonic speed!

Chapter 87: Sweeping Away All

“I wonder just how long this Lin Ming can persist inside.” Outside of the Ten Thousand Killing Array, everyone’s focus was turned towards Lin Ming. Even several of the Heavenly Abode disciples who ranked in the top 70 who were on the altar with Lin Ming were ignored.

“He’ll last for at least four incense sticks of time, maybe even half of a fifth. Zhang Cang is able to last until three and a half incense sticks. Since Lin Ming defeated Zhang Cang, his advance to the top 100 rankings is assured. Even the top 90 or 80, is not impossible!”

“Advancing to the top 100 is absolutely no problem, but to reach the top 80 is not so easy. Those are the rankings approaching a disciple of the Heavenly Abode, the spots are highly competitive. If you can enter the top 80 then you are eligible to challenge a disciple of the Heavenly Abode, and even have the possibility of entering!”

“If that’s true, then someone who is able to enter the Heavenly Abode after being at the Seven Profound Martial House for only a month is just inhuman.”

“There were people that were able to enter the top 90 in their ranking war, but those people were over 20 years old. They had all reasons they couldn’t enter the Seven Profound Martial House earlier. For a 15 year old to advance into the top 100 in just the second round, as far as I know, that hasn’t happened for the last 100 years!”

“Mmm, in these past ten years only Qin Xingxuan has had the ability to do this, but she was directly promoted to a core disciple... it has little to do with us...”

A single incense stick burnt through, then two, then three...

As the fourth incense stick lit up, Lin Ming’s face flushed with blood on the Ten Thousand Killing Array’s stage.

“Mmm, something’s not right, Sister Jingyun. It seems that Lin Ming might not be able to last much longer. The fourth incense stick has just started to burn, if this continues, he can only barely advance to the top 100.” Murong Zi’s eyesight was very good. She managed to see through the translucent light of the array and see Lin Ming’s circumstances clearly. Lin Ming’s breathing now held a slight disorder; that was the manifestation of consuming too much true essence.

Bai Jingyun frowned. They had thought that Lin Ming might be able to last until the fifth incense stick burnt through, but not it seemed that it would be a bit uncertain. Maybe just the fourth incense stick would be his limit.

“Lin Ming was weakened, it might have been that he was too careless in the Ten Thousand Killing Array at the start, and he was injured at the beginning?”

If one were injured at the start, then each time they fought would consume more strength and energy, and having a bleeding wound was extremely fatal. With something like that occurring, then their ranking would not only fail to rise, but instead fall, and cause the amount of resources they received every month to drop. Martial artists that entered the Ten Thousand Killing Array were always mindful about this, and were careful to avoid mistakes as much as possible.

“Being able to not be injured so early is also an aspect of strength, Big Sister, I think that this Lin Ming is not as fierce as you thought.” Murong Zi pursed her lips and remained unconvinced of Lin Ming. She had always been told that she was an infant prodigy since childhood. Now that she had been shown up by someone two years younger than her, she was naturally dubious of such a young boy.

“Oh? Not that fierce? Good, well then, if Lin Ming’s strength is really so poor, and he can only insist for four incense sticks of time, then my

little sister, how long were you able to last when you had been in the Seven Profound Martial House for one month?”

Murong was at a loss for words. When she had just entered the Seven Profound Martial House, she she had been unable to pass reach the top 150 rankings in her first assessment. The second time she had not reached the top 140; her performance was simply too far from Lin Ming’s. She simply turned her chin and looked towards the assessment, pretending she hadn’t heard.

The truth was that the time of a Martial House disciple’s greatest progress on the Ranking Stone was during the end of the school term. During this time, many disciples would graduate, and those masters that were eyesores would be gone. The top rankings would naturally empty, and those new disciples would be arranged in their places.

Therefore even if a Seven Profound Martial House disciple’s strength was disappointing, their ranking would jump up the longer they stayed at the Martial House.

Seeing Murong Zi act so childishly, Bai Jingyun smiled and didn’t pursue the matter. Even if Lin Ming could only persist for four incense sticks of time and reach the top 100, that was still a result to be proud of! In the Seven Profound Martial House, the number of monstrous geniuses who had reached this level could be counted on one hand!

“Big Brother, this Lin Ming doesn’t seem as if he can last much longer.” Ta Ku said to Ling Sen as he rubbed his chin.

“Mmm, but even with four incense sticks of time, that result is also astonishing.”

“Hehe, but of course. He uses a spear, and not only that, but it is a heavy spear. The spear has many usages. This Lin Ming’s spear probably has some very epic and grand fighting style. In a giant group battle, this fighting method can be called a fierce way to kill enemies!

However, the average person wouldn't dare to use it, because strength is consumed too quickly. That's why even amazingly fierce generals find it impossible to cut down tens of thousands of people. In the Ten Thousand Killing Array, even if they used a spear, they would not dare to fight constantly and would try to delay the time and recover their strength. The enemy will just emerge one after the other incessantly, and each time they come they are stronger." Ta Ku used a staff. A spear and a staff were different, but had similar methods. Naturally he knew of the advantages and disadvantages of such a weapon.

"Let's wait and see how long Lin Ming can last."

In the Ten Thousand Killing Array, Lin Ming's spear sent a sword-wielding martial artist flying backwards. His face was covered in blood, "Ah, it seems as if I've overdone it in killing!"

Lin Ming looked forward at a knight approaching him. The black armored knight grasped a long halberd, and rode a fully armored warhorse, his face revealing an imposing expression.

Bone Forging stage martial artist!

Lin Ming madly swept his purple black spear into a group. Being able to kill one enemy with one move was already highly efficient, but Lin Ming was actually able to kill several!

That's why, as the third incense stick was ignited, there were already Bone Forging stage martial artists appearing!

They were at a cultivation higher than Lin Ming by two whole stages!

Lin Ming fought with the black armored knight just now several times. It was strong, and moved well on its armored horse. When it dashed at him on that giant rushing horse, Lin Ming was unable to find any advantage.

For the talents of the Seven Profound Martial House, generally they were able to fight opponents who were a stage above them. For instance, the peak Third Stage of Body Transformation Zhang Cang was able to fight those who were at the peak Fourth Stage of Body Transformation.

But Lin Ming, even within all the talents at the Seven Profound Martial House, was still able to fight those a stage above him. He had won against Zhang Cang with just his early Third Stage of Body Transformation. This black armored knight was at the early Bone Forging stage, and Lin Ming was just able to barely come to a draw with him. With so many other enemies around, Lin Ming was not able to take advantage of the fact that the enemy was an illusory phantom. Their inflexible minds and rigid attack patterns had many weaknesses, but at present, surrounded by so many enemies that emerged one after the other and endlessly attacked, Lin Ming was in serious danger!

Bang!

As soon as Lin Ming and the black armored knight exchanged blows again, although the dark purple elastic iron spear had strong superior cushioning properties, Lin Ming still felt his hands tingle with numbness.

The black armored knight's horse reared up at Lin Ming, but Lin Ming had already bounced backwards, and flipped around a couple of times in midair.

“Roar!” A second-level vicious beast took advantage of this moment when Lin Ming was airborne with no balance and rushed at him. Two paws that were sharp like knives were coming towards Lin Ming's chest.

Lin Ming only heard shouting in his ears. He gripped the dark purple long spear and used its 820 jins of weight to stop his inertia in the air and balance himself. He took a deep breath, and the airflow from his

nose was like a streaming long snake. He looked towards the oncoming vicious beasts and threw a fierce punch!

“Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist!”

Poh! The vicious beast’s body exploded from behind with a giant hole. The gooey flesh and blood and internal organs were all blown out from the back of the hole!

One punch kill!

Lin Ming tumbled into the group of vicious beasts. Before he caught his breath, all of the vicious beasts in his immediate surroundings had already been killed!

Chapter 88: The Final Spear

Lin Ming tumbled into the group of vicious beasts. Before he caught his breath, all of the vicious beasts in his immediate surroundings had already been killed!

“Hoh!” A spear swept out, and the dark purple long spear curved like a full moon. An 800 jin heavy vicious beast was split in half and sent flying away. A martial artist’s sternum collapsed, and all five internal organs burst open on the scene.

However the number of vicious beasts was too many, and their attacks were too brutal. Also among them were cunning martial artists who appeared and vanished like ghosts. After Lin Ming sent this spear out, his body was wounded two more times. A sword has been thrust straight into his stomach; the wound had damaged his organs!

If not for the fact that he had achieved the Viscera Training stage and true essence had permeated into all his organs at the icy pond, then this sword would have already caused him to lose most of this battle strength!

“The pressure is too big!” Lin Ming’s whole body was bloodied. There was the enemies’ blood, and there was his blood. The dark purple long spear had turned completely crimson, and wet with blood. However because the spear shaft had undergone a special non-slip treatment, he could still firmly grasp the spear without a greasy feeling.

After Lin Ming had just massacred five enemies a moment ago, another five immediately appeared, one of which was equivalent to the cultivation of the Bone Forging Stage!

“This Lin Ming looks increasingly worse. I don’t think he will be able to last past the fourth incense stick.” Some of the disciples under the

stage said.

The fourth incense stick was almost burnt through, but on stage, Lin Ming had just coughed; he was obviously injured.

In the middle of a group of enemies, he might have been able to persist, but once injured, his battle prowess would drop, and he would not be far from death.

“He’s already missed the expectations, but he still should be able to advance to the top 100 rankings.”

“Mmm. He’s a new disciple after all; it seems four incense sticks is his limit.”

The people talked with less expectation and shock in their words than before. When a man repeatedly creates miracles time and time again, those miracles are soon taken for granted.

On the other hand, if he was unable to perform a miracle, even if his result was far superior to others, he might not even receive cheers, but boos instead.

For instance, if Ling Sen’s legend of being the top ranked number one was broken, then his position in the eyes of others would fall by several degrees. Even if he was still one of the top masters of the Seven Profound Martial House, his bright halo would already be lost, and people would talk behind his back, saying ‘This Ling Sen isn’t that great’, and other such nonsense.

The incense stick slowly burnt, and when the last weak spark unwillingly turned to ashes, the fifth incense stick was lit.

Four incense sticks had burned out!

At this time in the Ten Thousand Killing Array, Lin Ming had already taken 12 wounds, three of which were wounds to his internal organs.

Lin Ming had luckily reached the stage of being able to breathe like a snake, and also had the Perfect first layer of the 'True Prima Chaos Formula' supporting him, otherwise he would have already lost all his battle strength.

"Die!"

Lin Ming's spear swept out at a martial artist's leg, and then he dived forwards and punched the martial artist's chest. To save true essence, he did not use the overwhelming 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist'. Still, a punch with more than 4000 jins of might behind it hit the vital part of the martial artist's heart and caused his heart to stop. The martial artist died while violently spasming on the floor.

At the same time, there was a humongous roar. A giant illusory phantom appeared in the world of the Ten Thousand Killing Array. Lin Ming turned around to look, and a hundred feet away stood a bear-like monster that towered more than ten feet tall. The whole body of this monster was covered in thick black fur, and looking at its massive body, it most likely weighed more than several thousand jins!

"Third-level vicious beast!"

Lin Ming let loose a gasp. Although this giant black bear was only a weak kind of third-level vicious beast, it was still a third-level vicious beast. That meant it was at least equal to a martial artist that had reached the Large Success stage of Bone Forging!

With this kind of vicious beast, Lin Ming could do nothing to it at all with his current strength. Not only that, but with this beast appearing, it meant that later on would appear more martial artists and vicious beasts that would at least be this dangerous!

Lin Ming knew crystal clear that he didn't have much time remaining!

He turned his head again and he saw the black knight that he had battled for several rounds. He lifted his spear and rushed towards it!

True essence concentrated in the entirety of his body. Lin Ming was like a horse racing ahead at full speed. As he ran, all of the tiny units in his body began to breathe in rhythm. Lin Ming's internal true essence began to rapidly vibrate!

Because of the intense vibrations, all of Lin Ming's muscles swelled. He held the spear with an arm that was thicker by several inches, and the blue veins on his arm were bulging. With a ripping sound, the clothes on Lin Ming's body began to tear apart, and all his clothes became tattered and fell off around him. Lin Ming's body was like a shooting star!

The black armored knight lifted his halberd high in the air and cleaved downwards. Facing the cold, dense halberd, Lin Ming did not dodge or evade. He waiting for the split second the halberd came down, and focused true essence into both of his feet. The intense true essence vibrations disintegrated the ground underneath him; with every one of his steps, rocks shattered and came jumping into the air. He had reached the pinnacle of his speed, and then surpassed that! Together with his long spear, he was like a black arrow that flew towards the black armored knight!

“Pah!”

Lin Ming abruptly arrived before the black armored knight before his halberd had fully come down, and thrust his spear forwards!

“Flood Dragon Goes to Sea!”

The spear from the bottom up pierced the neck of the horse, broke through its armor, and then continued straight through the chest of the black armored knight!

Under the overwhelming vibrations, the black armored knight's armor was broken like thin paper. The cloud vein wrought iron tip of the long spear had pierced all the way through the black armored knight's chest. The savagely potent vibrations were sent into the black armored knight's body, and the knight uncontrollably shook. The knight began to bleed profusely from its head, and then immediately horribly died on the ground. The vibrating true essence had already liquefied all of its internal organs!

However, with that last killing strike towards the black armored knight, Lin Ming had exhausted all of his true essence in a single breath. Even his own muscles could not bear the intensity of the true essence vibration, and he suffered enormous damage to his entire body. It was difficult to even move, as a huge group of vicious beasts rushed at him from all angles. At this point, his battle had ended!

On the Ten Thousand Killing Array's altar, Lin Ming let out a cough. His face whitened and he was sent out.

On the altar, there were still three people in the assessment. The strength of the participants for this month's Ten Thousand Killing Array inspection was on a much higher level than last month's.

"Just a bit over four incense sticks, a tad better than I thought he would do. What's his ranking? Murong Zi said with a smile and a laugh. She turned her eyes over to the Ranking Stone.

"Rank 89 Gu Yu is still not finished on the alter. This Lin Ming was eliminated a step earlier than him. His result should be no more than rank 90."

"Mmm, this result shouldn't be too far..."

The people were in a heated discussion, and they began to focus on the changes in the Ranking Stone. Zhu Yan stood in the middle of these people and turned a deaf ear to their discussions. He was

fixated on the Ranking Stone, and his face was like a gloomy black lake.

The scouts sent by the princes also turned their focus to the Ranking Stone. They had come today for this reason. Some of them had even already prepared the sound transmitting talisman.

Most people were looking at the row that listed ranks 90 through 100. But this time, the sixth row of the Ranking Stone had a fluctuation. This simple and minor change was destined to be written down in the history of the Seven Profound Martial House, even in the history of the Sky Fortune Kingdom.

Lin Ming, 62.

Chapter 89: The Result That Defies Heaven's Will

“62!?”

“My heavens!”

Under everyone's burning hot gazes, these two simple characters of Lin Ming, inserted in the middle of a row of names, was utterly dazzling!

62!

In his second assessment, he had soared into the top 72 rankings! The Heavenly Abode had 72 people altogether. This meant that Lin Ming's strength already sufficed to enter the Heavenly Abode!

15 years old, entering the Seven Profound Martial House for one month, cultivation of the early Third Stage of Body Transformation, and he had the qualifications to enter the Heavenly Abode!

For the last 100 years, three martial artists had appeared who had entered into the top 100 during their second round of assessment. But if talking about someone who could enter the Heavenly Abode during their second assessment, there had never existed anyone like that!

All of the disciples present, and the scouts sent by the princes, stared wide-eyed at the Ranking Stone. Murong Zi incredulously covered her mouth in disbelief. The scouts were so shocked, they had forgotten to immediately report the results via their sound transmitting talismans.

This defied the heavens' will!

This was an absolutely monstrous genius who surpassed Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guanyu!

“No... it’s impossible! He only managed to pass through four incense sticks of time, he should only be past the first 100 rankings, how could his ranking possibly be so high!?” The Heavenly Abode martial artists said. Their rankings were in the 70’s and above. With Lin Ming rising into the middle of them, that meant there was the possibility that one of them would be squeezed out of the Heavenly Abode.

“Was there a mistaking in the Ten Thousand Killing Array’s Ranking Stone?”

“How could that be possible? It was an illusory magic array engraved by a Xiantian master.”

“Even a Xiantian master could make a mistake...” Some people were unconvinced. No one wanted to be kicked out of the Heavenly Abode.

“Shut up, it’s impossible for there to be an error in the Ranking Stone. That Lin Ming could kill his way into the top 72 with only four incense sticks of time is because the speed at which he killed his enemies in the Ten Thousand Killing Array is much quicker than martial artists at his level!”

The deacon who was responsible for the Ten Thousand Killing Array spoke up. This person was a graduate of the Seven Profound Martial House and had already broken through to the Pulse Condensation Period. In the Seven Profound Martial House, he was not only a deacon but also an instructor.

Much quicker than martial artists at his level?

Hearing the deacon’s judgment, it was as if all the air in the surroundings had been sucked out. In the Ten Thousand Killing Array, the enemies overwhelmed to the point of blotting out the sky. Wave after wave of enemies would come, each wave more formidable than the last. The assessment would cause one to not be able to catch their breath; everyone would try to slow down in order to find an opportunity to restore their true essence. Therefore everyone who

entered the Ten Thousand Killing Array would kill enemies at the same time and so their ranking could be judged by how long they took.

If Lin Ming slaughtered at such a speed, then without a doubt he would consume his strength faster, and die faster!

It was just too abnormal!

Murong Zi was still covering her mouth, finding herself at a loss for words. It was only after a moment that she turned to Bai Jingyun and said, "Big Sister Jingyun, you were right... this Lin Ming is simply a farm animal, I don't know what kind of food he was fed growing up..."

She was very clear on the significance of this ranking. Beyond the top 62 rankings, there were about a dozen students who were set to graduate at the end of the year. Even if Lin Ming stayed at the same ranking, he could enter the top 50 at the end of the year. He could even leap past the top 50 rankings!

But how could Lin Ming stay at the same rankings? He might even enter the top 30 by the end of the year and become her own competition!

Bai Jingyun snorted and then smiled, "Little girl, mind your manners. You are just envious of others."

"Humph, why would I envy him? I just have to take things a little more seriously, and then we will see if I am surpassed by him!" Murong Zi raised her small fists. Before now, she had just wanted to play around all the time. Before, at the Dream Trial during the entrance exam, Murong Zi's result was an absolute mess. It was only by taking risk after risk did she cross each hurdle.

"Damn it! Hurry up and report this to his highness the Crown Prince faster! Damn me, this result has really turned me into a blind dog!"

The lead detective under the command of the Crown Prince burst out at his group like an exploding chestnut!

“Yes, yes, we will immediately send the report. A little guy whose head had been knocked around hurriedly whispered the information, and then lit the sound transmitting talisman in his hands...

Meanwhile, the followers of the Tenth Prince also burnt their sound transmitting talisman. The man who led them looked at the four Crown Prince’s men in the bamboo grove, an evil smile curving on his face.

“What a bunch of idiots. They are still making a futile effort to struggle. Time is on our side, his Highness will inevitably win. What kind of trash can the Crown Prince put out? For this Lin Ming, his Highness has already especially prepared a set of human-step scriptures and a top-quality treasure!”

At this time, the Crown Prince Yang Lin was in the Eastern Palace. He was playing chess with his mentor, Mister Muyi.

“Haha, what was your highness thinking? That chess move was wrong.” Muyi smiled as he moved a piece and took another one. Yang Lin’s bottom left side of the board had already become a lost cause.

Yang Lin smiled as he shook his head. “Teacher, I have never won playing against you. Whether I lose early or I lose late, the difference is not big.”

“Haha, even if you say that your strength is inferior, you cannot lose your backbone or fighting spirit. Chess is like a battlefield, even if your technique is inferior; someone who dies on the battlefield remains a hero as he was before. But if he surrenders and is captured and then killed, it is only a shame.”

“Teacher’s lesson is wise.”

To Muyi, Yang Lin had no superiority as Crown Prince. In the Sky Fortune Kingdom, a middle Houtian stage master was someone that even the emperor had to give three points of respect to. More so because the current government and court were turbulent, Muyi was the most important person that Yang Lin relied on.

“Tell me, what’s on your mind?” Muyi asked as he put a pawn down on the board.

Yang Lin said, “I visited my father, the emperor today. His body seems to be worse than before...”

“Mmm...” Muyi thought silently. He knew that if Yang Lin was worried about anything, it was the throne change due to the old emperor’s deteriorating condition. He did not have too many forces on his side, and now he had to consider the power and strength of the other princes. The Tenth Prince, the Cloud Prince, was ambitious; he probably would not be willing to stay just a prince. But if comparing the influence in the court, their supporters, and even individual strength, Yang Lin was far from the Cloud Prince. Once a struggle began, he might not come out as the victor.

In the struggles of the throne, once one was defeated, their fate could be imagined. Yang Lin was already the Crown Prince; even if he didn’t want to struggle, he had no choice but to do so. Otherwise, he would lose his life! So these days, Yang Lin has been heavy-hearted, and had not dared to show his hand.

Muyi said, “Your highness. I had just said that chess is like a battlefield. You cannot lose your backbone or your fighting spirit. Your highness, if you lack confidence, then the subordinates under your control will also be anxious. These subordinates of yours have already resolved to follow your highness, and have handed over their lives and their families’ lives. If your highness loses, then the Cloud Prince will surely show no mercy, and will thoroughly cleanse the government. When that time comes...”

Muyi did not say it, but in all the ancient changes of the throne, they were often accompanied by massacres and the thick smells of blood and death. At those times, things like affection and friendship would all be nothing but a joke.

Chapter 90: Cloud Prince

Muyi slowly shook his head. To be fair, Yang Lin was far too kind; his temperament was not suitable to be the head of state. Although the charming stories from ancient times had told of many benevolent emperors who ruled their counties, that benevolence was only a single facet of their character. For instance, they would show one side to the officials, one side to the common people, and one side to their enemies. They would not be lenient or relent when it came to killing. Those who were too friendly and passive were not suited to be rulers.

Yang Lin said, “In the current Seven Profound Martial House ranking war, there appears to be some talent participating in the assessment. I sent Zishan and the others over because I wanted to win him over, but... I’m not entertaining any hope. My tenth younger brother has been at the battlefield in all directions for many years. He has captured the aristocrats of many neighboring countries and acquired massive amounts of wealth, jewelry, beautiful women, and cultivation method manuals... especially the rare cultivation manuals, these are particularly tempting to martial artists. I don’t think that I can offer anything comparable to what my tenth younger brother can.”

When the world was at peace, everyone would come to one for advantages, but when the world was in turmoil, one had to go to others for advantages. If a ruler wanted to win over talents, they needed to give corresponding rewards. Therefore, a prince’s wealth was also an important standard of their strength. Otherwise if you could not put out anything valuable, why would anyone die for them?

“Oh? Talent? Who?” Muyi’s heart moved. He already had a faint guess.

“Lin Ming, 15 years old. This time he might enter the top 100 rankings in the Seven Profound Martial House.”

“Lin Ming?” Muyi smiled. “Your highness please rest assured, Lin Ming will not be won over by the Tenth Prince.”

“Oh? Why do you say this?”

“Little Brother Lin and I are friends between generations. Moreover his background is a bit mysterious; he has a formidable master behind him. He only went to the Seven Profound Martial House for some exercise and experiences. Even if the Cloud Prince were to put out some good cultivation method, it may not even be seen in Lin Ming’s eyes. And also... does your highness remember one month ago when I asked your highness to help rescue a friend? This was at the start of fall and was also the same day as the Seven Profound Martial House entrance exam. He was framed and almost put in prison...”

“What... the... Teacher, do you mean to tell me that it was Lin Ming?” Yang Lin was quick thinking, he immediately understood what Muyi wanted to say.

“Haha, yes, he was Lin Ming. Although I do not have much contact with little brother Lin, but I can tell you that I feel he is a very righteous and good person. Although at that time your highness Crown Prince’s help wasn’t much, Lin Ming should remember this kindness. Although Your Highness might not win him over, he also will not become a subordinate of the Cloud Prince and oppose Your Highness.”

“This, this is really a pleasant surprise.”

The Crown Prince lit up with an happy expression. Although the emperor’s body was getting worse every year, but under the care of precious medicines and the physicians’ martial arts conditioning, it would not be a problem to live 5 or 6 years, or even 7 to 8 years more. Such a long time was already enough for a talent to grow.

Although there were quite a few Pulse Condensation martial artists in the Sky Fortune Kingdom, most of them were gathered at the Seven

Profound Martial House. Others were bestowed titles by the government, and were basically in the military.

The ones who could be utilized by the princes were less and less, because few people wished to wade into the turbulent waters of the throne change. Once they made a mistake and bet on the wrong horse, they would be beyond redemption!

On Yang Lin's side, not calculating Muyi, there was only a single Pulse Condensation martial artist, who was already over 50 years old. But looking at the Seven Profound Martial House, there was Ling Sen, whose cultivation was already at the peak Fourth Stage of Body Transformation, and whose true combat strength approached the Pulse Condensation Period!

Give him a few years, and he could also reach that stage!

This Lin Ming could become the next Ling Sen!

Lin Ming was a reputed rare talent at the Seven Profound Martial House that would only appear every few dozen years. If he decided to join a side, the power and influence he would gain would increase a step.

Therefore this competition for Lin Ming, although it appeared to be minor, was actually very significant!

At this time, a red flame lit up in front of Yang Lin.

Pure gold! An urgent sound transmitting talisman!

"Your highness, Lin Ming's result is in. His ranking is 62!"

"What!?" Yang Lin stood up on the spot. 62!!!

As the Crown Prince, he knew what it meant to achieve a ranking of 62 on the second assessment! Even Ling Sen was inferior to this!

Ling Sen was already an abnormal existence. With his cultivation of peak Fourth Stage of Body Transformation, he was able to approach the strength of the Pulse Condensation Period, and this Lin Ming was even more aberrant!

He immediately sent out another sound transmitting talisman. Although he knew that it was impossible for Zishan and the others to make such a huge mistake, he had to confirm this matter.

“How is it?” The sound transmitting talisman sends the sound directly to the receiver’s mind. Muyi had not heard anything.

Yang Lin took a deep breath and said, “Teacher, this Lin Ming’s result was rank 62.”

“What? 62?” Muyi was slightly perturbed for a moment but immediately relaxed. Of course, since Lin Ming was the disciple chosen by such a great master, how could he be a small fish in a pond? Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and others like them could be considered talents in the Sky Fortune Kingdom, but if compared to the disciples of the large sects that were taught by the highest masters, they were far worse.

Even if Lin Ming was able to reach rank 62 on his first assessment, it would not be an exaggeration!

Muyi believed that since Lin Ming had an extraordinary master behind him, then he must have a surprisingly good ability. Even if Lin Ming were to defeat Ling Sen in a few more months, Muiy at most would be astonished for a brief moment, and then also believe that this was normal.

While Yang Lin received the sound transmitting talisman, the Tenth Prince also received one. The Tenth Prince did not care much for Lin Ming’s strength, as he had many more masters under him than the Crown Prince did. What he cared about was Lin Ming’s influence. Lin Ming was the eye of the storm in the Sky Fortune Capital City and a

rising star in the martial artist circles. His talent was to the degree that it could only be found every few dozen years in the Seven Profound Martial House!

If such a character were to join him, then without a doubt his subordinates' morale would greatly increase. There were even more people who were waiting to see the situation before thinking of joining him. If Lin Ming were to join, it would no doubt be easier.

But now, after hearing the news from the sound transmitting talisman, the Tenth Prince's complexion immediately changed.

To enter the Seven Profound Martial House for only one month and for this to only be his second assessment, and also to only have cultivation at the early Third Stage of Body Transformation, yet he was still able to reach rank 62 on the Ranking Stone!

This ranking had completely outstripped Ling Sen!

The Seven Profound Martial House had never had a record like this for a hundred years!

For one to be able to advance into the Seven Profound Martial House's Heavenly Abode with just a peak Third Stage of Body Transformation could be considered a talent among talents if they managed to reach around rank 70. But Lin Ming had actually reached rank 62! And his cultivation was a full half-step lower! This was simply a monstrous genius!

It was possible that Lin Ming would become a master who far exceeded Ling Sen! Disregarding the considerable influence he would have in pulling other martial artists over to his side, his combat prowess was enough to give the Tenth Prince a shock!

Don't forget, Lin Ming was only 15 years old and his cultivation was at the early Third Stage of Body Transformation; there was immense room for improvement!

“Haha, the heavens help me! As soon as this rare talent that hasn’t been seen in a hundred years of the Seven Profound Martial House joins me, then the martial artists of Sky Fortune City will hear this and come shaking in their boots to join me!

“Your Highness, any orders?”

“Prepare 50,000 gold taels immediately, two boxes of the finest jewelry, a dozen of the finest outstanding virgin beauties under 16 years of age, a hundred servants, and have them wait at Chunyuan Mountain Villa. Also, prepare 500 acres of fertile farmland and the title deed of Chunyuan Mountain Villa!”

The man heard this and was secretly scared. Such rewards, was he for real!? Who was this for!? A villa, 50,000 gold taels, and two boxes of the finest jewelry were more than enough to win over a general!

The Tenth Prince was positive that he had this. In fact, he also had a secondary reward that gave him the most confidence. It was a set of rare human-step manuals that he had looted from an aristocratic family. With this, he had won over many martial artists.

“Yang Lin, Yang Lin, you will lose to me. What you can put out is not even a tenth of what I can. I want to see how you will struggle when you are fully pressured by me. I don’t need that old foggy to die; I will make the first move and catch you off guard!”

Chapter 91: Challenged at Spear Point

At the Ten Thousand Kill Array ashlar square -

Zhu Yan narrowed his eyes towards Lin Ming. Without saying a word, his complexion had returned to normal, but in the glint of those narrow eyes was an icy chill.

Lin Ming and Zhu Yan looked at each other with outward indifference. Their conflict would end in combat sooner or later, but Zhu Yan had not thought that the day would be arriving so quickly.

Lan Yunyue was quietly standing in a corner of the sword bamboo grove. She was at a complete loss looking at that incomprehensible number on the Ranking Stone. She looked at the confrontation between Zhu Yan and Lin Ming and was totally confused. How could things come to this...?

Many people in the audience were still shocked silly by the result. By now, the deacon responsible for the Ten Thousand Killing Array opened his mouth and suddenly said, "Lin Ming, congratulations for reaching rank 62 in the Ten Thousand Killing Array. According to the regulations of the Martial House, as soon as you enter into the top 80 rankings among the disciples, you have earned the qualifications to challenge any disciple of the Heavenly Abode. The winner will enter the Heavenly Abode and the loser will be eliminated and enter the Earth Hall."

The Seven Profound Martial House's Heavenly Abode had exactly 72 people. These people were there because of their combat prowess, but their strength might not be ordered on the Ten Thousand Killing Array rankings.

Although the Ranking Stone rankings judged the basic strength of an individual, sometimes there existed discrepancies. For instance, specific specialties such as an assassin, who do not excel in the forward rushing fighting style of the Ten Thousand Killing Array. But in terms of killing a human, they can often surpass their ranking to defeat someone.

Therefore the Seven Profound Martial House regulations stipulated that once one entered the top 80 rankings of the Ranking Stone, they obtained the qualifications to challenge a disciple of the Heavenly Abode. Generally speaking, for this challenge, the one most often chosen was the worst ranking person in the Heavenly Abode.

Lin Ming look at the Ranking Stone. On the Ranking Stone, the names of the Heavenly Abode disciples were slightly larger than those of the Earth Hall. It was easy to see that the one worst ranked in the Heavenly Abode was a 17 year old girl named Bai Rongrong, rank 75.

Bai Rongrong just happened to be present during this ranking war. She looked extremely pitiful as she saw Lin Ming turn his eyes on the Ranking Stone. She knew that she had no chance at all facing him. To reach rank 62 in four incense sticks and a breathe of time; even if there were two of her, she had no fancy dreams she could overcome such a monstrously evil genius.

She had to at least symbolically fight him. She just couldn't throw in the towel and admit defeat. She had to fight him honestly and fairly. She could only hope that this abnormal fellow showed some mercy and wasn't too ruthless...

Bai Rongrong was self-aware of her own situation; she had already resigned herself to fate.

The eyes of many of those present fell on Bai Rongrong. They all expected that this Bai Rongrong would lose. A girl was able to win sympathy from others, especially this Bai Rongrong who was always

diligent in her cultivation. If the one who met such a calamity this time was a boy, chances were that most people would have the feeling of taking pleasure in other's misfortune.

"Have you decided?" The deacon asked.

"Mmm, I've decided." Lin Ming replied. "I have a question though. Are there any restrictions on the time setting of this challenge?"

"The time is decided yourself, but preferably within a month. If your ranking falls out of the top 80, then you also lose the qualifications to challenge."

"I see... thank you Deacon Senior Apprentice."

"You've chosen? I need the name to report to the Heavenly Abode elder responsible for these matters."

"Mmm. I've chosen. The time is in one month. As for who..." Lin Ming turned his head. He lifted his spear and pointed it directly at a man who was staring at him with narrowed eyes, "I choose Zhu Yan!"

Zhu Yan!?

Everyone who heard this name froze. Especially Bai Rongrong, whose face filled with an incredulous expression of disbelief.

The entire ashlar square fell into absolute silence.

The one this Lin Ming chose was... Zhu Yan!?

Many people at first thought they heard wrong, but looking at who Lin Ming's spear was pointed at, it was clearly directed at Zhu Yan!

Provocation!

Challenging someone at spear point! This was simply unconcealed provocation!

Ranked 32, Zhu Yan! This Lin Ming just wouldn't stop astonishing everyone!

"This Lin Ming... he's just... he's gone insane!" Murong Zi's lips twitched. She mumbled, "No... I'm the crazy one. If this Lin Ming is crazy, and he does crazy things and creates crazy miracles, then if he is not crazy, I am crazy."

Bai Jingyun was also amazed. This Lin Ming was bold! What courage! He was prepared to surpass Zhu Yan in one month!

From 62 to 32, it had to be known that the ranking was exponentially more difficult the higher one went. From 162 to 132 would not be difficult, but from 62 to 32, the hardship would increase by several times!

She had used an entire year to go from 65 to 26.

This growth seemed high, but the truth was it was limited!

Because this year, 20 disciples who had been in front of Bai Jingyun had graduated from the Martial House. So Bai Jingyun had only actually advanced 19 ranks!

"This has become interesting." Ta Ku said with a wry smile. "I did not come today in vain. This Lin Ming seems to have a grudge with Zhu Yan. Otherwise, why would he aim so high?"

"Mmm, really a horrible relationship. I felt Zhu Yan's body flash a moment ago with murderous intent, but it was instantly hidden. Lin Ming challenged Zhu Yan at spear point. That in itself was also a kind of provocation." Ling Sen said. Although that moment when Zhu Yan had broken out in murderous intention was not obvious, Ling Sen was able to sense it from the many years he had spent on the battlefield. He also had his Ashura martial intent, so he was particularly sensitive to murderous intent.

“Zhu Yan is a ruthless person. Although he has an aristocratic background, he is actually someone who sinks his entire heart into diligently cultivating. He is very strong, and not only that, but this kind of person has no lack of ambition. In the future he will probably join the government. Even I have kept several points of attention on him. Now this Lin Ming challenged Zhu Yan, I really want to see!” Ta Ku licked his lips in excitement. He was a subordinate of the army, and would most likely return in the future. It was better for him not to be involved in these struggles.

What would the result be after one month? No one dared to guess.

If it was before, then they would say that Lin Ming was a fool who had bitten off more than he could chew. But at present, Lin Ming had created miracle after miracle, and no one dared to look down on a single hair of his.

“Mmm? What? Lin Ming challenged Zhu Yan? And he challenged him at spear point! Is it possible that he has some enmity with Zhu Yan?” In the Eastern Palace, the Crown Prince had just gotten the news that Lin Ming had challenged Zhu Yan.

“He called out his name and also referred to him by spear point. It really is unusual. Between these two people, there should be some matters.” Muyi also said.

“If there really is a grudge, then my chances just increased. This Zhu Yan is a cousin of my tenth brother. Zhu Yan is already joined together with my tenth brother as one. They share glory, and also defeat. I don’t know what sort of relationship exists between Lin Ming and Zhu Yan. It seems there are some oversights in my information...”

For the matters between Lin Ming and Lan Yunyue, except Lin Xiaodong, few others knew. The intelligence that the Crown Prince collected was mainly about Lin Ming’s background and parental situation, it wasn’t a completely exhaustive report.

Peng! The teacup in the Cloud Prince's hand was crushed. He had received the sound transmitting talisman at the same time the Crown Prince had.

Naming Zhu Yan in a challenge, referring to him by spear point, this was definitely not a good sign. If there was no hatred between them, why would Lin Ming jump over so many people to find Zhu Yan?

“This Zhu Yan, he's really making trouble for me!”

The Tenth Prince's two eyebrows slanted upwards like scimitars and twisted together. Zhu Yan belonged to his mother's side. About relatives from the wife or mother's family, generally speaking, regardless if it were a prince or an emperor, they would exclude most from the mother's side.

Since ancient times, it had been far too common for the wife's family or mother's family to take power. For instance, the empress or empress dowager would entrust heavy responsibilities to their family and cause their power to skyrocket. But once their influence inflated, then there would also be conspiracies and plots to control the court. There would be rebellions and plots from the women's side to seize power.

But, this was a crucial phase for the Cloud Prince in his struggle. Anything that could give him a boost was good. Zhu Yan was a talented person, and the Cloud Prince was willing to let him work as his subordinate, but he would not take Zhu Yan as a trusted follower. Someone like Zhu Yan was simply too ambitious.

“Pass the order; I want Zhu Yan to come see me tonight!” The Tenth Prince wanted to inquire about the reason behind the feud between Zhu Yan and Lin Ming, and see whether he could convert Lin Ming from an enemy into a friend.

Chapter 92: Declined

Hu! After Zhu Yan returned to his residence, a ball of flame burst into sparks in front of him. This was a message sent by a sound transmitting talisman from the Tenth Prince, Yang Zhen. The Tenth Prince wanted him to come see him tonight at his palace.

Zhu Yan could hear his underlying tone. The Ten Prince did not sound happy!

Zhu Yan knew for certain that if the Tenth Prince wanted to see him, it was because of that moment when Lin Ming had openly challenged him. The scouts he had sent to observe the situation must have reported back to the Tenth Prince.

Win over Lin Ming? Stop dreaming!

Zhu Yan reached out a hand and crushed the smoldering ashes in front of him. The voice of the Tenth Prince came to a screeching halt.

Zhu Yan slowly rose up and poured himself a glass of wine. He raised the glass and drained the whole thing. Slowly, his eyes became quietly cold, like a placid lake.

“There is still a month. Do you think that Lin Ming has already won?”

As Lin Ming returned to his residence, he also received sound transmitting talismans simultaneously from the Tenth Prince and the Crown Prince.

The Crown Prince’s message was from Muyi.

In the sound transmitting talisman, Muyi sent his congratulations and invited Lin Ming to the Crown Prince’s palace to visit and have a drink.

As for the Tenth Prince, he also invited Lin Ming over and also asked if Lin Ming could take a view at a rare human-step manual that he had.

These two sound transmitting talismans, in truth, had already violated the regulations of the Seven Profound Martial House. The Martial House had stipulated that any and all outside influences could not disturb disciples in the middle of the school period, even if it was a sound transmitting talisman sent from the outside. However, the present events were of an important matter with the princes competing for the throne, so naturally the Martial House was able to bend the rules a little to accommodate them.

“It seems that both sides want to win me over... I have antagonized too many people and made too many enemies. My own strength is weak... I may be safe in the Seven Profound Martial House, but if I go out, I might be assassinated! Although I created a story that I have some formidable master at my back, this kind of fake thing might not necessarily deter others. If I take a side for the time being, then they can also protect me. Muyi has been gracious and generous towards me and we are friends, and the Crown Prince helped me one time so I owe him a favor. If I join them, that would be a good choice. As for the Tenth Prince, he is a child of the concubine empress of the Zhu Family...” Lin Ming didn’t care much about politics, but he knew about the Zhu Family’s situation, and that the Tenth Prince was Zhu Yan’s cousin. The Zhu Family had used this relationship to climb up the ladder; their influence was growing day by day and rising in the ranks.

It was impossible for Lin Ming to take the Tenth Prince’s side. He immediately declined him!

As for giving face to Muyi, that was something that he absolutely had to do, but now was not the time...

“I thank your highness the Crown Prince for your great and kind invitation, but I already have a promised date in a month and must

seize every second and minute, thus I cannot keep my appointment with you. One month later, I will come visit and pay my thanks to your hospitality at that time.

In the Eastern Palace of the Crown Prince, Muiyi received Lin Ming's sound transmitting talisman. He traced his beard and said with a smile, "Lin Ming said that he would come to visit in a month."

"Oh? This Lin Ming is really so diligent that he doesn't have a free evening?"

Muyi replied, "Your highness must know that the man that cultivates the path of martial arts must be fastidious and keep their thoughts and heart pure. Lin Ming wholeheartedly pursues the martial arts peak; if his heart doesn't have any distracting thoughts, then his growth will also be very fast. If he were to come for a drink even for a night, then there would be some unavoidable disturbances in his mind and it would take perhaps a day or two to adjust back."

"So that's how it is. No wonder this Lin Ming's cultivation progressed so quickly. His heart of martial arts must be make up a large part of the reason?"

"Yes. Normally if someone's heart of martial arts is weak, when they only have some achievements, they have major powers from far and wide trying to win them over. They are very easily tempted by things like wealth and beauty. This kind of person will always lack great talent, and can only be a follower! However, that Lin Ming's strength improved so quickly is not just due to his pure heart of martial arts, but also because he has a formidable master behind him."

Initially, Lin Ming had asked Muiyi to keep his secret of being an inscription master private, but he had not said anything to Muiyi about keeping this formidable shadow master of his a secret.

In fact, with Lin Ming's current reputation, even if he were to publicize his status as an inscription master, it would not be

dangerous. It would even add to the chips in his hand! Not to mention that he had the Crown Prince and Muyi's protection now, his status of being a talented disciple of the Seven Profound Marital House was already an enormous deterrent.

"Of course... what sort of master is this behind Lin Ming? The Crown Prince asked as his eyes lit up.

Muyi saw this look of the Crown Prince and clearly knew what thoughts he had. He smiled and said, "Your highness should not expect to count on this person. I guess that this senior is at least at the Large Success of Xiantian stage. He might have even already surpassed the Xiantian stage; the height of the realms he has reached is already beyond our understanding. He would not meddle in the earthly matters."

"Surpasses Xiantian!" Yang Lin's heart shook as he heard this. "What sort of realm is above a Xiantian master?"

Muyi forced a wry smile. He said, "I do not know the martial arts path beyond that. For those that do not come from an ancient clan or sect, the martial artist who learns by themselves is just like living in a dense fog, they simply do not know where or what to explore. After the Xiantian stage, I am not clear what sort of realm it is..."

Yang Lin let loose a light breath and said, "Teacher, please do not belittle yourself. You already have such achievements though you are not from a sect or a clan; you are already a rare talent. I only have one point that is unclear; if this Lin Ming has such a formidable master behind him, why would he go to the Seven Profound Martial House?"

Muyi said, "Well about this I also have some doubts. To the martial arts path beyond the Xiantian stage, I do not completely understand. Perhaps if one wants to reach the higher boundaries in martial arts, they need to experience for themselves the world and accumulate life experiences, and that is why Lin Ming then came to Sky Fortune City."

“Mmm. Whether or not I can win over Lin Ming, I must at least become friends with him. Next month when Lin Ming comes, I will personally greet him and give him a proper banquet!”

“This Lin Ming, he actually rejected me!”

At the Cloud Prince’s palace, the Tenth Prince Yang Zhen received the sound transmitting talisman that Lin Ming had replied with, and his face immediately sank. “Zhu Yan, you really did a good deed. For a mere woman you have offended such a powerful enemy, you have really disappointed me!”

Zhu stood in front, silent and without words. Originally when he had succeeded in snatching and obtaining Lan Yunyue, Lin Ming had only been a little unimportant guy, nothing more than a bug beneath his heel. No matter what happened, he could easily deal with him. To take a woman from such an useless person, what could go wrong? Who could possibly expect that Lin Ming would grow so quickly into such a powerful enemy?

Of course, he did not explain these matters nor did he need to. Yang Zhen had asked him here today to let loose his volatile temper. Zhu Yan was very clear; his current status and his Zhu Family’s status was all because of the Tenth Prince. The Tenth Prince was his master, and in front of him, he could not revolt.

“I borrowed your Zhu Family’s strength because I thought you could assist me in dealing with my hurdle, but now you have only added to the chaos! I had the absolute confidence to win over Lin Ming, but now!”

“Zhu Yan, you followed me because you wanted to do great things and have great accomplishments! Only the stupidest, the absolute stupidest people would kill the world for just a woman! That Lan Yunyue, you will divorce her!”

As the Tenth Prince said this, Zhu Yan's brow slightly wrinkled. He said, "Your highness, even if I divorce Lan Yunyue, it is impossible for me to ease my relationship with Lin Ming. Do you believe that Lin Ming will forgive this betrayal and join together with Lan Yunyue again? This battle of mine and Lin Ming's was because of Lan Yunyue, but now, it already has nothing to do with Lan Yunyue any longer."

"I do not need you to preach to me! I already know that Lin Ming will not want Lan Yunyue again. But, if you divorce her, it will be a sign of showing weakness and humbling yourself before Lin Ming. Afterwards you can apologize. Only like this can we possibly sit down and discuss the future together. Only like this will I have the possibility to offer him generous conditions and bring him to my side! No longer an eternal enemy, only eternal benefits. I will choose for him beauties that far outstrip Lan Yunyue, heavenly beauties who are as obedient as a cat. I will give him great wealth and top cultivation methods. How could he not side with me? What the Crown Prince can give him is nothing compared to what I can!"

"You want me to show weakness and humble myself before Lin Ming...?" Zhu Yan's mouth twitched and his fists clenched together until they were white. For someone like him who had an arrogant personality, to show weakness and humble himself, it was worse than killing him!

Chapter 93: Obstacle

“What, you aren’t willing? A real man is resilient and can adapt to the situation. What is this matter of showing a little weakness? Could it be that you want to create problems for me, just because you and Lin Ming are complete enemies?”

Zhu Yan took a few deep breaths and then slowly relaxed his clenched fists. His eyes were cold as he slowly said, “Your highness. A dead genius is no longer a genius.”

“Humph! You want me to assassinate Lin Ming? Zhu Yan, do you not know what sort of unparalleled existence the Seven Profound Martial House is in the Sky Fortune Kingdom? Lin Ming is a rare talent that hasn’t been seen in a hundred years of the Seven Profound Martial House! I can’t believe that you wish for me to assassinate him. Even if he left the Martial House, even if he hasn’t grown, do not forget my elder brother, the Crown Prince Yang Lin! Although Yang Lin is stupid, he is not stupid to the point of being retarded! How could he not send protection for Lin Ming? His side also has a master, he even has Muyi! Once I make a minor miscalculation, once just a little bit of my plans are exposed to Yang Lin that I have killed Lin Ming, then I have lost! Let alone when the time comes to take the throne, I won’t even be able to preserve my life! The authority of the Seven Profound Martial House is inviolable. Even if it is my father the emperor, he would also be useless to do anything!”

“Just one Mui is enough to give me a headache!! I have spent many resources to raise 18 people into the court that are willing to die, and this is just to barely deal with Mui. If this Lin Ming grows up and is added to this already complicated situation, then my chances will be significantly reduced!”

Zhu Yan’s mouth twitched and both of his fists felt heavy. He spoke slowly and clearly, “Your Highness, please give me some time. I will

give you an adequate response!”

“Fine. I will believe you this one time. But what if you disappoint me once again?”

Zhu Yan took a deep breath and bit out the words, “If I am defeated, if Lin Ming can still grow with such a monstrously evil speed, then I will divorce Lan Yunyue and apologize to Lin Ming!”

“Humph. I hope it will not be too late at that time! Draw back!

In a guest room at the Great Clarity Pavilion, the ambiance was brilliant, and the prepared dishes were delicious, but Zhu Yan did not have the mind to eat the dishes as he stewed in his thoughts.

Seeing Zhu Yan not eating, Lan Yunyue hadn't dared to move her chopsticks. She had correctly guessed that Zhu Yan's worry today was related to Lin Ming's challenge. She was caught in the middle, embarrassed, and did not dare to even say a few words.

“Today, the Tenth Prince called me in to discuss some matters with me.” Zhu Yan slowly said after being silent for a long time.

“Mmm? Discuss... what did you talk about?” Lan Yunyue felt a faint sense of unease. She had never known what Zhu Yan was thinking. She could only feel his dark and terrible mood, as if there was this gently roiling calm, just before he would explode with sudden violent rage and run amok. His look was just like a vicious beast lying in ambush; at first it seemed tranquil and calm, but it was actually containing an inexhaustible murderous intent.

When she was together with Zhu Yan, Lan Yunyue had always felt an invisible pressure pushing down on her as if she couldn't breathe. It was unlike the past; during the time when she and Lin Ming had been together. When she was with Lin Ming, she could randomly act like a spoiled brat, or randomly lose her temper, but that boy would always

smile at her like sunshine and satisfy all of her unreasonable demands...

Unfortunately, those days were long gone and would never return. Lan Yunyue sighed in her heart. She did not dare to show any feelings, because she always felt as if Zhu Yan's eyes were like an eagle that seemed able to completely penetrate into her innermost feelings.

"He told me to..." Zhu Yan said, and then looked at her with both eyes and slowly continued, "He told me to divorce you..."

In that moment, Lan Yunyue became senseless. It was as if time had slowed down in that instant, and Zhu Yan's face suddenly seemed far off in the distance. All her senses, her hearing, her touch, all of it became blurred.

Although she had always maintained the purity of her body, she had already become engaged to Zhu Yan. In the Sky Fortune Kingdom, if a girl was divorced after being engaged, this was an extremely shameful matter, and their remarriage would be affected. If Zhu Yan really divorced her, what course was left for her to follow?

She looked at Zhu Yan with a twisted expression and clenched her lips, trying not to cry. Still, tears began to flow from her eyes. She knew what significance the Tenth Prince meant to Zhu Yan and the Zhu Family. His words held much weight to Zhu Yan.

"You... you have agreed?" Lan Yunyue choked on her words, almost sobbing.

"Not yet." Zhu Yan replied truthfully.

"It...why?" Lan Yunyue subconsciously held the chopsticks in her hand, but her knuckles had turned white.

“Because of Lin Ming. The Tenth Prince wishes to win over Lin Ming, but you... you have become an obstacle for him to win over Lin Ming.”

“Ob... obstacle...” Lan Yunyue could finally not bear the pain, and the tears she was holding back began to tumble down like rain. She was just an ordinary girl. How was it that one day she would be involved in the struggles of the throne, and become an obstacle to the prince...

Why was this happening?

Zhu Yan said, “I have one month, maybe two. But I still don’t know if, there might be a chance... you don’t need to despair. This matter isn’t necessarily a foregone conclusion.”

After saying these words, Zhu Yan simply rose up, pushed open the door and left.

Lan Yunyue was left behind, sitting in her chair. She looked as if her soul had been lost. She knew her situation. Although Zhu Yan had said there was an opportunity, she was not naïve enough to believe this. If she ever became an obstacle in his path, even if just a little, he would not hesitate to get rid of her!

Thinking of this, Lan Yunyue felt a surge of inexplicable sorrow.

She absentmindedly rose, opened the door and left.

The main hall of the Great Clarity Pavilion always resounded with boisterous noise and chatter. A crowd of aristocratic sons indulged in their desires and were having fun, raising goblets to drink from. The delicate bronze goblets were covered with a lifelike design, as if it were the mouth of a monster that was opening its jaws wide to swallow her...

Luxurious halls, velvet rugs, the gentle sounds of lofty strings and wind instruments, fine jade plates and golden bowls filled with the

best delicacies... she had once longed for these in her dreams and pursued them, but now they only made her feel desolate.

She walked down the staircase and out of the Great Clarity Pavilion.

The autumn night had a breezy coolness to it, and the blowing wind had a touch of dew; it was somber and wistful.

The truth was, Zhu Yan was not wrong... Lan Yunyue understood the reason he said those few words tonight, and did not feel any resentment towards him.

She had chosen Zhu Yan. She chose him because Zhu Yan brought to her great wealth, and thus a longer youth.

If one day Zhu Yan lost his status to women, then even his wife might leave him...

This truth, how could Zhu Yan not understand?

If one chooses splendor, then they have to be able to withstand the bitterness and pain behind that splendor, but... she understood this principle too late.

She suddenly realized how precious those missing things were that she once had. She regretted, not because Lin Ming had metamorphosed into a golden-scaled dragon, but her regret was not knowing that the happiness she had once felt was a true blessing.

The result that Lin Ming had created had shocked many people; the major powers had already set plans into action for Lin Ming. But even though Lin Ming had achieved such a great result, he had not even the slightest bit of complacency.

He chose one month of time before challenging Zhu Yan. The truth was, he did not have the absolute assurance that he would win.

Zhu Yan was the first decent enemy in Lin Ming's entire life.

Once, Lin Min had set surpassing Zhu Yan as a lifetime goal. But now, in only a short period of 6 months, Lin Ming would be facing off against Zhu Yan on the same martial stage.

Lin Ming could feel that Zhu Yan was tough and extraordinary.

Zhu Yan and Wang Yanfeng were the same. Both were proud and had their own unyielding will. It was just that Zhu Yan was not so hard-edged like Wang Yanfeng, and was more restrained at heart. If Wang Yanfeng was an unsheathed treasure sword overflowing with cold air, then Zhu Yan was a slender saber hidden in the sheath. It was difficult to tell when he would leave the sheath, and that first strike would be virtually impossible to guard against!

Zhu Yan would not be so easily crushed! He was the son of a concubine of the Zhu Family. He relied on his own strength and diligent efforts to crawl up, step by step, to his current position. He even had the possibility of inheriting the Zhu Family as the head of the household. Such a person, was like strong grass and just as tenacious!

Even if Lin Ming had the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill that was enhanced by the medicinal inscription symbol, he didn't have full confidence that he would win!

This month, Zhu Yan would definitely put in double the effort!

But even knowing this, Lin Ming had still issued a challenge! Not only did he have to challenge Zhu Yan, he had to challenge himself, and force himself into a corner to stimulate his potential!

This month, the resources that Lin Ming would obtain were increased. He would be able to practice for five full days at the seven major killing arrays, receive five Soul Gathering Pellets, and also five true essence stones.

The Soul Gathering Pellets were nothing, but the true essence stones, in particular the five full days of cultivation time, were crucial for Lin Ming.

Five full days was equal to 60 hours he could practice. That was an average of two hours every day for a month!

Although it wasn't indiscriminate practice, but the effects of two hours were already very rewarding.

This early morning, Lin Ming carried the Penetrating Rainbow and went to the Icy Pond Waterfall.

But just as he was about to enter the cold pond, a distant voice called out to him. "Young Cousin, wait a moment!"

"Mm?" Lin Ming paused his footsteps. It was Lin Wu.

"Young Cousin, congratulations! This time you have really gained face for our Lin Family!" Lin Wu cheerfully said as he ran over.

The Lin Family was one of the biggest families in Green Mulberry City, but at present it did not have the means to compare with the Zhu Family. This was because the Zhu Family had a concubine empress, and moreover the empress's son was awarded the title of prince.

This was not too bad; one could only blame fate. However, most of the Lin Family elders seethed with rage. The Lin Family was always pressured by the Zhu Family and Zhu Yan. They were like a mountain that stood in front of the Lin Family. The strongest of the young generation in the Lin Family was Lin Wu. He had already spent two years in the Seven Profound Martial House and had just barely entered the Earth Hall. Also, he was only in the lower-middle section of rankings. The other two of the younger generation had not even entered the Earth Hall; they could not catch up to even half of Zhu Yan. How could the Lin Family elders not be annoyed?

But yesterday, 12 long-range sound transmitting talismans had been used, and the great news had been sent a great distance that night to Green Mulberry City.

The common sound transmitting talisman could only reach several dozen miles in range, but the long-distance sound transmitting talisman could spread to several hundred miles. The price was of course far higher than ordinary; one slip cost several dozen taels of gold. To pass news from the Sky Fortune City to the Green Mulberry City required 12 sound transmitting talismans being sent in series. The cost to send this news was several hundred gold taels. If it were not important, then even a rich a respected family like the Lin Family would not be so wasteful.

12 sound transmissions were sent in succession, with an urgent pure gold color, they only had a few simple sentences. “Lin Ming has been at the Seven Profound Martial House for 34 days. During the second Ten Thousand Killing Array assessment, he reached rank 62 and obtained the qualifications to challenge the Heavenly Abode. He challenged Zhu Yan at spear point, and declared that their match would be one month later.”

It is said that when the head of the Lin Family received this sound transmitting talisman, he jumped up from his chair on the spot and even used dirty words - “This is fucking great!”

Chapter 94: Martial Intent Reappears

Of course this was great. Their Lin Family had always been pressured by the Zhu Family, and even the younger generation was being pressured by Zhu Yan. Now Lin Ming was able to mercilessly get justice for them, and even challenge Zhu Yan at spear point. To overturn this mountain that had always been suppressing the younger generation of the Lin Family, how could he not be feeling great?

There that night, 12 more long range sound transmitting talismans were used in succession to return news to the Sky Fortune City Lin Family branch. The instructions the Lin Family Head gave were, "Do not hesitate to use all supplies available to support Lin Ming. We must create the best and most ideal conditions for Lin Ming, so that he can defeat Zhu Yan one month from now."

So today, because of the instructions from the Head of the Lin Family, the Lin Family branch sent Lin Wu to bring Lin Ming resources to support him.

"This is..." Lin Ming looked at a small porcelain bottle and a small jade box in Lin Wu's hand.

"The Head of the Lin Family sent an urgent message through 12 long-range sound transmitting talismans to the family branch. He wants you to train well, and try your hardest to defeat Zhu Yan a month from now."

Lin Ming took the porcelain bottle and the jade box. He opened the porcelain bottle. Inside were ten pills. They were lustrous and round, with a delicate and gentle fragrance. As soon as one saw these, it was easy to tell they were superior medicines.

“High-level Soul Gathering Pellet?”

The main ingredient of an ordinary Soul Gathering Pellet was a 100 year old Yuan fruit. Its value was no less than a 100 year old Blood Lingzhi.

But a high-level Soul Gathering Pellet was made from a 300 year old Yuan fruit. Its value was at least 7 times more than an ordinary Soul Gathering Pellet. Moreover, it was not easy to buy!

A Soul Gathering Pellet could not directly increase a martial artist's strength, but it could enhance a martial artist's ability to condense true essence and thus increase their cultivation speed. Although these types of pills' effects of increasing strength were slow, they did not have any side effects, and one could take them constantly.

Because of this, of all the pills that martial artists had, the consumption of Soul Gathering Pellet was the highest. This bottle that the Lin Family gave of high-level Soul Gathering Pellets was worth nearly 20,000 gold taels.

The family had really used all their resources.

Lin Ming looked at Lin Wu and then opened the jade box. After opening it, he saw neatly placed inside were two layers of crystal clear stones that looked as if they were carved from ice. True essence stones!

Lin Ming could see with one sweep of his eyes that this box held 30 true essence stones!

30 true essence stones was not a small number! And these true essence stones were glittering as if they were carved from translucent glass. If compared to those given by the Seven Profound Martial House, they were somewhat purer.

These true essence stones; their value was also not low!

Seeing this bottle of Soul Gathering Pellets and this box of true essence stones, Lin Ming understood that if he received this great gift, it was equivalent to his tacit approval, and that he was willing to become a direct descendant of the Lin Family.

Lin Wu realized that Lin Ming's look had changed, and he faintly guessed in his mind what he was deliberating. He said with some embarrassment and a hint of apology, "Young Cousin, I know that this icing on the cake is not of a timely nature to truly help. I know that when you first came down to Sky Fortune City, not even a shadow of the family was here to help or assist you. Now that Young cousin has become a dragon among men, the family only then delivers medicine and true essence stones. It really does not honor you or do you justice, but there is also a reason we do the things we do. The family's resources are limited... there are just too many children of the Lin Family. If each generation equally divided the family property, then the Lin Family would have already disappeared."

Lin Ming understood what Lin Wu meant. Lin Ming's own great grandmother was the matriarch of the family office, Madam Fang. This relation was passed down to Lin Ming. The children of a large family tended to have many wives, and thus they flourished. The number of heirs and descendants exponentially increased with each new generation. The property had to be concentrated together in order to ensure that the family traditions could continue.

The family gave some businesses to the branch family juniors to manage, and to let these distant families earn a salary. This was already a kindness to the branch families. In fact, this was very generous. If it wasn't for Lin Ming practicing martial arts, his family's life could also be very wealthy.

To the Lin Family with which he shared the last name, Lin Ming felt a little thanks, but he did not have any real sense of belonging to them. But Lin Ming knew that his parents had very traditional and serious

mindsets, and they had always dreamed that one day they could return to the main family. In his parents' eyes, recognizing their ancestors and returning to the main family was the orthodox.

This was because his parents' status in the family would rise, and they would even receive the respect and veneration of the family head!

To the parents, this was a glory, and this glory would be brought because of him. Which parents did not hope for their children to have great accomplishments in the future, and return home with riches and honor? Lin Ming was a rare talent that had never been seen in the last hundred years of the Seven Profound Martial House. His rising star was enough to bring honor to his ancestors, and to give shade to his descendants.

Thinking this, Lin Ming accepted the pills and true essences stones, and said to Lin Wu, "Thank the family head for me."

"Young Cousin is too humble. The Lin Family thanks young cousin, and we hope you win for us." Seeing Lin Ming accept these gifts, Lin Wu relaxed and let loose a deep breath. He also had feared that Lin Ming had a cold and lonely heart towards the Lin Family.

It was only a few more months until the end of the year. Lin Ming was already calculating in his mind. There was a vacation period at the end of the Seven Profound Martial House school year. The Martial House disciples usually went home to celebrate the new year. He himself had to take advantage of this opportunity to visit his parents. His father and mother had worked hard enough for a lifetime; they deserved an easy and comfortable retirement in old age.

Bidding Lin Wu farewell, Lin Ming took the pills and the true essence stones with him, and carried Penetrating Rainbow to the Icy Pond Waterfall once more.

“Junior Apprentice Lin.” As soon as the deacon senior apprentice responsible for the Icy Pond Waterfall saw Lin Ming, his whole face had lit up with a welcoming smile. “Junior Apprentice Lin is truly basking in the limelight. But, ah, it is just too wonderful; Ranking Stone rank 62, terrific, terrific, and certainly unprecedented!”

Lin Ming smiled and didn't respond. These last two days he had heard far too much similar flattery.

“What difficulty does Junior Apprentice Lin want?”

“Nine levels!”

The highest difficulty in the Icy Pond Waterfall array was the twelfth level. The deeper one went, the higher the level one went, the more difficult the array would be. The only person capable of just barely withstanding the twelfth level of difficulty was Ling Sen. Even he could only last for an incense stick of time, and then he too had to surface and meditate. Therefore Ling Sen only practiced at the eleventh level of difficulty.

In one month, Lin Ming had jumped two levels of difficulty, and gone from the seventh level to the ninth level. This was a truly unbelievable matter, but Lin Ming's ranking spoke louder than words.

“Okay.” The deacon senior apprentice said without hesitation, and immediately opened the ninth level of difficulty.

Lin Ming swallowed a high-level Soul Gathering Pellet to help him increase his cultivation speed, and then he carried the Penetrating Rainbow with him as he dove into the icy pond.

As soon as he entered the icy pond, Lin Ming felt once more a bone chilling cold that was like tiny ice needles piercing him from all directions. The difficulty had kicked up a notch!

Of the Seven Profound Martial House's resources, the Soul Gathering Pellets and true essences stones couldn't be considered true treasures. Only these seven major killing arrays could be considered such. Each second and each minute was incomparably precious; he could not even waste a smidgen of time!

He only had two hours of time. Lin Ming stood on the big rock underneath the waterfall. He kept Penetrating Rainbow even and steady. In the ninth level of difficulty, the waterfall's pulsing impact had increased tremendously. When Lin Ming had gripped his eight foot eight inch spear underneath the waterfall, he immediately felt the huge impact force of the waterfall, as if at any moment his arm would break under the weight.

Underneath the effects of the waterfall array, it was not easy to stand, and the water was also freezing cold. The unending flowing water constantly slicked off of the body's heat. Adding an 820 jin spear that he kept horizontally underneath the waterfall, even with his own thick true essence and amazing strength, he could only support this consumption for a blink of an eye!

Even if it was Lin Ming, he had to absorb the true essence in a true essence stone to support himself.

"Mm? The absorption speed of true essence went up by 50%!" Lin Ming was startled, but he immediately understood. This was the effect of the high-level Soul Gathering Pellet.

An 1800 gold tael high-level Soul Gathering Pellet, eating one was a true treasure. The effects of this kind of luxurious and amazing pill were especially good!

By relying on the true essence stone and the high-level Soul Gathering Pill that was difficult to buy no matter how wealthy one was, Lin Ming was unexpectedly able to persist in this extremely violent situation!

Originally, Lin Ming had thought he could hold his breath for two quarters of an hour at most, but now, even though his true essence was depleted, he could still rely on the high-level Soul Gathering Pellet and true essence stone to supplement his body and barely continue.

Although Lin Ming felt that the pain was difficult to endure, he was still standing.

The advantages were immense in maintaining this condition. Not only did it rapidly enhance his spear skills, but it also tempered his body with true essence, and increased the synchronization of the tiny units in his body!

Each point of his muscles and organs independently absorbed true essence. His body continually resisted against the severe cold. When a common martial artist practiced martial arts, it was inevitable that their body would have a spot that they did not cultivate. But when every inch of the body was independently absorbing true essence, then this situation would not occur.

Lin Ming's one breath had already lasted for half an hour!

Because of the biting ice-cold chill, Lin Ming's body temperature had already dropped to an acutely low degree. An average man would have already died, but a martial artist relied on the protection of their true essence to maintain their blood flow.

Because of the long time he had been under this condition, Lin Ming's consciousness began to fade away from his body. Slowly, the thunderous sounds of the waterfall began to fade away and vanish into nothing. Lin Ming's mind entered a completely quiet and tranquil time and space. Here, it was as if he could clearly feel the flow and sound of each impact, and he could hear his own slow heartbeat as if it were frozen. This heartbeat beat with a rhythm of a booming drum.

At that moment, Lin Ming felt his soul leave his body once more. In his body, he once more felt that elusive state that he had been in before. Because he was unable to consciously control his body, the true essence in his body moved in accordance of its instincts. This sort of circulation route, compared to when Lin Ming was controlling his true essence himself, was far more perfect!

Lin Ming didn't know, but this state was the rudimentary form of 'Martial Intent'.

Chapter 95: The Effect of a Heart of Martial Arts

Lin Ming didn't know, but this state was the rudimentary form of 'Martial Intent'.

The last time that Lin Ming had entered into this mysterious cultivation state, he had reached the Perfect first layer of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'. Afterwards, Lin Ming had not been able to enter this cultivation state again. But this time, relying on the effects of the high-level Soul Gathering Pellet and true essence stone combining together, and having stayed in Icy Pond Waterfall's ninth level of difficulty for a long time so that his consciousness expanded, Lin Ming had once again entered this rudimentary form of martial intent.

Although Lin Ming's martial intent was imperfect and it wasn't so exaggerated as the 'sudden enlightenment' described in the ancient texts, but it was still able to bring great benefits to Lin Ming. Under this kind of martial intent, his cultivation and level were rapidly rising.

Martial intent itself was an evasive state, it had nothing to do with one's own intelligence or qualifications, it was only about one's own conscious will.

Lin Ming had an incredible and rare heart of martial arts. By virtue of this, he was able to slowly trace the opening method of martial intent...

Like this, two hours passed. The time of Lin Ming's appointment was up!

Xie Dong saw that Lin Ming still hadn't exited by the time his appointment was up, so he entered the array in order to remind him.

As he entered the array, he only found Lin Ming was sitting quietly under the waterfall with both eyes shut tight. His breath was long, almost stagnant. He was motionless like the dead.

As soon as he saw this, Xie Dong eye's jumped. He had spent many years at the Seven Profound Martial House, and had read a great number of ancient texts that covered a broad variety of topics. He knew that Lin Ming should currently be cultivating martial arts to an extreme degree. In that case, if he cultivated martial arts under these circumstances, his growth would be exponential!

“No... something's wrong. Even if he cultivated martial arts so fervently, his breath shouldn't almost be stalled. This is definitely not normal. Junior Apprentice Brother Lin's situation is...” Xie Dong's eyes were sharp. If he didn't see the thick and rich true essence that emanated from Lin Ming's body, he would have thought that Lin Ming had frozen to death.

“Is this... martial intent?” Xie Dong suddenly remembered the records about martial intent in the ancient texts. In the legends, certain individuals were able to enter into their own state of cultivation called martial intent. When they cultivated in this state, they could progress ten thousand miles in a day!

Ling Sen had comprehended a martial intent. The kind of person that could, usually had a heart of martial arts that vastly outstripped that of a normal man's.

Thinking of this, Xie Dong was suddenly enlightened. No wonder Lin Ming's strength had progressed so rapidly; Lin Ming had his own martial intent! This was extraordinary! It had to be known that those who had comprehended a martial intent generally had a supreme heart of martial arts, but it wasn't guaranteed that someone with a supreme heart of martial arts could comprehend a martial intent.

“To comprehend martial intent, one must have the greatest luck. It must come to them, they cannot seek it!”

At this moment, another disciple had arrived outside of the Icy Pond Waterfall. “Thank you Senior Apprentice Brother. If the array is vacant, please trouble to help me open up the seventh level of difficulty. Hehe, my condition recently has been very good and I’ve made much progress. Today, I think I want to challenge a higher difficulty.”

“This...” Even though he was responsible for the Icy Pond Waterfall, Xie Dong was a bit reluctant, “Junior Apprentice Brother Sun, the array has not yet been vacated...”

“Mm?” Sun Xing slightly frowned. Time in the seven major killing arrays was precious. An appointment was always exact, not a minute or a second could be missed, otherwise people would suffer a major loss. Xie Dong’s prime task was to remind disciples so that they came out earlier.

“Senior Apprentice Brother, this is a bit too excessive. What am I going to do if I lose time? Who is inside?” Sun Xing asked with some dissatisfaction. It was obvious that this Xie Dong favored the opposite party, but he didn’t want to show a bad side to him. Xie Dong was responsible for the Icy Pond Waterfall. If he offended Xie Dong, then he might have trouble in the future.

“This... inside is Junior Apprentice Brother Lin Ming.” Xie Dong said.

“Lin... Lin Ming?” Sun Xing suddenly stared with eyes wide open, and he gulped. Lin Ming’s name had spread through the entire Sky Fortune City like a heavenly thunderclap that reverberating in everyone’s ears in the Seven Profound Martial House. He was even more famous than Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and the others! If he could really defeat Zhu Yan in one month, then he would be the most abnormally monstrous genius that the Seven Profound Martial House had ever seen in the past 100 years. Who would even dare to think about provoking this kind of person?

Sun Xing hurried to hide his discontent. “So it was Junior Apprentice Brother Lin, haha... if I may ask the Senior Apprentice Brother, when will he come out?” Although he was no longer angry, he was still inevitably anxious.

Xie Dong said, “I’m not clear about this. Junior Apprentice Brother Lin has probably entered into some strange cultivation state. Well, today I am very sorry for Junior Apprentice Brother Sun. How about when Junior Apprentice Brother Lin comes out, I have him recompense you for your time?”

Xie Dong did not mention the matter of martial intent. After all, he was not assured of his judgment.

Sun Xing nodded in agreement. Most people would be unwilling to abruptly change their appointment time, but since the person who was taking his time was Lin Ming, that was another matter. Sun Xing thought for a moment and then said, “Since Junior Apprentice Brother Lin is so ardently cultivating his martial arts, I should lend him my time. That... cough... if Senior Apprentice Brother could remember to mention my name later, that would be wonderful.”

Sun Xing wanted to curry some favor with Lin Ming. To let Lin Ming borrow some practice time could only be regarded as a small favor.

“Haha, naturally.” Xie Dong said; he certainly understood Sun Xing’s thoughts.

In this way, Lin Ming continued cultivating in that special state. That one breath had been extended to four hours!

As he suddenly woke from that mysterious cultivation state, Lin Ming was surprised. How long had he been cultivating for?

As he exited the Icy Pond Waterfall, the sun was already high in the western sky. Was this the afternoon? At least three or four hours must have passed!

“Junior Apprentice Brother Lin, you’ve finally come out.” Xie Dong hurried to greet him. “I saw a while ago that Junior Apprentice Brother Lin was in a deep cultivation state, so I did not call you. I didn’t expect you to stay for three and a half hours.”

“Three and a half hours? Then I passed my appointment time.”

“Yes, I kept everyone back, but later Junior Apprentice Brother Lin has to repay the time.”

“Like that? I see. I really must thank Senior Apprentice Brother for helping me out.” Lin Ming didn’t think that there would be a day where he would be given such preferential treatment. He sighed with emotion. In the Seven Profound Martial House, strength was everything. If you had strength, you had privilege. If you were weak, then everyone would step on you underneath their foot.

“Haha, it’s just a minor matter, it’s not worth mentioning. Junior Apprentice Brother Lin, it appears that a moment ago you... entered some peculiar state. I realized that Junior Apprentice Brother Lin’s breath had almost stopped.”

“Mm? Did it? I did not have much of a feeling of anything.” Lin Ming did not have a complete understanding of that ethereal state he had been in a moment ago; he only knew that the cultivation state he was in had been of great benefit to his own cultivation.

Xie Dong hesitated for a bit before he said, “Junior Apprentice Brother Lin, if Senior Apprentice Brother did not guess wrong, then that strange state you were in might possibly be a kind of martial intent.”

“Martial intent?” Lin Ming was slightly stunned. This was the first time he had heard of such a concept.

“Mm, martial intent. I am not very clear on this matter, but I know that there are very few martial artists who have martial intent. To

comprehend it all depends on chance and opportunity. A martial artist with a strong heart of martial arts has a higher probability of comprehending it. Junior Apprentice Brother Lin has a truly unwavering and incomparably pure heart of martial arts, not even Junior Apprentice Brother Ling can compare with you. You must know that Junior Apprentice Brother Ling has also comprehended his own martial intent, and that is why he is so fierce!”

“Mm? Ling Sen can also enter this sort of cultivation state?” Lin Ming was surprised, but then he immediately became aware. No wonder! Although Ling Sen’s talent was only an inferior fourth-grade, he had been the number one rank on the Seven Profound Martial House’s Ranking Stone for a long time. Even the fifth grade talent Zhang Guanyu was steadily suppressed by him!

Lin Ming knew that a having a strong heart of martial arts was good for cultivation, but Lin Ming hadn’t known that besides letting a person be more diligent and persistent in their training, it also had other substantial advantages. If it was solely allowing a person to work harder, then it seemed a bit lackluster and useless. The time of a day was limited, even if you cultivated as you ate, how much more time would you have over others?

Now he knew a bit more. A strong heart of martial arts would let one be able to comprehend martial intent. With this ability, one could greatly improve!

Chapter 96: Instructor Hong Xi

“Does Senior Apprentice Brother happen to know what Senior Apprentice Brother Ling’s martial intent is?” Lin Ming didn’t know anything about these strange cultivation states, so he asked now to gain a better understanding.

“I do not know much, I only know that Junior Apprentice Brother Ling’s martial intent is named ‘Ashura’. I think it is related to concepts of death and slaughter. He can willfully enter this state of cultivation, that’s why his strength grows so quickly! He is much stronger than the second-ranked Junior Apprentice Brother Ta Ku! However, his cultivation is actually inferior to Junior Apprentice Brother Ta Ku. Junior Apprentice Brother Ta Ku has already entered the Bone Forging stage, but Junior Apprentice Brother Ling is only at the peak Altering Muscle stage.”

So that’s how it was... it seems there were many types of martial intents, and they varied from person to person. Lin Ming wondered how his ‘ethereal’ martial intent compared to Ling Sen’s ‘Ashura’. Would it be better or worse?

As he returned to his residence, Lin Ming felt as if his body was as light as a swallow. The three and a half hours of continuous high-strength cultivation hadn’t left him with any feeling of exhaustion. Carrying the Penetrating Rainbow on his back also felt light, and didn’t hinder any of Lin Ming’s motions.

“During my three and a half hours of training, I wasn’t able to break through to the second level of the ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’, but I felt I had touched the threshold. If I can enter the ‘ethereal’ martial intent state again, then I should be able to make a complete breakthrough! When that time comes, my strength will experience a huge leap, and I probably won’t be too far off from Ling Sen!”

“Because I cultivate the ‘Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians’, strength is my strong point, but strength does not represent the entirety of one’s battle prowess. I wonder what Ling Sen’s strong point is?”

“Since Ling Sen can enter into the Ashura martial intent state at any time, I wonder when I too will be able to enter into the ethereal martial intent state when I want to?”

As Lin Ming’s cultivation increased by leaps and bounds, Zhu Yan was similarly carrying out a hellish cultivation regimen. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that the match he would have a month from now would be his life’s most important battle!

He absolutely could not lose!

Zhu Yan held a longsword, and the sword light was like a bright spider web around him. In front of him, the golden soldiers formed from energy exploded one at a time as they came. From the seven major killing arrays of metal, wood, water, fire, earth, wind, and thunder, this array represented metal. This was the Golden Soldier Hall!

In the Ten Thousand Killing Array and the Exquisite Pagoda, the enemies one faced in the trials were only illusions. Outside, one wouldn’t actually be disturbed or even moved. But the seven major killing were different, they were true killing arrays. All of the golden soldiers were real forms given shape by energy!

In here, if one was not careful, they could be injured!

The array itself had a limited conscious and ability to judge the situation in the array. If the they judged than the situation in the array was too dire, then it would automatically cease attacking. But in the history of the trials, there have been those that were severely wounded, and even those who were killed by accident!

Of course, those who died were in the minority. Therefore the Golden Soldier was not as effective in improving cultivation as Ling Sen's 'Ashura'.

"Senior Apprentice Brother is just too fierce! He was at the tenth level of difficulty, but he also persisted inside for such a long time! Mmm, it's already been three quarters of an hour. The array doesn't have any sign that it's weakening, which proves that Senior Apprentice Brother Zhu hasn't yet been injured, nor is he having troubles with his true essence!"

"This Lin Ming actually wants to defeat Senior Apprentice Brother Zhu in one month. I think it will be too difficult!"

"Mm. This Lin Ming is truly an monstrous genius, but Senior Apprentice Brother Zhu isn't some vegetable to be pushed around. I think Senior Apprentice Brother Zhu will win. This is the tenth level of difficulty! As soon as I entered, I would be killed!"

Time passed day-by-day. The ruckus over the match between Lin Ming and Zhu Yan in one month did not only not cool down, but the mood and atmosphere was increasingly fierce.

During this period, there were some interesting phenomena happening at the Seven Profound Martial House. The set of cultivation methods that Lin Ming had chosen at the Seven Profound Martial House depository had suddenly become the hottest items around town. Underneath the 'Foundation Spear Technique' was written four names, and underneath the 'Foundation Movement Technique' was written three names. Because of Lin Ming's amazing performance, there were four junior disciples of the Human Hall that had decided to take up a spear as their own weapon.

However, no one questioned the martial skill that Lin Ming had chosen, the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist'.

This was because these new disciples had not seen Lin Ming use or practice the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist'.

The 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' was itself above a high-grade Earth-step martial skill. Even if it was complete it would still be extremely difficult to practice, not to mention that it was currently missing 70% of its contents. If Lin Ming had truly managed to cultivate this martial skill, then monstrously evil genius would be inadequate to describe him.

As the phenomena of some of the junior disciples choosing the foundation cultivation methods occurred, the depository elder could only nod at them with a forced smile. This stemmed from many junior disciples worshipping Lin Ming. As they said, love for a person extends even to the crows on his roof. These worshippers pursued Lin Ming's cultivation methods and had even chosen his weapon. However, Lin Ming was strong not because of these things, but because of himself. How many junior disciples would choose a spear, and how many would be able to display the true glory of a spear?

Early in the morning, the air in the world was rich with a fresh breeze. Lin Ming grabbed the end of Penetrating Rainbow with one hand. His arms stretched out horizontally to his sides and he closed his eyes. He opened his mind to the mountains and trees, and became calm and free of feeling.

He realized he could not use high-level Soul Gathering Pellets of true essence stones to help comprehend this 'ethereal' martial intent state. As long as he was able to enter the 'ethereal' state whenever he wanted, then that would be considered Small Success of Lin Ming's martial intent.

In this silent and peaceful state, Lin Ming suddenly opened his eyes. In that moment he had felt the presence of someone. Although he was in the relatively secure Seven Profound Martial House, Lin Ming still kept vigilance. After all, he had made too many enemies.

“Mm. Your alertness is good.” A vigorous and deep voice came from nearby and resounded into Lin Ming’s ear. A man carrying a spear and wearing red armor appeared like a ghost, and both his feet fell on Lin Ming’s spear point.

As soon as the man fell on the spear point, Penetrating Rainbow curved downwards a bit. However, Lin Ming still held the spear end steady.

“Good arm strength!” The person exclaimed.

“Instructor Hong?” Lin Min asked with a hint of surprise. The man who fell on his spear point was his Earth Hall instructor, Hong Xi.

“You really gave me good face during the Ten Thousand Killing Array. Rank 62 and you challenged Zhu Yan! You really are bold!”

Lin Ming said, “Thank you Instructor Hong for the praise. But as for Zhu Yan, I’m not fully confident I can win against him.”

“Mm. This Zhu Yan is not a simple character. When he had entered the Seven Profound Martial House, his display of ability was just like Wang Yanfeng. Although he is far inferior to your monstrous talent, he has still been in school longer than you by two and a half years. In these two and a half years, he dramatically rose from the same strength as Wang Yanfeng to his present ranking. In another one or two years, when Ling Sen and those others have graduated, Zhu Yan will undoubtedly be in the top ten of the Seven Profound Martial House rankings, and maybe even in the top five. Your opponent is a future contender for the top five ranks in the Seven Profound Martial House! You have chosen yourself a powerful enemy!”

Lin Ming naturally knew why Hong Xi was saying all this. He said, “Instructor Hong, I understand Zhu Yan’s strength. I also know that to surpass him in one month will be decidedly difficult. It was only that when the Deacon Senior Apprentice Brother asked me who I wanted to challenge and when. In my heart I had an intense desire to

challenge Zhu Yan. I did not want to suppress this idea, so I decided to follow my nature and challenged Zhu Yan.”

“Haha, good! What a good ‘go with my nature’! Those that practice martial arts must follow their nature and desires! Only when you are satisfied with your mind and thoughts will your meridians be cleared, and your true essence flow unimpeded! Your choice is good; it has boldness! Starting today, I will teach you spear skills! If I am your instructor, then I do not want to see any soldier under me lose to others!”

Chapter 97: Seven Kinds of Martial Intent

Lin Ming listened to Hong Xi's words and his heart filled with joy. Until now, he only had the 'Foundation Spear Technique', and could only study the foundation. If he were to have guidance, then his progress would be much quicker.

Hong Xi said, "I once joined the army for ten years. I only started learning the spear in my ten year career. Before that, I used the sword. The spear is the king of a hundred soldiers! I have not reached the stage of Large Success in spear play, but what I have learned, I can teach you. However, before we begin, I have a question. Were you able to comprehend a special cultivation state?"

Lin Ming paused. He didn't expect that Hong Xi knew about this matter. He nodded and said, "Yes."

"I thought so. Your perception is good. This cultivation state of yours can probably be compared to the best among its kind, otherwise with your talent, it would be impossible for you to have such great results in such a short time! This is a benefit of your pure and strong heart of martial arts. But even if you have an extraordinary heart of martial arts, you still might not have that lucky opportunity to comprehend such a cultivation state. This state is called martial intent!"

"Those who have a martial intent are very few. Even in the place like the Seven Profound Martial House where talents gather, in the last several dozen years there has only been Ling Sen! I did not expect that now there would be you also!"

"Oh? So few?" Lin Ming suddenly understood. No wonder he had never heard of this before.

“Yes, that is why the existence of martial intent is so mystical and mysterious, because there are too few people who are able to comprehend it. There aren’t many descriptions of it in the ancient texts, and not only that, but each martial artist’s martial intent is not the same; each has a different effect.”

Lin Ming said, “Instructor, I don’t understand. Since Senior Apprentice Brother Ling has comprehended such a rare skill like a martial intent, and his strength is known throughout the Sky Fortune Kingdom as being invincible within his cultivation stage, why was he not selected as a core disciple? What kind of monstrous geniuses are the core disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House?”

Hong Xi said, “Those of the Seven Profound Valleys have paid careful attention to Ling Sen. However, for him to be selected as a core disciple, he has to pass a test. Ling Sin was eventually unable to pass the inspection, so he was rejected. He had missed only one step.”

“Mm? Test?” Lin Ming’s heart moved as he heard this.

“Yes. Some do not conform to the rigid standards of the Seven Profound Martial House, and wish to become a core disciple through a test. When Lin Sen had faced the test, he had to defeat someone of the same age, or an older core disciple, and also reach the peak Fourth Stage of Body Transformation by the time he was 17.”

“Ling Sen was able to defeat a core disciple who was half a year older than him. Unfortunately, his cultivation was unable to reach the peak Fourth Stage of Body Transformation before he was 17, and therefore he failed due to this.”

“Is this because Senior Apprentice Brother Ling’s cultivation talent was not good enough?”

“Yes. As I said, there are many different kinds of martial intent. Ling Sen’s martial intent is ‘Ashura’. In the Ashura battlefield, he can experience endless slaughter and battle. With this kind of martial

intent, the main function is to enhance a martial artist's instincts, explosive force, and killing ability. However it is not really that useful for to improve a martial artist's cultivation. But, it does provide a few benefits in breaking through bottlenecks.

Hong Xi said this with a look of regret. A martial artist's combat prowess and cultivation were two different matters. Combat prowess was their strength, but cultivation was judged through stages, for instance, Body Transformation's First Stage, Second Stage, Pulse Condensation Period, and Houtian stage.

Cultivation was the most important factor in a martial artist's combat prowess, but it was not the only factor. Martial skills, fighting instincts, combat skills, field experience, the degree of true essence thickness, all of these could affect one's combat ability, therefore one could fight one above their cultivation realm.

But, to a martial artist, their cultivation was the fundamental basis for all. If they could not improve their cultivation, then whatever your combat power really was, it would not matter. A martial artist at the First Stage of Body Transformation would never defeat someone at the Pulse Condensation Stage. This was the absolute disparity that was created through cultivation!

Moreover, to a martial artist, their lives were inextricably linked to their cultivation. Ling Sen's main strength was his combat ability, his cultivation was actually not very high. If he had no chance of reaching the Xiantian stage, then to the large sects, he had no value whatsoever.

Therefore, Ling Sen was rejected!

Hong Xi said, "If Ling Sen's talent were increased half a step, for instance to a medium fourth-grade talent, then he would have an enormous chance of being selected to enter the Seven Profound Valleys. His 'Ashura' martial intent can let a person dance on the edge of life and death for a long time, and it also favors breaking

through bottlenecks. This is of value to the Seven Profound Valleys. Unfortunately, the 'Ashura' martial intent has no advantages in helping one accumulate true essence."

Lin Ming asked, "Instructor Hong, does Senior Apprentice brother Ling Sen not have any more chances of being selected to enter into the Seven Profound Valleys?"

"There is, but it is just far too difficult. One possibility is that he must break through to the Pulse Condensation Period before he is 22 years old. This is the most rigid criteria of the Seven Profound Valleys. As long as you are able to break through to the Pulse Condensation Period before 22 years of age, you may enter the Seven Profound Valleys. However with Ling Sen's current cultivation progress, it is impossible. The second possibility is if Ling Sen is able to comprehend another kind of martial intent. It would be better if this was one which helped increase his cultivation progress. If such a thing happened, then the entire Seven Profound Valleys would value Ling Sen. A person that can comprehend two kinds of martial intent is just too rare.

"Two kinds of martial intent? You can also have two different kinds of martial intent?" Lin Ming was surprised.

"Mm. But it is very difficult, difficult enough to cause anyone to lose all hope. In the entire Sky Fortune Kingdom, or even the entire realm of the Seven Profound Martial House and its surrounding hundreds of thousands of miles, there isn't a single one. I have heard about them in the ancient texts, for instance, legends passed down that told of 'sudden enlightenment'. There is a story of a mighty power who was called Emperor Shakya, that had seven different kinds of martial intent! Three thousand years ago, he meditated under a Bodhi tree for seven days and seven nights. In his body these seven kinds of martial intent actually fused together, and Emperor Shakya underwent a great awakening and achieved supreme enlightenment. He broke the

countless shackles of martial arts and reached nirvana to become a golden immortal, piercing through the martial void!”

As Lin Ming heard Hong Xi’s story, he felt a great shock!

Seven kinds of martial intents!

What concept was that? Moreover, these seven kinds of martial intents had even fused into one! This kind of person was truly a mythical heavenly being!

As he listened to the legend of the Bodhi tree, Lin Ming held an ounce of disbelief. To sit in meditation for seven days and seven nights and achieve supreme enlightenment, break the countless shackles of martial arts and pierce through the martial void, that just seemed a bit too exaggerated.

It had to be known that in the path of martial arts; the higher you went, the more difficult it was! Some people often needed upwards of a hundred years to break through a bottleneck! But this Emperor Shakya had actually broken through the bottleneck of martial arts, and rose up countless stages at once. Wasn’t this just nonsense?

But as he listened to Hong Xi’s story, Lin Ming began to believe. To combine seven kinds of martial intent into one, that thought alone was just far too terrifying.

Hong Xi said, “Lin Ming, describe your martial intent to me, so I can determine what sort it is. This will be very important to your future development!”

Lin Ming nodded and began to describe his ‘ethereal’ martial intent.

Hong Xi mulled over this, and then said, “This ‘ethereal’ martial intent that you have should be a kind that increases your cultivation. Your consciousness leaves your body and your true essence begins to spontaneously revolve according to its own instincts. With this, the

true essence can achieve a perfect circulatory path within your body. There are too many kinds of martial intent, and they are different from person to person and there aren't also many records. This is the first time I have heard of your kind of martial intent. I cannot judge its specific effects, but looking at how your cultivation increases by leaps and bounds, the effect should be very good. Your martial intent should also be superior to Ling Sen's. You maybe even have the possibility to be elected as a core disciple in the Seven Profound Valleys! Certainly, like Ling Sen, you must pass through the test. This test is difficult; it will depend on your martial intent to go against heaven's will."

Core disciple... Lin Ming silently thought.

Chapter 98: The Force of Vibration

Core disciple... Lin Ming silently thought.

Lin Ming felt that the Seven Profound Valleys was like a giant bloodsucking vampire that squeezed out all the cultivation resources in a radius of several hundred thousand miles. They caused the martial artists of small countries to be lacking in all cultivation resources, and thus a martial artist found it difficult to enter a tiny step into the Houtian stage.

After the Seven Profound Valleys had opened Seven Profound Martial Houses in all of the various countries under their control, with their superior position, they bestowed resources and they bestowed cultivation methods to the most outstanding talents so that they could use them.

But the royal families of these small countries knew this well. Even so, while they dreaded the specter of the Seven Profound Valleys, they simultaneously hoped for the support and protection of the Seven Profound Valleys. That is why they were willing to offer their countries' resources, bowing to them with both hands. This caused the remaining few resources in these countries to skyrocket in price. In Lin Ming's situation, even if he had talent, with his family circumstances he did not have the money to cultivate martial arts!

Between the parasitic relationship formed between the Seven Profound Valleys and the Sky Fortune Kingdom, Lin Ming had a fully uncomfortable feeling.

“If it were not for the Seven Profound Valley, then if I wanted to practice martial arts, it wouldn't have placed such a big burden on my family. The Seven Profound Valleys, so detestable...” Lin Ming thought. He wanted to say so, but he held his tongue.

“If I want to reach the higher realms of martial arts, I actually must become a core disciple! Otherwise, I will not have the resources to do so. All will wait until I have the strength to speak out.”

“Well Lin Ming, the points that I wanted to remind you of have already been mentioned. Your superiority lies in your heart of martial arts, but, in terms of current combat ability, you cannot compare to Zhu Yan. Most importantly, you do not have a martial skill. You defeated Zhang Cang with the most basic ‘Flood Dragon Goes to Sea’. At first I didn’t want you to choose the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering First’, but you were very insistent. Now it is too late to learn another martial skill.

“But what’s done is done. A martial artist should freely follow their nature and desires. No matter what, you should not regret your decisions. If you had changed your mind, then your heart would not be satisfied, then it will also not be open. Now, I want to hone your foundation spear skills, and have you use those foundation spear skills to defeat Zhu Yan! However, I will tell you this now. Zhu Yan has already mastered three kinds of martial skills! You must be prepared!

Lin Ming nodded and said, “Understood, Instructor Hong.”

“Now attack me. Let me take a good look at your spear skills!”

“Then I shall be impolite.” Lin Ming flicked his hand and Penetrating Rainbow jumped into his grip. With a shake of his power, the spear point began to unexpectedly tremble and hum. Dark purple elastic iron was immeasurably tough and resistant, even if it was only a slight tremor, it was enough to twist muscles and break bones!

“Oh? You can shake dark purple elastic iron so easily? Good strength!” Hong Xi laughed, and also flourished the long spear that he carried on his back.

“Flood Dragon goes to Sea!” Lin Ming shouted. Both hands held the spear, and with a sudden movement, he thrust the spear forwards!

As this spear thrust went out, Lin Ming’s imposing aura suddenly rose. The airflow around him began to change, as if there was an invisible current flowing around him and converging upon this aura and melting into Lin Ming’s long spear.

Hong Xi exposed a look of appreciation. He leaned a step forwards, gripped his spear shaft and aimed his spear point at Lin Ming’s spearhead, and then gave a fierce jab!

However, the power of this jab hadn’t managed to stop Lin Ming’s spear. That spear seemed to be cast from gold and iron, and did not change directions, still thrusting straight towards Hong Xi!

This was the result of Lin Ming practicing his spear thrust countless times underneath the Icy Cold Pond Waterfall. It had achieved the state of being immovably steady!

Hong Xi’s eyes flashed with a glint of light. “Good spear!”

“Hoh!” Hong Xi suddenly burst with strength. The true essence in his long spear began to stir. Lin Ming’s spear was stiffly swung aside by the brute force. He grasped his long spear and took a sudden step forward, and the spear point approached Lin Ming’s throat like a poisonous snake!

Hong Xi’s spear was twice as fast as Lin Ming’s! By the time Lin Ming had used one spear move, Hong Xi had used two!

Hong Xi thought that this one move would be the finisher. With his cultivation at the peak Pulse Condensation of Body Transformation, to deal with the Third Stage of Body Transformation Lin Ming should have been easy. Even if he used 30% of his strength, it should have been a simple task, but he did not think that he would have been wrong.

Seeing this spear reflected in his eyes at it came at him, Lin Ming's long spear was out wide, and he would not have enough time to receive it and defend against this move. He immediately reached out with his right hand towards Hong Xi's spearhead! At that moment, all of the tiny units in Lin Ming's body began to breathe in unison. True essence began to vibrate in his body, and was concentrated into his right hand!

Hong Xi saw Lin Ming move his bare hand towards the spear point that was thrusting forwards at high speed, and he suddenly hesitate. This Lin Ming...

“Mmm?”

As soon as Lin Ming's palm touched the spear point, Hong Xi felt an intense vibration transmit down the spear shaft and cause his spear to be unsteady. This... what was going on?

Hong Xi had naturally heard that before when Lin Ming was fighting Zhang Cang, he had used his open hand to receive Zhang Cang's saber. At that time, Hong Xi had thought Lin Ming had merely predicted Zhang Cang attack pattern and had avoided the saber's blade edge, so it had succeeded. But now it appeared that it wasn't so simple!

“Ho!”

Hong Xi was a master at the Pulse Condensation Stage. With a sudden effort of both hands, he jerked hard and counterbalanced the trembling of the spear shaft. But now, Lin Ming's second spear had arrived!

“Total Annihilation!”

Hong Xi had just enough time to dodge, and he leapt backwards from the strike. Even so, a strong heavenly wind followed Lin Ming's spear as it swept past. This strong wind contained a strange vibrating

power. As Hong Xi was swept by this strong wind, he felt his heartbeat and blood flow be affected, and a tightness in his chest!

This move completely startled Hong Xi. He was a martial artist who had reached the Large Success stage of Pulse Condensation. His meridians had already been opened and connected, and true essence had tempered his entire body, without a single weak point. In this situation, he had still felt a slight uncomfortableness when Lin Ming's spear wind swept past him. Although he wasn't injured, if it were a Viscera Training stage martial artist who had been touched by this wind, they might have suddenly spat blood!

"This kid, what kind of cultivation methods has he been studying? I thought that I would catch him with one move, but he's managed to last three rounds. If I can't handle him, how would I have face as an instructor!" Hong Xi raised his strength by another 20%. He twisted in midair, and his long spear fell down like a wild rainstorm!

Peng!

Lin Ming lifted his spear to meet the approaching enemy, but this time he actually felt an inexhaustible strength contained in Hong Xi's spear, as if he was unable to even think of contending with it, and his spear was swept away!

"!"

The spear point appeared like an invisible ghost at Lin Ming's throat. The approaching icy coldness of the spear point made Lin Ming's hairs stand on end. The fight had ended.

Hong Xi withdrew his spear and said, "Good young man, your hidden skills are truly deep, no wonder Zhang Cang was defeated with just a palm, fist, and spear. My cultivation far surpasses yours, but today it seems I can still learn from you!"

Hong Xi looked Lin Ming up and down, sizing him up. He recalled that strange vibration he felt; where had Lin Ming learnt that from?

This kind of fierce fighting style was impossible to be self-taught. It was certainly from studying some jade slip. Thinking back to the three jade slips Lin Ming had selected from the depository, they were the 'Foundation Spear Technique', 'Foundation Movement Technique', and the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist'...

Hong Xi had already seen the 'Foundation Spear Technique' before. In fact, every person who joined that army had to study the 'Foundation Spear Technique'. But even if the 'Foundation Spear Technique' from the army differed from that of the Seven Profound Martial House's depository, it was only some more concise ways of cultivating true essence; there was nothing different in the spear skills themselves. This kind of scary vibration did not originate from the 'Foundation Spear Technique', and it couldn't be anything from the 'Foundation Movement Technique'. That meant that...

“Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist!?”

Chapter 99: Fast Spear

This thought caused Hong Xi to suddenly freeze. He remembered glancing at the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist', and recalled that the essence of this 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' was... vibration!

Vibration!

Heavens! This boy!

Hong Xi's Adam's apple spasmed. This kid should not have learned the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist'!

It... It was impossible. Although true essence vibration was mentioned in the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' jade slip, it had not said how to train this true essence vibration; it had lacked the most essential basic part! The 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' was 70% incomplete, and it was also an Earth-step martial skill. Even an immortal would be helpless to do anything!

If Lin Ming was really able to cultivate this ability, then even those evil monstrous geniuses would be nothing but weak and pale in front of him; he would simply be the reincarnation of immortal gods and infernal demons!

"Boy, that vibration technique you had used a moment ago; where did you learn that from? Hong Xi's voice held a hint of trembling; obviously he was very disturbed and restless. He could not calm down after experiencing something like this. This meant that not only did Lin Ming have a superior heart of martial arts, but he was also able to comprehend his own martial intent. Not only that, but he was a beyond brilliant monstrous genius prodigy with perception that defied the will of the heavens!

To this kind of evil-doer genius, any talent was simply floating clouds!

That these monstrous geniuses could accomplish the impossible with their own hands, what sort of concept was that? Hong Xi did not even dare to imagine.

Lin Ming truthfully said, "They were some hints that I picked up from the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' jade slip." He had not planned to conceal anything to begin with. In fact, he could not even try to hide it. Sooner or later it would be exposed, unless he never used this skill.

But the truth was that even if he was exposed, it was impossible to teach or explain things like martial skills or cultivation methods without the jade slip. Only someone who has reached the Large Success stage of that martial skill or cultivation method would be able to copy it down, so Lin Ming simply did not worry that anyone would covet it.

Mentioning the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' would only increase the number of chips in his hand, and cause the Seven Profound Martial House and the Crown Prince to be even more protective of him. This way, he would be even safer.

After hearing Lin Ming's affirmation, Hong Xi could not speak for a long time. He merely stared at Lin Ming as if he was looking at a monster.

Whose mother would dare mention or look down upon Lin Ming's martial talent again?

This Lin Ming was the most abnormal talent in the last 100 years of the Seven Profound Martial House!

There was only Qin Xingxuan who could compare with Lin Ming; moreover, she wouldn't necessarily be better!

"Peerless monstrous genius..." Hong Xi finally gave his evaluation after he was speechless for a long time.

“Lin Ming, in my Hong Xi’s entire life, you are the best and most outstanding and talented martial artist that I have ever witnessed! Although your talent is only a medium third-grade, you can make up this deficiency with your ethereal martial intent! With just that, you can be considered a fourth or fifth grade talent. Still, that would not be anything special enough to attract the Seven Profound Valleys’ attention. But, your perception is just too terrifying; you can practice any skill with twice the result and half the effort. In addition, with your pure and strong heart of martial arts, you may even be able to comprehend a second martial intent. In that case, even the Seven Profound Valleys will not be able to hold you! You will at the apex of the entire Sky Spill Continent’s younger generation!”

“Your future is limitless. What I can teach you is limited. All I am capable of at present is being your teacher. I was prepared to teach you the spear skills that I had learned, but it seems that it is not necessary anymore. You have your own understanding of spear-play, and I am afraid that my own comprehension will negatively affect you. All I can teach you now is the basis of spear skills, as well as the spear cultivation method!”

“A moment ago when I fought you, I discovered that your spear is already very steady. You could say that you’ve reached the boundary where your spear is still like a cast metal statue. But, your spear is not quick! In my two spear moves, you were only able to return one! With this kind of speed, you will be unable to catch up to Zhu Yan!”

“The steady spear that cannot catch up to an enemy’s shadow is useless! Lin Ming, just watch! Hong Xi turned and punched a tree trunk. The autumn leaves that had already begun to turn yellow and wither immediately began to rustle and fall down.

Hong Xi’s eyes flashed with a glint of light. The spear in his hand shot out just like a deadly snake!

Cha cha cha!

Spear shadows covered the sky!

Even with Lin Ming's excellent eyesight, he could not clearly see Hong Xi's spear point!

He could only use his soul force to catch up to Hong Xi's movements. With each stab of Hong Xi's spear, the spear point pierced a fallen leaf, rapidly turned back, and then pierced another leaf. Like this, there was a string of fallen leaves on the spear point!

As the spear shadows flashed everywhere, the fallen leaves began to rapidly disappear with a speed obvious to the naked eye. In the span of a few breaths, Hong Xi had strung together a thick stack of fallen leaves on his spear point!

Finally, there was not a single fallen leaf that touched the ground.

Lin Ming could not help but exclaim at such wonderful spear skills!

It had to be known that Hong Xi's spear point was very wide; the widest part was four finger widths wide.

But these fallen leaves were elliptical in shape. Only the long axis was over four finger widths in length; the short axis was only two finger widths.

Thus, all the fallen leaves have been pierced by spear point through their long side; otherwise, the leaf would be cut in half!

Lin Ming looked at Hong Xi's spear point, and really did see that the several dozens of leaves that were strung together were in consistent order, it was as if they were especially organized to be that way!

The leaves were small, and their longest side was only a bit over 4 finger widths, but Hong Xi had managed to accurately pierce through all of the fallen leaves in this area, and did not cut any of the leaves apart. This control of strength caused Lin Ming to feel amazed!

Hong Xi's spear was not only quick, but he had great control of his strength!

As the saying went, a month to use a stick, a year to train a fist, and longer to practice a spear!

The difficulty in wielding a spear was high. It was meant to thrust, the shaft was long, it was hard to grasp and hard to control. If Hong Xi had been doing this with a sword, it would have been much easier!

The sword was faster than a spear, and it was also more accurate.

But a sword could not compare with the might of a spear.

For Lin Ming, this was an eye-opener.

Hong Xi said, "Cultivate your spear like this. Practice your spear skills so that you may use several dozen spear thrusts in the time of a few breaths. These several dozen spear thrusts must not be blind; but each and every spear move must be accurate! Control your strength until you can attack and withdraw freely! This fallen leaves are the appropriate practice method!"

"These falling leaves are very fragile, they will be cut apart if you use too much strength or if your aim is poor. If you can have these several dozen leaves completely strung together on your spear point, then your spear skills will have arrived at the Small Success stage. But you only have one month of intensive practice; it will take a much longer time to practice the spear. Do not irresponsibly talk nonsense and bite off more than you can chew. At this moment, do not seek to control the force, but instead you must do everything you can to maximize your spear speed to the limit, so you can chase down Zhu Yan's sword!

"I understand."

With this brief meeting with Hong Xi, Lin Ming had benefitted greatly.

“Good. Practice by yourself. This will be enough to have you occupied for some time. Later I will come back to teach you the next move.”

“Thank you, Instructor Hong.”

“Heh, no need to thank me. Right now I’m teaching you, but later I won’t even be able to stand in line to teach you.” Hong Xi laughed, launched a movement technique, and vanished into the forest.

After Hong Xi had vanished, Lin Ming watched the yellow leaves on the tree. He shook Penetrating Rainbow in his hand. His spear speed truly wasn’t good. Even if his spear skills were swift and fierce, they would have no meaning if they weren’t able to reach Zhu Yan.

Bang! Lin Ming punched the big tree, and thick leaves began to fall. Lin Ming looked at these leaves and the spear in his hand began to stab out rapidly.

“...”

The leaves were shredded apart by Lin Ming’s spear!

Though he wanted to string these leaves on his spear, it was not a simple task to constantly do this. During the time when the leaves were gently falling, they were often tumbled around in circles. During that brief period of time, he had to thrust out his long spear in the center of a leaf, and have the spear edge pierce through the long axis of the leaf. Only then could he string them on the spear. But as of now, Lin Ming was far from reaching this stage.

After several dozen leaves had fallen, Lin Ming had split some in half, and some had fallen to the ground. There was only a few that hung on Lin Ming’s spear point.

“Maybe I should start small. I should not use such a tiny elliptical leaf to practice...” Lin Ming thought. The small elliptical leaves were just too difficult right now.

He chose another, different tree. This tree’s leaves were heart shaped, and were the size of a palm, Regardless of any angle, as long as the spear pierced through the center, he could string the leaves on the spear tip.

“This tree is good. I’ll practice with the one.”

Day after day, Lin Ming went to spend his mornings tempering his body at the Icy Pond Waterfall. He set the difficulty to the ninth level to push his body to the limit, so that he could experience his ethereal martial intent. During the afternoon he would spend his time training his spear, and in the evening he would train the ‘Flow like Silk’ boundary, and cultivate his ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’.

Ten days had passed in the blink of an eye. Lin Ming’s ethereal martial intent was becoming increasingly stable. To enter it at first, he would push his body to the limit, and then by supporting himself with the high-level Soul Gathering Pellet and true essence stones, he could slowly enter the ethereal martial intent under these harsh conditions.

Afterwards, as long as Lin Ming meditated under the Icy Pond Waterfall, he could spontaneously enter the ethereal martial intent state.

After cultivating in the ethereal martial intent state for a long time, Lin Ming’s ‘True Primal Chaos Formula’ had finally entered the second-level. His true essence became even thicker, and his strength and speed also increased.

During that evening, Lin Ming sat alone in his room and meditated for a long time, He adjusted his mind to the most peaceful and tranquil condition he could achieve. Then, slowly, he pulled out the

reward he won from taking first place in the entrance exam - the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill!

The Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill was created by mixing the bone marrow of a Crimson Gold Dragon with many precious medicinal herbs, and then refining them all together.

The Crimson Gold Dragon's dragon marrow was inestimably precious and difficult to find. The other rare and precious medicinal herbs were also high-quality and rare. Not only had that, but to refine this pill required a top-tier alchemist. An alchemist of this level usually came from a large sect, it was impossible for a common person to even catch a glimpse of them, let alone ask them to come out create such a pill. Even if they did come out, the fees alone would be overwhelmingly expensive.

Therefore the Sky Fortune Kingdom had never produced a Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill. Not even the Royal Family could buy it, as its value could simply not be measured with gold.

Then, Lin Ming took out a 'Lower Spirit Cure Symbol' symbol paper that he had prepared in advance. He had trained hard for a half month to create these two 'Lower Spirit Cure Symbols'. The first had already been used on the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, and the second was to prepare this Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill.

Normally a martial artist could only absorb a small part of a pill's efficacy, and the rest would dissipate. But the symbols that Lin Ming had drawn up could control and stimulate this pill. With it, the effects of the pill would not dissipate in a martial artist's body, and instead infiltrate and be absorbed. This way, the pill's efficacy would increase by several times!

Lin Ming crushed the 'Lower Spirit Cure Symbol' in his hand. The symbol paper turned into a bright red flame that immediately flew to the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill and began to integrate with it.

In a few breaths of time, a flame-shaped inscription symbol had appeared on the center of the pill.

Chapter 100: Viscera Training, Large Success

The Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill was a potent and dangerous medicine. After having its efficacy increased several times over, it could be said to be poison to the body! So even after Lin Ming had completed the inscription symbol, he did not rashly take it.

But now, he had entered the second-level of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'. The impure true essence of the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill that he had taken before had already been completely refined into his body. Lin Ming felt that he was ready to take the next step.

Taking a deep breath, Lin Ming placed the pill in his mouth, and swallowed it.

The pill quickly slid into his stomach where it settled down without a response.

But Lin Ming knew, this was only the calm before the storm. Once the efficacy of the pill melted, it would immediately attack his insides. That would be the beginning of the pain.

Lin Ming had prepared a bath barrel full of water. He jumped into it and began to revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'. The water was able to help him feel relaxed and calm.

After half an hour passed, Lin Ming felt a feverish heat begin to form in his stomach. At first it was like drinking a full glass of strong liquor, but before long, it was similar to a lit flame. The heat fled in all directions in Lin Ming's body, and it was like he had fallen into a stove. The surface of his flesh began to steam, and it dissipated along his pores. At this moment, it was as if there was some invisible force shackling this angry heat, and stiffly holding it in Lin Ming's body!

This was the effect of the medicinal inscription symbol.

If not for the medicinal inscription symbol, the efficacy would dissipate. But, the medicinal inscription symbol was forcefully fettering these forces in Lin Ming's body. Another effect was that this increased Lin Ming's suffering!

The Golden Snake Scarlet Pill was cold like arctic ice, and eating it had made him feel like he had fallen into the ninth level of a deep, icy abyss. But this Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill was hot like fire, and eating it made him feel like he was committing suicide by running into ten thousand raging infernos; the burning pain was difficult to endure!

Ling Ming felt as if his entire body was burnt until it was overcooked, and then he felt a pain like there was a hard brush brushing back and forth all over him. This excruciating misery nearly made him collapse.

At first, he was able to forcefully revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', but now, he was actually unable to revolve the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'! Such a debilitating pain was not something a human could endure. Even if Lin Ming had a strong heart of martial arts, he was unable to forcefully exercise his strength under these conditions.

The water in the tub began to get hotter and hotter because of Lin Ming. Soon, it began to boil, and emit a massive white cloud of roiling steam.

The bath barrel of water was boiling.

In the throes of such searing pain, Lin Ming was unable to comprehend the situation he was in. But at this moment, the innumerable tiny units in his body began to spontaneously exhale and inhale to absorb Lin Ming's body heat.

The breathing of these tiny units quickly formed into the resonance of true essence. With this resonance, the trapped clouds of hot gas and heat in Lin Ming's body began to disperse due to vibration, and Lin Ming's pain began to lighten. "Mm? This is also..."

When Lin Ming had taken the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, the tiny units in Lin Ming's body had also spontaneously entered into the 'Flow like Silk' boundary, and their vibrations had dispersed the masses of cold air and energy in his body. As the cold air and energy was shaken up, it was easily absorbed into his body. Under these circumstances, it seemed the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill was in the same situation.

The countless tiny units in Lin Ming's body had already formed a cohesive resistance against this foreign enemy. This was their instinct; Lin Ming did not need to consciously direct them.

Without a doubt, this was an advantage of Strength Training's 'Flow like Silk'...

"The 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' is truly a god-level cultivation method!" Lin Ming did not know how many times his heart had already given birth to such grateful feelings.

If it were not for the 'Flow like Silk' boundary, then the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill would have been so burningly painful that Lin Ming did not know if he could have endured that long. When that happened, even if Lin Ming had fully managed to absorb the efficacy of the pill, if the toxic heat was retained in his body for too long, then it would cause damage to his meridians, and Lin Ming would need to take a long time to recover from that.

But now, under the help of 'Flow like Silk', Lin Ming's body was able to absorb just like when he had taken the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill, and perfectly refine the efficacy of the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill.

All that was left over was the absorption and consolidation process.

As time passed slowly, Lin Ming had already been in the bath barrel for two hours. During this time, the barrel water had been steaming hot.

With the refining of the drug in his body, Lin Ming's inner true essence took a new step and permeated through all his organs. This was the Large Success stage of Viscera Training!

Lin Ming opened both his eyes and exhaled a long breath of steam. This breath mixed with the white steam that filled the room and formed a small whirlpool. With the whirlpool in the air, he kept breathing like this for several moments, and still did not show any signs of slowing down.

“To breathe like a snake and aspirate like an arrow was already the sign of Viscera Training's Large Success, but I had achieved that in the early Viscera Training Stage. Now that I have taken the next step and reached Large Success of Viscera Training, my breath is like a vortex. In the memories of that elder, the person who practiced the true 'Chaotic Virtues Combat Meridians' to the pinnacle was able to create storms that wreaked havoc with a single breath, and give a shout like the angry thunder of a god. They were truly a power that could pierce the heavens and shatter the earth.

After reaching Large Success in the Third Stage of Body Transformation, Lin Ming didn't forget to test out his fist strength. These days, whenever Lin Ming's strength had evolved further, he had checked his fist strength to compare how far he was from Ling Sen. This time was not an exception.

It was already late at night. The strength measuring room was empty. Lin Ming randomly picked a strength measuring stone pillar, and then shut his eyes and made a small prayer. He gathered his momentum, and then suddenly let loose a punch!

Peng!

There was a dull sound, and the stone pillar began to wildly rock back and forth. The light beam jumped crazily, passed five feet, and kept rising!

5000 jins!

5100 jins!

5200 jins!

Finally, the light beam stopped at a quarter to six feet. His strength was 5300 jins!

Seeing this number, Lin Ming let out a long breath. His free punch had finally surpassed Ling Sen!

The 'True Primal Chaos Formula' had broken through to the second-level, and matched with the Large Success of Viscera Training, Lin Ming's fist strength had finally passed the critical mark of 5000 jins!

"At first, when Ling Sen had demonstrated his strength on the stone pillar for new disciples to see, he had let loose a random fist that was 4900 jins. But with Ling Sen's personality, that fist he used to display his strength was at least 80% serious. Ling Sen's highest fist strength should be higher than 5300 jins."

"But regardless of how near my fist strength is to Ling Sen's now, Ling Sen's superiority doesn't lie in his strength. His terrifying aspect lies in his fighting instincts and killing ability that he had cultivated from his Ashura martial intent. But my superiority is actually my strength. Not only is my strength inferior to his, but my combat prowess is far short!"

Those who had resolved their determination to pursue the peak of the martial arts path would often run into other powerhouses who

would take them as enemies. They would analyze these powerhouses' respective strengths and weakness, to see if they would win or lose if they were in a life and death battle.

Lin Ming was no exception.

Ten more days passed.

Bang!

Lin Ming punched the base of a thick, big tree. The leaves sprinkled down as they fell. Lin Ming flicked Penetrating Rainbow, and moved his hands like lightning!

Cha cha cha!

In several breaths of time, those dozens of leaves had been completely pierced by Lin Ming!

But Lin Ming could not be like Hong Xi, where the fallen leaves had been so beautifully strung on the tip of his spear. He was able to grasp speed, aim, but not yet control of his strength.

Lin Ming simply did not pursue the control of power, what he was pursuing was directly the ultimate destructive power!

He let the vibrations of 'Flow like Silk' travel up the spear. The true essence vibrations of the treasure spearhead touched the falling leaf, and directly pulverized the falling leaf!

He was able to achieve this step because he had reached the Large Success in Viscera Training. His true essence had become thicker, his strength stronger, and his speed quicker. During the short time that he had digested the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill's efficacy, Lin Ming had used most of the time shares he had left for the seven major killing arrays. All he had left was about 6 hours.

“Not bad!” Hong Xi said from his side. Not even the disciples that had requested the strict Hong Xi were able to make him feel such appreciation.

“In these last 20 days you have managed to reach the Large Success of the Third Stage of Body Transformation. Your ethereal martial intent really makes one envious.”

The last time, Hong Xi had taught Lin Ming spear skills. After he had taught him how to improve his spear speed, he had left for ten days. After coming back, Lin Ming had unexpectedly reached the Large Success of Viscera Training. This made Hong Xi feel genuinely startled.

Lin Ming replied, “Instructor Hong, before now I had not taken the Crimson Gold Dragon Marrow Pill, I had only eaten the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill. Several days ago I ate the Crimson Gold Dragon Pill. That is why I have had such progress since then.”

Hong Xi listened with a bit of surprise. It turned out that this Ling Ming had relied on just the Golden Snake Scarlet Pill to break through to the Third Stage of Body Transformation and defeat Zhang Cang. Everyone, including him, had thought that Lin Ming had eaten both pills together. This Lin Ming was just too difficult to explain with common sense.

Hong Xi said, “I would not have guessed that before now, you had only used a Golden Snake Scarlet Pill to break into the Viscera Training stage. If I’m not guessing wrong, then your body is very suitable to ingesting and absorbing valuable materials. Coupled with your ethereal martial intent, your future achievements really will be limitless. And that’s only because your natural talent is poor. If your talent was increased by two levels, then I really can’t dare to imagine what it would be like!

“Well, starting today, for ten days, I will always be accompanying you as you train your spear. Your basic spear skills are already fast,

accurate, and stable, but you are stilling missing one point, and that is change! Although spearplay is not as tricky or crafty as swordplay, but a spear has many more moves and varieties than a sword! The main attack methods of a sword are nothing but stabs, cuts, and slices. But a spear can do much more. A spear can stab, divide, sweep, circle, dance, and so on. I will not teach you fixed moves and routines. I will only have you achieve faster foundation spear skills through comprehensive practice, so that they are constantly changing!”

“Begin! I will suppress my true essence to be on a similar level to you. I will not show mercy! As Hong Xi said this, he flicked his long spear, aimed it at Lin Ming’s chest, and thrusted!

Hong Xi had only suppressed his true essence; he hadn’t suppressed his volatile strength. Lin Ming could not compare with Hong Xi, whose body was at the Large Success of the Pulse Condensation Period. Hong Xi’s spear speed was as fast as lightning. It instantly appeared in front of Lin Ming!

“Fast!” In that moment, Lin Ming had a clear feeling of the spear edge’s dense chill wavering in the air. It made the fine hairs on his body stand up.

Peng!

Lin Ming grasped Penetrating Rainbow and swept out. His spear met Hong Xi’s reckless attack and they collided. Even though Lin Ming’s strength surpassed 5000 jins, his hand was still shaken numb by Hong Xi’s strike!

The strength of a peak Pulse Condensation Period martial artist was just too abnormal and perverse! If Lin Ming hadn’t channeled the vibrations of ‘Flow like Silk’ into Penetrating Rainbow, with just this strike, he would have already been defeated!

Chapter 101: Arrival of the Decisive Battle

However, Hong Xi was even more startled. Even though he had not used true essence, he had still used his full and complete strength in this strike; but Lin Ming was able to block it head-on!

Hong Xi had already known that Lin Ming's strength was otherworldly, but he did not think that after achieving Large Success in the Third Stage of Body Transformation, that his strength would undergo such a dramatic rise. This strength must be no less than 5000 jins! His body was simply like a vicious beast!

Although he was surprised, Hong Xi's movement hadn't slowed in the slightest. He took advantage of Lin Ming's blowback from his spear strike and aggressed on him. He thrust his spear out three times, and each strike cut off all of Lin Ming's dodging paths. Lin Ming could only raise his spear to defend!

Dong!

As they collided, Hong Xi's spear fell upon the spear shaft of Penetrating Rainbow. The dark purple elastic iron spear shaft was hammered by Hong Xi and forcefully bent like a bow!

Lin Ming's feet sank into the ground, and his right foot was trapped in the thick soil. He pushed back with all his strength on Penetrating Rainbow, and just managed to force back Hong Xi's spear. But Hong Xi had backflipped into the air, and as he was airborne, his long spear drew a perfect arc, and he did a straight thrust from under his belly towards Lin Ming's throat.

The spear came flying at him too fast and too suddenly. With him having recklessly forced back two of Hong Xi's blows, he had exhausted his true essence, and the blood in his chest was roiling. He

was not able to block this strike, and Hong Xi's one spear thrust came perilously close to Lin Ming's throat.

At that moment, Lin Ming could clearly feel the bone-chilling wind from the spear, painfully flowing against his skin. But in a flash, Hong Xi had withdrawn his spear, and the spear point stopped a half inch away from Lin Ming's throat, not injuring him in the least.

What accurate control of force!

Even knowing that Hong Xi's spear would not pierce him, Lin Ming's breath had stopped in that instant as the spear wind blew against his skin. This spear thrust that was like a bolt of lightning was just too scary.

Three moves. In just three moves, Lin Ming was defeated!

As Hong Xi received his long spear, he said, "Lin Ming, although I suppressed my true essence, I did not suppress my strength. Still, you were able to last until the third spear move, which is already far beyond what someone of your level can accomplish! Your strength really goes against heaven's will; I guess it must be more than 5000 jins!

"5300 jins." Lin Ming replied truthfully.

"5300 jins!" Hong Xi clicked his tongue, "A martial artist at your cultivation would have been thrown 18 streets away by you. Your strength is truly appropriate to wield the spear; using a sword would have been a waste! When you had received my three strikes, you were actually not at your best level. When you were defending, you had one very weak point. That is your momentum!

Momentum!

Lin Ming was slightly stunned. Early on, his moment had really been overwhelmed and crushed by Hong Xi's swift and fierce spear moves!

“When you had fought against Zhang Cang, you had used the most basic foundation moves ‘Iron Bridge Blocks the River’ and ‘Flood Dragon Goes to Sea’ to break apart Zhang Cang’s ‘Sunset Cut’. This was because your spear carried with it a tide of surging momentum! But a moment ago, because my spear moves were too quick, you did not have enough time to gather your potential! Yes, although the momentum of your spear is strong, but it actually has a fatal weakness, and that is that its start is too slow!”

“Zhu Yan uses a sword, and he has great attainments in swordsmanship. His attacks are extremely swift and aggressive. If you are suppressed by him, then his moves will be faster than yours, and you will not be able to gather your momentum. When that happens, you will be led into his rhythm, and finally be defeated!”

Hong Xi was indeed an instructor of the Seven Profound Martial House; he had quickly discerned and pointed out another weakness of Lin Ming’s.

Indeed, no matter how good a skill was, if one did not have time to begin unleash it, then it would be useless!

“Now you must learn how to gather your momentum while you are attacking! Have you ever heard of some martial skills that are in a set, for instance, something something 18 palms, or whatever whatever 9 swords, or something silly like that?”

Lin Ming nodded.

Hong Xi said, “This set style often starts from the first, weakest move. A move will follow the previous move, and each move will be stronger than the last! You might ask; why would someone waste their energy doing this and not use their strongest final attack on the first move? The truth is, it is not that they don’t want to, but that they cannot. This is a question of gathering their momentum. They need to begin at the start, and save up their potential, and finally explode with

power in that last move! This is what it means to gather your momentum!”

Lin Ming was suddenly enlightened, “I understand.”

“If you want to learn how to gather your potential, then it is very simple. All you have to do is fight! Starting from today, except eating and sleeping, the rest of the time we shall fight! I want to see how long you will be able to stand it!”

For the next ten days, Lin Ming started a hellish combat training routine.

Although Hong Xi had said that they would fight each other whenever they weren't eating or sleeping, but he hadn't thought that Lin Ming would be able to persist through it.

Although a Viscera Training martial artist had vitality and endurance, and their hearts and lungs were powerful, it was impossible for them to maintain such intense fighting for a long period of time. However, Hong Xi quickly discovered that he had once again underestimated Lin Ming.

This Lin Ming was simply a perpetual motion machine in human form. His endurance was abnormal and outrageous!

His true essence was thicker than other martial artists of his cultivation by several times, and it was also purer; it could almost be said to be growing without end!

Even Qin Xingxuan who cultivated the rare and forbidden cultivation manuals of the Seven Profound Valley was not as exaggerated as this. Hong Xi didn't have any words to comment, he only chalked up this sort of bizarre situation to Lin Ming's ethereal martial intent and inborn divine strength.

They could fight for an entire eight hours with only a single breath!

Even Hong Xi was sweating profusely. His armor had already been tossed off to the side, and he was shirtless. But Lin Ming's entire body was wet and sticky with perspiration, and he took great panting gulps of breath. Every time he exhaled, the hot air would form steam, and every time he inhaled, the air would form a mini whirlpool. Even flying leaves near Lin Ming were blown away.

Hong Xi noted this phenomenon of nature. This boy, his breath was so long, no wonder his endurance was so good. Were his lungs a pair of bellows?

"Instructor Hong, let's go again!" Although Lin Ming was dead tired, his eyes still shined brightly with fighting spirit. In merely one day, his progress had been beyond astonishing. At the start, he had only been able to meet three spears from Hong Xi, but now he could take 7 or 8 moves from Hong Xi and still not be defeated. One time, he even met 10 moves!

These were attacks from a martial artist at the Pulse Condensation Period!

By fighting in such a manner, Lin Ming began to gradually discover what it meant to gather his potential and momentum during a fight. If in the past Lin Ming had depended on his strength and superior thick true essence to defeat his opponents, then now Lin Ming's combat skills were gradually catching up.

"Good! Come again!" Hong Xi's spirit was also aroused by Lin Ming's hot-bloodedness. In this day of fighting, even though Lin Ming's strength was far weaker than his own, he was still fighting with his full strength!

For ten days, whenever Lin Ming wasn't eating or sleeping, he was fighting with Hong Xi. By relying on his second-layer of 'True Primal Chaos Formula', and the resiliency given by his long, bellow-like breaths, Lin Ming was able to adhere to this practice regimen every day.

From the beginning, he had only been able to persist up to three moves, but afterwards he was able to last for more than 20. Lin Ming's flow of momentum and potential was becoming more and more skillful; he could send his momentum out with every strike of his spear. Even the momentum of his old self was less imposing! Each move he made with his spear was able to constantly accumulate momentum, getting stronger and stronger!

At the same time, Lin Ming's movement also made considerable progress. The 'Foundation Movement Technique' was not some sort of profound movement technique. Its movement was very simple and basic. However, Lin Ming was able to forcefully rely on this technique to slowly catch up to Hong Xi's movements.

Bang!

After the continuous momentum of 20 moves had gathered, Lin Ming's spear cleaved downwards. It brought with it a surge of torrential rivers and streams, and hacked towards Hong Xi. Everywhere the spear wind touched was blown away like sand!

"Good spear!" Hong Xi lifted his spear to meet the oncoming blow. Although he was able to block this spear, he was forced back a step by the backlash from the formidable momentum and intense vibrations that ran up Lin Ming's spear.

This was the first time that Lin Ming had forced back Hong Xi!

A Viscera Training stage martial artist that could force back one at the Pulse Condensation Period? Even though Hong Xi had suppressed his true essence, this result was enough to frighten anyone!

And Hong Xi was not an ordinary Pulse Condensation Period martial artist!

"Lin Ming, no matter what happens to your body, I don't think I can ever be surprised again." Hong Xi smiled, and received his long spear.

“This was only ten days. If there was perhaps a month, then I don’t think I would be able to defeat you without using more of my true essence.”

Although Hong Xi was praising him so, Lin Ming had no room for complacency. He knew that for a martial artist, the higher one’s cultivation was, the more important true essence would be. Someone using true essence versus someone not using true essence; the gulf between them was too vast. Especially in the body of a martial artist, once they had connected their meridians and opened them, then their true essence would be incomparably smooth and unimpeded. Attacks with true essence were the strongest methods of attack. If Hong Xi had used his full strength, then there was no doubt Lin Ming would die in less than three moves.

Lin Ming said, “I fall far short from Instructor. If Instructor Hong was serious, then being able to withstand one move would already be the edge of my limits.”

“Hey! You boy, you want to rely on your Viscera Training stage strength to whole-heartedly compare with someone at the peak Pulse Condensation Period? That you can force a Pulse Condensation Period martial artist to take a step back is already very good. Are you dissatisfied with that or something?”

Listening to Hong Xi say it like that, Lin Ming also smiled. His cultivation was simply too low; he was three stages worse compared to the Pulse Condensation Period! Moreover, for the boundaries of a martial artist’s cultivation, the higher one went, the harder it became, and the bigger the gulf between each realm!

Hong Xi said, “Tomorrow will be the day of your match against Zhu Yan. Today we will stop here. You go and take a good rest, and adjust to your peak condition. If you lose, I won’t forgive you.”

Lin Ming grinned and laughed as he said, “At first when I challenged Zhu Yan, I really wasn’t sure of my chances. But after practicing with

Instructor Hong for so many days, I think my odds are pretty high now.”

“Ha! I’ll take this as you having learnt something!”

Lin Ming’s Large Success of Viscera Training stage against Zhu Yan’s early Altering Muscle stage.

Although there was only a difference of half a stage, this was a fight between the apex of talents. A half-stage difference was already amazing, and that wasn’t even counting Zhu Yan having spent more time at the Seven Profound Martial House for two and a half years more than Lin Ming. In this time, he had been able to use the seven major killing arrays for much longer!

Zhu Yan was truly a formidable and daunting opponent. In the entirety of the Seven Profound Martial House, one could say his talent was only inferior to the three people; Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and Zhang Guanyu!

Time passed quickly, and it was soon to approach one month. This was the 64th day since Lin Ming had arrived at the Seven Profound Martial House. Today was also the day of Lin Ming’s and Zhu Yan’s duel. The location of this duel was the Seven Profound Martial House’s Martial Stage.

In the Seven Profound Martial House, there were places that were off limits to outsiders. For instance, those that involved secrets, heritages, and legacies; these were places such as the depository, the seven major killing arrays, the Ten Thousand Killing Array, the Exquisite Pagoda, and so on. All of those areas were restricted, and outsiders were not allowed to enter. When the servants of the Tenth Prince and the Crown Prince had entered the mountain valley to observe the ranking war at the Ten Thousand Killing Array, it was only because the stage was distant and it was hard to see clearly.

Outside of these places, the other areas of the Seven Profound Martial House were not so strict. For instance, the lecture hall, Martial House square, and so forth. When Lin Ming had borrowed a Pass Card to enter the Zither Department to look up information on materials, this was also a place that was generally open to outsiders.

As long as one had a pass or were of aristocratic status, they could enter these places.

The Martial Stage was also one of these places.

The disciples of the Martial House occasionally held martial arts contest, and there were a few people that often came to the Martial Stage to observe from the sidelines.

But today, the Martial Stage was packed to the brim with people. These people were all extraordinary characters; there were the talents and geniuses of the Seven Profound Martial House, the heroes of Sky Fortune Kingdom's martial artists, the nobility and aristocrats of Sky Fortune City, various famous and respected families, and important political figures.

Chapter 102: The Focus of All Eyes

But today, the Martial Stage was packed to the brim with people. These people were all extraordinary characters; there were the talents and geniuses of the Seven Profound Martial House, the heroes of Sky Fortune Kingdom's martial artists, the nobility and aristocrats of Sky Fortune City, various famous and respected families, and important political figures.

Lin Ming was an inestimably rare talent that would appear only every 100 years at the Seven Profound Martial House. His rising star and bright halo was enough to attract the attention of most martial artists. Zhu Yan was also a first-class master of the Seven Profound Martial House; he had the possibility to be one of the top ten future talents of the Seven Profound Martial House. These two people's match symbolized a duel between the top geniuses of Sky Fortune City's younger generation.

If it was just this alone, it would not have attracted the nobility of Sky Fortune City and the political figures to gather here.

They did not belong in the circles of martial artists. No matter how strong Lin Ming or Zhu Yan were, this would be of no relation to any of them.

The reason this match would cause them to pay special attention was because there was political significance behind it!

The news of Lin Ming and Zhu Yan's match had spread out far and wide long ago.

Everyone was aware that the Tenth Prince's mother, the imperial concubine, came from Green Mulberry City's Zhu Family. This Zhu Yan also had a very high possibility of being the next head of the Zhu Family. Zhu Yan was without a doubt a person of the Tenth Prince.

But Lin Ming had rejected the Tenth Prince's advances when the Tenth Prince had tried to win him over a month ago, and instead was in favor of the Crown Prince. Moreover, according to reliable sources, Lin Ming and Zhu Yan had some sort of enmity between them, and Lin Ming and Mister Muye were friends between generations. By virtue of these points alone, Lin Ming had an almost absolute possibility of being a person of the Crown Prince!

This match, while being a duel between Lin Ming and Zhu Yan, also symbolized the struggle between the Crown Prince and the Tenth Prince. These past few years, the hidden conflicts between the Crown Prince and the Tenth Prince had occurred often, but the Crown Prince had lost nearly every time! Although most of these battles had not genuinely wounded the Crown Prince's strength, they had without a doubt weakened the Crown Prince's momentum!

It was not a secret that the Tenth Prince wished to snatch the throne away. In this case, the Crown Prince had repeatedly suffered setbacks, and all of this perpetuated the notion that the Crown Prince was inferior to the Tenth Prince. Therefore, the people who supported the Crown Prince unavoidably panicked and were flustered, and less and less people supported the Crown Prince. Instead, the Tenth Prince's influence only grew by the day!

Many of the nobility and aristocracy came today not to see the contest between Lin Ming and Zhu Yan, but the contest between the Tenth Prince and the Crown Prince! The sooner these people supported the man they thought would be the dragon who would ascend the throne, the larger the advantage they could obtain in the upcoming throne battle!

Because of the appearance of these nobles, there were special protections at the Martial Stage, and bodyguards to protect these important guests.

Due to too many important people attending, the disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House were pushed far away. This made them angry, and criticize these nobles in their hearts.

Lin Ming had already arrived. He stood quietly on the empty Martial Stage, his body as straight as Penetrating Rainbow.

Faced with the eyes of everyone looking at him, and so many of them being important people, Lin Ming closed his eyes and meditated, his mind calm and tranquil like a still lake.

In a battle between two of similar strength, one's state of mind became very important. Even a slight change would affect the outcome of the battle.

The best condition for a martial artist's mind before a battle was to be tranquil and still like water, not having even a single distracting thought. Though saying this was easy, a battle usually involved great significance; how could a martial artist settle down and keep their heart still under this condition? In addition to the disturbance from so many other possible factors, there were very few martial artists who were able to achieve this calm and tranquil mental state.

However, Lin Ming had comprehended martial intent and had achieved this state. To him, this was as easy as turning his hand over.

It was half an hour from the agreed match time. At this moment, a sharp, high-pitched voice suddenly called out; this was the unique sound of the palace court eunuch. "The Crown Prince arrives!"

Everyone was shocked; even Lin Ming who had been standing on the Martial Stage opened his eyes. His Highness the Crown Prince had unexpectedly come!

Accompanied by the clear clip clip clip sounds of hoofbeats, several Snow Dragon Horses appeared and started to come into view. They were led by a young man wearing a purple gold crown and a silk

imperial robe. He wore a pair of Kirin styled boots, and delicate eyebrows framed his fair face. He had a broad forehead, and a very handsome face. His movements were filled with an innate, distinguished atmosphere.

This man was His Highness, the Crown Prince.

At the Crown Prince's side was an old man wearing green clothes. His face had a warm and friendly smile, yet it gave off an immeasurably deep and unfathomable aura. This person was the Crown Prince's teacher, the outsider from the Marshal's Quarters, Mister Muyi!

"His Highness, the Crown Prince!"

"Mister Muyi!"

Seeing these two famous figures come together in unison caused everyone present to feel awe. They cleared a path for these to come forward.

Muyi looked at Lin Ming with a smile and a nod, and Lin Ming smiled in return. There was much goodwill and friendship between Muiyi and Lin Ming.

But good things came in pairs. Similarly, after a half quarter hour, the Tenth Prince, the Cloud Prince, also arrived!

The Cloud Prince's appearance and the Crown Prince's appearance were somewhat similar. His appearance was only more resolute, his eyebrows were like swords that angled towards his temples, and above the center of his forehead was a vague purple cloud hidden under his skin. This was the legendary Purple Air Comes From the East, the King of Air!

At the Cloud Prince's side was also a slender young man in silk clothes. This young man was Zhu Yan.

As soon as the Tenth Prince saw Lin Ming, he smiled with a 'haha'. "Little Brother Lin, you've come very early. This is our first time meeting; it's nice to meet you!"

Though his voice was loud, there was no arrogance in it. Instead, it was very comfortable and pleasant to listen to.

Lin Ming silently thought, "This Tenth Prince is also a character. I refused him at first, but he doesn't seem to bear a grudge. On the surface he talks and laughs joyfully with me, as if nothing had ever happened before."

"There seems to be some sort of silly misunderstanding between Little Brother Lin and Zhu Yan. The warriors of my Sky Fortune Kingdom have always resolved their hatred in a martial way. I happen to think that both of you are fine heroes among men. No matter what sort of misunderstanding or unhappiness occurred between you two, as soon as this fight is over, how about we sit down for a chat and see if we can put an end to these hostilities, and turn swords into plowshares?"

'Turn swords into plowshares? I'm afraid Zhu Yan wants to eat my meat and flay me alive.'

Lin Ming understood that the Tenth Prince had said these words because he didn't want to be his enemy. He politely responded, "I did not expect Your Highness the Cloud Prince to watch this match. It is my utmost honor and greatest pleasure to see you here."

Lin Ming's words were neither arrogant nor servile. He directly responded to the Tenth Prince. The Tenth Prince only smiled, and no longer said anything.

At this moment, Zhu Yan dismounted and slowly stepped up onto the Martial Stage. As soon he saw Lin Ming, he confirmed that this boy had made a breakthrough in this month!

Large Success of the Third Stage of Body Transformation!

Zhu Yan felt the enormous pressure, but did not feel that anything was wrong. When Lin Ming had challenged him with a deadline of one month, Zhu Yan had expected Lin Ming to make astonishing progress during this time. He had probably comprehended some kind of martial intent.

Zhu Yan arrived on the other side of the Martial Stage, and stood distantly opposite of Lin Ming.

There was a quarter hour until the decisive battle!

Lan Yunyue was among those in the crowd. She was distantly looking at Lin Ming and Zhu Yan on stage. Her heart had overturned, and it was like all the good and bad emotions and feelings in her life had mixed together.

She was the one who was most unwilling to see this fight happen. Regardless of who was victorious or who was the defeated, each option would be a knife to her heart! Her eyes still reverberated with a phantom echo of those words Zhu Yan had said to her one month ago, "He wants me to... divorce you!"

She did not even dare to think what would happen if Zhu Yan were to lose, and how she would face life afterwards. She did not even have a chance to regret...

Although Lin Ming and Zhu Yan had already arrived, the battle had not started. Zhu Yan closed his eyes and meditated, adjusting to his own peak condition.

To him, Lin Ming was a formidable and daunting opponent. He had to adjust his pre-battle condition to its maximum, and display 120% of his strength!

Only half a year ago, Lin Ming had been an irrelevant loser, unworthy of even mentioning. Even if Lin Ming had defeated that child of General Wang, Wang Yigao, it was nothing to Zhu Yan.

In Zhu Yan's eyes, Wang Yigao was a good-for-nothing playboy that was not fit to be called a martial artist.

Zhu Yan had not thought that there would be a day where he and Lin Ming would be standing against each other, and fighting on the Martial Stage in front of so many important people. Even the Crown Prince and the Cloud Prince had come to watch this fateful battle.

And beyond that, Lin Ming's strength had also grown to the point of threatening him!

To prepare for this battle today, he had tortured himself for a month, and had even caused the foundation of his cultivation to be a bit unstable by enhancing his strength as much as possible with precious pills!

In the face of this battle, he too wished for a calm heart to face critical situations, to adjust his condition in this quarter hour before facing this great enemy!

This was a battle he could not afford to lose!

The victory and defeat of this battle not only concerned Zhu Yan's future, but it concerned his dignity as a martial artist, and more so, his dignity as a man!

As the sundial shadow began to gradually move, it finally became noon. Lin Ming's eyes suddenly flashed open.

"It's time!"

Zheng—!

With a loud ringing sound, Lin Ming flourished his spear, Penetrating Rainbow. It was just like a dark purple flood dragon that shivered as it fell into Lin Ming's hand! At this moment, Lin Ming had not fought, but his indomitable aura had already been released and it billowed outwards. Everyone present, even if their cultivation was higher than Lin Ming's, felt an invisible pressure pushing down on them!

“This aura... is this really something that a martial artist at the Third Stage of Body Transformation can release!?”

“This Lin Ming is too strong, his imposing manner and aura are enough to make one feel breathless!”

Even the disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House were fearfully startled. This Lin Ming's power was rising too fast! They hadn't seen him in a month, and his strength had already risen to another level!

Zhu Yan took a deep breath and slowly drew out his treasure sword. This sword in his hand was a low-grade human-step treasure, one of the best among its kind. Its name was Scarlet Flare, and it had already accompanied him for many years. He had long ago been able to communicate with his sword.

Facing Lin Ming, it was impossible to count on his opponent being weak. He could only ask that his own strength was stronger!

Fu—!

With a light sound, Zhu Yan's sword lit with flames visible to the naked eye! Substantializing true essence and giving it tangible form! This was a stage that only those a step away from reaching the Pulse Condensation Period could achieve. Generally only those who were at the Large Success of Bone Forging were able to reach this realm, but Zhu Yan, who was only at the early Altering Muscle stage, had already achieved this!

Lin Ming and Zhu Yan had not fought, but with just a few random movements, they had already displayed their frightening strength as the pinnacles among talents. This was a fierce struggle between two evenly matched opponents!

The entire Martial Stage audience was silent; even the sound of a pin dropping could be heard. The audience was silent with bated breath, and they steadily looking, with unblinking eyes, at the stage that held two solitary figures, for fear of missing even a single thing.

Chapter 103: Gather Momentum

Layer upon layer of crimson air emanated from Zhu Yan's sword. The meaning of Zhu Yan's name was vermilion flame, and his true essence also shared this fiery property. Therefore Zhu Yan's sword skills were often associated with fire! By virtue of the characteristics of his true essence, if he used martial skills of the fire attribute, then their power would also increase!

As the crimson air waves surged from Zhu Yan's blade, the chilly autumn air that had enveloped the Martial Stage began to turn into a scorching wind. Zhu Yan made his move!

Fiery true essence flooded into the Scarlet Flame sword. Zhu Yan's sword light wove a big net in the air, as if it were a burning cloud of fire that blotted out the sky.

“Martial Skill - Limitless Sunset Shine!”

Waves of billowing heat flowed outwards and a sizzling, feverish swelter enveloped the entire Martial Stage as the temperature shot up. The disciples who were standing nearby were forced backwards. The important figures were protected by their guards, who had set up barriers of true essence to protect them.

This Zhu Yan, as soon as he started, had used a martial skill. He was using everything he had to win!

Surrounded by the burning hot clouds that dyed the sky red, the innumerable tiny units in Lin Ming's body began to resonate together. True essence began to spontaneously vibrate within his body. This was the thick true essence that Lin Ming had obtained from reaching the second-level of the 'True Primal Chaos Formula'!

As his thick true essence vibrated, the 820 jin spear, Penetrating Rainbow, also began to tremble, carrying with it a terrifying lethality!

This vibration became increasingly strong, and it began to fuse with Lin Ming's aura and turned into howling gales of strong heavenly wind that scattered in all directions!

As this crimson cloud front came towards him, Lin Ming stood motionless. Suddenly, he moved his right hand and thrust out!

Peng!

There was a deafening sound of an explosion. The momentum of the spear was like an avalanche, and the limitless crimson flames were swept upwards by an indefatigable wind and became a flame tornado. At the center of this fire, among the circling embers, was a whirlpool of flames that concentrated at the tip of the spear. This current was suddenly thrown at Zhu Yan!

“Pah!” The swirling eddy was like a rotating cone that pierced Zhu Yan's body!

Before those watching had a chance to call out in alarm, Zhu Yan, who had been pierced by this cone of flame wind, had distorted into a shade that gradually disappeared.

“Afterimage?”

“It's 'God's Shadow Step'! This Zhu Yan, he actually managed to cultivate such a profound movement technique!

Zhu Yan had not publicly fought for over six months. The disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House only knew of his strength through his ranking on the Ranking Stone. But they were not able to look into the Ten Thousand Killing Array, and thus they could not see how Zhu Yan fought, or know what sort of skills and abilities he could use.

Zhu Yan was like a phantasmal ghost that faded into the wind. He instantly appeared at Lin Ming's side!

No, it was more accurate to say that it wasn't Zhu Yan that had appeared first, but his sword!

In that flash, his sword struck out 24 times!

Cha cha cha cha...

Sword light covered the sky in a tight and deadly net. Zhu Yan's skillful swordsmanship had already arrived at the point of perfection!

When he was just 14 years old, Zhu Yan had already been infamous for his swordsmanship in Green Mulberry City. He had later joined the army for one year, and then tortured himself practicing for two and a half years at the Seven Profound Martial House. In this three year period, he had even comprehended his own understandings of the sword. His sword was to the point where it seemed to melt into the emptiness. One could not see his sword; only the sword light!

Not even Zhu Yan could clearly see the path of his sword; how could it be blocked?

Even the top 40 disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House rankings and the Bone Forging stage masters who came to protect the important personages, felt a chill crawl up their spines as they watched this sword light. If it were them exchanging blows, then in the midst of such otherworldly sword light, even they would have been defeated! Lin Ming's movement technique was only the 'Foundation Movement Technique'. How could he dodge?

All of these thoughts occurred in an instant. Between the flashes of sword light, they all thought that it was too late. But at this moment, Lin Ming lifted his spear.

Penetrating Rainbow rushed out like a brilliant black dragon. In that strike, true essence vibrated like a sea of churning water, and scattered in all directions towards these sword lights.

Ding ding ding ding ding ding!

In a split second, it was unknown how many times Penetrating Rainbow hit Zhu Yan's sword. In that moment, Zhu Yan felt as if his sword was cutting at a mountain. Lin Ming's spear carried with it a vibrating true essence as if it were an angry earthquake occurring on a mountain, and forcefully scattered all of the sword lights.

Zhu Yan simply could not shake off Lin Ming's spear. If he did not withdraw his sword, he felt that he could possibly stab Lin Ming. But he had a feeling that if he was just a tiny bit slow, then his body would be torn apart by this intense vibration!

This strange vibration was putting an enormous pressure upon Zhu Yan's sword, as if it were a fish that was drowning in a quagmire.

Seeing even his body being affected by this vibration, Zhu Yan forcefully gathered his true essence and retreated.

Dong dong dong dong! Zhu Yan staggered and fell to ground. It was difficult to even take a few steps back. His movements had lost all of their previous light and lively elegance.

"Mm? What happened to Zhu Yan?"

"What just happened? Zhu Yan had put out so many sword strikes, how was he driven back by Lin Ming's spear?"

"How did he not stab him? His sword moves are fast enough that they have no shadow; it should be much faster than Lin Ming's spear!"

Of everyone present, almost no one was able to understand the mysteries contained in Lin Ming's spear. In their opinion, with Zhu Yan's superior movement and sword speed, he should have easily avoided Lin Ming's spear and pierced Lin Ming with his sword. However, what happened was that Zhu Yan had been placed into an exceedingly perilous situation by Lin Ming's spear. Lin Ming was like

a calm, unyielding mountain that towered on the stage; he had not even taken one step!

Even those guards at the Bone Forging stage were unable to understand what had just happened.

Hearing all of these people's discussions, Hong Xi smiled with a 'hehe'. In his heart he secretly thought, "Lin Ming, this kid is really a monster. He managed to integrate the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' into his spear. If one hasn't tasted this scary spear before, they cannot understand just how terrifying that feeling is. At the start, this father also ate many invisible losses due to that move. Now this boy is also going to give Zhu Yan a taste of what it's like."

Zhu Yan managed to stop the rolling blood in his heart with great difficulty, and he was secretly cold sweating. In that moment, he had felt his heartbeat's rhythm change. It was as if the entire blood flow in his body had been blocked by a countercurrent. Just what was going on here?

He looked at Lin Ming. Lin Ming was standing straight, gripping Penetrating Rainbow in his hand and pointing it at him.

In this pose and figure, the eyes that he was looking at Zhu Yan with seemed deep and unfathomable. A feeling gripped Zhu Yan so that he couldn't move for a moment.

"Mm? Fear?" Zhu Yan startled. There had actually been a subconscious feeling of fear that had emerged from his heart! Fear was the death knell of a martial artist's heart of martial arts. The Dream Trial's first hurdle was to test courage to overcome their fear!

And this fearful feeling had come from Lin Ming!

"This boy!"

Zhu Yan's heart surged with an inexplicable anger. He was unable to accept this! He could not accept that his arrogant and vaunted pride had been trampled upon by this little child that he had regarded as nothing but an ant!

Zhu Yan's eyes flashed with a cold light. His anger made him cut apart this feeling of fear. His figure rushed out, and a series of afterimages followed him.

As Zhu Yan sprinted forward, a three foot crimson flame erupted around his sword. This flame image was created by Zhu Yan pouring a massive amount of true essence into his sword.

Since his speed wasn't enough, then Zhu Yan would win through strength!

Zhu Yan shouted, and he jumped upwards. He gripped his sword with both hands, and slashed down!

“Falling Star Slash!”

“That's the medium-grade human-step 'Falling Star Slash'! It is a martial skill stronger than the 'Limitless Sunset Shine'!

By the time the crowd had exclaimed a few words, Zhu Yan's sword had already absorbed all of the surrounding fire essence. The majesty of this sword was like a fiery, burning meteor from the heavens that smashed downwards!

Lin Ming's lips curved. Strength against strength? That was his favorite!

Lin Ming wielded his spear. Penetrating Rainbow scattered sparks into the air as it drew a circular arc on the ground, and a full moon pattern appeared on the hard surface of the Martial Stage.

Lin Ming aimed at Zhu Yan's sword point, and thrusted forwards!

To stab a master's sword point in the middle of a fight where both parties were using lightning quick moves was easier said than done. However, for many years Lin Ming had been practicing his accuracy as he deboned, and in that one month of crazy spear practice, Lin Ming had acquired a solid foundation of his skills. He could wield his spear like it was his arm. Even if it were a concealed needle or other hidden weapon, Lin Ming could use find it with his spear point!

Ding!

Lin Ming thrust his spear at Zhu Yan's sword point!

This three foot Scarlet Flare sword, how could it compare to the 820 jin Penetrating Rainbow spear?

A screeching, teeth-aching sound of metal bending filled the air as the Scarlet Flame sword and Penetrating Rainbow spear met each other. Because of the huge pressure from both of them colliding, they even bent like a full moon!

As this happened, Lin Ming vibrated his true essence to counter Zhu Yan's 'Falling Star Slash'. The intense vibrations caused Zhu Yan's blood flow to well up once more!

Peng! The Scarlet Flare sword rebounded, and Zhu Yan was sent flying backwards!

But 'Falling Star Slash' was a medium-grade human-step martial skill after all; Lin Ming was forced back three steps by Zhu Yan's heat wave and momentum!

"This is the first time Lin Ming was forced back!"

"Not just a retreat, but from the time he came on stage to now, this was the first time he's made a footstep!"

Everyone had naturally noticed this detail. Before now, Lin Ming had not moved a single step.

“Words just aren’t enough to describe this. Lin Ming’s indomitable aura is steadfast like a mountain. To make him move just proves how much pressure there was in Zhu Yan’s momentum.” The old disciples present said. They were not willing to see Zhu Yan lose. To a famed old disciple losing to a rising new student; they felt as if they were in the same boat.

“Big Brother, do you think this match between Lin Ming and Zhu Yan looks somewhat similar to the one he had with Zhang Cang? Zhu Yan wasn’t stabbed or pierced, but he is still under a tremendous influence.” Ta Ku said to Ling Sen as they watched the match. They were standing at a corner of the Martial Stage.

“Mm. Lin Ming’s spear thrust has a mystery inside. Before, I read some ancient texts and they have recorded that martial artists who had reached the Large Success of spear skills are able to comprehend rules of the world, and understand certain laws. They can place these laws into their spear, and form ‘spear potentials’. Swords and sabers also have similar concepts. This kind of master does not need any weapon when facing the enemy. As long as they depend upon these ‘potentials’, they can completely kill their enemies! Lin Ming’s spear skill reminds me of these records.”

“Big Brother, the more you talk, the iffier you sound. Lin Ming is how old? How could he possibly comprehend this ‘spear potential’?”

“Of course he can’t, otherwise he simply wouldn’t need a spear to deal with Zhu Yan. All he would need is a thought to kill his enemy. Lin Ming’s spear hasn’t even bumped Zhu Yan, but Zhu Yan has still been affected. This point really looks like spear potential!”

As Ling Sen and Ta Ku were talking, Zhu Yan was once again fighting Lin Ming. Zhu Yan no longer used martial skill; he didn’t even use his magnificent and beautiful sword lights. All he used were simple,

straightforward sword moves. However, even like this, he felt as if his sword was being pressed down by an invisible strength, and every stroke he made was restrained.

In contrast, Lin Ming's moves were becoming increasingly fierce!

He was gathering his momentum!

Chapter 104: Amazing Spear

This was the greatest harvest from the days that Lin Ming and Hong Xi sparred against each other. This was to use move after move, and gather one's momentum, and after accumulating all of the residual momentum, to have that last strike erupt out and sweep all away!

Lin Ming's spear seemed much slower than Zhu Yan. When Zhu Yan made three moves, Lin Ming only made one. But what was incredible was that Lin Ming's one spear was able to block all three of Zhu Yan's sword moves!

This made one have very contradictory feelings. Those martial artists whose cultivations were too shallow could not understand the complex mysteries and profound principles in these two young men's fight. They would only feel like Zhu Yan was making useless moves, and in every three moves he made, there might not even be one that was useful.

On the reserved seating area, a noble man over 30 years old was watching Zhu Yan and Lin Ming's fight, and shaking his head. "This Zhu Yan is just too mediocre. His sword moves are just too gaudy. All he has is looks without substance; it's not very practical. These kinds of sword moves look nice, but have too many flaws to connect. Ah Wei, what do you think?"

This noble himself was only a second-grade martial arts talent. He was over thirty years old, and was at the early Third Stage of Body Transformation. He had some small insights into martial artist, so he asked his guard this question.

"My Lord, Zhu Yan's sword has indeed lost its light and sublime feeling. This subordinate does find it strange. The sword light that Zhu Yan had displayed before was truly swift and fierce. Even if it were this subordinate facing that sword light, I would not have full confidence to grasp it."

This guard was also over 30 years old, and he was at the early Fifth Stage of Body Transformation. However when he saw Zhu Yan display his sword skills before, he could not help but acknowledge his skill. If he were against Zhu Yan, his assurance of winning would only be 30 or 40%.

“You cannot defend against that sword light?” The noble smiled, but thought otherwise in his heart. “Ah Wei, you think too little of yourself. These years in the Seven Profound Martial House, besides Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and a few others, the people there have been getting worse and worse with each generation. In the past, the martial arts of the Seven Profound Martial House were able to fight those a stage above them as if they were having a simple meal. But you just look at this Zhu Yan. If I remember correctly, he is in the top 30 rankings of the Ranking Stone, and the sword in his hand...” The noble was prepared to elaborate on a few more of these martial arts ‘insights’, when the smile on his face suddenly froze.

On the stage, Lin Ming and Zhu Yan’s fight had already reached the edge of the platform. As Lin Ming thrust out his spear, Zhu Yan moved sideways to avoid. Because Lin Ming’s spear hit nothing, it continued thrusting until it hit a thick column at the edge of the stage.

He withdrew his spear, but at the same time, an incredible scene took place!

After being struck by Lin Ming’s spear, that thick stone column broke apart with an explosion from top to bottom!

Along with the crashing sounds, numerous stone fragments rolled down like peas, and finally turned to a small pile of rubble. This stone column was completely destroyed!

It was as if that stone column was held together by tofu!

“This... what is going on here?” The noble’s eyes were looking straight out. He had clearly seen a moment ago that Lin Ming’s thrust had not hit, and he had only withdrawn his spear.

But before he had withdrawn his spear, that spear had lightly scratched a spot on the surface, and that had actually caused the 20 feet high stone column to explode into a pile of crushed rocks. And the biggest crushed rock was only the size of a fist!

It was not only this noble, but everyone present, including Ling Sen, Ta Ku, Muiyi, and other masters were all equally shocked. Some people even subconsciously rubbed their eyes, thinking that they had seen an illusion.

Was that really caused by a spear?

To crush a stone column was actually very easy. Many of the masters and experts present had this strength, but to have a spear do it to a stone column and have the biggest rubble piece only be the size of a fist, none of those present were able to achieve this!

Even Muiyi could not. Although he could send out countless sword lights in a flash and cut the stone column apart, resulting in almost identical effects, his sword actually could not create such an effect with just a touch.

Even the normally stable Crown Prince had lost his composure as he saw these scene. “Teacher, this is... what kind of spear skill?”

The Crown Prince had a certain understanding of martial arts, but he had never seen a martial skill like this before.

Muiyi shook his head. “Your Highness, I am not sure.”

As the last piece of crushed stone stopped rolling, the entire audience was silent at the Martial Stage. They were shocked and shaken by this scene.

But the various masters of the Seven Profound Martial House, like Ling Sen, Ta Ku, and several other old deacons, saw this pile of rubble and had a faint, blossoming suspicion in their hearts. Although it was reasonable, they did not even dare to believe this suspicion!

This skill, could it be...

Zhu Yan looked at this pile of rubble closely. His right hand gripped his sword tightly, and because of excessive force, his knuckles began to turn white!

“Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist! You’ve cultivated the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist!’”

Zhu Yan had specially gone to the depository before to look at the martial skills that Lin Ming had chosen. Now, he finally understood the reason why Lin Ming was able to contain him. This was because he had managed to cultivate the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’!!!

That he could keep hold of Zhang Cang’s saber with his empty palm, and use only that fist wind to push back Zhang Cang, was because he had relied on this ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’!

Zhu Yan also suddenly understood that it was the true essence vibration that was described on the jade slip of the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’. This was what had caused his insides to lose their normal rhythm, and cause all of his body’s blood to want to flow in reverse!

How could this Lin Ming possibly have managed to learn the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’?

“Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’?”

Those present were stunned. For most of them, this ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ was just an unknown cultivation method. And

listening to such a vulgar name, it couldn't be any sort of amazing or powerful martial skill.

However, to the disciples of the Seven Profound Martial House, the name of 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' struck their hearts like a savage earthquake!

Before Lin Ming had become famous, most people had never heard of this incomplete martial skill. However, after he had defeated Zhang Cang and become the 62nd ranking disciple of the Ten Thousand Killing Array, the cultivation methods and martial skills he had chosen also became famous!

The pair 'Foundation Spear Technique' and 'Foundation Movement Technique' cultivation methods that normally no one would as for had suddenly become two of the most wanted manuals overnight. But the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' had been left behind. It was inevitable that people would see what was wrong with this cultivation method.

Low-grade Earth-step cultivation method. Loss rate, 70%!

Seeing these two points, even the fanatical fans of Lin Ming mania would not be so stupid or empty headed to choose this manual.

The 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' was only deemed as a low-grade Earth-step manual because it was lacking the most important beginning section, so its rank was unable to be judged by the elder who was responsible for ranking these cultivation methods. Nobody actually knew its true ranking.

It had to be known that the higher a cultivation method was, the more difficult it was to practice! If the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' was complete, it would be far more difficult to cultivate than Zhu Yan's 'Falling Star Slash' and 'Limitless Sunset Shine'! Without the heaven defying perception of a monstrous genius, it would be a

ridiculous dream for anyone in the Body Transformation Stage to want to practice an Earth-step martial skill!

Much less, this martial skill was incomplete!

Not only was it incomplete, but the beginning of it was incomplete! For most martial skills, if the later sections were missing, the beginning portions could still be practiced.

But if the beginning was incomplete, then a martial skill would have no value at all. Otherwise, how would the Seven Profound Valleys possibly place an Earth-step cultivation method like the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' in the Seven Profound Martial House's outer pavilion? That place was simply a garbage disposal for their unwanted jade slips!

The people who saw Lin Ming choose the 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' had disagreed with him. Even if it was a crazy fan of Lin Ming's, they had not thought he would perceive anything from meditating on this cultivation method.

But Lin Ming, even in this situation, had relied on this cultivation at the Third Stage of Body Transformation to learn this 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist', that not even the hidden and mysterious Xiantian experts of the Seven Profound Valleys were able to understand!

Was this really a human?

Throughout the entire history of the Sky Fortune Kingdom, or even the entire history of the Sky Spill Continent, this Lin Ming had the most terrifying perception to ever exist!

This fellow, he was simply the reincarnation of a heavenly god or devilish demon!

No wonder Lin Ming had made such astonishing progress in just a few short months. With this kind of godlike perception, any talent was simply floating clouds, just nothing but trash!

The Tenth Prince had already been made aware of what sort of manual this 'Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist' was; he did not need his subordinates to explain it to him. The Tenth Prince had enough achievements in the martial arts aspects to know what it meant to be able to cultivate such a skill.

He looked towards Lin Ming's form on the stage, and his face began to darken, becoming increasingly somber and terrible.

He had not thought that he had underestimated Lin Ming! This young man was actually terrifying to such a degree!

The Tenth Prince's heart had a faint premonition. If he truly became enemies with Lin Ming, and was unable to annihilate him before he grew, then Lin Ming would become the biggest barrier on his road to snatching the throne!

As the fight had progressed to this stage, victory or defeat had already become secondary. It was possible that even if Lin Ming lost to Zhu Yan in this battle, his reputation would even be more resounding!

It would spread throughout the entire capital!

Facing Lin Ming who was like a reincarnation of some divine being, even though Zhu Yan's heart of martial arts was strong, he had completely lost the courage to fight. Zhu Yan knew that even if he defeated Lin Ming today, in just a few months, it would be reversed and he would be defeated!

He had annoyed an enemy which he absolutely should not have stirred up!

"Kill him!!!!"

Zhu Yan's heart suddenly gave birth to this idea!

Before Lin Ming grew, he had to kill him. This was the only solution!

However, to assassinate someone in the Seven Profound Martial House was too tough and too difficult. Moreover, once they were discovered, regardless of whom it was, the Seven Profound Martial House would take their life as recompense!

On the contrary, if he killed someone during a battle, even though it was serious and flagrant violation of the Seven Profound Martial Houses regulations, it was not a crime worthy of death. After all, in matches where both parties' strengths were similar, there were occasions that could cause death.

Chapter 105: Torrential River Rope!

“Even though I will be punished, it is far better than being surpassed by Lin Ming in the future!”

“Moreover, a dead genius is no longer a genius. The Seven Profound Martial House will not kill me over someone who is dead. With the Tenth Prince secretly helping me, the worst that will happen is I will be dismissed from the Martial House and banished or exiled to the frontier.”

But to Zhu Yan, being banished didn't mean anything anymore. As for being dismissed from the Martial House, although it was a pity, it was absolutely worth it as long as he could kill Lin Ming!

This was the only chance he had to assassinate Lin Ming!

But, did he really have the ability to kill Lin Ming?

In his heart, Zhu Yan lacked confidence.

“I still have my strongest martial skill. But, this martial skill has an enormous toll on the body. I can usually only display 60% of its full might, but if I recklessly stimulate myself to force out 100% of its abilities, I might damage my meridians. If I damage these meridians, it will be difficult to connect and open them, and become a great barrier when I want to break through to the Pulse Condensation Period. But since it's come to this point, I have no other choices left.

Zhu Yan's face flashed with ferociousness as he triggered all of the true essence in his body to the limit. The Scarlet Flare sword in his hand began to issue out a shrill, keening sound.

“Zhu Yan's going to go all out!”

“What a terrifying true essence force! I’m afraid even a martial artist at the Bone Forging stage does not have such terrifying true essence!”

After everyone realized that Lin Ming had perceived the secrets of the ‘Body Tearing Bone Shattering Fist’ through meditation, no one doubted Zhu Yan’s strength again. That Zhu Yan could exchange blows for such a long time with a monstrous genius like Lin Ming was testament to his extraordinary skill.

Lin Ming faintly smiled as he felt a heavy murderous intent emanating from Zhu Yan. ‘You want to go all out? Then I’ll follow you!’

From the very start of the fight until now, Lin Ming had been gathering his potential!

Even though he had been using his full strength with every strike, he had been saving his momentum!

To constantly use moves and save momentum; this was the key to gathering one’s potential in a fight!

Now all of Lin Ming’s potential was poured into the Penetrating Rainbow spear, waiting for this last, final strike!

“This fight today, is the most important fight in my life so far. And Zhu Yan, he is also the most important opponent in my life so far. In the Seven Profound Martial House’s entrance examination’s Dream Trial, he was the cause for the flaw in my heart. Today, I and Zhu Yan will put forth our strongest moves, and I will defeat him to complete my perfect heart of martial arts!”

As Lin Ming walked forward step by heavy step, the hard floor tiles underneath him cracked and exploded into flying shards. Lin Ming’s right arm was flat and smooth, and lay upon Penetrating Rainbow. This was the most basic spear stance, ‘Iron Bridge Blocks the River’.

Yet in Lin Ming's hands, even such a simple stance gave off a boundless feeling of vigor. The dark purple Penetrating Rainbow was calm as if it were a cast iron statue. It was like a rope that stretched across a torrential river. No matter how the river flowed and surged, it was unable to shake that rope a single inch.

Unmovable no matter the force, 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River'!

"It's the 'Foundation Spear Technique' stance, 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River'!"

"Heavens! I finally get to see Senior Apprentice Brother Lin Ming's 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River' in action again!" A little girl half a year younger than Lin Ming clenched her fists in excitement. Her face was ruddy with joy. She had just entered the Human Hall.

To many of the lower disciples in the Human Hall, Lin Ming and his 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River' stance were a legend!

Many of the lower disciples from the Human Hall came from a humble birth and background, and their worth was meager. In the Seven Profound Martial House, because they were the most basic and lowest of disciples, they did not have any nice cultivation methods to choose from. Although they had the glory and honor of being a disciple of the Seven Profound Martial House, they did not entertain high hopes for the future.

However, Lin Ming, who had also come from a humble birth, had used the 'Foundation Spear Technique' to defeat Zhang Cang, a master of the Earth Hall! And he had used the 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River' stance!

This was a miracle!

In Lin Ming's hands, the simple, minimalist 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River' stance had become tranquil and immutable like a mountain!

Any magnificent or exquisite martial skill was broken by a single spear!

A lone strength to shatter 10,000 styles!

The only person in all of the Seven Profound Martial House who could use the 'Foundation Spear Technique' to resist Zhu Yan's finishing blow was Lin Ming!

Facing Lin Ming's 'Iron Bridge Blocks the River', Zhu Yan's complexion became filled with unprecedented dignity.

This was the most important match in his entire life. Even if Lin Ming used the 'Foundation Spear Technique', he would not look down on a single fine hair of his. Against such a monstrous genius of perception, any cultivation method in his hands could be turned into a divine miracle!

"Hah!" Zhu Yan shouted. The silk clothes that covered his upper body began to burn up in flames from the searing air waves that were condensed by his true essence. The charred fragments of his clothes fluttered down to the floor.

Zhu Yan ripped off his robe like a slip of paper and tore it to shreds. He revealed a toned, muscular upper body, but because of the high amount of true essence that converged on him, his skin was red like a fiery demon.

The Scarlet Flame sword in his hands combusted into a brilliant, shimmering flame. Zhu Yan could not yet feel the fiery true essence damaging his meridians, but the pain was like countless flame needles that gripped him. However, this pain had actually filled Zhu Yan with a bloodthirsty excitement.

"Die!"

Zhu Yan's still body suddenly soared upwards into the sky. Whistling flames in the air formed together into phantasmal illusions. Zhu Yan gripped his sword with both hands and lifted it high above his head. His spine curved like a drawn bow. Fire true essence began to gather all around Zhu Yan. It condensed together and turned into a blood-red lotus that began to quietly bloom in the air...

“Red Lotus Purgatory!”

The entire space seemed to flash black for a moment. This strange red lotus swallowed that dark light, and it was as if it contained not just true essence, but had also gathered the blazing sun!

Facing Zhu Yan's killing move, at that moment, Lin Ming's mind was calm like water. His ears had lost all outside noise, whether it was the sound of burning flames, or the cheers and shouts of the audience.

In his vision, he only saw Zhu Yan. In his heart, there was only the Penetrating Rainbow!

All of his momentum had gathered into Penetrating Rainbow. The strong true essence violently vibrated. Lin Ming thrust out his spear, and it was like throwing down a mountain!

Bang!

Lin Ming's spear and Zhu Yan's 'Red Lotus Purgatory' frantically collided. There was a loud, deafening detonation like a rumbling thunderbolt. That intense collision of true essence sparked a fierce shockwave, along with a 'ka ka ka' sound as the Martial Stage was destroyed. Large broken pieces of tiles flew off everywhere in the air.

Peng!

A silhouette wrapped in crimson flames flew outwards and loudly hit a column on the Martial Stage. Along with a breaking sound, the stone column was smashed apart from the center!

This silhouette was Zhu Yan. At this moment his entire body was bathed in blood. He was unconscious on the ground, life or death unknown.

And Lin Ming was not feeling good. He was injured in the impact of that terrifying strike, and he had flown backwards several dozen feet before using Penetrating Rainbow to steady himself in the air and fall on the ground with the support of the spear shaft.

His blood began to roil, and he almost spat out blood, but by revolving the 'True Primal Chaos Formula', he was just able to press it down.

“What a ferocious move. If I had not learned to gather my momentum and set all of it aside for a final blow, then just that move a moment ago would have defeated me, the best case was both of us being wounded! The aftermath of the impact broke through my protection of vibrating true essence and only almost made me cough blood. This was thanks to my true essence from the Large Success in Viscera Training, otherwise that strike would have injured my internal organs and caused me to be severely wounded.”

“Zhu Yan’s last move had gone all out and overdrawn his strength. His injuries this time will not be light.”

Zi zi zi...

As the fragments of flames still burned, the entire audience was dead silent.

This was the pinnacle of battle! Even two peak Bone Forging martial artists could not be so intense!

Zhu Yan was already a top-tier talent, but Lin Ming had actually jumped up half a realm to defeat him!

“Did Zhu Yan die?”

“That last move of of Zhu Yan’s was an absolutely desperate one with his life on the line. ‘Red Lotus Purgatory’ is not a martial skill Zhu Yan can use. He has overdrawn his true essence.”

“Overdrawing true essence will harm one’s cultivation. For Zhu Yan to do that in order to win this match, his obsession runs too deep. But even so, Zhu Yan was defeated. This Lin Ming is truly terrifying!”

There were many masters and experts present; they had naturally seen how the final fight had played out.

Even several elders of the Martial House were present. They had seen the murderous killing intent contained in Zhu Yan’s final move.

“I find it strange. Even though Lin Ming’s perception is good, his martial talent is bad. It should be impossible for him to progress so quickly, and yet in these last two months his cultivation has leapt up an entire realm. How was this possible?”

“This... seems to be because Lin Ming has comprehended some kind of martial intent.”

“Martial intent? What’s that?”

“Well... I have only heard about it. I don’t know the specifics, but it should be powerful.”

Two of the low-level Human Hall disciples were having a casual conversation; however their conversation had been overheard by one of the top 50 disciples of the Ranking Stone. His eyes immediately widened, “What did you just say? Martial... martial intent? Lin Ming had comprehended a martial intent?”

“Uh, yes.” That low-order disciple said with a look of bewilderment.

“Who told you that!?”

That Heavenly Abode disciple was suddenly all excited; this made the low-order disciple feel a bit of fear. Facing a top 50 ranking disciple of the Heavenly Abode, it was impossible for them not to feel pressured.

“This... this matter was said by the deacon of the Icy Pond Waterfall, Senior Apprentice Brother Xie Dong...”

“Xie Dong...” The Heavenly Abode disciple gulped. Although Xie Dong had not reached the Pulse Condensation Period, he was a deacon who had worked at the Seven Profound Martial House for many years. His experience was vast, and it was impossible for him to be so wrong.

This Lin Ming, had actually managed to comprehend a martial intent!

The perception of a monstrous genius, a pure and strong heart of martial arts that was a cut above everyone else, and he also had a martial intent!

It was just too terrifying!

At this time, the medical personnel of the Seven Profound Martial House hurried onstage to apply medicine to Zhu Yan. But Lin Ming had already stepped down from the Martial Stage. His true essence had already been depleted from the fight, and at present his combat strength had fallen by several levels. He might not even be able to hold off a normal Third Stage of Body Transformation martial artist.

But still, there was a hidden aura on Lin Ming's body that emanated. Along with his formidable strength and monstrous perception he had just displayed, this made those people looking at him feel bursts of pressure.

This was the dread that came from seeing a powerhouse.

When Lin Ming stepped down, several of those nearby pulled back. Even the martial artists that had been famous for a long time stepped made way with respect. And those low-order disciples who had idolized him, only worshipped him Lin Ming with more fanaticism.

“Mister Lin Ming! Congratulations!” Crown Prince Yang Lin stood up from afar and warmly greeted him. Among his words was just the right amount of veneration. This was the respect he demonstrated to a powerhouse, and had disregarded his status.

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