

Chapter 101: Challenging the Ten Formations Pagoda

“Senior, I want to challenge the Ten Formations Pagoda. Is there anything to take note of?” Su Zimo came to the elder and asked respectfully.

Although Su Zimo had stayed at Array Peak for three months, this was his first time coming to the Ten Formations Pagoda.

The elder paused for a while on Su Zimo’s face. He sized him up and asked, “You look very unfamiliar. You’re not a disciple of my Array Peak, are you?”

“I’m from Weapon Peak,” Su Zimo nodded.

“Oh.”

The elder replied casually. He looked at the sect badge on Su Zimo’s waist and passed him a wooden badge, saying in a deep voice, “Take this badge. If you can’t hold it or encounter danger inside, break this badge immediately. You will be transported out safely.”

“There are dangers to be encountered within the Ten Formations Pagoda?” Su Zimo was slightly stunned.

The elder explained patiently, “Level 1 of the Ten Formations Pagoda is very simple. As long as you set up a supplementary formation, you can reach Level 2. Level 2 is an illusion formation and the type of illusion is random. You will need to dispel the formation to reach Level 3.”

“Level 3 is a trap formation. Once you clear the trap formation, you will be able to see the entrance to the Level 4, the killing array. It is extremely dangerous inside and if you aren’t careful, you might lose your life. If you can’t crack it, don’t force yourself. Crush this badge.”

“Level 5 is a combination formation consisting of two of either a trap, illusion or killing formation. You can only be considered as an Elementary Array Formation Master after dispelling the formation. With that, you can ascend to Level 6.”

With a rough understanding of the Ten Formations Pagoda now, Su Zimo bowed and expressed his thanks before entering the pagoda.

Looking at Su Zimo’s back view, the elder smiled and mumbled to himself, “It’s rare for disciples of Weapon Peak to come and try to clear the Ten Formations Pagoda. I wonder how many levels that lad can clear. Perhaps two?”

“Su Zimo. Hmm... that’s quite a familiar name. I seem to have heard it before somewhere.”

Murmuring softly, the elder shook his head and did not think much about it.

After all, there were many disciples challenging the Ten Formations Pagoda on a daily basis and he only paid attention to some of the more outstanding ones from Array Peak.

Ten Formations Pagoda, Level 1.

This was a slightly spacious room that was empty.

The floor was a little strange – it was soft with some elasticity.

Surrounded by four walls, the door behind Su Zimo slammed shut the moment he entered and the entrance to Level 2 was not in sight.

Su Zimo thought for a moment and understood.

The entrance to Level 2 would only appear if he laid out a supplementary formation on the ground.

He did not hesitate as a stream of spirit qi shot out from his fingertips. Squatting down, he drew on the ground carefully.

He was drawing a soundproof formation.

Inside, no one could hear any noise made from the outside.

This was the first formation that Su Zimo learnt and his motive was to isolate little crane's chirping.

While drawing a formation pattern, one had to focus intently without any distractions or deviations.

Even the slightest deviation of the formation pattern would result in a failed formation that could not be activated.

This was a test of a cultivator's patience and conscientiousness towards details! The better they were, the more perfect things would be!

Array Formation Masters were all meticulous people.

If the setting up of a formation was seen as a game of chess, the Array Formation Master would be the player.

A chess game was unpredictable and a single misstep could lead to a loss.

For Array Formation Masters, any mistakes in their spirit patterns would render their previous efforts wasted.

The soundproof formation was relatively simple and its patterns were not complex as well. Before long, Su Zimo had drawn the formation on the ground.

A spirit stone was placed in the eye of the formation as it shone brightly on the ground.

The soundproof formation was activated!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

At the same time, a stone door appeared on a wall in the south, revealing a stone staircase made of granite that led to Level 2.

The soundproof formation that Su Zimo had just drawn on the ground slowly disappeared as well as the ground returned to normalcy while the spirit stone he placed in the eye rebounded to him.

“What an ingenious set up.”

Chuckling, Su Zimo picked up the spirit stone and headed to Level 2.

The moment he entered Level 2, his body broke into a shudder.

He was faced with a towering mountain covered in clouds and surrounded by water and greenery. There was a magnificent palace that looked like a paradise.

Su Zimo realized that he had entered an illusionary formation.

From Level 2 on, the disciple’s ability to dispel formations would be tested.

The principle of dispelling formations was simple – one had to locate the core of the formation, also known as the formation eye.

The higher the grade of the formation, the more formation eyes there were.

Grade 1 formations only contained a single formation eye.

Grade 2 formations had two.

If one wanted to dispel a Grade 2 formation, it wasn’t enough to merely locate one formation eye. They had to find and destroy both in order to dispel the formation.

Even though it sounded simple, a formation eye was difficult to locate within the formation.

Take the illusion formation before Su Zimo for example. The eye could be a simple blade of grass, a cloud floating above, a stone on the mountain or even a fish swimming within the river...

A formation contained a world within itself.

If it was someone who knew nothing about formations, they might not be able to locate and destroy the formation eye within its parallel world even if they spent their entire life and effort.

However, Array Formation Masters could locate the formation eye based on their understanding of formations and guts alongside logical analysis.

One thing was certain – formation eyes were definitely far from ordinary.

Even if they may look to be normal, careful analysis would uncover their unusualness.

Brilliant Array Formation Masters would make sure to conceal their formation eyes so carefully that it would be difficult to detect.

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Right as Su Zimo entered Level 2 of Ten Formations Pagoda, a group of disciples from Array Peak were headed towards it.

The leader amongst them wore black robes, looking cold and cool. His eyes were indifferent with his hands behind his back. Even though he was only at Level 9 Qi Condensation, he had an air of superiority.

This was Zhong Wen. A publicly recognized talent amongst the trial disciples and a genius of the sect, he was the top of Array Peak and was already an Elementary Array Formation Master. He was currently stuck at Level 7 of the Ten Formations Pagoda.

Today, he came to challenge the Ten Formations Pagoda again to see if he could clear Level 7.

Even if he couldn't, he wanted to break the record of his previous clear time of Level 6.

Knowing that Zhong Wen was here to challenge the pagoda today, many disciples from Array Peak came to watch and surrounded him.

"Senior Brother Zhong, I wish you success this time! Be the first person in the history of our sect to clear Level 7!

"Senior Brother Zhong is a Level 9 Qi Refinement Warrior right now and he still has many chances before entering Foundation Establishment. Who knows, he might even be able to clear Level 8 in the future."

Many disciples of Array Peak complimented him.

Zhong Wen was only in his twenties. Even though he seemed mature, he definitely felt gleeful upon hearing those words.

No matter what, it was a proud accomplishment for anyone to be the top of any one of the five peaks.

His gaze lingered on the stele at the right of the Ten Formations Pagoda, pride flashing through his eyes.

Chapter 102: Ten Formations Stele

The ancient stele was thick and heavy. At about ten feet tall, it was called the Ten Formations Stele.

It was of extraordinary significance and honor for any trial disciples of Ethereal Peak to have their names left behind on the Ten Formations Stele.

Carrying with it the memories of Ethereal Sect over thousands of years, the Ten Formations Stele had also witnessed the changes of the sect through those years.

There were a total of hundred names on the stele, all of them geniuses through the history of Array Peak.

Time was merciless and cultivators were no exception to that rule. Many of the genius cultivators on the list had passed away and the only trace left of them was probably on the stele.

Behind every single name was the number of levels cleared as well as time taken.

The higher the levels cleared, the further ahead one's name would be. For those at the same level, ranking would be dependent on time taken.

The bottom 30 odd names on the Ten Formations Stele were trial disciples who had passed Level 4.

A huge chunk of names in the middle were disciples who had passed Level 5 with the fastest amongst them using 12 hours.

The tens of disciples on top were those who had cleared Level 6. Zhong Wen's name was right at the top of the list – he was the top of Array Peak!

There was reason for Zhong Wen to be proud and he was definitely qualified as well.

After all, he had already taken over every single genius through the thousands of years of history of Array Peak – he was the true number one of Array Peak!

A line of words was displayed on the first row of the Ten Formations Stele.

“Zhong Wen, cleared Level 6, 11 hours!”

Right then, Level 2 of the Ten Formations Pagoda suddenly shone with a bright light, attracting the attention of the Array Peak disciples.

That unique light that belonged to a formation pattern would only shine if someone had cleared the level.

Zhong Wen declared indifferently, “To think that someone would be here earlier than me today to challenge the pagoda. Interesting.”

“Greetings, Elder Luo.”

Zhong Wen arrived before the Ten Formations Pagoda and bowed slightly to the elder at the entrance.

Elder Luo looked at Zhong Wen in appreciation. “You're here so early to challenge the pagoda. Are you intending to clear Level 7 this time round?”

“Yes.”

Zhong Wen nodded.

Pausing for a moment, he continued, “I've learnt quite a bit during this period of time. Even if I can't clear Level 7, I should be able to make a new record on the Ten Formations Stele.”

The so-called record was naturally the one he had created.

In Zhong Wen's eyes, no one from the five peaks could compare to him in array formations.

What he wanted to do was to constantly challenge himself!

“Alright, I'll be awaiting your return from the challenge,” Elder Luo smiled encouragingly and passed Zhong Wen a wooden badge.

Nodding to the many Array Peak disciples behind him, Zhong Wen entered the Ten Formations Pagoda.

Challenging the pagoda was something he was extremely familiar with.

Without hesitation, spirit qi seeped out from his fingers and he started drawing the moment he entered Level 1 – his choice of supplementary formation was the simplest type.

Challenging the pagoda wasn't only a test of the number of levels cleared, one had to take into account the time taken too.

Zhong Wen was naturally not going to waste any time.

Before long, he was done drawing the formation pattern. Placing a spirit stone in the formation eye, the entrance to Level 2 appeared.

Retrieving his spirit stone, Zhong Wen rushed up to Level 2 swiftly.

Similar to Su Zimo, Zhong Wen found himself transported into an illusionary formation the moment he entered Level 2.

Looking calm, he surveyed his surroundings and walked about casually, stopping from time to time to observe the ground.

15 minutes later, he heaved out a sigh gently and summoned his flying sword, piercing it at the ground nearby.

All of a sudden, the surrounding illusion disappeared and the entrance to Level 3 came into sight.

Zhong Wen was in excellent condition as he walked confidently to Level 3.

Su Zimo was in the Level 3 trap formation at the moment as well. Even though they were in the same level, they were in different formations and neither would see nor affect the other.

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Outside the Ten Formations Pagoda.

When they saw the burst of light emit from Level 2, the crowd gasped.

“Senior Brother Zhong only took around 15 minutes to clear two levels! That’s slightly faster than before!”

“Of course. He wouldn’t have come for the challenge if he wasn’t confident.”

More and more trial disciples were gathered when they heard about Zhong Wen’s challenge of the pagoda today.

An hour passed and a bright light shone from Level 3.

“He passed!”

“Yes, an hour. That’s around the same as before.”

The disciples of Array Peak discussed.

“I wonder how long Senior Brother Zhong will take for Level 4.”

“I remember he took two hours previously.”

“Actually, Level 4 is not too bad. It’s just a singular formation after all. Level 5 is the most difficult since it’s a combination formation. The difficulty is doubly high!”

Time passed by quickly and another two hours were gone.

A bright light shone from Level 4. Just as the shocked disciples were about to speak, a bright light shone from Level 3. That caused a clamor.

“Huh? There’s someone else other than Senior Brother Zhong challenging the pagoda today?”

Some of the Array Peak disciples that had arrived later asked in confusion.

Many disciples of Array Peak would normally choose to avoid the pagoda if Zhong Wen was challenging it.

Even though all challengers were unaffected by one another, they would undoubtedly feel the pressure knowing that they were doing it at the same time as the number one of Array Peak and that would affect their performance as well.

“Hmph, that person sure is ambitious to want to challenge at the same time as Senior Brother Zhong,” Someone scoffed coldly.

“I wonder who he is. He’ll definitely suffer at Level 4!”

“Fufu, I’ll wait here and see that person get kicked out of the Ten Formations Pagoda in a wretched state!”

Many Array Peak disciples were waiting to see a joke.

Shocked, Elder Luo turned to look at the Ten Formations Pagoda as he recalled a handsome disciple in green.

“Disciple of Weapon Peak?”

Chuckling and shaking his head, Elder Luo murmured to himself, “To think that the lad could clear Level 3 as well. Yes... someone like that is definitely talented in formations. I wonder why he was sent to Weapon Peak to begin with.”

In truth, notwithstanding the many Array Peak disciples, even Elder Luo did not expect much of Su Zimo.

To Elder Luo, even if Su Zimo could get through Level 3, he would definitely fail at Level 4.

After all... Level 4 was a killing formation!

Every single step within was filled with danger. Any misstep and one could lose their life there. Under such tense circumstances, most people would be so rattled that they would instinctively break the wooden badge and be transported out, let alone compose themselves to dispel the formation.

For a first-timer like Su Zimo who had never experienced a killing formation, it was a level he couldn’t possibly clear.

Not only did Level 4 test one’s understanding towards formations, it also tested one’s determination and courage in life and death.

How should one maintain their composure within a treacherous situation to calmly analyze the formation while detecting the loophole within... that was the key to clearing Level 4!

However, neither the Array Peak disciples or Elder Luo understood Su Zimo.

Compared to the nights in Cang Lang Mountain Range, the danger posed by a Grade 1 killing formation was way too weak for Su Zimo...

Furthermore, he possessed an ability no one else had – spirit perception!

The current state of Array Peak was akin to a calm lake where Su Zimo's appearance was like a pebble dropping into the lake.

Right then, no one realized that the pebble would not merely cause a few ripples. Instead, it was about to whip up a torrential tide that would shock all five peaks and the sect!

Chapter 103: 17 Seconds!

Su Zimo who had just entered Level 4 of the Ten Formations Pagoda did not know that someone had cleared it previously. He did not know that there were more Array Peak disciples gathered outside and that he was starting to gain attention as well.

Level 4 was the killing formation.

Amongst the formations, killing formations were the most powerful. If a cultivator was stuck in it without any means of dispelling and he wasn't strong enough, he would definitely die within.

Cultivators could hold out temporarily against the formation. However, there would come a time where they would get exhausted and by then, they would be destroyed by the formation.

However, killing formations were the easiest to dispel across the various formations.

The main goal of a killing formation was to kill and destroy everything. As the saying goes, things would reverse at extremities. In this world, there was no such thing as absolute destruction. Therefore, life-force was bound to exist within the destruction.

If one could locate the life-force, the killing formation would naturally be dispelled.

Not far ahead was a volcano spouting billowing ashes. The moment Su Zimo was transported in, a rumble boomed out from the mountain.

Immediately after, scarlet lava gushed out from the peak of the volcano as gigantic flaming rocks plummeted down from the skies endlessly in an earth-shattering manner.

Suffocating black smoke filled the air and blocked one's vision.

It was as though the world was ending in an apocalypse!

Faced with such devastating destruction, most cultivators would shatter their Protection Talisman and run off instinctively, finding a place to hide from the falling lava.

However, that was an extremely unwise move in reality.

This was a formation.

Unless they dispelled it, cultivators had no way of escaping!

That also meant to say that no matter the speed of the cultivator, they wouldn't be able to escape the radius of the falling lava within the formation.

With a calm expression, Su Zimo summoned his flying sword and leapt down. Instead of retreating, he advanced.

All the plants on the ground were burnt to a crisp as bubbling lava that emitted a scorching heat flowed.

In the blink of an eye, the ground beneath Su Zimo had turned into a scarlet sea of lava leaving only rocks that had yet to melt.

For other Array Formation Masters, they would have to analyze how to dispel the killing formation while avoiding its power.

However, that was not the case for Su Zimo.

Through the dangers of the killing formation, there was only a single spot where Su Zimo's spirit perception had no reaction to.

That must be where the loophole of the killing formation was!

Because illusionary and trap formations merely aimed to bewitch and restrain instead of kill, Su Zimo's spirit perception was of no use since he could not sense any danger – he had to rely on his own capabilities to dispel those two types of formations.

However, his spirit perception worked in killing formations, turning everything else into mere decorations!

Before long, Su Zimo arrived on a single rock.

It looked ordinary like any other rocks protruding from the lava and only had room to fit a single person.

However, one could avoid all the dangers in the killing formation just by standing motionlessly on the rock!

If anyone else saw this, their jaws would definitely drop wide open.

As the torrential lava rained down through the world, a man in green stood without suffering any bit of damage at all!

However, locating this rock was not enough to dispel the killing formation.

After all, the volcano was spewing continuously and Su Zimo did not know when it would stop – he can't wait here forever.

After pondering for a long time, he looked at the seemingly ordinary rock he was standing on and smiled.

Logically speaking, this should be the formation eye.

However, if it was a wrong deduction and the killing formation was not dispelled by destroying the rock, the person trapped in the formation would fall right into the lava and be burnt to a crisp!

The Array Formation Master who had set this formation had indeed gave it much thought.

This was not just a test of the cultivator's dispel capabilities – it was also a test of their courage!

Would you dare to break away your only lifeline?

In reality, the Array Formation Master's mindset was actually aligned with how killing formations worked – both required the trapped cultivator to seek life through desperate times.

Smiling, Su Zimo stomped down on his foot.

Bam!

The rock beneath him broke apart and Su Zimo's body descended.

Right as he was about to drop into the lava, everything around him disappeared and reality set in once more.

The entrance of Level 5 had appeared!

Su Zimo strolled towards it.

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At that moment, outside Ten Formations Pagoda.

When the light of Level 4 shone not long after Level 3's light was lit up, the discussions of the disciples outside came to a halt.

Everyone looked at the nearby Ten Formations Pagoda with widened eyes and gaping mouths; they could not recover from the shock.

"Hmm?"

Elder Luo sensed it and looked back.

When he saw the light of Level 4 shining, he was stumped as well.

That lad had cleared Level 4?

Also, it was so fast! It seemed like it only took 17 seconds?

How was that possible?

Countless questions surfaced in Elder Luo's mind as he frowned.

"What did I just see? Level 4's formation pattern had lit up as well?"

"From the moment he stepped into Level 4 to the lights shining, it only took a few seconds. How could he be so fast?"

"Who is that person?"

After a brief moment of silence, sounds were heard from the crowd as the Array Peak disciples discussed fervently.

Even the number one of Array Peak, Zhong Wen, took two entire hours to clear Level 4.

How did that man dispel Level 4's formation using just a couple of seconds?

"I've got it!"

Suddenly, a disciple exclaimed, "There must be two people in Ten Formations Pagoda other than Senior Brother Zhong! So, someone had cleared Level 3 previously and another person cleared Level 4!"

"Right, right! That must be the case!" Another disciple nodded furiously in enlightenment.

"Yes, it must be a coincidence that someone had managed to clear Level 4 right after the first person cleared Level 3."

"Damn, that scared me. I told you it was impossible."

The Array Peak disciples relaxed slightly as the crowd calmed down.

After all, many of them were unable to dispel Level 4's formation yet.

If they knew that someone had cleared it using only a few seconds, it would be a huge blow for them.

Upon hearing the conclusion in the crowd, Elder Luo lowered his head slightly to conceal his shock.

No one knew better than him that from morning till now, only two people had entered the Ten Formations Pagoda.

Since Zhong Wen had already cleared Level 4, there was only one other person who could have cleared Level 4 using a couple of seconds.

It was that trial disciple from Weapon Peak – Su Zimo!

Elder Luo turned and glanced at the Ten Formations Stele.

The thirty-over lines at the bottom were all formation geniuses who had cleared Level 4. The fastest amongst them was Situ Boyan who had spent 1 hour.

Even if Su Zimo failed at Level 5, he would definitely leave a mark on the Ten Formations Stele above Situ Boyan's name!

His time taken to clear Level 4 was the fastest through history – 17 seconds!

Chapter 104: Level 6!

Right as Zhong Wen entered Level 5, Su Zimo ascended as well.

This level was the final test for one to become an Elementary Array Formation Master.

A combination array formation.

Even between Elementary Array Formation Masters, some had deeper understanding towards formations. Some could combine two, three or even more formations together.

Level 5's combination formation comprised of two of either an illusory, trap or killing formation.

The reason why it was difficult was partly because the combination of formation patterns was difficult to distinguish, making it easy to commit a wrong judgment.

At the same time, a combination of two Grade 1 formations implied that there were two formation eyes and that increased the difficulty level of the formation.

Even though Grade 2 formations had two formation eyes as well, they were still more difficult to dispel than two Grade 1 formations combined together.

The reason for that was simple.

Destroying a formation eye was equivalent to destroying half of the combination formation. With that, the remaining half would be much easier to dispel.

However, destroying a formation eye in a Grade 2 formation would not dispel the formation entirely.

Su Zimo stood on the spot and sensed his surroundings, realizing instantly that he was in a trap and illusion combination formation.

"My luck's average."

Su Zimo muttered softly.

Things would have been much simpler for Su Zimo if it was a combination formation with a killing formation.

However, given his current understanding of formations, clearing Level 5 wasn't difficult – it was just a matter of time.

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Time slowly passed.

The Array Peak disciples outside of Ten Formations Pagoda did not leave.

At the moment, most of the people's attention was not on Zhong Wen. Instead, they were curious as to who the person who cleared the Level 4 formation was.

As evening approached, Level 5 lit up.

"That must be Senior Brother Zhong!"

"Yes! He broke another record once more! He's even faster than before!"

"I wonder if he can clear Level 6."

The disciples began to discuss once more.

From Level 6 on, it was a test of the Array Formation Masters' understanding of Grade 2 formations.

Similar to Level 1, Level 6 only required laying a supplementary type of Grade 2 formation.

The formation patterns of a Grade 2 formation were much more complex than a Grade 1 and its difficulty was doubly so. Any slight mistake would render the formation a failure.

The Array Peak disciples knew that two hours was all it took to know whether or not one could pass Level 6.

Everyone waited patiently.

Two hours were nearly up and there was still no sign of light from Level 6.

All of a sudden!

A blur appeared at the entrance of Ten Formations Pagoda as a figure appeared.

Everyone's hearts skipped a beat as they looked over.

It was Zhong Wen!

"Ugh!"

"It's a pity, but I failed Level 6."

"Actually, it's a good thing. You took a faster time clearing the first five levels so you've already broken your previous record, Senior Brother Zhong."

Because he had gone through the killing formation of the Ten Formations Pagoda, Zhong Wen's clothes were tattered and he looked somewhat wretched. However, his expression was still calm and firm as he looked towards the Ten Formations Stele.

A bedazzling bright light shone on the first row of the Ten Formations Stele.

The name written was still Zhong Wen and it was still stated that he had cleared Level 5. However, the time taken had changed from 11 hours to 10 hours and 15 minutes!

Zhong Wen heaved a sigh of relief.

His arm had quivered slightly at the critical juncture of setting up his Grade 2 formation. As such, there were some deviations in his formation patterns and his previous efforts were wasted.

However, he had still gained something for breaking his own record once more.

Elder Luo smiled. "Not bad, not bad. Work harder when you get back and try to break through Level 6 before you become an inner sect disciple!"

"Don't worry, Elder Luo. Level 6 can't stop me," Zhong Wen replied confidently.

He believed that as long as he spent more time researching, he would be able to get through Level 6.

Cupping his fists, Zhong Wen bid farewell to Elder Luo and nodded to the Array Peak disciples behind him before turning to leave.

He walked a few steps before realizing something strange.

The reason why those Array Peak disciples had gathered was because they wanted to see if he could break a new record. However, now that he had left, they did not seem like they had any intention of leaving?

Now that night had descended and those disciples weren't attempting to challenge the pagoda, what were they waiting for?

Zhong Wen stopped in his tracks and swept his gaze across the faces of those Array Peak disciples.

He realized that everyone was looking at Ten Formations Pagoda from time to time as though they were waiting for something.

Was someone challenging the pagoda?

But, who else other than him would attract all of those audiences for their challenge of the pagoda?

Frowning, Zhong Wen came beside an Array Peak disciple and asked in a seemingly casual manner, "Junior Brother Wang, what are you guys waiting for?"

"Ah!"

That disciple was somewhat flustered as he stammered, "T-There are two other people challenging the pagoda right now and one of them made it through Level 4 as well. However, we don't know who it is. I'm waiting to see who that person is."

"Yeah, it's just out of curiosity," Another disciple smiled awkwardly.

After all, they had accompanied Zhong Wen for the pagoda challenge initially. As such, they naturally felt somewhat embarrassed that they were still lingering on with their attention on someone else despite Zhong Wen wanting to leave.

Zhong Wen's expression relaxed as he chuckled and waved it off. "Alright, since I've got nothing on, I'll wait and see too."

The moment he said that, Level 5 lit up!

The crowd was in an uproar!

"He cleared Level 5?"

"That's enough to leave a name on the Ten Formations Stele!"

"Amazing! Who is that person?"

When he heard the discussions of the crowd, Zhong Wen's expression turned serious.

Even though he knew that Grade 2 formation patterns were much more complex and this person would not be able to clear Level 6, for some reason, he felt uneasy.

It felt as though his status was being threatened.

Elder Luo's gaze lingered for a long time on Level 5.

"Where did that disheveled old man find this treasure? To think that he's an array formation genius."

“However, how did he manage to clear the killing formation in just 17 seconds? Could the formation eye have appeared right beside that lad?”

“Was it luck?”

Elder Luo frowned in thought.

The Array Peak disciples who already had no intention of leaving were even more determined to stay on after seeing the mysterious person clear Level 5.

Level 6 was a test of Grade 2 formation skills. An outcome would be determined within two hours.

None of them minded waiting for another two hours.

The night got darker.

Having spent an entire day waiting in front of the Ten Formations Pagoda, even the Qi Refinement Warriors were showing signs of fatigue.

“An hour has passed. It’ll be soon.”

“Yes, let’s wait and see.”

Right after that disciple spoke, a bright light shone from Level 6 and illuminated the night skies!

Silence!

Hundreds of Array Peak disciples raised their heads and watched with agape mouths, forgetting to even breathe momentarily.

Everyone’s expressions were frozen. Their eyes were filled with complex emotions – shock, confusion, amazement, surprise...

In only an hour, Su Zimo had cleared Level 6!

Elder Luo bolted upright and looked at the shining formation pattern light on Level 6, lamenting internally, “Holy shit, holy shit! A true formation genius has appeared in our sect!”

Chapter 105: Turbulent Undercurrent

A new record for the Ten Formations Pagoda was born.

It was so sudden, unexpected and shocking.

This was supposed to be the most ordinary day on Array Peak.

However, everything changed the moment Level 6 lit up.

The birth of a new record also implied that Zhong Wen was dethroned from his number one status in Array Peak from this moment.

Many Array Peak disciples turned to look at Zhong Wen subconsciously.

His expression was extremely ugly as he glared fiercely at Level 6. Because he was gripping his fists so tightly, both his arms were shivering in rage.

Everyone could more or less empathize with how Zhong Wen was feeling at the moment as there was inevitably a look of pity in their gazes.

It was a hard pill to swallow even for anyone else in Zhong Wen's position.

Closing his eyes for a long time, Zhong Wen let out a deep breath.

By the time he opened his eyes once more, his gaze shone with a renewed confidence.

At that, Elder Luo nodded to himself.

To be able to walk out of such a trauma that quickly meant that Zhong Wen had a good character – his accomplishments in the future wouldn't be bad too.

"Very well. There's finally someone who can give me pressure."

Smiling, Zhong Wen muttered to himself, "It's been a long time since I've experienced this feeling. Even though I don't know who you are, your appearance will force out the best in me!"

With that said, Zhong Wen looked at the Ten Formations Pagoda deeply once more and turned to leave without hesitation.

Many Array Peak disciples understood that before long, Zhong Wen would be back to challenge the Ten Formations Pagoda once more!

At that time, the number one of Array Peak would be determined by the person who clears Level 6 in the shortest period of time!

Even after Zhong Wen's departure, many of the Array Peak disciples had no intention of leaving.

Everyone was even more curious to see who this mysterious person who was challenging the pagoda was!

The thought of the challenger clearing Level 7 did not cross everyone's minds.

From the looks of it, it wouldn't be long before the person was sent out.

However, time continued to pass and yet the challenger had not appeared. It was as though he was residing within the Ten Formations Pagoda silently.

The night passed just like that...

The morning sun rose and the many Array Peak disciples before the Ten Formations Pagoda were getting sleepy after staying awake for the entire night. Casually, they stretched their bodies and gathered their spirits.

"What's that person doing inside? He should come out if he can't continue. Why is he taking so long?"

"I don't know but I can't take it anymore. I've got to head back and rest."

A worn out disciple shook his head, no intending to waste any more time here.

“Yeah, I’m heading back too. After all, this person will definitely leave his name on the Ten Formations Stele after clearing Level 6. I’ll just see who he is then,” another disciple remarked.

Right then, someone sped towards them on a flying sword.

When the person approached, everyone focused their attention over – it was Zhong Wen who had left the previous night!

He was back after a single night!

One could imagine how he must have spent all his time and energy into researching on Grade 2 formations rather than sleep the previous night.

Arriving before Elder Luo, Zhong Wen declared deeply, “Elder, I’d like to challenge the Ten Formations Pagoda!”

“Very well.”

Elder Luo nodded his head and passed Zhong Wen a wooden badge.

Upon receiving it, Zhong Wen turned and entered the Ten Formations Pagoda.

Upon seeing that, the disciples who planned on leaving hesitated.

“Cough, cough. Perhaps we can hold out for another day to see if Senior Brother Zhong’s able to take down that person and reclaim the first spot on Ten Formations Stele.”

“Fair enough, let’s wait another day.”

The disciples ultimately lost to their curiosity and chose to stay.

In the blink of an eye, yet another day had passed and it was dusk.

The challenger had yet to appear.

As for Zhong Wen, he was at Level 6 once more.

After a while, Level 6 lit up and everyone was shocked.

“He cleared it! How long did Senior Brother Zhong take?”

“More than an hour?”

“That means he still lost?”

“Yeah, by a little.”

The many Array Peak disciples sighed.

Before long, Zhong Wen was sent out of the Ten Formations Pagoda and he glanced at the Ten Formations Pagoda.

The first row of the Ten Formations Stele shone brightly. Even though it was still his name, the words at the back had changed.

“Zhong Wen, cleared Level 6, 1 hour 15 minutes!”

Looking at the Ten Formations Stele, Zhong Wen frowned and asked around, “That person is not out yet?”

“That’s right,” One of the disciples yawned and replied listlessly.

The record on the Ten Formations Stele would only be updated when the challenger left the Ten Formations Pagoda.

That mysterious person who had cleared Level 6 merely took an hour, faster than Zhong Wen. However, for Zhong Wen’s name to still be on the Ten Formations Stele, that meant that the challenger was still inside the Ten Formations Pagoda!

“That person has lasted for so long in Level 7?”

Zhong Wen scoffed coldly internally, “Let’s see how long more you can hold out.”

Taking one last look at the Ten Formations Stele, Zhong Wen left.

The difference between the both of them wasn’t great at merely 15 minutes. He had the confidence of surpassing that challenger during his next challenge of the Ten Formations Pagoda!

Many Array Peak disciples could not wait any longer and chose to head back and rest for the night before returning the next morning.

Some of the disciples who were unwilling to give up remained waiting, bent on witnessing the person who created the new record.

Yet another night passed.

By now, the disciples that were waiting outside the Ten Formations Pagoda were in a mess; some of them were asleep while others would open their eyes and look towards the Ten Formations Pagoda drowsily from time to time.

There was no activity in the Ten Formations Pagoda throughout the entire night.

The challenger had yet to appear.

Disciples who were impatient had already asked Elder Luo about who the person was and if he was still inside the Ten Formations Pagoda. However, Elder Luo merely shook his head and did not reveal the person’s identity, merely stating that the person was still within.

“That’s strange. How is that person not out yet? He’s already spent two whole nights in Level 7!”

“We’re already exhausted from just waiting and doing nothing. It’s hard to imagine how that person is going to survive while spending a great deal of effort on dispelling the formation.”

Right then, a disciple suddenly remarked, “Wait, aren’t there two other people in the Ten Formations Pagoda other than Senior Brother Zhong? Why is the other person not out yet?”

Suddenly, the discussions quietened down as everyone’s eyes flashed in bewilderment as though they had just recalled something frightening.

The presence of two individuals in the Ten Formations Pagoda was just their speculation.

The reason for that was because they could not believe that someone would be able to get through Level 4's killing formation in such a short period of time.

But now, a more realistic possibility existed.

There was only one person inside the Ten Formations Pagoda!

That person had truly taken a few mere seconds to clear Level 4!

It was the same person who had created the new record!

The atmosphere in front of the Ten Formations Pagoda was stiff as no one spoke; it was as though an invisible arm had choked them into suffocating.

Right then, Zhong Wen arrived once more. He entered the Ten Formations Pagoda again, bent on breaking the record of the mysterious challenger.

This was already the morning of the third day.

In the past three days, events on Array Peak gradually spread among the five peaks.

A turbulent undercurrent was charging beneath the calm lake surface, ready to burst forth at any moment!

Chapter 106: Things Are Getting Interesting Now

Initially, a new record on the Ten Formations Stele wasn't something trial disciples of the five peaks would be concerned about.

That was because everyone knew that it must have been broken by Zhong Wen and because of that, they were already used to it.

However, when they heard that the new record was broken by an unknown, mysterious disciple, it piqued everyone's curiosity.

Following that, news spread of how Zhong Wen had returned to challenge the pagoda once more but he still lost to the mysterious challenger. Right now, it was his third attempt and the outcome was unknown.

A clash between two top geniuses of Array Peak was akin to the year end Array Peak face-off being brought forward!

It wasn't just the young and inquisitive trial disciples who were interested, even the five peak masters were aroused with slight curiosity.

The number of people gathered before the Ten Formations Pagoda was increasing as time went on!

Other than Array Peak, disciples of the other four peaks came as well to witness the final outcome.

Led by Feng Haoyu, a group of talents from Spirit Peak arrived. Little fatty was among them.

After three months, little fatty was already at the peak of Level 8 Qi Condensation.

Leng Rou's appearance caused a huge stir as many disciples turned their gazes towards this ice cold beauty.

In less than a year, she was regarded by quite a number of people as the top beauty of all five peaks.

It wasn't just because of her looks, it was also because she was extremely strong. Right now, she was the same as Feng Haoyu at the peak of Level 9 Qi Condensation.

She was his biggest competitor for the year end Spirit Peak's face-off.

More than that, Leng Rou had displayed a shocking talent in the craft of talismans!

She also stood a high chance of taking the number one spot on Talisman Peak's year end face-off!

Disciples of Elixir, Talisman and Weapon Peak had arrived to watch the show with Xue Yi and the others among them.

There were still three months left to the year end face-off. This challenge of the Ten Formations Pagoda was probably the biggest event in all five peaks till then.

In the blink of an eye, the third day was already half gone.

As dusk arrived, Level 5 of the Ten Formations Pagoda lit up, indicating that Zhong Wen was about to challenge Level 6 once more.

If he could clear Level 6 within an hour, he would be able to reclaim his honor as the number one of Array Peak!

Little fatty squeezed through the crowd to get to Xue Yi and whispered, "Senior Brother Xue, why haven't I seen bro at all recently?"

"I've not seen him for a couple of days now as well. But I think things should be fine, don't worry," Xue Yi consoled.

Little fatty frowned and murmured, "Strange. I haven't seen him in three months and his cave abode was empty too. I was contemplating to help bro sharpen his fighting techniques."

Xue Yi smiled without saying anything.

In his opinion, Su Zimo might have realized he had no hope of winning at the end of the year and made an excuse to leave.

That way, he could avoid the year end face-off. Even though he might get mocked by others for it, it was better than losing in front of everyone.

Right then, Level 6 burst forth with a bright, bedazzling light of formation patterns.

"He did it!"

"How long did it take?"

"Around 45 minutes! It's less than an hour!"

“As expected of Senior Brother Zhong. He is backed by a strong foundation of knowledge towards array formations after all.”

As the discussions went on, some of the Array Peak disciples who were closer to Zhong Wen heaved a sigh of relief.

Before long, Zhong Wen was sent out of the Ten Formations Pagoda.

At the same time, the top row of the Ten Formations Stele shone brightly as the words shuffled. “Zhong Wen, cleared Level 6, 45 minutes!”

“Not bad, not bad.”

Elder Luo nodded with a smile.

“Congratulations, Senior Brother Zhong!”

“You’re still the best! You’ve cleared Level 6 with such speed!”

Some disciples of Array Peak hurriedly congratulated him with cupped fists.

Hands behind his back, Feng Haoyu nodded to Zhong Wen.

Given Feng Haoyu’s haughty character and status within the five peaks, he was already giving face to Zhong Wen by showing that gesture.

Zhong Wen smiled and raised his voice. “Everyone, please quiet down.”

The noisy crowd gradually calmed down.

“It’s all thanks to your care and concern that I’m able to return to the top of the Ten Formations Stele. It’s been a tiring few days, everyone, but...”

Zhong Wen changed the topic and with a sharp gaze, looked towards the Ten Formations Pagoda intently and declared, “The person I must thank the most is that unknown challenger. I’ve mentioned previously, his appearance will force the best out of m-”

Before Zhong Wen could even finish saying ‘me’, his pitch changed and his pupils constricted as though he had witnessed something horrifying.

Everyone looked in Zhong Wen’s direction.

Level 7 of the Ten Formations Pagoda was lit up!

The light was a little blinding.

Before anyone knew it, Elder Luo was already standing up and looking at Level 7 with a blank look of disbelief.

The atmosphere in front of the Ten Formations Pagoda had turned extremely strange.

No one spoke.

Everyone was mesmerized by the light coming from Level 7 that they forgot to breathe; it was as though they had lost their souls.

Zhong Wen's expression changed a couple of times before settling on an ashen look with a dim gaze.

He had lost.

He had lost completely!

Right then, he tried countless times to muster his courage and gather his confidence, but he couldn't do it!

The shining light of Level 7 gave him a pressure that no one could understand!

It was a pressure called despair.

He knew better than any other disciples among the five peaks about the obscurity of Grade 2 formations. Even that mysterious challenger had spent an entire two days and nights before deducing his way to clear Level 7.

However, a clear was a clear.

Yet, Zhong Wen was completely lost in the face of Level 7's formation. He was trapped by the illusion formation and could not locate any loopholes of it at all.

In fact, he could not last for more than four hours within Level 7.

If he continued to stay on, there was a high chance he would suffer irrecoverable damage to his psyche.

"Ugh."

Sighing sadly, Zhong Wen turned around and mumbled to himself despondently, "I've got no chance of surpassing him."

"You do."

Right then, a warm voice rang out beside Zhong Wen.

Zhong Wen looked up.

Out of nowhere, Array Peak's master, Xuan Yi, had appeared and was standing not far away, smiling and looking at him encouragingly.

When he met with that gaze, Zhong Wen shuddered and the haze within his heart dispersed, allowing him to see the light once more.

Taking a deep breath of air, Zhong Wen nodded his head and replied deeply, "Don't worry, master. I won't be defeated that easily. I'll be back once more!"

"Well done. That's more like my disciple."

With his confidence regained, Zhong Wen left the Ten Formations Pagoda once more.

Xuan Yi looked at the fading Level 7 light and a trace of curiosity flashed in his eyes. He floated towards Elder Luo and set up a soundproof barrier with the wave of his hand, asking, "Who is inside? When did someone like that appear in our Array Peak?"

"That lad... is not from our peak," Elder Luo chuckled bitterly and shook his head.

"Hmm?"

Xuan Yi frowned and asked, "What's his name?"

"Su Zimo."

Xuan Yi's heart skipped a beat and his expression turned odd.

Sensing the change in Xuan Yi's expression, Elder Luo asked, "Why? You know that person? His name does sound somewhat familiar, as though I've heard it somewhere."

Xuan Yi did not reply him. He seemed to have thought of something fun as he smiled. "Things are getting interesting now."

Chapter 107: Gradual Emergence

Elder Luo was flustered as he urged, "Don't beat around the bush. Who is he?"

"The one that slashed at me on the front peak. That's the lad," Xuan Yi chuckled.

"Him?"

Elder Luo realized what was going on. However, he was even more puzzled and frowned. "Hasn't he already issued a challenge to Feng Haoyu and caused a huge stir about wanting to prevent the latter from getting number one for Elixir and Weapon Peak? What has that got to do with us?"

"If he can challenge the Ten Formations Pagoda, he must have put in quite a lot of effort on learning formations. Why do you think he's doing this instead of spending his time on refining elixirs, weapons and raising his cultivation?"

"I've got no idea too," Xuan Yi shook his head and smiled. "But, don't you think that this is really interesting?"

"So what if it is? He's not a seed from our peak, sigh," Elder Luo replied regrettably.

Xuan Yi looked at the Ten Formations Pagoda meaningfully and whispered, "I'm just curious now to see how many levels he can clear."

...

Gradually, night arrived.

Many Array Peak disciples left while disciples of the other four peaks waited to see who the challenger was.

Little fatty rolled his eyes and stopped an Array Peak disciple casually, asking with a grin, “Senior brother, why aren’t you guys waiting anymore?”

“Heh! Junior brother, this is where you lack experience.”

The person replied mysteriously, “Think about it. Even if you wait here the entire night, you might not get to see who the person is. You might as well come back tomorrow morning. Furthermore, even if that person can clear Level 8, it’ll take at least two days and nights too.”

Little fatty nodded his head in agreement. “Senior brother, you’re really smart! That does make sense!”

The mysterious person had taken two days and nights to clear Level 7. Even if he could clear Level 8, it wouldn’t be that soon.

At that thought, little fatty headed back to rest.

There was no activity in the Ten Formations Pagoda for the next two days as more than half of the gathered disciples had lost their patience and left.

Zhong Wen arrived at the Ten Formations Pagoda on the morning of the sixth day, ready to challenge it once more.

Before night arrived, he was sent out by the pagoda. Even though he had cleared the first six levels even faster than before, he still failed at Level 7.

Just as he was about to leave, Level 8 lit up!

“Level 8! That person has cleared Level 8!”

“That’s a full three days and nights!”

“That means that he’s been inside for a whole six days now! What sort of a body does he have to withstand such a draining experience?”

In fact, many disciples did not know that Su Zimo’s physique was much more terrifying than they had thought.

Moreover, he was tortured by little crane endlessly back in his Weapon Peak cave abode and it was almost ten days of sleepless nights back then...

It could be said that Su Zimo’s current achievements in array formation was forced entirely by a stupid bird...

When he saw the glowing light of Level 8, Zhong Wen felt a bitterness surge within him – he no longer had any hope.

The difference was too great.

Once again, he looked at that familiar name at the top of the Ten Formations Stele. He found it a little eye-piercing and could not help but laugh at himself bitterly before leaving.

When he saw Zhong Wen’s back view, Elder Luo shook his head and sighed. “What a pity. If that person had not appeared, Zhong Wen would have been a really great genius of array formations.”

By now, the disciples of the various peaks had a rough grasp of the timing for the Ten Formations Pagoda.

Based on that logic, the mysterious person was going to take even longer to clear Level 9!

With the year end face-off approaching, most disciples would naturally not choose to spend their days wasted here. Moreover, it was already dark and everyone dispersed to rest in their cave abodes.

Before long, it was peaceful at the Ten Formations Pagoda once more. Elder Luo was the only one still guarding as he stood up and stretched.

Xuan Yi walked over from afar and said, "Elder Luo, go and rest first. I don't think there'll be much activity for the next few days now that the lad's at Level 9."

Elder Luo shook his head.

"Why? You're still worried?" Xuan Yi chuckled. "If you are, I'll help you watch over tonight."

Elder Luo let out a mysterious smile and asked, "Do you know what type of formation is at Level 9?"

"Killing?" Xuan Yi was puzzled as to why Elder Luo would raise that question.

Elder Luo asked once more, "Do you know how long that Su Zimo took to get through Level 4's killing formation?"

Realizing that there was something more to it, Xuan Yi's eyes gleamed as he made a guess, "15 minutes?"

Elder Luo snickered, beating around the bush slightly before replying slowly, "17 seconds!"

Psst!

Xuan Yi's expression changed entirely as he gasped, "How could that be?!"

After a deep silence, Xuan Yi asked in a testing manner, "Is it a coincidence?"

Gazing at the Ten Formations Pagoda, Elder Luo remarked softly, "We'll know soon if that's the case."

All of a sudden!

The moment Elder Luo said that, Level 9 lit up the night skies!

Xuan Yi and Elder Luo exchanged glances – both could tell of the other's shock.

"How long did he take this time round?"

"Around 47 seconds."

"Seems like that lad really does have a method to get through killing formations."

"Level 10 comprises a combination array formation of two types. If one of them is a killing formation, the combination formation would be extremely easy for that lad."

"If he manages to clear Level 10..."

...

Su Zimo who had just entered Level 10 did not know that he would cause such a huge commotion among the five peaks with his challenge of the pagoda.

He had reaped a lot from this challenge.

Even though he had spent a lot of time studying in the Array Chamber, that was all just theory without any practical aspect.

However, Su Zimo had witnessed and learned from the various methods and techniques deployed by different Array Formation Masters in setting up the formations in the Ten Formations Pagoda.

Observing carefully in Level 10, Su Zimo smiled.

It was a combination formation comprising of a killing and trap formation. A killing formation was almost nonexistent for him and the only thing he had to dispel was the trap formation.

“Seems like my luck’s better this time round.”

A deep fatigue could be seen from Su Zimo but still, his eyes remained clear and resolute.

For six whole days, Su Zimo had not rested at all as he spent his time dispelling formations. Even though it didn’t expend much spirit qi, he was physically and mentally exhausted.

It was a huge toll on one’s mental state to dispel formations.

However, fully motivated by the thought of not having to worry about that stupid bird after getting out of this place, Su Zimo picked himself up and worked at dispelling the formation.

On around midnight of the eight day.

The moon was bright with little stars in the skies. Other than Elder Luo, there was no one else in front of the Ten Formations Pagoda.

Just as Elder Luo was about to fall asleep, the peak of the Ten Formations Pagoda lit up without any warning!

Astonished, Elder Luo looked at those shining formation patterns for the longest time in silence.

According to the time that Su Zimo cleared Level 10, it was now short of six hours to make a full eight days since he had entered the Ten Formations Pagoda!

A challenge of this duration was not merely a test of a cultivator’s ability to set up and dispel formations, it was also a test of their determination, physique, mental state et cetera.

Elder Luo was very pleased.

It was as though he was looking at the gradual emergence of a monster in array formations from this pagoda that he was guarding in a corner of Tianhuang Mainland!

Chapter 108: Sword Formation

Level 10 of the Ten Formations Pagoda.

When Su Zimo dispelled the formation, he saw a man clad in white robes. Hands behind his back, the man's black hair was casually draped over his shoulders and swayed gently against the breeze.

Standing at the exit on the top of the pagoda, the man was back facing Su Zimo, looking as though he was part of the night skies.

Even though Su Zimo could not see the person's face, he caught sight of a hexagonal, obscure emblem on the person's sleeve.

It was Array Peak's master, Xuan Yi!

Su Zimo furrowed his brows slightly.

Was this an illusion formation?

Could Level 10 be made up of three instead of two different formations?

There was an illusion formation left after he dispelled the killing and trap formation?

"This is not an illusion. You've already cleared the Ten Formations Pagoda successfully."

Xuan Yi's voice suddenly rang, gentle and calm, as though he could read Su Zimo's thoughts.

Certain powerful Array Formation Masters were experts of games and could deduce the other party's thoughts with just some clues.

Su Zimo did not get careless despite hearing Xuan Yi's reply.

After all, similar circumstances could happen within an illusion formation as well. It was hard to differentiate between reality.

Standing on the spot, Su Zimo observed for a long time. When he sensed no aura of formation patterns, he advanced and cupped his fists. "Greetings, peak master."

Xuan Yi did not turn around, merely asking, "How long have you been studying formations?"

"Three months," Su Zimo did not hide anything.

A shocked expression flashed through Xuan Yi's eyes and disappeared quickly.

"T-Three months..."

Xuan Yi mumbled repeatedly to himself. After a long time, he turned slightly and smiled at Su Zimo, nodding. "Come on, stand beside me."

Momentarily startled, Su Zimo continued walking forth until he was beside Xuan Yi.

"Tired?" Xuan Yi asked with a smile.

Su Zimo nodded his head. Right then, the only thing he wanted was to head back to his cave abode and sleep in silence without a care for the world.

“I’ve heard about your challenge with Feng Haoyu as well. Why did you suddenly come and learn about formations despite not having much time?” Xuan Yi was curious.

The image of that stupid bird flashed through Su Zimo’s mind as he shook his head with a bitter chuckle. “There’s a long story behind it.”

“It’s less than three months until the year end face-off. I’m not concerned about elixir and weapon refinement, but I heard that you challenged Feng Haoyu to a fight after the Spirit Peak face-off?” Xuan Yi asked.

“Yes.”

“Are you confident?”

Hesitating for a moment, Su Zimo shook his head. “No.”

He would be confident if not for his concern that his demonic self might be exposed.

However, in terms of pure cultivation techniques, Su Zimo was far inferior.

Xuan Yi replied deeply, “Actually, the killing methods of Qi Refinement Warriors are rather simple because the spirit qi in their dantian is limited. Even at Perfected Qi Condensation where their dantian opened up like a vast sea, it will still be in spirit qi state. One can only deploy stronger spirit arts when they advance to become a Foundation Establishment Cultivator and their spirit qi’s quality condenses into liquid form.”

Su Zimo’s heart skipped a beat as he recalled when he was being pursued by Joyful Sect. Some of the Foundation Establishment Cultivators deployed strange techniques like the Ground-caving and Vinewood-twining Skills which caused him great trouble.

Those must be the spirit arts that Xuan Yi was referring to.

“Between Qi Refinement Warriors, the only thing that they compare is one’s mastery of sword wielding.”

Xuan Yi continued, “In terms of sword wielding, one of our sect’s three major secret skills, Ethereal Sword, is famous through the northern region of Tianhuang and is ranked at the top. Feng Haoyu is already cultivating it.”

Su Zimo could tell what Xuan Yi was implying.

In other words, he had no chance of winning against Feng Haoyu who was already cultivating Ethereal Sword.

In the hazy, starry night, both men stood at the peak of the Ten Formations Pagoda. One was clad in white and had a graceful bearing while the other was clad in green with a delicate, handsome face. If any trial disciples of the five peaks saw this scene, their jaws would drop in shock.

Every single peak master was a Golden Core – what sort of status did they bear in the sect?

The fact that a mere trial disciple at only Level 6 Qi Condensation was able to stand shoulder to shoulder and chat with Array Peak’s master was a treatment that would make anyone envious.

Noticing Su Zimo's silence, Xuan Yi spoke once more, "Initially, I had not meant to say these things to you. However, since you've already cleared the Ten Formations Pagoda, I can offer you a way out. Whether or not you succeed depends on yourself."

"Thank you, peak master," Su Zimo's heart skipped a beat as he bowed hurriedly to express his thanks.

Xuan Yi continued slowly, "Other than the standard skills and secret techniques of sword wielding, there is another method that can raise a cultivator's fighting strength... it's called a sword formation!"

"Sword formation?" Su Zimo furrowed his brows in deep thought.

In Array Chamber, he had chanced across a bamboo scroll named Tripartite Sword Formation

Xuan Yi replied, "Most Array Formation Masters are weak because in fights, opponents would not give you a lot of time to set up your formation before rushing in blindly. However, there exists a special branch amongst Array Formation Masters – the Sword Formation Master."

"The prerequisite of becoming a Sword Formation Master is that they must first be an Array Formation Master with a deep understanding towards formations. Secondly, they had to cultivate a type of sword formation."

Su Zimo nodded.

"Sword formation manuals are extremely rare and even within our sect, we only have two. One is called the Tripartite Sword Formation while the other is the Hexagonal Sword Formation. The former is a Grade 1 formation while the latter is a Grade 2."

"The activation of a sword formation is through remnant marks created by tearing through the void with a flying sword. By using them as replacement for formation patterns, an Array Formation Master is able to create a formation that can produce a powerful force!"

Su Zimo was shocked to hear this.

Just setting up of formation patterns was something that was extremely difficult for Array Formation Masters – any single mistake and the formations would fail.

Furthermore, they were now talking about using the remnant marks in the void as a replacement for formation patterns.

Xuan Yi spoke, "The reason why there are so little Sword Formation Masters is because the conditions are way too harsh. Every single Sword Formation Master is an elite among the Array Formation Masters and have a far superior understanding of formations. Furthermore, sword formations usually require the use of multiple flying swords. Using a single flying sword in battle is tough enough, let alone using many for a sword formation."

Su Zimo nodded.

For example, three flying swords were required for the Tripartite Sword Formation.

As the name implied, Hexagonal Sword Formation would most likely require six flying swords!

“Also, controlling multiple flying swords would cause one’s spirit qi to deplete faster. If the formation was a failure, it would be a waste of spirit qi for the Sword Formation Master and he would end up placing himself in danger.”

Xuan Yi chuckled. “Furthermore, how are normal Array Formation Masters going to get that many flying swords? For example, many of our trial disciples barely have a single inferior-grade flying sword, let alone three, six or even more.”

“Can they use flying swords of different grades as replacement?” Su Zimo asked.

“No.”

Xuan Yi shook his head. “You have to understand that the flying swords used for a sword formation must be of the same grade. If the grades were different, the formation patterns left in the void would deviate and the formation would definitely fail!”

Chapter 109: Earth-shattering

“Of course, if the flying swords used are of the same build, size, weight and sharpness et cetera, it would be even easier to set up a formation.”

Pausing for a moment, Xuan Yi chuckled. “But that’s not too realistic unless the flying swords are created by the same Weapon Refinement Master who had specially created them as a set.”

“A set of flying swords?” Su Zimo’s eyes twinkled meaningfully.

“You’re a disciple of Weapon Peak. Even though you have yet to become a Weapon Refinement Master, I’m sure you understand how difficult it is to refine weapons. It’s already difficult enough to create a single graded spirit weapon, let alone a set.”

The mention of that had Su Zimo’s heart skipping a beat.

Everything else aside, it wasn’t really difficult for him to create a set of almost identical inferior-grade flying swords.

“But of course, I know that this is not an easy path to undertake and this idea might not even be of help for you to defeat Feng Haoyu. After all, with just three months left to the year end face-off, time is limited for you.”

Xuan Yi continued expectantly, “However, you’re the most talented Array Formation Master that I’ve ever seen. Perhaps, you can one day be a true Sword Formation Master if you continue in this direction.”

“Peak master, are you a Sword Formation Master?” Su Zimo suddenly asked.

“I’m the only Sword Formation Master in our sect,” Xuan Yi nodded his head with a smile.

It was only then that Su Zimo understood why Xuan Yi was waiting for him and telling him about those things – the latter wanted to find a Sword Formation Master successor in the sect.

Pulling out a scroll from his storage bag, Xuan Yi passed it over to Su Zimo. "I believe you must have come across the Tripartite Sword Formation in the Array Chamber. This is the Hexagonal Sword Formation. Burn it after you memorize it, do not spread it."

Su Zimo received it with both hands and nodded his head.

Xuan Yi pondered for a moment and continued, "Zimo, don't harp on a moment's failure. There is still a long way to go."

Su Zimo knew that Xuan Yi was worried he would lose to Feng Haoyu and have his confidence dashed, hence that advice.

In truth, Xuan Yi was not the only one. Neither of the four peak masters nor anyone in the sect had their eyes on Su Zimo winning.

Perhaps he might be evenly matched with Feng Haoyu in terms of elixir and weapon refinement.

However, in everyone's eyes, the outcome was already decided if the both of them fought – Su Zimo would only humiliate himself.

Of course, there was a single existence in Ethereal Peak who thought highly of Su Zimo. Only, that existence wasn't human...

"Go on, time is precious. Spend more effort on elixir and weapon refinement so that you can get number one for those two peaks," Xuan Yi instructed.

Su Zimo nodded his head and closed the Hexagonal Sword Formation's manual. Summoning his flying sword, he left the Ten Formations Pagoda and disappeared into the night skies.

The moment Su Zimo left the Ten Formations Pagoda, the names on the Ten Formations Stele started shifting as everything was pushed down for a blank space above.

Zhong Wen's previous record was now pushed to the second row.

A line of words appeared on the first row of the Ten Formations Stele.

"Cleared Level 10, 7 days 18 hours!"

However, the portion where his name was supposed to be was a complete blank!

Right then, Xuan Yi descended from the Ten Formations Pagoda and accidentally caught sight of what happened. Slightly surprised, he murmured softly, "That lad must be so tired that he forgot to place his sect badge on the Ten Formations Stele."

Stunned for a moment, Elder Luo suddenly realized. "Aiya, I forgot to tell him about this!"

The Ten Formations Stele would only record one's name after they tapped their sect badge on it after the pagoda challenge.

For the past three months, Su Zimo spent his time buried in the ancient texts in Array Chamber with absolute focus. He did not interact with any Array Peak disciples as well. In fact, he did not even know about the function of the Ten Formations Stele.

When he saw the huge stele before his challenge, he did not think much nor ask about it and headed for the pagoda straight.

Elder Luo thought that as a disciple of Weapon Peak, Su Zimo was merely there to join the crowd and did not mention it since he had not expected the latter to leave a mark on the stele either.

“Should I call him back?” Elder Luo leapt into the air, prepared to chase after Su Zimo to inform him about it.

Xuan Yi waved it off and shook his head. “Forget it. That lad hasn’t slept a single week in nearly eight days. Let him have a good rest.”

“Should I look for him tomorrow then?” Elder Luo asked.

Xuan Yi remained silent for a moment. “Perhaps after the five peaks face-off. Let’s hide this for him for the time being. Needless to say, something like this would definitely cause a commotion among the five peaks and it’ll attract trouble for him if the other disciples knew that he was the one who cleared the Ten Formations Pagoda.”

“Yes, that’s good too.”

Elder Luo nodded his head. “It’s less than three months to the end of the year. Let’s not affect his cultivation because of this.”

The both of them chatted casually for a little more before leaving the place.

Elder Luo could finally rest in peace as well.

Once again, the Ten Formations Pagoda returned to normalcy. Disciples of the five peaks were fast asleep at the moment as no one realized that overnight, a new line had appeared on the Ten Formations Stele.

...

Yu Ping was a disciple of Array Peak. His habit for the past few days would involve running to the Ten Formations Stele for a look in the morning before going off to do his own things.

This morning, Yu Ping arrived on his flying sword and took a spin around Ten Formations Pagoda, glancing at Ten Formations Stele casually.

“Yeah, no changes.”

He murmured softly.

There were a total of 100 lines on the Ten Formations Stele and there were truly not many changes with a single glance.

All of a sudden!

Yu Ping’s expression changed starkly as he turned around, glaring at the first row intently. His eyes widened as his pupils constricted.

Something changed!

There was a change on the Ten Formations Stele!

Senior Brother Zhong was pushed to the second row!

The name of the first row was...

“Mmm?”

What was the meaning of this?

Blank?

Yu Ping was dazed.

Blinking his eyes, he looked again – it was truly a blank.

Landing on the ground, he approached even closer and rubbed his eyes. However, it was still blank.

The challenger had no name?

Instinctively, Yu Ping continued reading the row of words as his jaws dropped apart while his eyes flooded with shock.

“Cleared Level 10, 7 days 18 hours!”

That line of words had him rattled silly.

Yu Ping stood there motionlessly, absolutely stunned as his mind went into chaos. The only thing he did was mumble subconsciously, “Cleared Level 10, cleared Level 10...”

“Junior Brother Yu, you’re so early today?”

Someone greeted him from the back to be met with his silence.

“What are you doing standing here and getting immersed in the Ten Formations Stele?”

A disciple of Array Peak who came after Yu Ping patted him on the shoulder and commented casually before raising his head.

Instantly, that person’s smile froze as well.

After a long time, a shrill shriek tore through the skies, waking countless of Array Peak disciples who were still deep in their sleep.

“Cleared! Cleared!”

“The mysterious challenger cleared Level 10!”

“A new record is born! Zhong Wen has lost completely!”

Within an hour, the news spread through all five peaks.

It was earth-shattering!

Chapter 110: Just Who Was It?

This day, the five peaks quaked as countless of trial disciples rushed towards Array Peak.

Not just that, more than half of Ethereal Peak's inner sect disciples rushed over because of the news as well.

Logically speaking, the birth of a new record on the Ten Formations Stele shouldn't have created such a stir. However, it was said that the record was downright broken!

There were only 10 levels to the Ten Formations Pagoda and the challenger had cleared them all!

Before long, many sect disciples gathered before the Ten Formations Pagoda and in the skies, many were still continuously streaming in on their flying swords.

Spirit Peak's Feng Haoyu, Leng Rou and little fatty were among them.

Xue Yi and the others from Weapon Peak came over too.

Zhong Wen looked at the first row on the Ten Formations Stele with a deep sorrow in his eyes.

Had he known that this would be the case, he need not have tried repeatedly to challenge the pagoda previously just to beat this person – the both of them were not even on the same level of understanding towards formations.

"One can be called an Intermediate Array Formation Master after clearing Level 10 of the Ten Formations Pagoda."

"Becoming an Intermediate Array Formation Master at the Qi Condensation realm is way too terrifying."

"Not only is this record unprecedented, no one should be able to surpass it in the future. This guy spent close to eight days without eating or sleeping. How did he manage to survive?"

The fact that the challenger did not leave his name piqued everyone's curiosity as countless guesses were made.

"Just who is that person?"

"There must be a reason why the mysterious challenger did not leave his name!"

No matter how hard everyone tried, they would not be able to guess the reason was because Su Zimo did not know the purpose of the Ten Formations Stele and neither did he know how to leave his name on it.

"Could it be Senior Brother Liu? Other than Senior Brother Zhong, he's the only one with the deepest understanding of formations."

"I saw Senior Brother Liu a couple of days back. It can't be him."

"Or could it be Senior Brother Ceng? He hasn't appeared for the past few days. There's a chance it's him."

"I heard that Senior Brother Ceng left to do a sect mission."

Everyone continued discussing fervently with wild guesses.

“I think this senior brother must be the true genius hiding within our Array Peak. Definitely someone handsome and extraordinary. Most importantly, he is someone indifferent to fame and isn’t cocky.”

A female disciple of Array Peak muttered to herself, immersed in her fantasy as her eyes swooned with love.

“I think that he probably wants to reveal his identity at the year end face-off and shock everyone,”
Another disciple deduced.

All the gathered disciples looked on with awe.

Clearing Level 10 meant that one could set up a Grade 2 formation.

In Elixir and Talisman Peak, the geniuses were barely able to refine Grade 1 elixirs or talismans.

In Weapon Peak, no one could even create an inferior-grade spirit weapon.

From that perspective, that mysterious challenger had already surpassed all the trial disciples in the five peaks!

Within the crowd, Feng Haoyu suddenly chuckled and shook his head. “The Dao of formations is merely a supplementary skill at the end of the day. In the cultivation world, one’s true strength is what matters in life and death situations.”

With that statement, Feng Haoyu turned around to leave with a bunch of Spirit Peak disciples behind him.

“Hmph! What’s he getting cocky for? He thinks he’s a somebody just because he’s good at fighting?”

“Isn’t that right? If this mysterious senior brother were to set up an array formation for him, he’d have to obediently surrender!”

“Listen to how salty he sounds. That’s the number one of Spirit Peak? How crass.”

Instantly, many Array Peak disciples were displeased as they mocked behind Feng Haoyu’s back.

To them, Feng Haoyu’s disdain of that mysterious challenger was equivalent to his disdain of Array Peak and indirectly, them.

Furthermore, even though the Dao of formations was a supplementary skill, it was extremely important.

If a sect was weak but possessed an extremely strong Array Formation Master, he could set up a sect protecting formation to withstand powerful enemies.

That was why some sects in the cultivation world who had strong Array Formation Masters were almost impenetrable.

“Amazing! That’s amazing!”

Little fatty rubbed his chubby palms and declared, “It’d be such a pity if I don’t get to know someone so amazing! Just who is this person?”

Leng Rou's gaze lingered for a long time on the Ten Formations Stele before she nodded her head. "Impressive."

With that, Leng Rou left Array Peak too.

When the many disciples beside Leng Rou heard that, they could not help but yelp.

She had a cold and aloof nature and barely spoke. Even a genius like Feng Haoyu had not received an appraisal as such from her.

However, that single word she said was enough to tell of her thoughts.

Little fatty squinted his eyes and looked around the crowd for a long time as though he was searching for someone.

After a while, he found nothing and frowned, murmuring to himself, "Where did bro disappear to recently? He isn't even here to take a look at such a huge commotion?"

"No, I've got to go take a look at Weapon Peak."

His mind made up, little fatty summoned his flying sword and sped towards Weapon Peak.

...

In the distant skies, five Golden Cores stood among the clouds, watching the rare spectacle on Array Peak.

They were the five peak masters.

"Just who is the person who challenged the pagoda? Even I'm curious," The brown haired youth of Elixir Peak said with a gaudy tone.

Four pairs of eyes landed on Xuan Yi as Wen Xuan chuckled. "Say it. I don't believe that you don't know who it is as Array Peak's master."

Hands behind his back, Xuan Yi smiled in silence.

"Stop beating around the bush! Say it!" Talisman Peak's master, a cold-looking woman, barked.

Xuan Yi's smile froze on his face.

"Haha!"

The disheveled old man rubbed his hands in laughter. "You wouldn't want Qi Shan to get angry. If she throws a bunch of talismans on your face, you'll know what's true suffering."

"No, no."

The brown haired youth shook his head with a serious expression. "Qi Shan won't bear to attack Xuan Yi."

Qi Shan's face blushed for a brief moment as she glared at the disheveled old man and brown haired youth with grit teeth. "You damned fogies! Nothing good comes out of your mouths!"

With an awkward expression, Xuan Yi looked at Qi Shan warily before coughing. "I... really can't reveal this."

"Eh?"

Wen Xuan was puzzled. "That's strange. How unique is the identity of this lad that you can't tell us?"

Xuan Yi shook his head in silence.

The disheveled old man waved it off. "Forget it, let's not make things difficult for him."

Pausing for a moment, the disheveled old man couldn't help but remark, "But, you're quite something, Xuan Yi. To think that you've managed to groom such a talent without letting us know about it. That's quite skillful of you."

"Hmph, I reckon he must have spent quite a bit of time and energy on that lad," Qi Shan scoffed.

Xuan Yi smiled. "Not really. He's self-taught."

"Self-taught?"

The four peak masters exchanged surprised glances.

If someone could clear the Ten Formations Pagoda based on his own studies without the guidance of a strong Array Formation Master as backing, that was truly something incredible.

"Damn, that's going to make us even more curious," Wen Xuan laughed bitterly.

Xuan Yi pondered for a moment and replied, "Don't worry. His identity won't be hidden for long. It's just a matter of time before you guys know about it."

Chapter 111: Displeasure of Little Fatty

Weapon Peak.

Little fatty arrived at the entrance of Su Zimo's cave abode.

The door of the entrance was destroyed by little crane and Su Zimo had not fixed it. Looking inside, little fatty caught sight of a green robed man in deep sleep on the stone bed with a ferocious spirit tiger guarding at the side.

A twinkle appeared in little fatty's eyes as he cast his flying sword aside and rushed in.

When the spirit tiger saw little fatty, it growled softly but did not show any animosity.

It naturally knew that little fatty was Su Zimo's friend.

If anyone else had barged in as such, the spirit tiger would have rushed in front of Su Zimo to block.

"Bro, bro! Wake up!"

Little fatty was already yelling before he approached.

Even though Su Zimo was deep in sleep, he was already awake subconsciously the moment little fatty had barged in.

Shaking his drowsy head, Su Zimo sat up and blinked his sleepy eyes while stretching his tendons.

“Bro, where have you been for the past three months? Why haven’t I seen you anywhere?” Little fatty asked.

Su Zimo replied casually, “I went out to relax.”

Rolling his eyes, little fatty grumbled, “Bro, you sure are confident. The five peaks face-off is approaching and yet you went out to relax...?”

Pausing for a moment, little fatty inched towards Su Zimo and said mysteriously, “Bro, haven’t you heard that something major happened in our sect recently?”

“Ah?”

Su Zimo was somewhat puzzled as he shook his head. “I don’t know.”

“Bro, you know that there’s a Ten Formations Pagoda in Array Peak, right?”

“Yeah?”

“A mysterious disciple cleared the entire Ten Formations Pagoda!”

Su Zimo’s heart skipped a bit and he was more awake now. Frowning, he asked, “How did you know about it?”

“I’m not the only one! All trial disciples of the five peaks know about it! Before long, the entire sect’s going to know about it! There’s a lot of people gathered on Array Peak right now!”

Su Zimo was shocked.

He had not expected that his unintentional actions would have caused such a stir.

Could Elder Luo and Peak Master Xuan Yi have spread the news?

Wrong!

On second thought, Su Zimo asked, “What do you mean by mysterious disciple? Nobody knows who cleared the Ten Formations Pagoda?”

“Hehe!”

Little fatty gave a mysterious smile as he said beamingly, “That’s the most incredible part! After the disciple cleared the pagoda, he did not leave his name on the Ten Formations Stele! Now, disciples of all five peaks are guessing at that person’s identity!”

“Ten Formations Stele?”

Su Zimo blinked his eyes and vaguely recalled that there was a huge stele filled with words beside the Ten Formations Pagoda.

“What do you mean leaving a name on the Ten Formations Stele?” Su Zimo asked once more.

Little fatty explained the use of the Ten Formations Stele, “After clearing the pagoda, one has to tap their sect badge on the Ten Formations Stele for their name to be recorded.”

Su Zimo froze for a moment and muttered to himself, “So, there’s such a thing.”

“That incredible person cleared all 10 levels in one go and left gracefully just like that. How admirable.”

Little fatty’s eyes were filled with awe as though he was imagining a cultivator’s extraordinary demeanor amidst the ethereal clouds, leaving as he flicked his sleeves.

In reality, Su Zimo was thoroughly exhausted that night and had barely managed to return on his flying sword. There was no way he was that carefree.

Little fatty noticed that Su Zimo was distracted and seemingly disinterested. He then reached for Su Zimo’s arm, saying, “Bro, let’s go! I’ll take you to Array Peak and you’ll see just how amazing that person is!”

Discreetly, Su Zimo avoided little fatty’s hand and shook his head. “I’ll give it a pass.”

Su Zimo did not have much time to begin with. Now that he had spent three months on Array Peak without refining elixirs, raising his cultivation or practicing sword wielding, he was left with less than three months to the end of the year.

How would he have the mood to join the crowd.

Furthermore, he was that mysterious challenger – Su Zimo wasn’t curious in the slightest bit.

At the same time, Su Zimo realized that if word were to spread out, it would bring quite a bit of trouble for him. He decided to hide it for the time being.

“Bro, it’s a huge crowd on Array Peak right now! It’s absolutely unprecedented! It’d be such a pity if you didn’t go take a look!” Little fatty did not give up and continued persuading.

Su Zimo chuckled and replied casually, “I know nothing about formations too. What’s the big deal about challenging the pagoda?”

That statement was casually thrown out by Su Zimo. However, little fatty was instantly displeased.

Bang!

His chubby palm slammed down heavily on Su Zimo’s stone bed, giving off a dull thud.

Su Zimo was dazed.

“Bro, that’s not a nice thing to say.”

Little fatty kept his smile and his expression was unprecedentedly serious. “Perhaps that mysterious disciple might not be your match in terms of weapon refinement. But bro, you should not underestimate him like that!”

“What do you mean what’s the big deal about challenging the pagoda? Do you know what it implies for someone to be able to clear Level 10 of the Ten Formations Pagoda?”

Su Zimo asked automatically, “What?”

Little fatty was stunned at Su Zimo’s question. After holding it for a long time, his face flushed and he could not give a reply either.

Naturally, little fatty was not really angry. It was just a moment of indignance for that mysterious challenger.

Su Zimo looked at little fatty’s embarrassed face and could not help but smile. “Actually, I’m that mysterious disciple...”

“Bro, stop messing around,” Little fatty waved his hand to interrupt him.

Su Zimo: “... ”

Little fatty said in a deep voice, “Bro, you have to understand that through the generations of trial disciples in the history of the sect, there have been many geniuses. However, the best among them have only cleared Level 6!”

“Look at that Feng Haoyu. He may seem impressive now, but it’s not like there hasn’t been another genius with a wind spirit root in the sect. He’s just one of them. However, this mysterious disciple that cleared Level 10? He’s the first person through the thousands of years of history of our sect!”

Su Zimo could only nod his head in agreement.

“Think about it, bro. Wasn’t it incredible when you got through the Eight Distresses Formation and destroyed the spirit testing gate? Just like you, the accomplishment of this mystery disciple is unprecedented!”

With a stoic face, little fatty said earnestly, “Bro, you’ve got to be humble. Humility is important. You can’t look down on others casually. That won’t do.”

“Alright, I got it. I’ll check it out when I’ve got time.”

Su Zimo was sweating profusely for this conversation. When he saw that little fatty had no intention of stopping, he changed the topic. “It’s been a long time since I’ve cultivated. I’ve got to seize the opportunity to raise my cultivation.”

Little fatty scanned Su Zimo with the Spirit Peering Art.

He was still at Level 6 Qi Condensation?

Bitterly, little fatty said, “Bro, look at you. You were already at Level 6 Qi Condensation three months ago but you haven’t progressed at all. How are you going to fight Feng Haoyu?”

“Bro, even if you know you can’t win him, you’ve got to pick yourself up and not give up! The path of cultivation is like going against the waters. If you don’t advance, you get pushed back. You’ve wasted three months just like that! What should I say about you? Sigh!”

Su Zimo: "... "

Chapter 112: Elixir Choice

With a great deal of effort, Su Zimo finally managed to send little fatty away. He then squatted at the entrance of his cave abode and focused on setting up a formation.

He set up a Grade 2 formation – Smoke Gathering Formation

Because the stupid bird's identity was unique, Su Zimo did not dare to set up a killing formation. It would suffice for him to set up a trap formation and restrain the stupid bird.

Standing at the side, the spirit tiger watched. Even though it did not understand what was going on, it realized that Su Zimo's return must mean that the latter had found a way to suppress that stupid bird.

He was gone for a full three months; it wasn't a short period of time.

Su Zimo took an entire day to set up the Smoke Gathering Formation.

However, he had no intention of stopping right after. He continued to set up another Soundproof Formation outside the Smoke Gathering Formation.

That way, Su Zimo wouldn't be affected no matter how the stupid bird cried within the trap.

Thereafter, he made an imprint using the spirit beast badge on the spirit tiger's neck so that the latter would have unrestricted access to the cave abode.

By the time everything was set up, it was night.

Su Zimo looked at the night skies without feeling sleepy in the slightest bit.

It was less than three months to the year end face-off – he did not have much time left.

According to his original plan, he would have been able to reach Perfected Qi Condensation through sufficient use of spirit stones.

Now that he had spent so much time on Array Peak, he would only be able to reach Level 9 Qi Condensation at max come the end of the year.

After all, he did not have much progress on elixir refinement yet.

Against Feng Haoyu's Perfected Qi Condensation, Su Zimo knew that he had no chance of winning.

Furthermore, Feng Haoyu was cultivating one of the three major secret skills – Ethereal Sword.

Su Zimo's only chance of winning was on the two sword formation manuals!

He had to master the Tripartite and Hexagonal Sword Formation before the year end face-off and become a Sword Formation Master!

Su Zimo did not sleep the entire night as he summoned his Elixir Furnace and started with refinement.

Previously, he had a chance of refining Grade 1 elixirs. However, it exploded due to little crane's interference, wasting all his previous efforts.

After three months of not refining elixirs, Su Zimo's technique was clearly rusty.

Unable to control the temperature of the flames precisely, the spirit herbs were burnt to ashes.

It was only till midnight when he finally found the feeling and got into the groove.

Failing many times in between, Su Zimo finally managed to refine a cauldron of elixirs come early morning.

Usually, a cauldron would contain nine elixirs.

However, the complexity of the refinement increased with the recipe and as such, the number of elixirs were reduced.

For example, among Grade 1 elixirs, the most difficult of them was the Foundation Establishment Elixir and each refinement would only produce a single elixir, nothing more.

Spirit Gathering Elixir was the most simple to refine amongst Grade 1 elixirs.

Nine Spirit Gathering Elixirs burst forth from the holes in the Elixir Furnace and hovered in midair. Eight of the elixirs had three elixir patterns etched on them – those were superior-grade elixirs!

One of them had four elixir patterns – a supreme-grade elixir!

Looking at the nine elixirs that he had refined floating in the air, Su Zimo's eyes flickered as he pondered.

It was out of his expectations that he had managed to produce elixirs of such quality with his first attempt.

Refinement of elixirs was unlike that of weapons.

For weapon refinement, fire was the foundation. However, the true core of it was on the steps of tempering and spirit gathering.

As for elixir refinement, the true core lies in the two extraction steps.

The more thorough the extraction, the less the impurities of the elixir and the better the quality of the end product.

With a single thought, a scarlet flame appeared from the fingertip of Su Zimo's right hand with a loud thud.

There was only a single explanation as to why he could create elixirs of such quality – it was the Level 3 Spirit Fire!

He could vaguely sense that the Level 3 Spirit Fire produced by his right hand was unlike normal Level 3 Spirit Fires. In fact, it seemed to give him a unique advantage in terms of refining spirit herbs.

As long as he continued practicing on grasping the flame's temperature precisely and familiarizing himself with the ratio of spirit herbs, it wouldn't be impossible for him to create perfect elixirs!

"Perhaps this flame of mine isn't actually a Level 3 Spirit Fire? Maybe it just shares the same color as one?"

Su Zimo looked at his right hand repeatedly and fell into deep thought.

Right then, a familiar cry of a crane appeared outside his cave abode.

"Caw, caw!"

The spirit tiger trembled as it jolted up in fright. The hair on its back all stood up as fear seeped out of its eyes.

Even after three months, the spirit tiger still had lingering fears. That was enough to tell how tormented it was by little crane.

"It's finally here."

Su Zimo smiled gently as he looked calmly at little crane descending from the skies.

Flapping its wings, little crane looked at Su Zimo with a taunting and gleeful expression.

Its meaning was clear – 'Small fry, even if you hide outside for three months, you'll have to come back sooner or later! You can't escape from my grasp!'

Right as little crane descended upon the entrance of the cave abode, a bright, bedazzling light shone from the ground!

The formation pattern shone brightly as the Smoke Gathering Formation was activated!

"Caw!"

Little crane's expression changed as it panicked. It wanted to soar into the skies but it realized that no matter how it tried, it could not fly out of that small region.

It was trapped!

Having grown up in Ethereal Peak, little crane naturally knew of the methods deployed by cultivators. Instantly, it realized that it might have fallen into a type of array formation.

"Caw, caw!"

Enraged, little crane shrieked sharply and loudly. However, its voice reverberated around the Soundproof Formation and could not pass through.

Inside the cave abode, the spirit tiger looked at little crane opening its mouth without any sound coming out. Instantly, it beamed and jumped around the spot in excitement.

It was his turn to see the stupid bird suffer!

"Finally, comeuppance! It's my turn for revenge!" The spirit tiger reared its head and howled, letting out all its indignance.

When it saw the spirit tiger's provocation, little crane was even more enraged. It stood silent on the spot for some time before suddenly flapping its wings. Amidst the raging hurricane formed, it swooped towards the cave abode with cold, sharp talons!

The spirit tiger jumped in right. Just as it was about to dodge, it realized that little crane was still stuck within the same region and could not escape at all – it merely slammed around the corners like a headless bug.

That caused the spirit tiger to laugh even more merrily.

Su Zimo heaved out a sigh of relief.

It was obvious that the stupid bird knew nothing about formations. Furthermore, it was not strong enough to break through the formation with brute force.

He could finally cultivate in peace for the next few days.

Totally indifferent towards little crane who was rampaging and crying at the entrance of the cave abode, Su Zimo took out a spirit stone from his storage bag and channeled Qi Condensation to cultivate.

His cultivation was stagnant for three months now and he had to raise it as soon as possible.

Even though he had just refined a cauldron of Spirit Gathering Elixirs, Su Zimo had no intention of consuming them.

He found out from Elixir Peak's master previously that other than perfect elixirs, all other graded elixirs had impurities. The impact they had on cultivators was something that was undetermined.

At that time, Su Zimo had already made a choice.

Unless it was a perfect elixir, he was not going to consume it casually.

At that moment, Su Zimo did not realize it yet. However, that choice of his was precisely the reason why he would gain a solid foundation that no one could match in his path of cultivation!

Chapter 113: How Sinful!

After three days, Su Zimo finally refined a cauldron of Spirit Gathering Elixirs with a perfect elixir!

He placed that perfect elixir carefully into a jade bottle and kept it in his storage bag.

Little crane was trapped by the Smoke Gathering Formation for the past three days and was unable to escape. It was also hoarse after crying for three days and nights. By now, it was sprawled on the ground in a despondent manner, looking at Su Zimo pitifully.

Su Zimo came before the Smoke Gathering Formation and looked at little crane with a fake smile. "Stupid bird, you know how strong I am now?"

Little crane nodded hurriedly and let out a look of awe.

Su Zimo was unmoved.

This stupid bird had a high status and had never suffered before in the sect – there was no way it was going to give in so easily.

If Su Zimo let it go, it might even come back and cause a greater ruckus!

“Stay here for three months. I’ll let you off after the five peaks face-off,” Su Zimo remarked casually.

“Caw, caw!”

Instantly, little crane’s expression changed as it yelled at Su Zimo as though threatening him.

Scoffing coldly, Su Zimo pretended as though he saw nothing and left his cave abode, riding his flying sword towards Elixir Peak.

Knowing how to refine Spirit Gathering Elixirs was not enough for him to be the number one of Elixir Peak.

The greatest difficulty of weapon refinement lies in spirit gathering.

As for elixir refinement, the difficulty lies in the deep knowledge that was required of all the various types of spirit herbs.

An Elementary Elixir Refinement Master would be able to differentiate between the spirit herbs for Grade 1 elixirs as well as their attributes and the temperature they could endure.

Someone who was unfamiliar with those things would be put in a spot if someone were to give them a recipe and they did not know of the spirit herbs listed. If so, how could they refine any elixirs?

Incredible Elixir Refinement Masters would be able to understand the recipe’s description based on their imaginations and creativity. From there, they could refine new elixirs using their own ratios.

But of course, Su Zimo was still far from that.

Su Zimo’s motive for heading to Elixir Peak was to exchange for a record of Grade 1 spirit herbs so that he could memorize them. Thereafter, he would exchange for some recipes and spirit herbs to continue practicing on refinement.

Before long, Su Zimo returned to his cave abode.

For the next few days, he worked on raising his cultivation and elixir refinement.

Trapped in the formation, little crane had nothing to eat and had lost weight, looking even more pitiful.

The spirit tiger could not bear to see it suffer and hence, when it hunted for food outside, it would bring some back for little crane as well, chatting with it every now and then.

During this period, the relationship between the tiger and crane had improved quite a bit.

Only, the way little crane looked at Su Zimo was still filled with resentment and pride.

Su Zimo could not be bothered.

This day, he refined another cauldron of elixirs with four supreme-grade and the rest being superior-grades.

Just as Su Zimo was about to keep the elixirs, he had an idea.

Even though he was not going to consume those elixirs, they still contained the essence of spirit herbs. He wondered if they would work to help spirit beasts raise their cultivation faster too.

At that thought, Su Zimo walked towards the spirit tiger with the fragrant smelling elixirs.

Right as he was about to ask, the spirit tiger wagged its tail with a pandering look. Its mouth was gaping and saliva was almost drooling...

Alright, that saved him the question.

“Look at your worthless expression!”

Su Zimo scolded jokingly before tossing some of the freshly refined elixirs over.

The spirit tiger leapt into the air and opened its mouth, catching an elixir and chewing in satisfaction.

When little crane who was trapped in the formation saw that, it was stunned.

“That works too?”

It was completely stupefied.

It had taken elixirs in the past before. However, even if its mother was the Mystical Guardian Beast, the elixirs given to her were middle-grade at best.

Little crane had never seen someone like Su Zimo who would feed a dog superior-grade elixirs!

To little crane, the way the spirit tiger fawned with a wagging tail earlier on was no different from a dog.

Little crane had a clear view of everything – there were even supreme-grade elixirs!

How extravagant!

How wasteful!

How exciting!

How sinful!

“But, I like it!”

Little crane jumped on the ground excitedly and winked at spirit tiger, trying to signal to it.

There were many cultivators who reared spirit beasts in the cultivation world. However, only few of them would be willing to feed their spirit beasts with elixirs, much less superior or supreme-grade elixirs.

Cultivators would not even bear to eat those elixirs, much less feed their spirit beasts.

Little crane felt that it was getting along quite well with the spirit tiger these days and it was implying for the latter to share some elixirs with it.

The spirit tiger glanced at little crane and hesitated for a long time. Finally, it picked up an elixir of the worst quality from the ground and tossed it into the Smoke Gathering Formation.

Little crane was enraged but it couldn't do anything at all.

Twirling its butt, the spirit tiger ran back and clawed a circle on the ground, protecting the rest of the elixirs in front of it.

It looked like it was ready to fight anyone to the death if they dared touch those pills!

Su Zimo shook his head and smiled. Retrieving a couple of jade bottles from his storage bag, he poured all the elixirs within in front of the spirit tiger.

Most of them were superior-grade elixirs with some supreme-grade ones; even the lowest quality was at middle-grade!

He remarked, "It's all for you. Hurry and raise your cultivation."

The spirit tiger was bedazzled.

"This happiness came too suddenly! Joy has finally come to me!" The spirit tiger dove head first into the pile of elixirs and nearly fainted from the fragrance of it all.

Little crane was getting more and more anxious as it watched, crying repeatedly but her voice could not be heard at all.

"How can you finish so many elixirs? Share some with me!"

After a moment, the spirit tiger regained its senses and swallowed another few elixirs. It then sprawled on the ground and began snoring.

Every spirit beast knew how to cultivate innately. However, certain spirit beasts with powerful bloodlines would contain a memory heritage that would make their cultivation techniques even stronger.

The spirit tiger merely had an ordinary bloodline and its cultivation technique would never be able to match the Marrow Cleansing section, let alone The Mystic Classic of the Twelve Demon Kings of the Great Wilderness.

The thought of imparting the Marrow Cleansing section to the spirit tiger so that it could turn stronger had crossed Su Zimo's mind as well.

However, Die Yue had once warned him not to impart the skill to anyone else and as such, Su Zimo could only abandon that thought.

Seeing that no one was paying attention to it, little crane felt extremely aggrieved. Left with no choice, it picked an elixir left behind by the spirit tiger earlier and began cultivating.

Within a couple of days, the tiger and crane finished all the elixirs.

Even though little crane's cultivation rose, it wasn't obvious because it was a spirit demon and did not consume much elixirs to begin with.

However, the spirit tiger's aura was clearly much more ferocious. Its gaze had turned more sinister and its fur was now golden, standing erect like shimmering needles.

If it continued cultivating as such, it wouldn't be long before the spirit tiger became a Foundation Establishment realm spirit demon!

After the elixirs were consumed, both the spirit tiger and little crane were yearning for more as they looked at Su Zimo wistfully, waiting for him to refine.

By now, the spirit herbs that Su Zimo had exchanged for were used up entirely.

Because he no longer had any contribution points, he would have to use spirit stones if he wanted to exchange for spirit herbs at Elixir Peak.

However, Su Zimo required spirit stones to raise his cultivation.

Meeting the anticipating gazes of the two spirit beasts, Su Zimo merely shrugged his shoulders and shook his head. "I can't refine any more elixirs. I'm out of spirit herbs."

It was like thunder striking!

The news was a huge blow to the tiger and crane!

Both of them were addicted and had yet to enjoy to their hearts' contentment. However, he was going to stop...

Chapter 114: Trump Card

The reason why Su Zimo wanted to stop refining elixirs was because he no longer needed it.

Similar to weapon refinement, Su Zimo no longer had to waste time on it now that he could refine inferior-grade spirit weapons.

There were two months left to the year end face-off.

At the moment, Su Zimo's cultivation was at Level 7 Qi Condensation.

Coupled with the perfect elixirs he had refined previously, it was not going to be an issue for him to reach Level 9 Qi Condensation by the end of the year. However, Perfected Qi Condensation was impossible for him.

At Perfected Qi Condensation, the dantian would open up like a vast sea of qi and one would be much stronger than at Level 9.

That was something that required elixirs, spirit stones and a long period of cultivation. Even cultivators with heaven spirit roots were no exception to that rule.

During this period of time, little crane had consumed quite a bit of Su Zimo's elixirs. Even though it was still trapped in the Smoke Gathering Formation, its relationship with Su Zimo had improved.

Despite that, Su Zimo did not dare to let little crane out.

This day, little fatty arrived at Su Zimo's cave abode once more.

When he saw that Su Zimo's cultivation had risen, he felt relieved and thought that Su Zimo had finally picked himself up.

At the moment, little fatty's cultivation realm was at the peak of Level 8 Qi Condensation.

By the end of the year, he was definitely going to hit Level 9 Qi Condensation.

Even though his progress was already very fast, it was still slightly inferior compared to Feng Haoyu and Leng Rou.

In theory, the cultivation speed of heaven spirit roots should not lose out to variant spirit roots.

Su Zimo had vaguely sensed that little fatty's physique was different.

Even though it could not be compared to his, it was definitely much stronger than most other Qi Refinement Warriors.

There was a possibility that little fatty had used a portion of his spirit qi on tempering his body. That might be why he was not on the same level as Feng Haoyu and Leng Rou.

The reason for little fatty's arrival was naturally to impart to Su Zimo the various methods of sword wielding and fighting between cultivators.

As Xuan Yi had mentioned, the fights between Qi Refinement Warriors were relatively simple and there weren't many things to mention – most of it had to be learned through practical experience.

For that month, little fatty stayed in Su Zimo's cave abode.

As the both of them sparred daily, Su Zimo's sword wielding skills were becoming more and more proficient.

Initially, Su Zimo was at a complete disadvantage. Each time little fatty summoned his flying sword, he could suppress Su Zimo in less than three moves.

However, as time went on, Su Zimo was gradually able to match little fatty evenly.

Subsequently, the spirit tiger even joined the fights and attacked Su Zimo together with little fatty.

At the beginning, Su Zimo was not used to being attacked by little fatty and the spirit tiger together. However, as his sword wielding skills improved, he was able to hold his ground without losing out.

During this period of time, what puzzled little fatty at the most was that despite being at Level 7 Qi Condensation, Su Zimo was completely able to match him who was at Level 8.

That implied that the quality of Su Zimo's spirit qi was far superior compared to little fatty's.

But, that didn't make any sense.

Both of them had heaven spirit roots, so why would there be a level of difference between their spirit qi?

Little fatty had asked about it before as well but Su Zimo merely shook his head, indicating that he was unclear too.

In truth, Su Zimo had a theory.

It was because a change in quality would occur after spirit qi enters his body through his right hand, causing it to be even purer within his body!

Vaguely, Su Zimo had the feeling that his right hand might have something else that Die Yue left for him.

That was the reason why he could produce the Level 3 Spirit Fire too.

However, everything was so strange that Su Zimo would naturally not mention it to anyone else.

This day, little fatty had plans to leave.

He had already taught Su Zimo most of what he had learned in Spirit Peak – it was meaningless to stay any longer.

Before he left, little fatty suddenly declared mysteriously, “Bro, I know it seems like we’re rather evenly matched recently. But, actually, I have a trump card!”

“Oh?” Su Zimo raised his brow.

A smug look flashed through little fatty’s eyes as he chuckled. “Bro, I’ve actually been cultivating a body tempering technique that takes up quite a bit of spirit qi. If not for that, I would be able to hit Perfected Qi Condensation by the end of the year.”

Indeed, Su Zimo had guessed correctly.

When he saw that Su Zimo did not have a stark reaction, little fatty thought that it was because he did not understand the benefits of body tempering. Because of that, he rushed forward excitedly. “Bro, you haven’t fought with cultivators who had tempered bodies before. If I make use of my trump card, you’ll definitely lose for sure!”

“Is that so?”

Su Zimo chuckled and asked.

When he heard that, little fatty glared at him and harrumphed gently, “Bro, if you still don’t believe me, we can have another spar so that I can show you my technique!”

“Very well.”

Su Zimo nodded in agreement.

Little fatty summoned a fatty – it was a pseudo spirit weapon.

Among the five peaks, there were not many trial disciples who had an inferior-grade spirit weapon. Because little fatty had just joined for less than a year, he naturally did not have one too.

During their normal spars, Su Zimo naturally did not use the inferior-grade flying swords that he had created. Instead, he would also use a pseudo spirit weapon.

“Go!”

A stream of spirit qi shot out from both their fingertips into their flying swords.

Shuttling through the cave abode, both flying swords clashed against one another.

Cling! Clang!

The sounds of metal clashing echoed as sparks flew.

In terms of sword wielding, both of them were evenly matched and neither party's flying sword could break the other's defense.

Right then, little fatty hollered and slapped on his storage bag, summoning a gigantic axe!

The gigantic axe looked to be the same size as little fatty and it appeared extremely strange when he wielded it.

While their flying swords were fighting in mid-air, little fatty took advantage of the chance and tunneled forth. A golden light shone on the surface of his body as he suddenly arrived before Su Zimo, swifter than ever.

Swoosh!

The gigantic axe tore through the voids and descended from the skies menacingly. Before it got close, Su Zimo's hair was already pushed backwards.

"Haha, bro! You lost!"

Little fatty burst out in laughter. As the gigantic axe was about to strike Su Zimo's head, little fatty hurriedly held back.

Right then, with an unchanged expression, Su Zimo suddenly reached out and grabbed the incoming axe!

Bang!

Even though the gigantic axe had met with flesh, the sound that echoed felt like it was defeated!

The gigantic axe could not advance anymore!

Little fatty's face turned pale with fight as he rushed over and asked in panic, "B-Bro! Are you a-alright?! Why did y-you grab my weapon?!"

Su Zimo had already tossed the axe onto the ground and retracted his nails discreetly.

Holding up Su Zimo's hand, little fatty checked it back and forth... there was no damage done at all!

He was alright?

Completely unharmed?

Little fatty's gaze towards Su Zimo changed gradually.

No matter how strong his body was, there was no way he would dare to receive a weapon with his bare hands – that was akin to courting death.

However, little fatty had witnessed the scene unfold right before his eyes!

Before little fatty managed to retract his momentum, Su Zimo had already stopped the axe! The feeling was no different from chopping an unshakable mountain!

“Bro, you...!” Little fatty’s eyes were filled with astonishment.

Su Zimo chuckled casually. “I’ve also cultivated body tempering techniques before. You’ve got to help me hide it.”

“F-For sure! Definitely!” Little fatty nodded instinctively.

Chapter 115: Face-off Commencement

When little fatty left Su Zimo’s cave abode, he was still filled with doubts. In a daze, he had not snapped out of what happened earlier.

There were no lack of amazing body tempering techniques in the cultivation world. However, he had never heard of one which the user could catch weapons barehanded.

And... he wasn’t injured at all!

Even demons who were known for their powerful bodies might not dare to do such a thing?

Suddenly, little fatty recalled the scene of them entering the sect.

Su Zimo was carrying him while dealing with a spirit demon on the walls of the peak – that wasn’t something that could be done with just body tempering.

Frowning, little fatty remembered the moment when his gigantic axe met with Su Zimo’s palm. Other than the dull thud, there were some other strange noises.

It was as though something sharp had scratched on his weapon, making a crisp sound.

Because everything had happened so suddenly, little fatty did not think too much into it. However, things felt odd in retrospect.

Instinctively, he took out his gigantic axe and swept it with his gaze. Instantly, his pupils constricted as the hair on his back stood up – he was petrified!

There were five small holes on the surface of the axe!

With a deep breath of air, little fatty composed himself and gestured his palm on the axe.

He placed his palm on the blade of the axe. His fingers fit exactly where the five holes were!

Broop!

Little fatty gulped.

Keeping his axe hurriedly, he adjusted his emotions and calmed himself before leaving.

...

In the cave abode.

Su Zimo looked at his palm and sighed gently.

He had merely wanted to grab little fatty's axe on a whim earlier on. He didn't expect that he couldn't suppress the Power of Blood and forced out those sharp nails.

It may not have been a big deal to be seen by little fatty. However, if seniors of the sect saw it, they might turn suspicious and that might even reveal his demonic bloodline!

"This matter is ultimately a problem," Su Zimo shook his head with a look of worry on his face.

It was one month away from the year end face-off.

Su Zimo's cultivation had just risen to Level 8 Qi Condensation.

He retrieved the Weapon Tripod from his storage bag.

No matter what, he had to master the Tripartite Sword Formation within the month. It would be best if he could master the Hexagonal Sword Formation too – that would increase his chances of victory against Feng Haoyu.

The prerequisite of cultivating a sword formation was that one had to possess a set of flying swords.

Su Zimo already had an inferior-grade flying sword – he had to refine five more.

For him, refining inferior-grade flying swords was no longer a problem.

He had the help of his spirit perception for the aspect of spirit gathering, turning it into a 100% success rate. However, he was still unable to refine middle-grade spirit weapons for some unknown reason.

After a day, Su Zimo managed to refine five inferior-grade flying swords to make up a set.

In his cave abode, he recalled the contents of the Tripartite Sword Formation and began to cultivate.

An extremely high mastery of flying swords was required for sword formations – the set up had to be perfect.

Fortunately, Su Zimo had established a firm foundation in sword wielding thanks to little fatty's help through the past month. Now, what he had to learn was how to control multiple flying swords.

...

In the final month, the atmosphere in the five peaks was clearly much more dense.

Most disciples were holed up in their cave abodes cultivating, preparing to showcase their prowess in the face-off.

The commotion caused by the mysterious challenger of Array Peak had gradually simmered as well.

Previously, the identity of the mysterious challenger had become the most popular topic amongst disciples of the five peaks with everyone guessing at his identity daily.

However, the discussions had mostly died down as the end of the year approached.

This day, a bell sounded from Ethereal Palace. There were a total of five sounds.

The five peaks face-off had officially commenced!

Many trial disciples appeared from their cave abodes one after another, speeding towards Weapon Peak with energized expressions.

The five peaks face-off lasted five days.

Because Weapon and Elixir Peaks were the weakest, according to the previous years' arrangement, their face-offs were arranged on the first and second day.

However, things were different this year.

Everyone of the five peaks knew of Feng Haoyu and Su Zimo's challenge.

Coincidentally, both of them were going to take part in the Weapon and Elixir Peak face-offs. Be it refinement or weapons or elixirs, both took a huge toll on one's spirit qi, energy and mental state.

In order to ensure that the both of them could take part in the face-offs in their best condition, the five peak masters agreed that they would separate the events.

First day, Weapon Peak face-off.

Second day, Talisman Peak face-off.

Third day, Elixir Peak face-off.

Fourth day, Array Peak face-off.

Fifth day, Spirit Peak face-off.

Because the Spirit Peak face-off was the most anticipated event among the five peaks, it was always on the last day every year.

The reason why they arranged for the Array Peak face-off before it was so that Feng Haoyu could get sufficient rest and prepare for the Spirit Peak face-off.

Weapon Peak's face-off was held in the Weapon Refinement Hall.

On the first day, nearly all disciples of the five peaks had gathered outside the Weapon Refinement Hall; there were even inner sect disciples gathering.

Weapon Peak had never seen such a crowd before.

At a glance, the entire place was densely packed with people.

The reason for this was because Weapon Peak's face-off was the first round of challenge between Feng Haoyu and Su Zimo!

All eyes were on this!

Everyone wanted to know who would have the last laugh in weapon refinement – the talent of Spirit Peak, Feng Haoyu, with his wind spirit root or Su Zimo with his Level 3 Spirit Fire.

Prior to this, disciples of the five peaks had already secretly wagered on the outcome.

The five peak masters sat right at the front of the Weapon Refinement Hall.

There were more than a hundred participating disciples standing below.

As for the spectating disciples, they could only stand outside and were not allowed to enter lest they disrupted the weapon refinement process.

“Make way, make way!”

A holler sounded from outside the crowd as though someone had arrived.

The crowd parted to the sides, revealing a passageway.

Hands behind his back, a purple robed Qi Refinement Warrior strode in. With a haughty expression, he entered the Weapon Refinement Hall – it was Feng Haoyu!

“Amazing! He’s already at Perfected Qi Condensation!”

“Hmph, that’s not all. I’m telling you, Senior Brother Feng already hit Perfected Qi Condensation more than a month ago. Right now, he’s only a single step away from entering Foundation Establishment realm!”

“I wonder what cultivation Su Zimo is at right now. If he’s too far apart, there won’t be anything to look forward to for their sparring.”

Right then, someone shouted among the crowd. “Su Zimo is here!”

Everyone looked over.

Not far away, Su Zimo arrived on his flying sword. Still clad in green robes, he looked calm as though he was in no pressure at all.

“Ha!”

A disciple could not help but scoff, “Am I seeing things? He’s only at Level 8 Qi Condensation?”

“Fufu, you were right. The difference between them is two levels! The outcome is obvious without them even fighting,” Another disciple shook his head and laughed, his ears clearly filled with disdain.

“If I were Su Zimo, I would admit defeat as soon as possible lest I get beaten up too badly in public and embarrass myself.”

Chapter 116: What Is He Refining?

Despite the ridicules of the crowd, Su Zimo remained expressionless. As if he had not heard anything, he walked straight to the Weapon Refinement Hall.

As he had spent three months on Array Peak and placed much effort into learning about sword formations, Su Zimo’s cultivation had not reached his expected Level 9 Qi Condensation.

But of course, there were still a couple more days before his final battle with Feng Haoyu.

If Su Zimo were to seize the chance to cultivate during the few days, he would have a chance to reach Level 9 Qi Condensation.

“Bro, good luck!”

Little fatty’s voice rang out from the crowd as he thumped his fist towards Su Zimo.

Smiling, Su Zimo nodded his head and entered the Weapon Refinement Hall.

Within the hall, Xue Yi and the others nodded their heads to greet Su Zimo.

“Junior Brother Su, don’t let those nasty remarks distract you. Calm yourself and you’ll definitely win!” Xue Yi whispered when Su Zimo walked by him.

“Yes. You too, Senior Brother Xue.”

Su Zimo replied with a smile.

“Don’t worry. I’ve managed to cultivate a Level 2 Spirit Fire by now. I might not lose to Feng Haoyu too,” Xue Yi’s eyes flashed with confidence.

It was not easy for someone in their Qi Condensation realm to cultivate a Level 2 Spirit Fire as well.

This time round, Su Zimo did not stand at the back of the hall. Instead, he walked right to the front and stood in the same row as Feng Haoyu.

A tense aura gradually spread through the hall.

“Junior Brother Su, I haven’t seen you for half a year. Even though your cultivation hasn’t increased much, you seem to have gotten much more daring,” Feng Haoyu glanced at Su Zimo and remarked blandly.

“I’ve always been daring,” Su Zimo’s tone was indifferent as he did not even look over.

Feng Haoyu continued, “If you beg for mercy and admit defeat now, I’ll give you some face after the Spirit Peak face-off and let you suffer a less shameful defeat.”

“Is that so?”

Su Zimo smiled calmly.

Of course, Feng Haoyu did not simply want to bicker with Su Zimo. His main goal was to disrupt Su Zimo’s mind.

Be it weapon or elixir refinement, any bit of distraction could result in a failure.

Unfortunately, Feng Haoyu did not manage his goal. His two punches seemed as though they were hitting cotton and harmless.

“By the way, I forgot to tell you something.”

Feng Haoyu’s lips curled as he extended his palm. With a swoosh, a flame rose in it.

Dark red color... it was a Level 2 Spirit Fire!

Immediately after, Feng Haoyu’s palm stirred as a spirit wind was injected into the Level 2 Spirit Fire.

Swoosh!

The flames grew in size and the color intensified, transforming into scarlet in the blink of an eye.

Level 3 Spirit Fire!

Immediately, Feng Haoyu's voice rang out. "I've also managed to cultivate a Level 3 Spirit Fire. In front of me, your greatest support is nothing at all."

It was clear that Feng Haoyu was trying to apply more pressure to Su Zimo!

The more pressure Su Zimo was under, the more nervous he would be and the easier he would commit mistakes!

A roar of surprise overtook the crowd outside when they saw the Level 3 Spirit Fire in Feng Haoyu's palms.

"At first, I thought that this first match might be very intense. Now, it seems as though Su Zimo does not have much of a chance at winning."

"That's right. With the same level of spirit fire, how can Su Zimo's weapon refinement techniques match against Senior Brother Feng?"

Xue Yi's eyes darkened.

He had given it his all to cultivate a Level 2 Spirit Fire. He had thought that he could compete with Feng Haoyu, but he was still a little too weak.

The other disciples participating in the face-off looked grim and nervous.

Within the hall, Su Zimo was the only one who was calm as ever. He only glanced at it briefly before turning back.

All five peak masters could not help but praise internally when they saw what happened.

No matter what, Su Zimo's calm and composed attitude was enough to stand above the entire crowd.

The disheveled old man stood up and gestured for silence with both hands as the crowd gradually quietened down.

"All disciples participating in the Weapon Peak face-off can come forth and select spirit materials. It is up to you what sort of weapon you want to create. Once the refinement is over, the victor will be judged after the weapons are submitted."

Once the disheveled old man said that, the disciples in the hall went forth and chose the spirit components they wanted.

There were more than 10 types of spirit components displayed with the majority comprising of pure gold ores, the main material required for refining flying swords. There were comparatively less of other spirit components.

The first step of weapon refinement, material selection, required some know-hows as well.

If one were to refine a flying sword, other than pure gold ore, they merely needed two or three other supplementary spirit components.

If they were to add in too many, there would be too much impurities which would result in a difficult refinement with a longer time required.

During each Weapon Peak face-off, there were no disciples who could refine an inferior-grade spirit weapon.

Everyone refined pseudo spirit weapons. Because of that, they were judged based on quality and the time taken to complete.

Before long, many disciples were done with material selection.

Su Zimo was the only one still hovering around the spirit components thinking about something.

Now that he already had six flying swords, it would seem excessive to refine another one.

After much thought, he took a little of the different spirit components and headed back.

That action of his attracted the ridicule of many.

The more types of spirit components there were, the heavier the weapon created. If he was refining a flying sword, it would lose its advantage of being agile and it wouldn't be worth it."

"Is that Su Zimo stupid or what? Don't tell me he's trying to refine a huge hammer, right? Haha!"

"From the looks of it, it's possible."

"Don't laugh. Who knows, he might be trying to refine a gigantic flying sword that would scare the hell out of you!"

There was a commotion outside the hall.

Even the disheveled old man frowned confusedly at what Su Zimo was doing.

The disciples headed back to their respective positions and took out their Weapon Tripods – they were all prepared.

With a wave of his hand, the disheveled old man said darkly, "Let the Weapon Peak face-off commence!"

The moment he said that, the hall was filled with flames.

Balls of spirit fire danced in the palms of many disciples, illuminating the hall in red. The crowd outside had quietened down too.

Among them, Feng Haoyu and Su Zimo's Level 3 Spirit Fires were the most eye-catching.

Right after them was Xue Yi's Level 2 Spirit Fire.

Second step of weapon refinement, tripod warming.

Almost at the same time, Feng Haoyu and Su Zimo were the first to be done with the tripod warming and insert their spirit components.

Both of their movements were extremely fluid – it was clear they had put in a lot of effort.

The five peak masters nodded approvingly.

The scarlet flames burned under their Weapon Tripods as the temperature within rose. Before long, the spirit components showed signs of melting.

Because Su Zimo had a wider mix of spirit components, his speed of smelting was evidently slower.

Even with a Level 3 Spirit Fire, Su Zimo had already fallen behind most of the disciples for this step.

After an hour, the liquid within Feng Haoyu's tripod no longer reduced and he was done with the first smelting.

Within Su Zimo's Weapon Tripod, the spirit components had only just started to melt. Burning scarlet red, they bubbled and impurities continued to be purged away.

Right then, Feng Haoyu's advantage was obvious as he was far ahead of Su Zimo.

However, Su Zimo was in no rush. Unhurriedly, he looked at the spirit components within his tripod and constantly increased the temperature of his flames to purge as much impurities as possible.

By the time Feng Haoyu was done with forging and had started on tempering, Su Zimo was only just done with smelting – he was a full two steps behind!

The amount of spirit component liquid left in Su Zimo's Weapon Tripod was significant. It was more than enough to refine a couple of flying swords, much less one.

Just what sort of a spirit weapon was he refining?

That question crossed everyone's mind.

Chapter 117: Scared Away...

What Su Zimo wanted to refine was a gigantic axe.

During this period of time, little fatty had helped him a lot.

The last time the both of them fought, Su Zimo unintentionally dug five holes into little fatty's gigantic axe.

This gigantic axe was made for little fatty.

Another hour passed. The other cultivators had begun forging but Su Zimo was only just done with smelting. Assuming a lotus position, he recovered spirit qi while waiting for the Weapon Tripod to cool down.

A few disciples were already eliminated by this step.

Those disciples did not manage to control the temperature and failed to be able to forge, wasting all their previous efforts.

Another 15 minutes passed. Suddenly, Su Zimo stood up and created a pair of hands using spirit qi. Reaching into the Weapon Tripod, he began to forge.

On the other side, tinkling sounds could be heard.

Feng Haoyu was already at tempering.

Each time his wind hammer landed, it would remove some impurities from the flying sword, solidifying it further.

Every single strike of the wind hammer on the scarlet flying sword would send sparks flying. Landing on the bottom of the tripod, those sparks were actually the impurities of the flying sword.

At Su Zimo's side, he was done with forging.

"What's that? A gigantic axe?"

"Furthermore, that axe is way too stupid. Controlling it would just waste spirit qi. Who would use it?"

"That's right. That axe has already lost the nimbleness and agility that a spirit weapon should have. On the contrary, it's more like a weapon a boorish punk would use without any form of advantages."

Outside the hall, many disciples were already making a conclusion towards Su Zimo's axe.

Little fatty was the only one whose heart skipped a beat. Blinking his eyes, a possibility came to mind.

Su Zimo's expression was calm as always. After forging, he ignited his Level 3 Spirit Fire once more and started heating up the gigantic axe.

It didn't take long before the gigantic axe was heated to a red crystalline state

Just as Su Zimo was about to begin tempering, Feng Haoyu was already done with that step.

At that moment, Feng Haoyu hesitated.

The next step was the all important spirit gathering.

Right now, Feng Haoyu's advantage was obvious. Be it in terms of the spirit weapon's shape or refinement speed, he was superior against Su Zimo.

However, if he failed the spirit gathering and his flying sword exploded, he would be eliminated on the spot.

Immense boldness was required for one to attempt spirit gathering.

In the past few months, Feng Haoyu had truly succeeded in spirit gathering once. However, he did not dare to gamble on such a crucial moment.

After hesitating for a long time, Feng Haoyu decided to give up on spirit gathering and dipped his flying sword into cold water.

With a clang, green smoke billowed as the flying sword was formed!

Feng Haoyu was now the first to refine a spirit weapon in the Weapon Peak face-off. He placed the flying sword at the front desk and returned to his position, looking at Su Zimo calmly.

"Senior Brother Feng won!"

“That’s right. Unless Su Zimo succeeds in spirit gathering, he won’t have a chance of winning.”

“Succeed in spirit gathering? Fufu, can that even happen? Don’t forget, he just joined the sect for less than a year. In such an intense situation, even an Advanced Weapon Refinement Master would have a much lower success rate of spirit gathering.”

Many of the Spirit Peak disciples spectating outside heaved a sigh of relief.

The second person to complete his weapon tempering was Xue Yi of Weapon Peak.

With a Level 2 Spirit Fire in his possession, Xue Yi’s weapon tempering speed was superior compared to others too.

The next step was spirit gathering.

Unlike Feng Haoyu, Xue Yi did not give up and chose to attempt spirit gathering!

When the disheveled old man saw that, he nodded to himself.

To be fair, Feng Haoyu was indeed quite talented in weapon refinement, even more so than Xue Yi. However, he lacked the boldness.

If Feng Haoyu had chosen to attempt spirit gathering, the disheveled old man would have thought better of him.

Even disciples who did not have knowledge of weapon refinement, they knew how difficult it was to attempt spirit gathering.

Therefore, Xue Yi’s choice attracted quite a bit of attention.

With a solemn expression, Xue Yi controlled the spirit qi within the Weapon Tripod warily and channeled it towards the flying sword.

Crack!

A crisp sound rang out from within the tripod, reverberating through the hall loud and clear.

It was broken!

Xue Yi realized that something was wrong.

The disciples watching shook their heads.

That was the sound of cracks forming on the sword.

True enough.

The next moment, yet another crack sounded out.

A boom echoed out from Xue Yi’s Weapon Tripod as his flying sword exploded. Shrapnel shot against the inner walls of the tripod, producing tinkling sounds.

The spirit gathering had failed.

Xue Yi chuckled bitterly before putting away his Weapon Tripod. He bowed to the five peak masters and left the Weapon Refinement Hall.

The explosion of the flying sword meant that he was eliminated.

Following that, other disciples were finishing up with their weapon refinements. Apart from Xue Yi, no one else attempted spirit gathering.

Right then, Su Zimo heaved out an air of relief as he was done with his tempering.

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh!

Everyone fixed their gaze on Su Zimo.

Some of the Weapon Peak disciples had looks of anticipation.

Su Zimo was now Weapon Peak's final hope.

If he failed, that would mean that the number one of Weapon Peak would be taken away by disciples of other peaks!

Even though they were all of the same sect, it wasn't an honor for disciples of Weapon Peak.

Su Zimo paused for a moment and suddenly, he did something that shocked everyone – he removed his Weapon Tripod!

“W-What is he doing?”

“Is he giving up on spirit gathering?”

“I'm not sure.”

If Su Zimo wanted to give up on spirit gathering, all he had to do was take the gigantic axe out of the Weapon Tripod and dip it in cold water.

There was no need to remove the Weapon Tripod.

Right after, in front of everyone, Su Zimo started channeling the surrounding spirit qi towards the gigantic axe with a solemn expression.

Spirit gathering!

He had chosen to attempt spirit gathering!

However, this was quite a bizarre scene before them.

All through history, there had never been a Weapon Refinement Master who would remove their Weapon Tripod while conducting spirit gathering.

That was completely pointless and way too dangerous for the Weapon Refinement Master.

If the spirit gathering failed and the spirit weapon exploded, the first person to suffer would be the Weapon Refinement Master himself.

“Hmm?”

When the disheveled old man saw that, his heart skipped a beat as he stood up instinctively, wanting to stop Su Zimo.

However, Su Zimo had already begun.

If the disheveled old man said something to distract Su Zimo, the spirit gathering may end up failing.

Frowning, the disheveled old man hesitated for a long time before sitting down. He was extremely tense and was prepared to save Su Zimo immediately.

Feng Haoyu who was initially standing beside Su Zimo was shocked by the latter's action and dodged aside right away.

Right then, Su Zimo turned his head while spirit gathering and gave a fake smile. "Why are you running? You're afraid?"

That statement caused an uproar outside the hall!

When it came to spirit gathering, one would usually have to focus intently to prevent mistakes. No one would behave like Su Zimo – not only did he remove his Weapon Tripod, he was even chatting with others!

Wasn't that just courting death?

However, no one knew that Su Zimo's spirit gathering method was based on his spirit perception.

Even if he was distracted, his spirit perception would warn him immediately about any signs of incoming failure. Su Zimo would then naturally stop.

"Lunatic!"

Feng Haoyu scolded coldly before retreating a couple of steps more.

There were initially some other disciples beside Su Zimo. Some of them had just finished refining their weapons. However, they did not even bother to submit their flying swords before they dodged him like the plague.

Some disciples were still tempering their spirit weapons. When they saw what happened, they ran off without caring about their weapons in the tripod, hating their parents for not giving them an extra pair of legs.

It was chaos within the Weapon Refinement Hall.

In the blink of an eye, other than the five peak masters, there was no one else left around Su Zimo!

Chapter 118: Number One of Weapon Peak

This was the first time a scene this chaotic had happened during a Weapon Peak face-off.

But of course, it was also because there hasn't been someone like Su Zimo in history.

In the eyes of everyone, he was a lunatic who did not care for his life.

“Hmph! I think he’s creating a scene on purpose because he knows that he’s going to lose.”

“In my opinion, Su Zimo has some ulterior motives. The way he behaved earlier seemed as though he was trying to hurt Senior Brother Feng. Maybe if that happens, the both of them won’t have to fight anymore.”

The crowd outside the hall was rife with guesses.

“Su Zimo, are you going to attempt spirit gathering or are you giving up? Why are you doing something so strange?” Spirit Peak’s master, Wen Xuan, asked harshly with furrowed brows.

Su Zimo laughed. “Of course I’m attempting spirit gathering.”

“Why are you removing your Weapon Tripod for spirit gathering?” Wen Xuan asked again.

“Why not?”

Su Zimo reversed the question, rendering Wen Xuan speechless.

Indeed, there was no such rule that stated that spirit gathering had to be conducted within a Weapon Tripod. Su Zimo’s actions were merely so strange that no one could comprehend.

Right then, Su Zimo turned to look at Feng Haoyu while spirit gathering, chuckling and asking, “Feng Haoyu, did you think that you were going to win?”

“Humph!”

Feng Haoyu harrumphed coldly, “I don’t believe you can succeed in spirit gathering!”

“Very well. I’ll show you.”

In truth, during that short conversation, Su Zimo had already attempted multiple spirit gatherings. However, he stopped in time after sensing danger.

This time round, a faint imprint of a spirit pattern appeared on the axe without any warning alerts.

Su Zimo was elated.

Success!

“Buzz!”

With a tremble, the axe glowed brightly, emitting a bedazzling light.

A spirit pattern!

The discussions outside the hall gradually died down.

Many disciples watched dumbfounded with agape mouths, their eyeballs nearly dropping out of their sockets.

He had managed to succeed in spirit gathering?

Didn’t they say that spirit gathering was difficult?

How was it that Su Zimo had managed to create a spirit pattern even while chatting idly?

Not to mention the many disciples outside the hall, even the five peak masters were stunned and filled with questions.

Was it luck?

Coincidence?

What had just happened?

At the end of the day, the other four peak masters did not have a deep understanding of weapon refinement. All of them looked at the disheveled old man questioningly.

Pondering for a long time, the disheveled old man could not come up with an answer and shook his head as well.

With Su Zimo's success in spirit gathering, there was no doubt about his status as the number one for this face-off.

Feng Haoyu's face turned ugly instantly.

Even if he was faster in refining his weapon, it was a pseudo spirit weapon without any grades.

"He won!"

"Haha! Our peak won!"

"Well done, Junior Brother Su!"

After a momentary silence, a series of cheers broke out from the crowd.

Those Spirit Peak disciples who had initially thought highly of Feng Haoyu lowered their heads in defeat.

Even at this moment, they were still confused as to how Su Zimo had managed to succeed in spirit gathering.

Furthermore, he looked as though he was extremely relaxed?

Others may learn about weapon refinement for many years without being able to refine an inferior-grade spirit weapon. Yet, this lad was able to create one even while chatting?

Feng Haoyu composed himself swiftly. Sneering coldly, he turned to leave.

"Very well, very well. You win this round. We'll compete again on Elixir Peak's face-off!"

Even though his voice could be heard, he had already disappeared into the crowd.

With a loud clang, Su Zimo dipped the gigantic axe into cold water. Instantly, an inferior-grade gigantic axe was formed. Shining with a cold aura, it looked formidable as though it could cleave an entire mountain!

"Hmph! So what if it's an inferior-grade spirit weapon? Which Qi Refinement Warrior would use such a stupid axe? What a joke!"

A Spirit Peak disciple remarked sourly.

“That’s not a nice thing to say. That’s the type of weapon I like!”

Little fatty was displeased on the spot.

That Spirit Weapon disciple sneered coldly, “What’s the use of liking it? It’s not even your spirit weapon!”

Right then, Su Zimo beckoned to little fatty and declared, “Fatty, this weapon is made for you. Here, take it.”

“Err...”

The Spirit Peak disciple who spoke had a livid expression as he disappeared into the crowd dejectedly.

Little fatty stumbled over to Su Zimo excitedly. Rubbing his chubby palms together, he wanted to laugh but he was embarrassed.

“Bro, f-for real? It’s for me?”

Till now, little fatty did not have a single inferior-grade spirit weapon with him.

He had not thought that Su Zimo would make one for him personally.

Furthermore, this gigantic axe was absolutely suited for him, as though it was a custom-made piece.

With this inferior-grade spirit weapon, little fatty would definitely be able to obtain a good ranking on the Spirit Peak face-off.

“Yes. Do accept it.”

Su Zimo nodded his head and passed the gigantic axe to little fatty.

When little fatty took it over, he could not bear to let it go and remarked intoxicatedly, “I’m going to hug it to sleep tonight!”

With that, little fatty pecked a wet kiss on the gigantic axe.

The five peak masters smiled as they saw that.

The brown haired youth said in a low voice, “That’s quite a favor.”

“It’s just a pity. If Su Zimo could make use of the opportunity to create an inferior-grade flying sword for himself, he might improve his chances of winning against Feng Haoyu,” Xuan Yi remarked.

Wen Xuan shook his head. “The difference in strength between him and Feng Haoyu is too great. It’s not something a couple of inferior-grade spirit weapons can make up for.”

The disheveled old man waved it off. “No matter. Su Zimo can select an inferior-grade spirit weapon of his desire from the Spirit Weapon Chamber for getting number one of Weapon Peak.”

Rising, the disheveled old man declared, “The outcome of this Weapon Peak face-off is obvious. The victor is Su Zimo, disciple of Weapon Peak!”

Many Weapon Peak disciples cheered loudly.

The disheveled old man continued, “Su Zimo, come up and explain to us the meaning of why you removed your Weapon Tripod earlier.”

“Uh...” Su Zimo looked apprehensive.

“Don’t worry. There is no difference between those who are ahead or behind. Anyone who accomplishes the feat is a master. Share your insights so that all of us can learn from it,” The disheveled old man encouraged him.

Su Zimo walked to the disheveled old man and whispered, “Master, my method isn’t really suitable for everyone.”

To be fair, Su Zimo was the only one who could attempt that method of spirit gathering – no one else could imitate it.

“No matter, just mention a couple of things casually,” The disheveled old man persuaded again.

Left with no choice, Su Zimo headed up the front. Facing the many disciples of the five peaks, he coughed gently.

Outside the hall, multiple disciples listened intently.

“Erm... it’s actually a personal habit to remove the Weapon Tripod. I just feel like it’ll help boost my chances of success in spirit gathering,” Su Zimo braced himself and commented ambiguously.

What he did not know was that his casual comment had stuck to the minds of many disciples!

Removing the Weapon Tripod could improve the success rate of spirit gathering!

Seeing the sparkle in the eyes of many disciples, Su Zimo continued hurriedly, “Removing the Weapon Tripod is a dangerous act. It’s best if everyone does not try it.”

Even though he had said it out of goodwill, many disciples misunderstood that Su Zimo had only said it because he did not want them to learn his spirit gathering method.

Hence, for a period of time after this, disciples of the sect began to experience continuous accidents while refining weapons. Failing in spirit gathering, they were left half-dead by the fragments of the exploding spirit weapons...

Chapter 119: Connate Spirit Weapon

After the Weapon Peak face-off ended, many disciples dispersed gradually.

The disheveled old man stopped Su Zimo. Coming before the Spirit Weapon Chamber, he laughed and said, “The prize for the number one of Weapon Peak is to be able to get a spirit weapon of his choosing in the Spirit Weapon Chamber. Go on in.”

Su Zimo’s achievement of attaining the number one of Weapon Peak was an honor for the disheveled old man as well. The way he looked at Su Zimo was filled with pride.

The Spirit Weapon Chamber in Weapon Peak was filled with pseudo and inferior-grade spirit weapons. As for middle-grade spirit weapons, only inner sect disciples of Foundation Establishment realm were qualified to obtain them on Ethereal Peak.

Actually, given Su Zimo's current ability in weapon refinement, inferior-grade spirit weapons were no longer attractive to him.

However, since it was the sect's Spirit Weapon Chamber after all, he decided to go take a look inside.

"There are various types of spirit weapons in the Spirit Weapon Chamber. Do you have anything in mind?" The disheveled old man asked.

Su Zimo shook his head and questioned, "Do you have any suggestions, master?"

"Indeed, I do have one."

The disheveled old man pondered for a moment before saying, "You have a fight left with Feng Haoyu after the five peaks face-off. To be fair, you don't stand much of a chance winning."

That was obviously an euphemistic statement.

All five peak masters felt that Su Zimo had zero chance of winning!

The disheveled old man continued, "Therefore, I suggest you choose an inferior-grade defensive spirit weapon. That way, you won't be injured badly even if you lose."

In general, spirit weapons were divided into three types. For offensive spirit weapons, the most common were flying swords. There were also defensive spirit weapons such as shields, armor and heart protecting mirrors. Lastly, there were support spirit weapons that came in all shapes, sizes and uses.

For offensive spirit weapons, the more spirit patterns and the higher grade they were, the more killing power they possessed.

Vice versa, the higher the grade of defensive spirit weapons, the more damage they can prevent.

Su Zimo did not comment. Nodding his head, he entered the Spirit Weapon Chamber.

Rows of spirit weapons were displayed within the Spirit Weapon Chamber with flying swords taking up the majority; there were less defensive and support spirit weapons.

Su Zimo looked through the entire place and did not find anything of particular use to him.

For defensive spirit weapons, he could refine them at any moment and he did not have to choose from one here.

As for the other spirit weapons, they were of little value to his current state.

Right as Su Zimo was about to randomly pick a spirit weapon and leave, he caught sight of a golden light shining for a brief moment at the corner of his eyes.

"Hmm?"

Stopping in his tracks, he turned to look.

After checking through the place, he did not find the source of the golden light. He thought that he was seeing things.

Standing motionlessly on the spot and pausing for a moment, the golden light shone once more!

This time round, Su Zimo saw it clearly.

The source of the golden light was from the ground in a corner of the defensive spirit weapon section.

“Why is the ground reflecting golden light?”

Feeling that something was amiss, he walked closer to take a better look.

The ground seemed to be covered by a golden silk cloth that was filled with dust. It seemed as though it was left there for a long time without anyone bothering about it.

The golden light was reflected from this beneath the thick dust covering it.

In the Spirit Weapon Chamber, be it pseudo or inferior-grade spirit weapons, everything was placed on their respective shelves.

What was the reason for the golden silk cloth to be thrown on the ground?

Su Zimo used his sleeves to brush away the dust, looking at it intently.

The golden silk cloth looked to be a defensive type of inner armor. Weaved with golden thread, it was only a thin layer. With an additional layer of dust covering it on the ground, it was difficult to notice it even when people walked by.

It ‘looked’ to be a pseudo spirit weapon.

The reason why it ‘looked’ to be was because there was a single spirit pattern on the armor. However, it was broken into several portions and even injecting spirit qi to it was not enough for it to unleash its strength as a spirit weapon.

However, there was a strange thing. If spirit weapons were to receive a devastating blow, the spirit patterns would dissipate rather than break into several portions. In fact, most spirit weapons would end up breaking as well.

Yet, the armor before him was not only perfect, its spirit pattern had not dissipated as well!

That was quite contradictory.

Su Zimo pondered for a moment and decided to take this pseudo spirit weapon as his reward.

Extending his palm, he grabbed the golden inner armor on the ground casually. Just as he was about to turn and leave, his expression changed.

“Hmm?”

“I can’t lift it?”

The golden silk armor was still lying motionlessly on the ground.

Even though Su Zimo did not activate his Power of Blood, that single grab of his had at least a ton worth of strength!

“How is this thing so heavy?”

Su Zimo was surprised. Using both arms, he grabbed it.

However, the golden inner armor was merely slightly lifted with most of it still on the ground.

Finally, Su Zimo understood why the golden inner armor was left casually on the ground.

If it was placed on the stone racks, they would crumble instantly!

Su Zimo’s heart stirred. He took off his storage bag and channeled his blood. Instantly, his eyes shone bright red and his veins popped up. As a shocking power burst forth from his body, he yanked the golden inner armor and stuffed it into his storage bag.

No matter how heavy something was, it would be light as air inside the storage bag.

Slowly, Su Zimo composed his blood and after his demon form disappeared, he walked out of the Spirit Weapon Chamber.

“Have you chosen?” The disheveled old man was waiting outside as he asked upon Su Zimo’s exit.

Nodding his head, Su Zimo hesitated for a moment before saying, “I saw a strange golden inner armor inside. I’ve got no idea where it came from but I brought it out.”

“Golden inner armor?”

The disheveled old man frowned and thought for a while. Suddenly, his expression changed as he exclaimed, “Mystic Gold Silk Armor!”

“Mystic Gold Silk Armor? So, that’s the name of that pseudo spirit weapon,” Su Zimo murmured softly.

“Pseudo spirit weapon?”

The disheveled old man’s gaze turned odd.

“Isn’t it a pseudo spirit weapon? I saw a spirit pattern on it, but it was broken into several segments and it can’t be used. Isn’t that considered as just a pseudo spirit weapon?” Su Zimo asked.

The disheveled old man looked emotional as he asked, “Su Zimo, do you know how many different grades there are for spirit weapons?”

“Four. Inferior, middle, superior and supreme,” Su Zimo replied.

Pausing for a moment, Su Zimo recalled a speculation he had previously and continued, “If four spirit patterns create a supreme-grade, perhaps there’s a perfect-grade with five spirit patterns.”

The disheveled old man gave a look of approval and nodded. “Not bad. Indeed, there are perfect spirit weapons above supreme-grades.”

Right after, the disheveled old man asked again, “But, do you know what’s above perfect-grade?”

“There’s more after perfect-grades?” Su Zimo was surprised.

With a deep voice, the disheveled old man said, “Connate comes after perfect. Connate spirit weapons!”

“What are connate spirit weapons?”

“They are created by the universe and formed after absorbing an endless amount of spirit qi. Perfect spirit weapons have five spirit patterns but connate spirit weapons have six! The sixth is known as the connate pattern!”

Chapter 120: A Terrifying Powerful Being a Thousand Years Ago

“Connate pattern?” Su Zimo frowned in deep thoughts.

The disheveled old man continued, “The broken segments on the Mystic Gold Silk Armor are the connate patterns. Since it’s connate, postnatal Weapon Refinement Masters are not able to create it, no matter how powerful they are.”

Su Zimo gradually returned to his senses. Shocked, he could not help but ask, “Master, what you mean to say is that the Mystic Gold Silk Armor is a connate spirit weapon?”

“It was.”

The disheveled old man drowned in reminiscence as he related slowly, “It was said that a thousand years ago, the Mystic Gold Silk Armor was one of the strongest defensive spirit weapons and was well known through the cultivation world. However, it was met with catastrophic damage and its five postnatal spirit patterns were destroyed, leaving only the connate pattern that was broken into several segments.”

“Since a connate spirit weapon is so strong, what destroyed it?” Su Zimo could not help but ask.

“There are many things that can.”

The disheveled old man laughed. “A connate spirit weapon is just a spirit weapon at the end of the day. Above spirit weapons are dharma weapons. For Golden Cores, spirit weapons are the best type of equipment. However, once you reach Nascent Soul realm, you will naturally be able to create dharma weapons and will no longer use spirit weapons.”

A strong dharma weapon is able to obliterate a connate spirit weapon! Those are items on completely different levels!”

Su Zimo roughly understood.

No matter how sharp weapons in the mortal world were, they were easily destroyed by spirit weapons of cultivators as well.

“So, why is this Mystic Gold Silk Armor in Weapon Peak’s Spirit Weapon Chamber?”

Su Zimo felt that since it was a connate spirit weapon, it should be stronger than other spirit weapons even if it was destroyed.

The disheveled old man shook his head. "The Mystic Gold Silk Armor only has a broken connate pattern and is equivalent to a pseudo spirit weapon. Even though it can block against sharp weapons, it's unable to defend against spirit techniques without a spirit pattern."

In other words, even though a cultivator's sword would not be able to pierce the Mystic Gold Silk Armor, the energy possessed by the flying sword would still penetrate through it and destroy the body beneath!

If the other party was a Foundation Establishment Cultivator and attacked with spirit techniques, the Mystic Gold Silk Armor would be of no use at all.

The disheveled old man continued, "Furthermore, even though the Mystic Gold Silk Armor is destroyed, it still retains its old weight of 5 tons! Which cultivator would be able to endure that? That is the reason why no one has touched it for the past thousand years. It's almost a useless spirit weapon."

"5 tons. Even back then, there were not many Golden Cores who had the ability and qualifications to wear it."

As though the disheveled old man recalled something, his expression looked somewhat wistful.

Su Zimo naturally knew of how heavy the Mystic Gold Silk Armor was. If he hadn't activated his Power of Blood, he would not have been able to lift that seemingly thin inner armor!

Suddenly, a thought struck him as he asked, "Since this Mystic Gold Silk Armor is here, does that mean that someone from our sect once wore it?"

The disheveled old man remained silent.

"Who is that person? Is he still in the sect?" Su Zimo asked out of curiosity.

The disheveled old man's eyes fluttered. After a long time, he sighed and shook his head. "He is no longer in our sect and neither have I seen him before. I've merely heard rumors about it. It was said that he was a powerful being of our sect a thousand years ago. In the northern region of Tianhuang Mainland, he was invincible amongst the Foundation Establishment and Golden Cores! There was no one who could challenge him!"

Su Zimo was shocked.

Someone who was invincible through an entire realm? How terrifying was that?

"What happened after?" Su Zimo asked right away.

"I'm not sure. However, rumors about him disappeared thereafter."

"Did he die?"

Su Zimo frowned and thought to himself, 'No, someone that strong isn't going to die that easily. But why is that person no longer in the sect and it seems as though the disheveled old man is unwilling to talk about him? Did he commit some sort of violation?'

After a momentary silence, the disheveled old man continued, "Ever since our sect set up the Eight Distresses Formation, there have only been two people to go through it entirely. One is you, and the other is him."

Su Zimo's mouth opened slightly.

The disheveled old man waved it off, seeming vexed. "Return the Mystic Gold Silk Armor and choose another item. You can't use that anyways."

Given Su Zimo's current situation, the Mystic Gold Silk Armor was not suitable for him.

However, for some reason, Su Zimo felt that he might be able to make use of it in the future.

After a moment of hesitation, Su Zimo said in a deep voice, "Thank you, master, but I'm still decided on the Mystic Gold Silk Armor."

Frowning, the disheveled old man did not say anything more and merely sighed. "It's up to you. However, do be careful during the fight against Feng Haoyu. If you think that you can't win him, just admit defeat and don't be reckless."

Su Zimo could tell of the disheveled old man's concern and replied with a smile.

"By the way, master, I've got a question regarding weapon refinement."

Su Zimo changed the topic and asked, "To be honest, master, I've already successfully refined inferior-grade spirit weapons before the face-off. However, for some unknown reason, I just couldn't gather the second spirit pattern no matter what. Do you have any idea why?"

"Haha!"

The disheveled old man could not help but laugh. "Lad, you sure hid yourself well. So, you've already refined an inferior-grade spirit weapon. Not bad, not bad."

Automatically, the disheveled old man thought that Su Zimo had merely refined a single inferior-grade spirit weapon.

After laughing, he said, "Actually, the most difficult step of weapon refinement is spirit gathering. However, the most crucial step is in fact tempering. That is a step that requires a lot of technique. In the cultivation world, sects that specialize in weapon refinement all have their unique tempering techniques."

"There are many impurities in spirit components and making use of spirit fire alone is not enough to purge them all. Some of the remnant impurities can only be purged through advanced tempering techniques."

"If your tempering skill is weak and there are too many impurities, the forged spirit weapon would not be able to endure the immensity of a forcefully gathered second spirit pattern. That is why the spirit gathering will fail and the spirit weapon will explode."

Suddenly, Su Zimo was enlightened.

The reason why he couldn't gather his second spirit pattern wasn't because of his spirit gathering method or the quality of his spirit components – it was because his tempering skill was not good enough.

The disheveled old man said, "Right now, our sect doesn't have any really good tempering techniques. But, don't worry about that. Leave it to me."

"Yes."

Su Zimo could clearly sense the disheveled old man's care and love for him – that couldn't be faked.

After a deep bow, Su Zimo left on his flying sword.

The disheveled old man frowned as he looked at Su Zimo's back view.

Actually, he had already been looking for advanced tempering techniques outside from the moment Su Zimo cultivated his Level 3 Spirit Fire because he wanted to help the latter raise his weapon refinement skills.

However, most of the tempering techniques were secrets of the sects and it was difficult for outsiders to obtain them.

"Sigh, the pearl is covered in dust. It's a pity," The disheveled old man sighed silently. He pondered about how he should go about looking for a suitable tempering technique for Su Zimo after the five peaks face-off was over.

All of a sudden!

The disheveled old man's expression changed as he recalled an almost neglected detail.

The Mystic Gold Silk Armor had a weight of 5 tons. As a Level 8 Qi Refinement Warrior, how did Su Zimo manage to stuff it inside his storage bag?

The more the disheveled old man thought about it, the more he felt that something was amiss. After pacing back and forth for a long time, he decided to abandon the thought of asking Su Zimo about it.

"Looks like this disciple of mine isn't that simple either."