

Emperor 3741

Chapter 3741: Challenge Letter

The news of the letter startled everyone.

“It’s here.” The experts on Minor Sacred Mountain became nervous, especially the younger ones.

The provocation from the scion infuriated them. Alas, there was a touch of helplessness because he was just too powerful. Few could actually fight him directly and make him pay for his contemptuous attitude.

All eyes were on the base of the mountain now. They saw three people slowly appearing in their vision - two men and one woman From Righteous Sect.

They had a calm expression despite going up against the mass. Though peace existed between the two powers, being under so much scrutiny would warrant some anxiety.

This wasn’t the case for the letter bearers. They seemed to be strolling, completely undeterred by the gazes.

The mark of Righteous on their uniform looked particularly conspicuous and provocative due to the circumstances.

The woman stood in the center, seemingly in charge. She wasn’t older than Dugu Lan.

In terms of appearance, she was pretty with an oval face. Her eyes were bright like the stars with unique lights hidden within.

She wore a faint blue dress without any jewelry and ornaments. It looked like a regular outfit yet upon closer inspection, it was perfectly fitted.

She was pretty, not in an astonishing manner. Her beauty resembled a pristine piece of jade, exquisite without being carved. Her eyebrows were unique - emerald and pointing slightly upward. She had a faint smile, looking rather amicable.

Of course, there was a disparity between her and Dugu Lan. The latter was gorgeous, enough to sway the soul at first glance.

To her left was a saber-wielder. He had a large stature - half flesh and half stone. It gave off a fortified and powerful presence.

Despite having a bulky frame made of stone, he didn’t look heavy and sluggish at all. His steps were as light and free as the clouds.

To the right was a tall and slender man with a white complexion. He seemed quiet and graceful like a weak scholar. One gale could probably send him flying. His weapon of choice was a whip coiled around his arm, looking nimble like a spirit serpent.

“Two from the five prodigies of Geniuses.” No one recognized the woman in the center. However, most knew the two men.

Due to the relationship between Righteous and Buddha, cultivators would normally travel back and forth. Thus, the members of the holy ground were familiar with the top talents in Righteous.

“Thunderblade Xiao Fengyun and Cloudwhip Liu Huaishi.” Some could be considered acquaintances with them. It just wasn’t the right time for a greeting.

“This only shows how strong the scion is, having these five prodigies as the vanguard.” One spectator commented.

Similar to the holy ground, Righteous also had numerous sects and countries within its territories. The five great prodigies were the top talents from there.

“Who is that girl?” This became the next question.

She should have a unique status in order to have these two as her escorts. However, no one recognized her, not even those who have stayed at Righteous for a long time.

“I don’t know, maybe a disciple of an elder from Righteous Sect.” Someone speculated.

The actual Righteous Sect was similar to Sacred Mountain. The members of the latter rarely showed up. If a disciple from an elder there were to walk around the holy ground, they would be treated with the utmost respect.

The crowd applied this same logic to the woman. To be the letter messenger from the scion was indicative of her high status.

“I am Xu Cuimei of Righteous Sect.” She stopped before the steps and smilingly cupped her fist: “Our sect’s scion will be coming to the holy ground to challenge its heroes. The challenge letter is here today. Please excuse the lack of etiquette and decorum.”

The crowd was certainly annoyed or infuriated at the scion’s disdainful challenge. However, this girl was polite so they couldn’t vent their anger or it would reflect badly on the holy ground.

After all, she came alone without an army all the way to Minor Sacred Mountain. Treating her improperly would show a lack of elegance and grace.

Thus, they remained silent. Moreover, accepting this letter meant bearing the brunt of the responsibility by actually fighting the scion.

They needed to have enough power to do so lest they want to embarrass themselves. They turned towards Dugu Lan. Even Phantom and Hu Ben did so.

“The scion is gifted and ambitious.” Dugu Lan answered: “Our holy ground is not belligerent. This doesn’t mean we’re afraid of fighting. If he wishes to see our techniques, then we will show him what we can do. I, on behalf of the members of Buddha Holy Ground, accept this challenge.”

Dugu Lan spoke calmly without any hostility. Her response was thoughtful, earning her the praise of the crowd.

They then waited for Xu Cuimei to hand the challenge letter over. In order to get there, she must make it through Conqueror and Virtuous Rank.

This shouldn't be a problem for Thunderblade and Cloudwhip. What about this girl?

"Your reputation precedes you, Fairy Dugu." Xu Cuimei smiled and walked up the steps with the two men behind her.

She had no problem reaching Virtuous Rank before curious gazes.

Chapter 3742: Greetings, Young Master

People stared intensely at Xu Cuimei as she walked up the steps.

It was time for Dugu Lan to accept the challenge letter - a truly pivotal moment for the holy ground.

Cuimei made it up to Dugu Lan's level and scanned the area. She glanced at Dugu Lan first before being surprised after looking at a creek nearby.

She composed herself and started walking in that direction to everyone's astonishment.

She was supposed to hand over the letter; even her two escorts didn't know what was going on.

"What's happening?" The crowd followed her movement.

"What about the challenge letter?" One genius blurted out. Dugu Lan was right there already.

Some became angry right away. "Is she trying to insult Fairy Dugu on purpose?"

"She's purposely insulting the entire holy ground. Hmph, it won't go as she plans!" Another furiously said.

Their annoyance was warranted. Thousands of geniuses were here to wait for the challenge letter. This was giving Righteous Sect plenty of face.

On the other hand, Xu Cuimei suddenly ignored Dugu Lan and walked somewhere else. This could only be construed as deliberate disrespect.

If Righteous Scion was the one doing this, they wouldn't dare to say anything.

The problem was - this Xu Cuimei looked to be a regular disciple from Righteous Sect. How dare she put on such a show?

The calmest person present was Dugu Lan. As the main character, she should be the most offended one after being ignored. However, this seemed to be within her expectations.

Minor Sacred Mountain had rivers coursing around it. From a distance, the rivers looked like coiling dragons.

Not far from Virtuous Altar was a creek surrounded by trees, looking quite peaceful.

Cuimei came to a twisting section of the creek to see a man fishing there. He wore a hemp robe and a veiled hat large enough to shield from the sun. This naturally hid his face as well.

He hasn't moved in a while, seemingly asleep. No one paid attention to him a while back.

"Xu Cuimei, a member of Righteous Sect, greets you, Sir." She bowed deeply towards the fisherman.

The spectators became astonished. Why did the courier focus on this fisherman instead of her duty?

“Who is that?” They were perplexed.

“Looks a bit familiar.” One expert said.

The fisherman seemed to be asleep and ignored the girl.

“I apologize for bothering you, Sir.” Cuimei’s head lowered even more, as subservient as can be.

The fisherman finally looked up and lazily said: “You’re forgiven.”

“It’s Li Qiye!” After he raised his head, people finally saw who he was.

It turned out that Li Qiye had been here a long time before Dugu Lan and the rest.

“What is he doing here?” The crowd found this surprising since he had disappeared after destroying the two mansions.

“Does Li Qiye know her?” This perplexed them all.

“It is an honor to see you, Sir. I have heard of your exploits before...” Cuimei continued.

As the saying goes - nobody will find fault with extra courtesy. Li Qiye smiled and said: “Call me Young Master. Righteous Sect has waves of geniuses, glory will come soon with one like this.”

The members of the holy ground were dissatisfied with this remark. Li Qiye praised their opponents in public; this wasn’t good for morale - certainly not appropriate during the sensitive circumstances.

“Hmph, he thinks too highly of himself.” One prodigy scowled.

“Is he forgetting that he’s part of the holy ground?” Another from Vajra coldly uttered.

“You’re too kind, Young Master. Buddha Holy Ground has hidden dragons and crouching tigers, it’ll be just as resplendent.” Cuimei hurriedly responded.

“A true dragon cannot hide forever.” Li Qiye replied: “Unfortunately, the majority consists of fools.”

This casual insinuation was as clear as can be. The crowd started glaring at Li Qiye.

In this key moment, they all focused on how to deal with Righteous Sect. Li Qiye was breaking the solidarity despite being a member of the holy ground.

“What are you trying to say?!” One youth shouted at Li Qiye only to be ignored.

“Think about your background first before you speak, you’re from the holy ground too.” Another added.

“Is he conspiring with the enemy? Banish him in that case.” One guy talked among his group.

“That’s letting him off easy. If he’s an actual traitor, off with his head as a warning.” A peer had murderous flashes in his eyes.

“Shut your mouth!” An older senior immediately scolded.

The young ones were impetuous with their words. Li Qiye could say whatever he wanted since he was the saber messenger. Offending Li Qiye meant offending Vajra.

Given Li Qiye's brutal personality, he might actually mobilize Vajra and start a war over petty quarrels.

"I am occupied with business and will come back later, Young Master." Cuimei bowed again.

"Go." Li Qiye waved his hand and went back to focus on fishing.

"Hmph, not helping us is one thing but he's actually lowering morale and degrading the holy ground's reputation." One spectator said with disdain.

A number of geniuses were annoyed with Li Qiye. One of them said: "Haha, how is he going to help with his meager skills? I don't think he has the courage, that's why he's flattering Righteous Sect."

Li Qiye's comment has truly offended the majority of the crowd. Even Phantom and Hu Ben didn't take it in stride. Of course, they were smart enough to keep their mouth shut.

As for Dugu Lan sitting beneath a tree, she didn't say anything either as if she had expected this.

Chapter 3743: Xu Cuimei

"I have heard of you long ago, Fairy Dugu. You do live up to your reputation." Xu Cuimei went back then cupped her fist and told Dugu Lan.

"You're too kind, Miss Xu." Dugu Lan replied: "My knowledge regarding Righteous Sect is limited. I'm sorry but I'm not familiar with you."

"Righteous has plenty of talents and disciples, I am only an ordinary disciple. It's understandable." Cuimei smiled back.

Cuimei remained calm despite facing thousands of top talents from the holy ground, including a genius like Dugu Lan. Her courage and composure were admirable. No wonder why she was chosen as the courier.

"On the other hand, I've heard of a few rumors about Righteous Scion." Dugu Lan seemed amused while looking at Cuimei.

"Is that so? I'm sure there are plenty of rumors since the tallest tree has to block the strong winds. There has been no lack of positive and negative comments."

"Right." Dugu Lan nodded: "Trusting the nonsensical rumors will drag us down to their level, only adding unnecessary problems."

"I'm glad we agree. It's a shame that we couldn't have met sooner, it is my pleasure." Cuimei said.

"The pleasure's mine." Dugu Lan smiled.

The crowd listened attentively. These two seemed to be enjoying their conversation, virtually lacking any hostility.

One would mistake them for two friends or admirers of each other. It wouldn't be surprising if this led to friendship, at least according to the current mood.

“Fairy Dugu is special.” A listener said: “Still elegant and friendly while facing this challenge. How many can do it like her?”

No one has mistreated or disrespected Xu Cuimei so far. Nonetheless, due to the nature of the challenge, they still had some prejudice or distaste towards her.

On the other hand, Dugu Lan didn’t express any of this.

“That’s why we call her fairy, flawless and freed from mortal imperfection.” One admirer couldn’t help praising.

“I am here to give you the letter in the scion’s stead.” Cuimei held a box with rays emanating from it.

People became serious right away and watched with bated breath. This was definitely a big event for both the holy ground and Righteous.

“The scion isn’t aiming at you specifically, he wishes to test himself against all the heroes in the holy ground.” Cuimei said.

“I understand.” Dugu Lan nodded: “We shall accept his challenge and face him when he comes.”

Cuimei finally opened the box. A letter slowly floated upward and pulsed radiantly just like a supreme treasure. The material was obviously precious.

From this, one could see that despite his arrogant tone, the scion didn’t actually look down on the holy ground. The effort spent on this letter alone was indicative of how much he cared.

The crowd started thinking as the letter was floating towards Dugu Lan. If it wasn’t for her, who here would dare to accept it? The one to do so would have to fight no matter what for the sake of their reputation.

Dugu Lan raised her hand, caught the letter then opened it.

The light became as bright as a rising sun. “Boom!” A power exploded and spread across the region. The waves were unbearable for some cultivators.

Many were caught off guard and got sent flying, unable to withstand the tsunami currents. They had to spin repeatedly in the air in order to regain stability. Some smashed onto the ground or got blown off the mountain. Chaos and disorder took over right away.

A haughty figure emerged in the light. Though it was faint, just one hand wave could suffocate others or render it impossible to stand straight.

“As I head eastward, I hope that the path won’t be empty. Who in the holy ground will be able to stop me?” The figure spoke sonorously.

Just one brief sentence struck the crowd hard. Some couldn’t handle the words echoing in their eras and succumbed to the overbearing pressure.

The figure then disappeared. The letter turned into golden particles that scatter away.

The scion's words infuriated some of the young geniuses here. It felt as if he was looking down on the geniuses from the holy ground, already assuming superiority.

They regained their wits and stared at Dugu Lan. She remained cool and told Cuimei: "Miss, please tell the scion that I'll be waiting to fight him right here."

"It is expected for Fairy Dugu to guard Minor Sacred Mountain." Cuimei smiled: "I hope that others will fight him along the way or it'll be a boring journey. You surely can't be the only combatant in the massive holy ground."

The listeners found this frustrating. Cuimei made it sound that only Dugu Lan was worth the scion's time. Some were young and easily offended.

One genius stepped up and said: "Righteous Scion's strength is unquestionable but the holy ground has plenty of talents. If he dares to come, we'll show him what we can do."

Earlier, the two escorts behind Cuimei have remained silent. Thunderblade smiled and responded: "You sound quite confident."

The members in Righteous adored the scion. Thunderblade was no exception.

"He'll find out once he's here." Another genius from the holy ground added.

The young talents from both sides were arrogant and prideful. They certainly didn't like each other.

"Well, I don't see it. I hope that there won't be too many turtles hiding in their shell on that day." Thunderblade smirked.

"Watch your words!" A genius barked back.

Chapter 3744: Thunderblade

Thunderblade Xiao Fengyun's retort offended all the cultivators from the holy ground. Nonetheless, the unpleasant content carried a hint of truth and struck where it hurts.

The members of the holy ground did show hesitation when dealing with the scion until Dugu Lan stepped up.

The holy ground would have been humiliated if it wasn't for her. Others would have mocked it for years.

"My words are nothing but the truth. If you think otherwise, come forward." Xiao Fengyun said.

"Fengyun, enough." Xu Cuimei smiled and shook her head to stop the provocation.

"Got it." Fengyun slightly bowed but still smiled at the experts in front of him, clearly taunting them. His smile could only be construed as disdain and contempt.

"Righteous Sect is strong but so is our holy ground." Hu Ben uttered coldly: "Though the scion isn't here, if other members of Righteous wish to test us, we're more than ready."

"Why not?" Fengyun said: "If you all want to, we're ready as well." He took one step forward while holding his saber, looking relaxed despite facing thousands of people.

The holy ground must do something to answer this provocation.

“Let’s see the great arts of Righteous Sect.” Hu Ben stepped forward, looking fierce.

“Hu Ben, teach him a lesson!” One prodigy loudly supported.

“A spar is fine.” Cuimei didn’t stop them this time.

“What do you think, Fairy?” Hu Ben stared at Dugu Lan.

She was in charge of the competition so they were ready to listen to her.

“Our opponent is Righteous Scion.” Dugu had a calm yet focused expression as she answered: “We need to do everything we can then.”

“I understand.” Hu Ben pondered for a second before nodding.

The true combatants against the scion were their group. This final battle was extremely important.

They needed more information on the scion’s true power and resources while hiding their own. Dugu Lan wanted the top geniuses to avoid minor skirmishes - if you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.

The problem was, very few in the holy ground could actually force the scion to use his real abilities. Outside of the four geniuses, the scion probably didn’t need more than half a move to defeat his foe.

Since their holy ground had this idea, Righteous Sect probably thought the same way. Thunderblade might be using this opportunity to gather information on the top geniuses of the holy ground.

“It would be unwise to fight you right now, Daoist Xiao. Seems like a battle between us won’t happen.” Hu Ben paused for a bit then added: “But there are other geniuses here who might be interested.”

“What? He’s spared just like that?” One youth didn’t grasp the finer details. In his opinion, Hu Ben was dodging a direct confrontation at the expense of the holy ground’s reputation.

“It’s just a strategy.” A smarter youth responded: “The four of them need to think about the scion and conserve strength, hiding their real abilities.”

The others immediately understood why Hu Ben backed off and stopped blaming him.

“Understandable.” Xiao Fengyun didn’t mock Hu Ben for doing so.

He turned towards the crowd and said: “Excuse me for overestimating myself but I wish to spar against any willing challenger.”

The ones present must accept the fight against Thunderblade. The previous hesitation with the scion was shameful enough. This would be utterly unacceptable.

“Should I go?” A junior sought counsel from his senior.

“What is his cultivation realm?” Another quietly analyzed Xiao Fengfun.

“Myriad-form Sanctity, unclear whether it is the intermediate or grand level.” Dugu Lan revealed.

“Fairy Dugu, your vision is impressive.” Xiao Fengyun wasn’t startled after the revelation of his cultivation.

“Hmm, grand-level Myriad-form Sanctity.” The geniuses who wanted to fight earlier hesitated.

There were powerful ones present - young lords of sects and saint child. Some of them were at the Myriad-form realm, albeit only at the intermediate level. Facing one level higher meant uncertainties.

“Be mindful of our Thunderblade’s saber when fighting him. It’s a good weapon made from the bones of an auspicious lighting beast.” Xu Cuimei smiled and warned the other geniuses.

Unfortunately, her goodwill was taken as naivety or foolishness.

“That saber is powerful indeed but Daoist Xiao’s bloodline is more dangerous.” Dugu Lan concluded after taking a closer look.

The crowd pondered while staring at the hybrid body. His actual bloodline remained unknown.

“You already know the ins and outs before seeing me in battle, it seems like you can kill me in one move.” Fengyun smiled wryly.

“No, that’s unlikely.” Dugu Lan shook her head.

Fengyun was certainly impressive as one of the five prodigies in Righteous. Even if he was weaker than the four great geniuses in Buddha Holy Ground, he was still among the top.

The members of the holy ground exchanged glances. None had absolute confidence in beating him.

Normally, losing wasn’t a big deal. After all, all cultivators must lose eventually. However, this was a competition between Righteous and Buddha - a historical event. To lose now would brand them as a loser forever. It was better to be passive in this case.

Chapter 3745: Direct Confrontation

The atmosphere felt awkward and oppressive for the holy ground’s members. It would be too embarrassing if no one accepted the challenge.

Dugu Lan, Hu Ben, and Phantom couldn’t fight since they needed to focus on their real opponent.

“Allow me to see your techniques, Brother Xiao.” One person finally stepped forward.

He wasn’t as tall as Xiao Fengyun but still looked quite tough and brimming with power - seemingly capable of moving anything in front of him.

“It’s Lin Hao.” Others recognized the youth.

“One of the five heroes from Duality Academy, maybe there’s a chance of victory.” Some became excited.

“There are only three heroes now.” Another quietly said.

The crowd then remembered that Li Xiangquan and Zhang Yunzhi have been killed by Li Qiye.

“Maybe other students will take their spots.” One student said.

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief. At least they didn't need to do it themselves. Plus, Lin Hao was strong enough to put up a good fight.

"Senior Brother Lin, you got this!" The students from Duality started cheering.

Lin Hao's bravery earned points for the academy since everyone else hesitated.

"I have heard of you before, Brother Lin." Xiao Fengyun said: "Your furious axe is a top technique in the holy ground. It is an honor."

"It's just an exaggeration, I am nothing compared to the real heroes in this world." Lin Hao shook his head.

In recent days, he became more introverted and humble, fully focusing on cultivation.

"You're too humble. You are rumored to be a master at the Furious Flame Law, it will be a fortune to see it." Xiao Fengyun said.

People were surprised to see Fengyun knowing so much about Lin Hao.

"Looks like Righteous did their homework, clearly researching the top talents in our holy ground." One youth said softly.

"Obviously, they had to prepare before challenging us." Another said while being glad that he didn't step up.

Xiao Fengyun already knew Lin Hao's techniques and abilities, maybe other arts as well.

"It's just an earth-level law with limited power. I hope I won't make a fool out of myself." Lin Hao said.

Lin Hao certainly had the worst background out of the five heroes. He came from nothing instead of his peers who were usually from the nobility.

Li Xiangquan and the others already had access to top merit laws or ancestral arts even before joining Duality.

This wasn't the case for Lin Hao. He started as an ordinary student in Duality and learned elementary merit laws at the start.

An earth-level law was impressive for regular cultivators. However, it wasn't much for the influential nobles and geniuses. This was his biggest disadvantage.

"Senior Brother Lin still has an inborn fate palace." One Duality student said.

His fate palace allowed him to excel against the odds. Nonetheless, his starting point was still lower than others.

"A senior once told me that merit laws decide an individual's starting point but as for their height? It's up to them." Fengyun said.

"I do agree with that. Seems like even if I were to lose, it won't be a vexing defeat." Lin Hao laughed.

"Let's get started then." Fengyun walked forward while holding his saber.

"I hope I'll be able to see the famous Evil Devourer art of Righteous." Lin Hao walked forward as well.

"I'm afraid you'll be disappointed because I'm too slow to learn this supreme art. I'm not qualified either." Fengyun smiled wryly: "My art is from my clan, Thunder Saber Art. It might not be enough to enter your sight."

Fengyun deliberately revealed his best merit law.

"The Xiao is one of the top five clans in Righteous." Dugu Lan interjected: "Thunder Saber Art is certainly a top-tier technique. According to the rumors, Righteous Dao Lord received points from the seniors of the Xiao Clan and learned this art. He stopped using it after becoming a dao lord but later on, he helped modify this art."

She wasn't trying to boast her knowledge, only to remind Lin Hao.

"A saber technique fixed by a dao lord." Others became startled and thought that they were lucky to hold back.

"Fairy, it seems like you know everything, maybe more about our clan than some of our own members." Fengyun praised her.

"It's no big deal, I had a trip abroad at Righteous during my youth." Dugu Lan said.

Others haven't heard of her experience before in Righteous.

"Brother Lin, the truth is I am indeed at the grand level. Please be careful now." Fengyun took a deep breath and told Lin Hao.

This was rather unexpected. Fengyun's goal was to test the geniuses in the holy ground. But now, he revealed his merit laws and cultivation realm before the start of the fight.

Victory or defeat actually didn't matter here; only information gathering. What was the point in fighting then?

"Incredible. And Brother Xiao, I've only recently reached the grand level as well." Lin Hao also stated his cultivation realm.

"Senior Brother Lin is at the grand level now?" Some Duality students couldn't believe it.

"So the rumors are true. He just didn't admit it before." Another student said.

"Duality Academy is incredible, even someone who has no background to speak of can reach this realm." One older expert became emotional.

"People of talent appreciate one another." An expert commented.

Xiao Fengyun and Lin Hao have never met before but they seemed to be appreciating each other and could have been friends under different circumstances.

"Brother Xiao, make your move." Lin Hao took out two axes that were hanging on his waist.

Chapter 3746: First Swing

Lin Hao and Xiao Fengyun stood face to face while everyone else watched with bated breath.

Both were at the grand level of the Myriad-form realm. This was nothing short of impressive at their age. They might not be the best of the best but were still geniuses among geniuses.

They certainly had a bright future given their current cultivation and had no problem becoming Heavenly Sovereigns. In fact, they would be at the top level of that realm, becoming the strongest ancestors of a sect. Thus, this fight was worth a watch even for the top ancestors.

The two took the fight seriously, not daring to be careless.

“Who’ll win?” Some youths lost their patience during this standoff. For them, the fight was more than just Lin Hao’s personal score. The holy ground’s prestige was on the line as well.

“Senior Brother Lin, obviously, his inborn fate palace gives him a powerful life fire. Xiao Fengyun can’t stop it.” One spectator said.

“I hope so.” Another student replied. This would be a boost to the academy’s image.

A more insightful genius disagreed: “Lin Hao’s chances are low, to say the least. They’re both in the same realm but in terms of mastery, Lin Hao is far shallower.”

“As Fairy Dugu said, Xiao Fengyun is from a famous clan in Righteous, he has access to resources that Lin Hao isn’t privy to.” An expert agreed.

A few powerful geniuses from the holy ground thought about fighting Xiao Fengyun before Lin Hao. They hesitated because of Fengyun’s clan. This deterred their confidence.

Thus, the hopeful members of the crowd became quiet. The logic was sound - Lin Hao’s background was his biggest weakness.

Therefore, his available merit laws and weapons couldn’t compare to Xiao Fengyun.

“I’m starting now.” Fengyun unsheathed his saber.

“Clank!” Crackles detonated unceasingly as lightning waves engulfed the blade. He seemed to be holding a bundle of lightning bolts instead of an actual saber.

“Overwhelming Blast!” He roared and pushed his saber forward with lightning speed. The actual blade couldn’t be seen anymore, only lightning bolts twisting together.

The currents flowed swiftly like a torrential river, looking like a spear piercing through space. It felt as if a dam had fallen and the ferocious lightning bolts instantly rushed out to hunt Lin Hao.

It consisted of speed, power, and sharpness - crushing space in the process while aiming for Lin Hao’s throat.

This move was ferocious and potentially fatal while being extremely hard to defend.

“Activate!” Lin Hao was ready. He roared and released his fate palace. Life fire was released with a similar intensity.

This flame had an all-destroying destructive capability, able to burn through everything in its path.

“Boom!” The lightning river and the fire wave made contact, resulting in a terrible shockwave of fire and lightning twisted together. Loud crackles and blinding lights materialized, akin to the eruption of a volcano infused with lightning.

The flames seemed to have the upper hand and started drowning out the lightning. The flow suddenly reversed towards Xiao Fengyun like an unstoppable army.

“This is possible?” One youth became slack-jawed.

“His cauldron of life is special, no one among the young generation can have a stronger fire.” A big shot praised Lin Hao after seeing this.

The life fire seemed rather unstoppable, ready to burn the opponent to a crisp.

“Lightning Bird!” Xiao Fengyun showed no sign of fear as he performed his next technique. The saber immediately released more lightning.

“Screech!” As he swung his blade, a lightning bird flew out.

“The image of an auspicious divine beast.” Even the older experts became startled.

The saber was made from the dao bone of this auspicious beast.

“Rumble!” The bird soared upward and released more lightning bolts. It looked like the ruler of this affinity. Its claws could tear out the fabrics of space to open a portal to a lightning world.

It didn’t take long before an ocean of lightning accumulated to meet the incoming life fire.

“Boom!” This influx of power seemingly overwhelmed the torrent of fire.

Lin Hao saw this and finally used one axe for a vertical slash. Its speed was unreasonable. The afterimage in the air appeared a long time after the actual movement.

The monstrous slash seemed capable of splitting the world into two halves.

“Furious Slash!” His roar echoed in everyone’s mind.

“Boom!” Fengyun retaliated perfectly by parrying the axe with his saber, preventing his head from being split open.

The crowd felt pain in their ears from the loud explosion. Fiery sparks splattered from the impact point while Fengyun was pushed a dozen steps backward.

“Yea! Brother Lin!” The Duality students applauded since Lin Hao had the upper hand.

The slash earlier made them feel amazing. They have been holding back anger and indignation for a while now.

“Lin Hao’s reputation is well-deserved.” Another genius had to admit that Lin Hao was worthy of his fame. He might not be the strongest among the five heroes but definitely in the top three.

“He would be one level higher if he came from a big clan.” One ancestor sentimentally said.

Among the five, he certainly worked the hardest so his cultivation was solid.

The rare members of the crowd who came from humble backgrounds took pride in this. After all, he represented their dream.

Chapter 3747: Third Swing

The first swing forced Xiao Fengyun back and pleased the crowd.

Lin Hao rode the momentum in a spurt of energy, not allowing Fengyun to breathe or regain stability.

“Earth Rend!” He swung his second axe and released a massive fiery meteor with a long trail towards Fengyun. The flames burned the air, creating blurriness and a melting phenomenon.

“Crack!” The ground cracked enough though the axe was still in the upper trajectory. Lava oozed out from the cracks and actually lunged towards Fengyun.

The second swing was more dominating than the first and harder to stop.

“So strong!” One spectator blurted out while his knees buckled in fear.

The geniuses in the same realm became emotional. They admitted that Lin Hao was quite strong despite lacking resources and top merit laws.

Fengyun retaliated by pinning his saber into the ground. “Buzz.” Lightning bolts coursed underground.

In the next second, a diagram with lines made of lightning appeared on the ground like a peerless totem.

“Lightning Pillars!” Feng Yun roared and thick lightning bolts came out of the ground - mighty enough to shoulder the sky. They created a net-like barrier to stop all offenses.

“Boom!” Lin Hao’s axe struck the barrier.

“Rumble!” The power of the hatchet was devastating, seemingly wanting to destroy the capital.

Alas, it wasn’t enough to split the lightning barrier, only forcing some cracks on the surface.

Fengyun took this opportunity to retaliate. The next saber swing lacked the same fanfare as before.

This slash was virtually imperceptible. Once people noticed it, it would have been too late since the blade would be inches away from the neck.

Abyss Lightning - this was a killing move from his clan’s Thunder Saber Art. This one was different from the rest - looking weak due to its subdued nature yet was extremely fatal.

Many opponents died to this particular move instead of the flashy ones.

Most young spectators didn’t see the move clearly. They only felt a cold breeze by their neck as if something was on the verge of piercing through.

“Watch it, your neck!” The stronger geniuses shouted to warn Lin Hao.

Of course, it was way too late once the words came out. The tip of the saber was already there. These geniuses could already imagine the fatal result.

“Clank!” More sparks slashed outward. Lin Hao managed to stop it with his third axe that came out of nowhere. His speed wasn’t inferior to Fengyun in the slightest.

“That was close.” People heaved a sigh of relief. Their back was drenched with cold sweat by now.

“Triple Furious Axe.” They finally understood his title after seeing this. [1]

Normally, people only saw the two axes hanging by his waist, not the third one. Those who didn’t know him well would only think that he was a dual-wielder.

“Where did the third one come from?” One cultivator regained his wits and wondered.

Xiao Fengyun wasn’t puzzled by this and activated more lightning bolts.

“Watch it!” The spectators shouted.

Lin Hao didn’t need them to warn him. He knew that this wasn’t looking good because Fengyun’s body was covered in lightning bolts right now. He had no choice but to switch to defense.

“Ravage The Nine Firmaments!” Fengyun roared and the lightning bolts soared straight towards Lin Hao.

“Boom! Boom! Boom!” In the next split second, the bolts struck Lin Hao and exploded.

Lin Hao’s reaction was impeccable as he pulled back his axe to defend himself. Alas, it wasn’t enough to block all the lightning bolts.

He was sent flying through the air and vomited blood. His armor also broke down from the explosions.

“Bam!” He smashed into the ground, looking disorderly.

The atmosphere became frozen while the members of the holy ground couldn’t keep their mouth shut.

Lin Hao had the upper hand just a moment ago but everything changed so quickly.

A while later, Lin Hao got up, looking bloodied from top to bottom.

“Senior Brother Lin, are you okay?” One student came over, wanting to help him.

Lin Hao gently rejected the guy and stood straight on his own.

“I’ve lost.” He smiled wryly without looking dejected or angry.

“It’s too early for that, you can still fight.” Xiao Fengyun shook his head.

The wounds weren’t serious enough to negatively affect Lin Hao. He could keep on fighting if he wanted to.

“A loss is a loss, no need to prolong it. I can still fight but the gap is clear. I’ll only be inviting further humiliation. I am weaker and wholeheartedly accept defeat.” Lin Hao said, not too bothered by the loss.

This battle pertained to the holy ground’s reputation. Some wouldn’t take losing as lightly as him right now.

That’s why the others didn’t want to take this risk. On the other hand, Lin Hao seemed rather accepting of the whole thing. This strong mentality impressed the crowd.

"I like your style, Brother Lin. It's an honor to fight you." Fengyun cupped his fist.

"You're too kind. The Xiao's saber art was amazing." Lin Hao reflected.

This gentlemanly display was enviable. The result didn't matter as much as the experience.

"Sometimes, an enemy can be cuter than a friend." One person said softly.

"Brother Lin, you've done well in representing the holy ground. It's a great contribution." Dugu Lan spoke.

"I'm sorry." Lin Hao smiled bitterly and finally accepted the help from his peers to leave the scene.

Silence took over. His loss, regardless of its elegant nature, was still a blow to the holy ground.

Chapter 3748: Cloudwhip

The geniuses of the holy ground had nothing to say. They didn't mock or criticize Lin Hao for losing.

In reality, they probably wouldn't have fared better. Lin Hao was absolutely strong, perhaps only weaker than Dugu Lan's group. A few others could be stronger than him but certainly not by much.

After seeing Xiao Fengyun in action, they realized that defeating him cleanly would have been virtually impossible. Not losing in a disastrous manner would have been a good outcome.

Prior to this, some prideful geniuses were infuriated with Xiao Fengyun's attitude. However, it was tough to act out given the guy's displayed power.

Xiao Fengyun could definitely be listed among the top geniuses of the holy ground.

This was a terrible start for the holy ground, losing the first round. Anxiety and nervousness surfaced in the young geniuses' mind.

"No need to worry, this is just the nature of fighting and cultivation." Dugu Lan consoled.

Unfortunately, the atmosphere didn't get any better. The young ones still wore a heavy heart.

"How about a spar with me now, fellow daoists from Buddha Holy Ground?" Cloudwhip Liu Huaishi stepped forward.

This was expected because his side had the morale advantage. The holy ground would have done the same.

But since Lin Hao had lost, who would want to fight Liu Huaishi now? Liu Huaishi and Xiao Fengyun were part of the five prodigies. This meant that he was likely just as strong.

Huaishi stood facing the members of the holy ground with an indifferent expression, looking like a bamboo tree.

The holy ground's members exchanged glances, feeling the same hesitation as before. The stake was even higher now. Losing a second time would be more serious than the first. The pressure was palpable for any potential challenger.

"I cannot see through your background, Fellow Daoist Liu. Nonetheless, your power is worthy of admiration." Dugu Lan gazed at him and concluded.

Her assessment startled the crowd. Could it be that Liu Huaishi was even stronger than his friend? She said it in order to warn the geniuses here.

"You're too kind, Fairy Dugu. My defeat is certain if you join the fray." Liu Huaishi cupped his fist with a serious expression.

"Your vision just keeps on impressing. His power is indeed mighty, definitely the first or second in our group." Xiao Fengyun laughed.

Xiao Fengyun currently served as a standard for fighting capabilities. It seemed that only the four geniuses of the holy ground could defeat him. Now, he admitted that Liu Huaishi was actually stronger than him.

"Can it be... he's in the Grand Dao Sacred Physique realm?" One listener murmured.

"Grand dao realm..." The top geniuses present couldn't help shuddering.

Given the guy's age, it meant that he was a dragon among men, a genius among geniuses.

"Should be peak Myriad-form if not already sacred physique." One older expert said.

The members of the holy ground found the situation deteriorating. It became harder to breathe for them.

Those on the verge of coming out prior changed their mind. If Liu Huaishi was only as strong as Xiao Fengyun, some still had a chance of putting up a great fight or winning.

Now, the gap between the two seemed considerable. This shattered their confidence.

"I can handle a grand-level Myriad-form cultivator." A formidable genius said: "But the sacred physique realm? No way."

Everyone knew when within one realm, one could rely on peerless merit laws or treasures to make up the cultivation gap. However, when it was an entire realm, this was the difference between heaven and earth.

"Righteous Sect is using their ace cards for this." One genius said. Their four geniuses needed to take action now.

"Are you an actual disciple from Righteous Sect?" Phantom stared at him and asked.

"I've only become one recently after falling into the good graces of the seniors. I do not dare to represent Righteous Sect due to my lack of abilities." Liu Huaishi answered.

"A direct disciple of Righteous..." The geniuses from the holy ground became shaken after hearing the confirmation.

Righteous Sect was similar to Buddha Holy Ground in that it governed numerous vassals and tributaries. Normally, everyone could claim to be a disciple of Righteous; this was the case for the members of Buddha as well.

However, under official events or serious occasions, this no longer applied.

Phantom was asking whether the guy was from the actual sect. For example, Thunderblade was from a great clan under Righteous' banner.

Being in Righteous meant being a part of this sect and learning its merit laws. The equivalent for the holy ground would be joining Sacred Mountain and learning there.

An actual disciple and a mere member of Righteous were two completely different things.

"Do we have anyone from Sacred Mountain here?" This beckoned the question.

No one could answer. Sacred Mountain actually had many disciples due to its long history. However, these disciples rarely came out.

The revelation destroyed the hope of the geniuses present. They had no choice but to stare at Dugu Lan, Phantom, and Hu Ben.

"Does anyone wish to fight?" Liu Huaishi repeated with a cold expression.

The members of the holy ground took it as a provocation. Hu Ben and Phantom exchanged glances. If others didn't want to fight, they must do something.

Chapter 3749: Brave Girl

Hesitancy and doubt permeated the side of the holy ground. Losing to Liu Huaishi would be a great blow to the cause.

The members of the holy ground wouldn't be able to keep their head high when facing someone from Righteous after losing.

Thus, they placed their hope on Dugu Lan, Phantom, and Hu Ben.

Unfortunately, this wasn't the right time for them to fight according to the plan. They needed to focus on the scion since they were the ace cards of the holy ground - the only geniuses that could actually keep up.

Thus, the later their involvement, the better. This made it harder for Righteous to understand their actual abilities.

Unfortunately, no other members present had absolute confidence in beating Liu Huaishi.

"Anyone at all?" Liu Huaishi asked again.

The common words were viewed as another insult by the other side. They were frustrated but couldn't do anything.

"I'll overestimate myself and fight you, Fellow Daoist." A pleasant voice answered.

A woman stepped out, wearing a simple yet meticulously crafted dress. She wasn't as beautiful as Dugu Lan but still had a special aura that made her unique and elegant. One would never get bored of staring at her.

"Senior Sister Xiaoyue! She's stepping up!" A student from Duality shouted.

"Another of the five heroes from Duality." Others recognized her.

Those from various powers became dejected because so far, both combatants were from Duality Academy.

"The academy is showing why it is number one during this time of crisis." One big shot sighed and said.

The youths here had to admit that the students from Duality had more courage. First, it was Dugu Lan. Now, both Lin Hao and Chi Xiaoyue also stepped up.

Vajra didn't take charge nor did the mighty Divine Ghost Tribe. Duality Academy was at the forefront when everyone else faltered. This was rather commendable.

"Can Chi Xiaoyue win? Lin Hao lost to Fengyun." The crowd remained pessimistic.

Lin Hao and Chi Xiaoyue should be evenly matched. The problem was - Huaishi was far stronger than Fengyun.

"I think Hu Ben should be the one to fight." A genius commented.

They knew that to obtain a win here, it had to be either Hu Ben or Phantom Sacred Child.

The holy ground couldn't afford to lose two times in a row. Their vast land couldn't muster someone to beat the geniuses from Righteous? That would be disgraceful.

"We'll see, Sister Xiaoyue is from a great clan. She should have plenty of resources." One Duality student said.

Most students showed her full support due to her bold choice.

"From what I know, the Chi isn't a part of Buddha Holy Ground." Liu Huaishi's eyes narrowed.

"Right." Xiaoyue nodded and gracefully responded: "The Chi isn't a part of the holy ground but I am a student of Duality. I'm sure you won't mind my getting involved."

"It's fine." Xu Cuimei smiled and said: "Duality is a pillar of the holy ground. You can certainly fight."

"Please give me pointers, Miss Xiaoyue." Liu Huaishi took a deep breath and solemnly said.

"Same to you, Fellow Daoist." Xiaoyue didn't underestimate her opponent.

"Buzz." With that said, she activated her vitality and auspicious energy billowed, fully enveloping her.

Her vitality was pure and regal, adding to her already immaculate temperament. She resembled the daughter of a supreme king, commanding respect and reverence.

"A member of the Pure Blood tribe." An older expert became emotional: "The royal family of the Blood Tribe, so prestigious back then."

“No, that’s not all...” An ancestor from this race took a careful look and noticed a faint lunar glow on her forehead.

A half-moon seemingly peeled from her forehead. She held it with both hands, looking like a supreme treasure or weapon.

The lunar glow combined with her pure vitality. She looked transcending and magnificent as a result.

“Half-moon...” The ancestor concluded: “Two great bloodlines, so pure too.”

Eyes were wide open. The members of the Blood Tribe were extremely excited.

Both Half-moon and Pure Blood were royal clans of their race. Though they have declined and weakened, they were still quite famous.

She could be considered a jewel of their race due to her pure bloodlines. The old Blood experts saw her boundless potential.

“Excuse me now.” Chi Xiaoyue uttered before activating the half-moon. It became blindingly resplendent.

“Clank!” The light then condensed into a single slash soaring straight at Liu Huaishi before the crowd could react.

It cut through space and left behind an afterimage. Spatial lines could be seen from the breaking process to the astonishment of the spectators.

The lunar slash seemed unstoppable. Even the toughest material would feel like tofu before its sharpness.

“Good move!” Liu Huaishi shouted and instantly used the whip that had been coiling around his arm.

“Raa!” As he swung forward, a dragon roar could be heard. The whip turned into a dragon with black scales. Its claws were just as sharp as the lunar slash and tore space apart.

“Boom!” The two moves collided, causing the region to quake violently.

Chapter 3750: Eight Celestial Dragons

“Boom!” The shockwaves made it difficult for others to stand firmly.

Liu Huaishi’s attack frightened the majority of the mass, clearly showing them that he was stronger than Xiao Fengyun.

The force of the dragon-like whip caused Chi Xiaoyue to tremble once.

“Damn!” A genius gasped, feeling his palms drenched with cold sweat.

Some thought that they have made the right choice but not accepting the challenge. Otherwise, they would have looked like clowns after losing in one move.

“Shit...” The students from Duality worried the most while clenching their fists. She seemed to be at a disadvantage after the first exchange.

“His power is indeed above Xiao Fengyun.” One older expert became startled: “If he can reach the sacred realm, he’ll be eligible to become a sect master in just a few years afterward.”

“Die!” Liu Huaishi roared and leaped upward.

“Boom!” The fate palaces emerged and released majestic grand dao power and true chaos energy.

The whip in his hand coiled and the sky turned dark. A true dragon with black scales emerged and blotted out the area. Its draconic energy rampaged like a tsunami.

Others became frightened and lost their composure. Loud blasts came next and the draconic energy gathered, turning into an ocean drowning everyone. The overbearing draconic aura was suffocating. People’s knees buckled uncontrollably.

“Eight Celestial Dragons!” Liu Huaishi waved his hand and affected the spatio-temporal fabrics.

As the whip came down, eight dragons manifested into reality. They roared and started descending downward, ready to unleash an apocalypse.

Their shape and form varied - one was of the fire affinity, another was shrouded in a golden radiance, another was cold enough to seal the world in a layer of ice, one more was surrounded by darkness...

The fiery dragon’s claws melted the ground; the golden one tore space apart; the ice one began sealing the sky...

Each unleashed their destructive potential, seemingly wanting to destroy Minor Sacred Mountain.

Not to mention the young geniuses, even the older experts were startled by this attack. It displayed all of Liu Huaishi’s strength and proved the previous speculation of him being stronger than Xiao Fengyun.

Chi Xiaoyue gathered her strength into the half-moon. Her pure vitality erupted like an endless torrent.

The frightening vitality and lunar light instantly fused. The half-moon transformed into an arc before becoming a massive ball of light, serving as an unbreakable defense. At the same time, it also emitted waves of energy for retaliation.

“Boom!” Liu Huaishi froze for a moment; the eight descending dragons also slowed down.

However, this didn’t last long before the eight dragons regained momentum and resumed their attack.

They slammed onto the light ball. The golden dragon used its claws like divine swords; the fire dragon incinerated the outer layer; the black dragon used its dark affinity for a consuming attempt.

This combined power of the dragons seemed unstoppable.

The half-moon in Chi Xiaoyue’s hands flickered and dimmed down. She trembled continuously, seemingly unable to stop the attack.

“Break!” Liu Huaishi didn’t let up and added more power to the eight dragons.

“Rumble!” His empowerment allowed the dragons to launch a relentless onslaught.

Eventually, cracks could be heard and seen on the circular barrier.

“Not good!” One spectator blurted out. It seemed that Chi Xiaoyue wouldn’t be able to hold on for much longer. Losing was only a matter of time.

“She’s not a match...” Another genius said.

“Senior Xiaoyue, you can do it...” One student shouted in support.

“Yes, you can do it! Keep holding on!” Other students cheered for her.

“Crack! Crack! Crack!” Unfortunately, more and more cracks appeared. The barrier was on the verge of collapsing.

“Boom!” After several more attacks from the eight dragons, the barrier finally crumbled and Xiaoyue was blown flying.

Liu Huaishi decisively gave chase with his whip. The thing pursued her like an evil dragon, wanting to claw open her chest to get to her heart. This move showed no mercy.

The spectators became startled by this development. Losing was one thing but she might actually die from this.

“It’s over...” A few turned away to not see a gruesome death. The whip was just ferocious and unstoppable.

However, a terrible power erupted and blasted everything in the near radius. It was as if a dao lord was here in person.

Even the whip was sent back. Liu Huaishi staggered backward from the backlash.

The perplexed crowd saw Chi Xiaoyue standing up straight and holding a treasure seal with both hands. It was as red as blood and painted the sky in the same hue.

Nothing in the world could match its weight. If it were to fall, it could destroy heaven and earth. It exuded a terrible dao lord aura, capable of sweeping through all evils.

Unfortunately, the seal was missing one corner. This seemed to be due to incompleteness, not that it was damaged later on. The creator of this seal simply didn’t finish the refinement process.

People couldn’t believe it. They thought that she would die to the whip but she turned the tides back during the very last moment.

“A dao lord weapon.” An ancestor recognized the seal right away.

Well, this was rather obvious for anyone due to its rampant aura.