

Chapter 11: Breaking Through the Realm Once More

Zhang Ruochen hunkered down underwater peacefully and calmly. He transferred the Genuine Qi in his body to the three Meridians.

The pain lessened with each cycle of the Genuine Qi.

He could not hold his breath to practice underwater too long due to his current level of martial cultivation, so he had to come up from the water to breathe every five minutes.

After two hours, the pain had almost disappeared. A flow of cool air came into his body to regenerate it. The feeling was so pleasant that it almost made him moan.

“Crash!”

Zhang Ruochen stood up and wiped himself dry. He stood in front of a bronze mirror, stared at his own body, and nodded.

The 10-day practice and the alleviation from the medicated bath had strengthened his body to some extent. He used to look so ill.

Only four days had passed in reality of course, while over 10 days had passed in the Time and Space Spinel.

Four days ago, he was a loser driven away from the Jade Palace by the Eighth Prince and was laughed at mercilessly by everybody. Who could have even imagined, however, that only four days later he would have attained the cultivation of the Mid Stage of the Yellow State?

It was a miracle!

“That’s not enough! The Mid Stage of the Yellow Realm is only the beginning!” With a sharp look in his eyes, Zhang Ruochen clenched his fist.

After putting on his clothes, he took a Blood Pill and entered the internal space of the Time and Space Spinel to continue his practice.

The reason why he could attain the Mid Stage of the Yellow Realm in merely four days was not only because he had Martial Arts experience in his last life, but also because of the help of the Time and Space Spinel.

He could practice three times longer than the other warriors with the help of the Time and Space Spinel, which was his unique advantage.

“Bang!”

“Bang!”

“Gallop! Gallop!”

Zhang Ruochen bent his legs, stepped out, and punched. Every punch gathered the power of each muscle and every bone.

After the medicated bath, one needed to use the fist technique in order to integrate the medicated effects into the body, thus transferring it into their own power.

Zhang Ruochen spent the next few days mainly practicing inside the internal space of the Time and Space Spinel and only came outside every three days.

Concubine Lin knew that Zhang Ruochen had just obtained his Sacred Mark and he needed to seclude himself for refining, open up his Qi Pool, wash his marrow, and break out of the channels. Therefore, she did not get involved with him, but simply asked Yun to take good care of him.

She still continued to sell her accessories and used the money to buy Blood Pills for Zhang Ruochen.

At that time, Zhang Ruochen asked Yun to secretly buy those accessories back at a higher price.

It was a feeling beyond description. Zhang Ruochen was greatly moved by selfless love.

Gradually, Zhang Ruochen was accepting his identity in this life and saw Concubine Lin as his real mother.

“Why don’t we tell Concubine Lin the truth? She would be overjoyed if she knew that you are a real warrior now,” said Yun.

“Not now. I want to surprise her at the Year-end Assessment. Apart from that, I don’t think I’m strong enough now. I need to be even stronger,” said Zhang Ruochen.

Yun now knew a lot of Zhang Ruochen’s secrets.

Except for the secret of his last life and the Time and Space Spinel, Zhang Ruochen had told her everything.

In Yun’s view, the Ninth Prince was an incredibly outstanding genius of Martial Arts. In only a few days’ time, he had reached the Mid Stage of the Yellow Realm, which no other prince could compare with.

Perhaps only the best-of-the-best, Prince Seventh, could be mentioned in the same breath as him.

After achieving the Mid Stage of the Yellow Realm, Zhang Ruochen kept practicing in the Time and Space Spinel for a month, taking an Energy Pill every six days and a medicated bath every 10 days.

His other time was spent on practicing the second movement of the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm, Dragon in the Sky, and understanding the “Scripture of Emperor Ming’s Emyrean” and “The Graph of Meridians”.

The Genuine Qi in the Qi Pool was completed but the second movement of the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm was not ready yet.

“Tonight, I’ll try to reach the advanced stage of the Yellow Realm!” said Zhang Ruochen.

After hearing this, Yun was so surprised and said, "Advanced stage of the Yellow Realm! But you've just reached the Mid Stage only 10 days ago! Are you going to go for the Advanced Stage already? It took the Eighth Prince four years to do that!"

Yun did not know about the existence of the Time and Space Spinel, so she thought that Zhang Ruochen had only practiced for 10 days. In fact, Zhang Ruochen had been practicing for a whole month.

Actually, it should not have even taken him that long. He spent a large amount of his time refining his body, otherwise, his practicing speed would have been even faster.

"It is really that fast? It has just all come when it has needed to."

Zhang Ruochen never considered that his practice speed was very fast. He believed that if other geniuses had the good resources that he had, they would also be fast.

The Eighth Prince taking four years only proved that he was a man of terrible endowments.

Anyway, Yun was very excited now. She said, "I know that you are going to succeed. If you can reach the Advanced Stage of the Yellow Realm, we don't need to be afraid of the Eighth Prince anymore!"

"Yes! Now please leave me alone. I don't want anyone disturbing me tonight," said Zhang Ruochen.

Yun nodded her head so hard that she looked like a pecking little chick. She said, "I'll guard the door tonight. If anyone dares to disturb you, I'll risk my life to stop him."

He gazed at her with deep feeling and said softly, "Thank you."

After Yun left, Zhang Ruochen entered the internal space of Time and Space Spinel right away.

"If I want to break through to the advanced stage of the Yellow Realm, I must open up three Meridians at once, and make these Meridians penetrate the five internal organs, arms, and feet."

Zhang Ruochen took out three jade bottles at once and put them in a row. Inside every bottle, there was one portion of Marrow-washing Liquid.

After adjusting himself to the best state, Zhang Ruochen drank the first bottle. With the help of the medicating effect, he started to open up the fourth Meridian.

After half an hour, the fourth Meridian was opened up successfully.

The fourth Meridian flowed from the Qi Pool and came to his neck, chest, left arm, and right arm. It then flowed all the way from his back and rushed to his head. Finally, it came back to the Qi Pool between his eyebrows. A large circulation of vital energy was completed.

Without pausing, Zhang Ruochen drank the second bottle and started to open up the fifth Meridian immediately.

The fifth Meridian extended from the Qi Pool and went through his chest, stomach, left leg, and right leg, and finally returned to the Qi Pool.

This Meridian had a longer route, which took Zhang Ruochen six hours to open up successfully.

Half of the Genuine Qi had been used up. Zhang Ruochen was covered in sweat, so he had to take a Spiritual Crystal in his hand and quickly absorb the Spiritual Qi to transfer it into Genuine Qi. Then he stored it in the Qi Pool.

The Genuine Qi in the Qi Pool was once again full.

Zhang Ruochen immediately drank the third bottle and started to open up the sixth Meridian.

This Meridian flowed through the five internal organs, namely: spleen, lungs, kidney, liver, and heart. When the Genuine Qi flowed through them, it would strengthen them. The five internal organs, however, were extremely fragile. Therefore, Zhang Ruochen had to be much more careful.

Finally, 12 hours had passed and the Genuine Qi was almost again used up. But there was still one part left to be opened up.

If the Genuine Qi ran out, all of his previous efforts would have been in vain, and the five internal organs would even be hurt.

Furthermore, it would be 10 times more difficult to open up this Meridian in the future than it was at this time.

Zhang Ruochen made a bold decision. He put an Energy Pill in his mouth at a blistering speed.

“Bang!”

The Pill Spirit of the Energy Pill exploded inside his body.

Zhang Ruochen multitasked immediately. On the one hand, he used the five Meridians that were already opened up to absorb the Pill Spirit, transferred it into Genuine Qi, and moved it to the Qi Pool.

On the other hand, he carefully controlled the Genuine Qi and continued to break through the sixth Meridian.

It was a great test of his Spiritual Power. Fortunately, Zhang Ruochen was a strong warrior of the Completion of the Realm of Heaven in his last life, whose Spiritual Power was strong enough to perform multitasking successfully.

The sixth Meridian was opened up successfully!

The Qi Pool between his eyebrows glowed white, and its capacity became 10 times greater than before.

The Qi Pool at the Mid Stage of the Yellow Realm had been only as big as a rice jar.

Now, Zhang Ruochen’s Qi Pool was about 10 rice jars in size, which was big enough to hold a large amount of Genuine Qi.

“I finally made it to the advanced stage of the Yellow Realm!”

Zhang Ruochen put a Spiritual Crystal in his hand, and then his Sacred Mark between his eyebrows appeared and started to absorb the Spiritual Qi from the Spiritual Crystal.

The absorbing speed was doubled when the six Meridians worked simultaneously.

Zhang Ruochen stopped practicing when the realm had become stable.

He opened his eyes. His pupils became incomparably bright, just like two stars in the sky.

Lots of impure substances excreted from his pores with the opening up of the three new Meridians. So the stench was unbearable.

Zhang Ruochen went out of the internal space of the Time and Space Spinel and took a bath in the prepared bucket. Then he put his clothes on and stepped outside.

It was already midnight.

The feathery snowflakes were dancing in the sky, and the whole courtyard was covered with a layer of silver frost.

Yun was sitting on the stairs outside Zhang Ruochen's room. Her body was curled up and she rubbed her hands and breathed on them from time to time.

"Creak!"

Hearing the door behind her open, Yun quickly stood up and looked at Zhang Ruochen, who had just walked outside. She asked with joy, "Did you succeed?"

Chapter 12: Qing Xuan Pavilion

Zhang Ruochen, dressed in white, stood himself upright and gave Yun a mildly quizzical glance and a little nod. Then he said, "I have reached the Advanced Stage of the Yellow Realm! But why didn't you take a rest, Yun?"

After hearing what Zhang Ruochen had said, Yun was so shocked that her heart wildly thumped with unparalleled excitement and she felt like crying.

"That's great, that's great!" Yun said while wiping her tears, "since I said that I would guard the gate for you, I would certainly never leave."

Touched by what Yun had said, Zhang Ruochen gave her a Blood Pill.

"It's snowing. I hope that you can go to bed early to avoid catching a cold. Eat this Blood Pill and you will feel warmer," Zhang Ruochen said to Yun.

Taking the Blood Pill and tightly grasping it in her hands, Yun nodded deeply. She went to her room while thinking that tonight might be a sleepless night.

After sending Yun away, Zhang Ruochen went back to the center of the snow-covered courtyard.

Although the snow fell on his head and shoulders, Zhang Ruochen stood still.

"The second movement of the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm, Dragon in the Sky."

Suddenly, Zhang Ruochen made a heavy step on the ground. Countless snowflakes immediately rose up. His arms and legs rotated as quickly as a rapidly rotating turbine, rolling up countless snowflakes.

He flew up to seven meters high with the help of the strength in his legs. With the sinking dragon's roar coming from his mouth, his palm slapped a heavy boulder.

"Bang!"

The heavy boulder suddenly broke into pieces and the pieces flew in all directions, finally falling into the thick snow.

Zhang Ruochen stood in the snow and happily stared at the pieces. Then he thought. "Finally. I have succeeded in practicing the second movement of the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm, and now it's as powerful as a martial technique of the Mid Class of the Human Stage."

Now, not only the second movement of the Dragon in the Sky but also the first movement of the Elephant Galloping was as powerful as a martial technique of the Mid-Class Human Stage.

If Zhang Ruochen succeeded in the third movement, the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm would be as powerful as a martial technique of the Superior-Class Human Stage.

Once he succeeded in the Palm, his martial technique would advance up a level, becoming more sophisticated and mysterious.

"The first movement of the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm, Elephant Galloping."

Zhang Ruochen moved his feet and rushed out as quickly as a brute elephant. Then he slapped in the air and a string of Qi explosion sounds echoed through the air.

Countless snowflakes rose up and flew into the air, melting into drops of ice water from the power of his palm.

Zhang Ruochen thought. "Although the first movement of the Elephant Galloping is less powerful than the second movement, it is indeed as powerful as a martial technique of the mid-class of the Human Stage. The Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm is really abstruse."

His power was not as mighty as a brute elephant, but at least was as powerful as a brute bull.

It was called "Strength of A Bull" in the practice of Martial Arts techniques.

It was known that not every warrior in advanced stage of the Yellow Realm could unleash the "Strength of A Bull". The warriors who could unleash it were above average in advanced stage of the Yellow Realm.

Zhang Ruochen had just reached advanced stage of the Yellow Realm, but he had been able to unleash the Strength of A Bull with the help of the advantage of the six internal Meridians and the power of the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm, which showed that he had unlimited potential.

With his cultivation increasing and his body becoming stronger, he certainly could unleash more powerful forces.

After he cleaned up the pieces, Zhang Ruochen went back to his room and, instead of practicing, just lay in bed to relax and fell asleep.

As for him, after breaking through to advanced stage of the Yellow Realm, he finally could have a smooth and steady sleep.

He thought that it would take him three months to reach this realm. However, he only spent half a month to reach it with the help of the power of the space-time Spiritual Crystal and a great amount of practicing resources.

Before the Year-end Assessment, he had confidence that he could break through to a higher realm.

After a night's rest, the next day Zhang Ruochen had full energy and power.

He thought. "I need to buy some Energy Pills and Refining Powder in the Martial Market because I only have half of it left."

After having breakfast with Concubine Lin and Yun, Zhang Ruochen left for the Martial Market alone.

He walked into a store named the "Qingxuan Pavilion" in the Pill Market.

Located at the crossroads, this store ranked in the top three of all the stores in the Pill Market. The warriors who were passing by there would walk into this store. Some bought the correct Pills and others sold precious medicinal materials that they had just picked.

A moment or so later, an old man with a black mole on his lips came close to Zhang Ruochen and asked, "Would you like to buy some Energy Pills, sir?"

With a little shock, Zhang Ruochen turned to the old man and deeply glanced at him.

The old man must have had excellent Martial Arts skills because he could silently get so close to Zhang Ruochen. But for his voice, it might have been hard for Zhang Ruochen to find him.

"The old man must be a master of Martial Arts!"

The old man smiled and said, "I'm Mo Hanlin, the shopkeeper of this store."

"You are the shopkeeper? Hello, my first name is Zhang." Zhang Ruochen nodded and continued, "I would like to buy 50 Energy Pills and 30 Refining Powder. Is there enough stock in your Qingxuan Pavilion?"

Mo Hanlin was shocked and thought. "What a big order. Only a great family would buy so much practicing resources at once. It is rare to see just one warrior buy so many Pills."

Both Energy Pills and Refining Powder were expensive, thus ordinary warriors could not afford them.

The shopkeeper said, "If you were to go to other stores, you might not get so many Pills. But our Qingxuan Pavilion happens to have enough Energy Pills and Refining Powder to meet your needs."

Mo Hanlin took out an abacus to calculate how much Zhang Ruochen should pay and then he said, "50 Energy Pills and 30 Refining Powder cost 80,000 silver coins." "But because you are buying so much at once, I will sell it to you at a discount. You just need to pay 72,000 silver coins."

Zhang Ruochen said, "You're so straightforward that I'll buy the Pills in your store from now on."

Zhang Ruochen did not have enough money with him to pay such a large sum at the moment, so he went to the Martial Market Bank to withdraw 200,000 silver coins.

After spending 72,000 silver coins, now he had a total of 135,000 silver coins with the silver coins that he had left.

After completing this big deal, a huge grin came over Mo Hanlin's face, and he asked, "Mr. Zhang, would you like to buy anything else?"

Zhang Ruochen replied. "I'm certain that there's nothing that I want to buy."

Mo Hanlin asked, "Do you want to buy a handy weapon?"

Zhang Ruochen thought that the shopkeeper was formidable and said, "You have a very keen judgment."

Mo Hanlin smiled and said, "As a shopkeeper for several decades, I have seen thousands of warriors, but the warriors who don't have weapons are few. We have a branch in the Weapon Market, let me ask a fellow to show you the way."

After a while, Mo Hanlin found a fat boy, about 15 or 16, and said, "Han Zi, show Mr. Zhang the way to the Weapon Market and tell the hostess to give a discount to our distinguished guest."

Han Zi vigorously shook his head with his eyes opened wide and said, "No! No! I don't want to visit that hostess who can seduce a man's soul. I will be going to my death if I see her."

Mo Hanlin got angry and scolded him. "You aren't a man, you're just a little boy, what are you scared of? If you don't go, you won't get any Energy Pill this month."

Han Zi got nervous and repeatedly said, "Don't do that, don't do that, I will go, I will go."

Han Zi walked over to Zhang Ruochen and respectfully said, "Please follow me, Mr. Zhang."

Zhang Ruochen nodded his head and followed Han Zi toward the Weapon Market.

Zhang Ruochen thought that the shopkeeper of Qingxuan Pavilion was a little weird and looked like an extraordinary person. Of course, he did not worry that the old man would hurt him. After all, there were army guards and strict management in the Martial Market. No one dared to cause trouble.

Han Zi whispered, "Mr. Zhang, will you really buy weapons in the hostess's store? The hostess can seduce a man's soul. Mr. Zhang, are you a man?"

"Eh... I am also just a boy," Zhang Ruochen said.

With immense relief, Han Zi said, "That's great."

Han Zi looked white and fat, with protruding ears and plaited hair. His eyes were as small as soybeans.

Zhang Ruochen felt curious and asked, "You said that the hostess can seduce man's soul, so is she pretty?"

Han Zi nodded and said, "The Hostess is a great beauty, she's very sexy and charming. Only one look from her can make a man's hearts beat faster. What's more, you will blush at your first sight of her. But she has married seven husbands."

"Seven husbands?" Zhang Ruochen was shocked.

Han Zi continued, "Yes, but each of the seven husbands died on their wedding nights."

Zhang Ruochen asked, "Who inherited their property after they died?"

"The hostess, of course, inherited their property. Our shopkeeper is just an employee."

Han Zi whispered, "The hostess is born to be alone. She must be the reincarnation of a soul bringer and fox. Once a man sees her, it's hard for him to live for even three days. Luckily, we are just boys, so she can't seduce our souls."

Zhang Ruochen nodded and said, "I hope so."

Chapter 13: Qin Ya

There was also a Qingxuan Pavilion in the Weapon Market, which was the most magnificent landmark there.

Han Zi took out a palm-sized token from his pocket, showed it to the Qingxuan Pavilion's guard, and then led Zhang Ruochen into the courtyard.

Inside the courtyard, a maid walked into a pavilion that was covered in a white curtain and bowed. She said, "Chief, a customer introduced by Mo Hanlin hopes that you can see him in person."

A woman in a red, phoenix-embroidered gown was sitting in the center of the pavilion. Her hair was combed high with three golden hairpins. Her bright eyes, red lips, smooth skin, and plump breasts could be vaguely seen through the light veils.

She was about 27 or 28, with hints of attraction leaking out of every part of her body.

She was the hostess of Qingxuan Pavilion, Qin Ya.

Qin Ya rolled her eyes and smiled. She said, "A customer introduced by Mo Hanlin? I bet he's another presbyter from some kind of suzerain, or another host from who-knows-what family. Forget it! I'm rather tired today."

The maid shook her head and said, "No. He's only a young man, about 16 or 17."

"Oh?"

Qin Ya was a little surprised, and she said, "Mo Hanlin has always been a reliable person. Why did he do such a stupid thing as introduce such a boy here!"

The maid said, "Mo Hanlin never does stupid things. The boy must be an extraordinary person."

Qin Ya nodded and laughed. She said, "Interesting! All of a sudden I'm not tired anymore. Let's go and take a look at that boy! Haha!"

Zhang Ruochen sat in the VIP room and waited patiently, holding a colored glaze teacup. He looked very calm.

Han Zi sat on a chair casually and swallowed the tea, he even drank the tea leaves. He kept praising the tea while drinking it.

A moment later, they heard footsteps.

Then, Qin Ya and two maids walked inside.

Han Zi put down his cup immediately and jumped up from his chair, just like a rat upon seeing a cat. He saluted Qin Ya with the utmost respect and said in a low voice, "It's a great honor to see you, hostess."

Qin Ya directly passed by Han Zi and stared at Zhang Ruochen. The young man sat there with a calmness that did not belong to a person of his age.

Meanwhile, Zhang Ruochen also looked at Qin Ya. He was somewhat astonished by her beauty as well. What a pretty and coquettish woman! If she tried to lure men, nine out of 10 might surrender.

Fortunately, Zhang Ruochen had a strong Spiritual Power, which helped him to resist the lure to a large extent. He said directly, "I'm here to buy a weapon. Please take me to your warehouse."

Qin Ya walked over to Zhang Ruochen one step at a time. Her breasts shook with each step she took. The scene was too sexy to look at.

She smiled prettily and said, "Master Zhang, you need to tell me what kind of weapon that you desire, so I can prepare it for you, right?"

"A sword! It'd better be a sword of Genuine Martial Arms!" Zhang Ruochen smelled a dimly discernible fragrance, so light and so attractive. It was Qin Ya's body scent.

The fragrance was very tempting and fantasy-arousing. It was, however, not vulgar at all.

"What an attractive siren!"

It was Qin Ya's first time seeing a man stay calm in front of her. "He was only a teenager! Shouldn't the teenagers have the weakest temperament and be the easiest to lure?"

Zhang Ruochen's eyes were bright and clear, without any libidinous looks in them.

"That explains why Mo Hanlin wanted me to meet him in person. He's extraordinary. Other boys' Spiritual Power can never compare with his."

Qin Ya nodded. Now Zhang Ruochen interested her even more. She said with a smile, "There are a lot of swords of the Genuine Martial Arms in my warehouse. Since you are the respected guest here, I'll show you there myself."

Standing behind Qin Ya, the heavy boy, Han Zi, shook his head fiercely at Zhang Ruochen. It seemed that he wanted to say: Hey man, never go to the warehouse alone with the hostess! She'll eat you up!

Certainly, Zhang Ruochen noticed Han Zi's expression. He thought for a while and said, "Okay. Thank you so much, hostess. Please lead the way!"

Qin Ya's breasts were very plump, and her waist was as slim as a willow branch. When she was walking in front of Zhang Ruochen with her butt moving, her body outlined a beautiful curve. Her hair fell on her back like a black waterfall, flowing with her movement. Whenever she made a step, her beautiful plump butt would tilt up a little bit.

Merely a view of her backside would make it impossible for others to move their eyes away from her.

No wonder Han Zi was so afraid of her.

Men loved a woman like her if she was gentle. Yet, men were afraid of a woman like her if she was not.

But how could a woman like her, who had brought seven husbands to their deaths and held a huge amount of fortune in the Martial Market, be gentle?

Zhang Ruochen tried his best not to look at her.

"Good day, hostess!"

Outside the warehouse, two rows of guards immediately fell on one knee with their eyes gazing at the ground, not daring to even look at Qin Ya.

They were all in fear and trepidation, as if the woman in front of them was not a beauty, but a soul bringer.

Qin Ya and Zhang Ruochen entered the warehouse, while all the others were left outside.

Seeing Zhang Ruochen follow Qin Ya in, Han Zi shook his head and sighed, because he could already predict Zhang Ruochen's fate.

Up to now, there had not been even one man that had left the warehouse with his body intact if he had followed the hostess inside alone.

Some had their hands chopped off, some were castrated, some had their eyes gouged out, and some even lost their heads!

The hostess never intended to hurt them. However, they just could not hold back their desires and had tried to rape her.

In fact, it was the hostess who was the victim in the very first place. She had to rise up and teach them a lesson.

Due to that, those who had gotten wounded did not dare to make it public.

For respected people like them, it would be a huge disgrace once such things were disclosed.

Qingxuan Pavilion's weapons warehouse was very big and was divided into a sword room, blade room, spear room, mace room, axe room... Among them, the sword room was the biggest.

Because, in Yunwu Commandery, most warriors preferred swords as weapons.

The weapons were divided into normal weapons and Genuine Martial Arms.

The normal weapons were used by ordinary people.

The Genuine Martial Arms were the weapons for the warriors. Only a warrior could bring out the real power of a Genuine Martial Arm.

The Genuine Martial Arms could be divided into nine levels based on their materials and the inscription numbers.

The first-level Genuine Martial Arms were the lowest.

The ninth-level Genuine Martial Arms were the highest.

The moment that Zhang Ruochen entered the sword room, he felt a strange wave, which came from a broken sword in the corner.

The broken sword was about a hand's width. Although the sword tip was broken, it still had a length of about four feet.

The sword looked plain and even had some rusty spots on it.

"Aby... ss..."

The moment Zhang Ruochen saw that sword, he was astonished. Then he quickly walked over to it.

Qin Ya smiled and said, "Master Zhang, what a good taste! That's a sword with 1,000 years' history. It's extremely heavy but incredibly sharp. The material is also very special. No one can tell what it is made of."

"It would be at least a seventh-level Genuine Martial Arm if it was not broken."

"What a waste! A good sword like this... It was broken, along with the inscription inside. Now, except for its sharpness, it has no value. But if you are interested, I can give it to you at the first-level Genuine Martial Arm's price."

"How much?"

Zhang Ruochen slowly picked the extremely heavy sword up and held it in his hand. He gently wiped the rust on the handle off. Beneath the rust, the ancient characters "Abyss" appeared.

The Abyss Ancient Sword.

Qin Ya discovered that Zhang Ruochen liked that broken sword very much, and felt a little regret. A first-level Genuine Martial Arm could only be sold for 500 silver coins at most, which was even cheaper than a single Energy Pill.

"1,000 silver coins."

She raised the price a lot.

"I'll take it," said Zhang Ruochen simply.

Even if it had cost 10,000,000 silver coins, Zhang Ruochen would have still bought it, let alone 1,000 silver coins.

Because this was his sword 800 years ago.

It was the sword that had been sent to him as a present from Princess Chi Yao, who was Empress Chi Yao now.

“When the warrior dies, the sword dies along with him. Now, since I have been reborn, it’s time for the sword to be reborn as well! Abyss, I’ll let your radiance return to this era!” Zhang Ruochen softly touched the Abyss Ancient Sword with his eyes blurred, so soft like he was touching his lover.

This was the predestined relationship between swords and men!

Qin Ya became speechless. “Is Zhang Ruochen really a man?” He was staying with a peerless beauty alone in a warehouse, yet he only wanted to hold that broken sword tightly.

Was that broken sword prettier than her?

Any other man would have pounced on her if they had been alone with her in this warehouse.

Although Qin Ya hated those men so much that she wounded them without a second thought, she still liked to see men going crazy and turning into a goat because of her.

She enjoyed seducing them first, and then wounded them mercilessly to wake them up and drown them in a tearless state.

But now, this Zhang Ruochen would not even look at her!

Any woman as beautiful as she would not be resigned to this!

Chapter 14: Peerless Enchanting

“Only this broken sword, Master Zhang?”

Qin Ya walked over to Zhang Ruochen. Her body almost stuck to him, giving off a charming fragrance.

Zhang Ruochen recovered from the thoughts of his previous life. The moment that he raised his head, he saw a large patch of white skin on Qin Ya’s chest. Although she was wearing her clothes properly, it still seemed very enchanting.

He immediately closed his eyes and held his breath a bit. His heart was pounding. He pinched his fingertips at once and forced himself to look at the sword on the wall.

Pulling himself together, Zhang Ruochen pointed at a royal blue sword and asked, “Hostess, which level of Genuine Martial Arms is this sword?”

Qin Ya looked a little disappointed and said, “That’s a fourth-level Genuine Martial Arm called the Flash Shining Sword. There are 14 inscriptions on it: four Inscriptions of Power, four Inscriptions of Ice, four Inscriptions of Electricity, and two Inscriptions of Light. In other words, it has three special attributes: ice series, electricity series, and light series.”

Generally speaking, there would only be one inscription on a first-level Genuine Martial Arm.

Only swords with over 10 inscriptions could be considered fourth-level Genuine Martial Arms.

Whenever an inscription was added, specific powers would be added to an extent. The more interesting thing was that according to the different nature of the inscriptions, the Genuine Martial Arms would have different properties that suited individual warriors.

For example, a warrior with the Blaze Sacred Mark had a blast of flame gas in their Genuine Qi. Thus, when they used the fire series of Genuine Martial Arm, they could unleash a stronger power of the arm.

“How much?” asked Zhang Ruochen.

“30,000 silver coins,” Qin Ya said.

“Alright! I’ll take it,” he excitedly said.

Zhang Ruochen took the Flash Shining Sword in one hand and the Abyss Ancient Sword in the other and quickly fled out of the armory.

Staying alone with that enchanting hostess was too dangerous, even for Zhang Ruochen.

After all, he had found the Abyss Ancient Sword and bought a random Genuine Martial Arm, which was all that he needed.

“What a quick getaway... Haha! But, it won’t be that easy to run away from me again! The future will be interesting when we meet again.” Qin Ya smiled. She became even more interested in Zhang Ruochen.

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When Zhang Ruochen and Qin Ya had entered the weapons warehouse before, there was a man and a woman led by an old shopkeeper from Qingxuan Pavilion approaching the warehouse’s doorway.

They seemed quite respected, even the old shopkeeper had to bow and smile with flattery.

The young man was Zhang Ruochen’s eighth brother, the Eighth Prince of the Yunwu Commandery, Zhang Ji.

The young woman with Zhang Ji was one of the four young beauties of the Yunwu Commandery, Master of the Red Cloud Sect’s daughter, Shan Xiangling.

Shan Xiangling’s temperament was outstanding, as pure and fresh as a lily. She was about 16 or 17, with bright eyes and a nice figure. Wherever she went, she was the most attractive girl.

The Eighth Prince smiled and said, “My mother told me that this is your first time to Yunwu City, so I must take good care of you. Qingxuan Pavilion is one of the biggest shops in the Martial Market. My junior sister apprentice, if you take a fancy to any weapon, do let me know.”

The Eighth Prince’s mother, Concubine Xiao, was a student of the Red Cloud Sect. She was also the junior sister apprentice of Master of the Red Cloud Sect.

Therefore, the Eighth Prince called Shan Xiangling his junior sister apprentice as well.

Shan Xiangling gently smiled and said, "Thank you! However, the main purpose of my time in Yunwu City is to meet some geniuses, especially the top genius, the Seventh Prince. I have heard about him many times and greatly admire him, like many other girls in the Red Cloud Sect. But it's so hard to even catch a glimpse of him."

The Eighth Prince said, "If he was here, I could introduce you to him. Unfortunately, my seventh brother is not currently in Yunwu City."

Shan Xiangling looked a little disappointed and said, "If I remember correctly, the Year-end Assessment is the second biggest pageant after the Ceremony of Worship. Won't the Seventh Prince be here for the pageant?"

The Eighth Prince laughed and said, "My seventh brother already got first place in the Year-end Assessment when he was only 10 years old. It doesn't make sense for him now. However, the Year-end Assessment is a big competition, where only young men from the Royal Family and noble families who are under 20 are allowed to participate. Perhaps my seventh brother will come back. If you want to watch it, I can get you a ticket."

"Thank you again," said Shan Xiangling with a smile.

While the Eighth Prince and Shan Xiangling were talking, the old shopkeeper walked up to Han Zi and asked, "Han Zi, who is in the warehouse now? Why is the gate closed?"

Han Zi gave him a strange look and whispered, "The hostess and a young man."

Hearing this, the old shopkeeper gasped in astonishment and said to himself, "Oh, the hostess... don't make anyone die!"

The Eighth Prince and Shan Xiangling also heard what the shopkeeper said.

In an astonished voice, Shan Xiangling asked the shopkeeper, "Does the hostess here kill customers for money?"

The Eighth Prince shook his head and said, "No! There are just some rumors about the hostess. Rumor has it that the hostess is so extremely beautiful that any man seeing her will fall for her."

"There's also hearsay that the hostess is cruel and merciless. Many men have died by her hands."

"What's more, it's said that she is very licentious and had kept many men. She is also a sadist. Many men had their hands cut off and their eyes gouged out."

"Of course, these are all rumors. I've never seen her in person, so it's hard for me to say what kind of woman she is." He concluded.

After hearing this, Shan Xiangling had a bad impression of the hostess.

Everybody could assume what was happening after a woman led a man into the armory in broad daylight with the gate closed.

The hostess was definitely not a decent woman and the man with her also had to be disgusting.

"Boom!"

The gate was pushed open and Zhang Ruochen came out with two swords in his hands. He was quite surprised seeing his brother, Zhang Ji, in the distance.

The Eighth Prince was also surprised to see Zhang Ruochen, but his eyes immediately turned cold and he reprimanded him. "My ninth brother, what are you doing here? This is not a place that you should come!"

Having heard the Eighth Prince address Zhang Ruochen as his brother, Han Zi and the old shopkeeper were astonished that Master Zhang really did have a great background. Unexpectedly, he was the son of the Yunwu Commandery Prince!

At the same time, they were relieved that the hostess had not hurt him. If the Ninth Prince had gotten hurt here, Qingxuan Pavilion would most likely have been shut down the very next day.

Shan Xiangling had also heard of the Ninth Prince. It was said that he was the only prince who had not obtained his Sacred Mark.

She did not deliberately get to know Zhang Ruochen, so she had no idea that Zhang Ruochen had opened his Sacred Mark half a month ago.

"How could a loser like him walk out of the armory?" Shan Xiangling thought.

"Could it be..."

With consideration of what the Eighth Prince said, she looked at Zhang Ruochen again with contempt.

Zhang Ruochen frowned and said with displeasure, "Since you can come to Qingxuan Pavilion, why can't I?"

The Eighth Prince sneered and said, "I'm here to buy weapons. What are you doing here? Can you afford a Genuine Martial Arm? How did you get those two swords?"

Zhang Ruochen was baffled by his attitude and rudely said, "It's none of your business! Even if I picked them up on the side of the road, it's still none of your business."

The Eighth Prince shouted, "Stop! You should stay in the palace and behave yourself since you're a loser without any talent. Don't come here and shame the family or I'll break your legs for my father."

Zhang Ruochen was even more confused. He asked in a low voice, "Are you even capable of doing that?"

The Eighth Prince burst out laughing.

He put his palms together and stretched his 10 fingers. The Eighth Prince then chuckled. "I'll show you what my capability is today!"

Zhang Ruochen stood there calmly. He pressed his five fingers together and moved his Genuine Qi through his six Meridians.

He scoffed. "If there's a fight, then let's fight!"

Qin Ya stepped out. "Oh! Your Highness! What are you doing? This is Qingxuan Pavilion, it's not an appropriate place to fight. The Ninth Prince is my distinguished guest, so I must step in if you challenge him here," Qin Ya said with an enchanting smile on her face.

Upon seeing Qin Ya, the Eighth Prince was taken aback by her beauty.

He would have lost his mind if Shan Xiangling was not here. Seeing an enchanting beauty like Qin Ya, it was impossible for him to keep calm.

The Eighth Prince looked away from Qin Ya and stared at Zhang Ruochen. He yelled. "You are such a disgrace to our family!"

In the Eighth Prince's opinion, Zhang Ruochen could never afford any Genuine Martial Arms. The only way he could get them was to be the hostess's secret lover.

He was exchanging his body for resources to practice Martial Arts.

In fact, Shan Xiangling shared the same opinion with the Eighth Prince.

"What a shame! As the son of the Yunwu Commandery Prince, the Seventh Prince is a top genius while the Ninth Prince is a woman's lover! What a contrast!" Shan Xiangling stared at Zhang Ruochen as she shook her head with a sigh.

Zhang Ruochen had no idea what his brother was talking about. He decided not to pay any attention to him because he had done nothing indecent. Holding his two swords, he walked outside.

Qin Ya was a very clever woman, so she could somehow tell what the Eighth Prince and Shan Xiangling were insinuating.

She cunningly smiled and said, "Your Highness, Ninth Prince, if you come here again, I'll treat you well! If you want any other practice resources, just come by and tell me. Hehe!"

Chapter 15: Strength of Four Bulls

With the Abyss Ancient Sword and the Flash Shining Sword, Zhang Ruochen went into the forecourt of Qingxuan Pavilion. He paid 31,000 silver coins for these two swords and then went back to palace.

While walking in Ziyi Side Hall, Zhang Ruochen found that the courtyard was entirely covered in white snow.

A strange sense of emotion came into his mind as he was holding the four-foot-long broken sword.

"800 years have passed. The world is changing all the time for both humans and everything else. I had never thought that the once sharpest Abyss Ancient Sword would also be broken apart."

The Abyss Ancient Sword, though broken apart, was still far too heavy for Zhang Ruochen. If he had not reached the Advanced Stage of the Yellow Realm, he might not have even been able to pick it up.

"The sword's inscriptions were all broken without exception. It's currently only sharper than other swords. If I want to reconnect these inscriptions and regain its full power, I will have to enlist weapon

refiners of at least the fifth rank. But are there any weapon refiners of the fifth rank in the Yunwu Commandery?"

Zhang Ruochen put his swords away.

Even if the Abyss Ancient Sword became a piece of scrap iron, Zhang Ruochen would still bring it along as it could always remind him of the past and motivate him to practice harder. Only when he became strong enough would he be able to get revenge on Empress Chi Yao.

Zhang Ruochen took out the Flash Shining Sword, one of the fourth-level Genuine Martial Arms. He gripped the hilt and pulled out the sword from its sheath. A blue and crystal sword body appeared.

Zhang Ruochen began to mobilize his Genuine Qi and injected it into the sword body of Flash Shining Sword through his palm.

Activated by Genuine Qi, the first inscription quickly recovered.

It was an inscription of Power Series! Once it was stimulated by Genuine Qi, it would gain 100 pounds in weight.

It weighed 53 pounds originally. But now its weight had increased to 153 pounds after the first Inscription of Power Series was recovered.

Such a big increase in weight!

His arm trembled slightly as he tried to maintain his posture.

"Clang!"

He thrust out the sword.

However, the sword's direction was not accurate and it was too hard to control.

With his present cultivation, Zhang Ruochen could give out a power like that of one Brute Bull by displaying the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm. He could even throw a 300-pound stone tray 10 meters away.

Nevertheless, that was one burst of his power in just one moment!

Providing it was a 300-pound sword, Zhang Ruochen could not necessarily lift it up with his present cultivation, let alone demonstrate masterful sword skill.

A sword that was 153 pounds was his maximum limit.

"Wham!"

"Chop!"

...

Zhang Ruochen spent his whole afternoon practicing the Flash Shining Sword. Eventually, he began to adjust to its weight.

Certainly, it was just a preliminary adaptation!

Those Martial Arts masters could stab mosquitoes within 10 meters with great ease. With superb sword techniques, they had already attained the realm of Sword Following the Heart.

Zhang Ruochen found himself lagging far behind those masters. Compared with them, he was too clumsy to use this heavy sword.

“There are four Inscriptions of Power Series on the Flash Shinning Sword. Its weight increased to 153 pounds after the first Inscription of Power Series was activated. I can’t imagine how heavy it would be if I stimulated the second inscription.”

Zhang Ruochen started to mobilize his Genuine Qi and kept injecting it into the second inscription of Power Series.

As his Genuine Qi became thinner and thinner, the second inscription of Power Series had not changed at all and showed no sign of any recovery.

Zhang Ruochen had to give up.

“With my current Genuine Qi level in my body, I can’t activate the second inscription. It seems that my cultivation is still not powerful enough!”

Zhang Ruochen withdrew his Genuine Qi from the sword body. Then the Flash Shining Sword immediately became 53 pounds again. Having adapted to the weight of 153 pounds, Zhang Ruochen found it really light to hold.

Whereafter, Zhang Ruochen injected Genuine Qi into the Flash Shining Sword again and succeeded in stimulating one Inscription of Ice Series.

As the Flash Shining Sword emitted a rush of icing air, his fingers became numb.

“Thump!”

When Zhang Ruochen swung his sword, some crystal snowflakes came out of the edge of the Flash Shining Sword. That was because small drops of water in the air were clotted into granular snow by Sword Breath.

“Inscription of Electricity Series!”

“Inscription of Light Series!”

Zhang Ruochen continued his attempt to stimulate another Inscription of Electricity Series and Inscription of Light Series.

After the Inscription of Electricity Series was activated, a wisp of an electric wire arose on the surface. He thrust out the sword. It looked like a flash of lightning cleaving the sky with a “Thwack!” sound.

The Flash Shining Sword was enveloped in a white haze and became extremely sharp when Zhang Ruochen succeeded in stimulating the Inscription of Light Series. With white light flashing, the stone cracked instantly.

His present Genuine Qi could only sustain one inscription. If he employed the power of the Inscription of Power Series, the power of other three inscriptions would be unusable.

“I need to practice harder to improve my cultivation if I want to activate two inscriptions simultaneously.”

“30,000 silver coins is worthwhile!”

Zhang Ruochen withdrew his Flash Shining Sword back into its sheath.

“Only when a total of 14 inscriptions are all stimulated will the power of the fourth-level Genuine Martial Arm be brought out completely. I need to intensify my practice!”

Zhang Ruochen swallowed an Energy Pill at once and started to practice after entering into the internal space of the Time and Space Spinel.

“Bang!”

The Energy Pill exploded inside his body, turning into a cloud of Pill Spirit.

Six Meridians carried Pill Spirit promptly and soon it was transformed into Genuine Qi within his Qi Pool.

It took half a day for Zhang Ruochen to absorb and refine all of the Pill Spirit.

Only half of the Pill Spirit was assimilated and converted to Genuine Qi.

The other half of the Pill Spirit was wasted as it escaped through his pores.

If this had happened to other warriors, they would have been distressed greatly. After all, half of a Pill Spirit cloud was equivalent to 500 silver coins.

Conversely, Zhang Ruochen did not think it was a waste of money because he felt that his Genuine Qi had greatly increased. If he had practiced progressively, it would have taken over 10 days to reach his present status.

However, it took only half a day for Zhang Ruochen to achieve the desired effect with the help of an Energy Pill.

“1,000 silver coins don’t matter.”

“Money can be earned if I need more silver coins.”

“But lost time is never found again.”

Over the following days, Zhang Ruochen spent most of his time practicing inside the Time and Space Spinel.

He took Energy Pills to expand his Genuine Qi and utilized Refining Powder to refine his body.

Beyond that, he also spent most of his hours practicing the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm and the Sacred Sword Skill.

After the first month of practice in the Time and Space Spinel, his Genuine Qi in his Qi Pool had quintupled.

The second month passed and Zhang Ruochen could give a quick burst of the Strength of Two Bulls.

After the third month, his Genuine Qi in his Qi Pool was tenfold as much as what he had in the Advanced Stage of the Yellow Realm. He completed the practice of his Genuine Qi and attained the limit of advanced stage of the Yellow Realm.

At this time, Zhang Ruochen could have opened up new Meridians and strive for the next realm, the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm.

Instead, Zhang Ruochen chose to restrain his cultivation and kept using Refining Powder to refine his body.

“Considering my present physical quality, I need to open up another four Meridians if I want to reach the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm. Specifically, there will be 10 Meridians inside when I arrive at the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm.”

Those warriors who practiced the exercises of the Inferior-Class of the Human Stage could only open up seven Meridians in their body. It was the same with warriors in the Yellow Realm Completion.

Anyone who had the capacity to open up 10 Meridians at only the level of the Dawn State was absolutely a genius.

Zhang Ruochen was still ungratified.

In his last lifetime, he had opened up as many as 13 meridians when he was at the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm.

“Although my present physical quality could not compare with that of my last lifetime, I still believe that I can succeed in opening up 11 channels at the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm if I exert myself to refine my body.”

The Time and Space Spinel, which could make his practicing time three times longer than others', was his biggest advantage at present. Given this, he should naturally make full use of his time to improve himself and become more outstanding than his last lifetime.

The fourth month passed by. Tremendous changes took place in his physical quality and he could now give a quick burst of the Strength of Three Bulls by displaying the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Fist.

Six months later, his strength increased sharply to Strength of Four Bulls.

Reaching his carnal limit, Zhang Ruochen discovered that bottlenecks constrained his physical quality and it was extremely tough to improve.

He would be unable to enhance his power to Strength of Five Bulls, even if he practiced for another year.

Practicing within the Time and Space Spiritual Crystal for half a year was equivalent to two months outside.

“Those who could give a burst of one Brute Bull at advanced stage of the Yellow Realm are considered as strong as Medium- and Superior-Class warriors. Only warriors at the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm could practice Strength of Four Bulls.”

“I could give a burst of Strength of Four Bulls only with the cultivation of advanced stage of the Yellow Realm, which enables me to contend against normal warriors at the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm. If I enter into the next realm, the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm, how powerful will I become?”

“Having reached my physical limit, I could start practicing for the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm. How many Meridians could I open up? I have no idea.”

In case of any special conditions, Zhang Ruochen took out a total of six small jade bottles filled with Marrow-washing Liquid, putting them in front of himself neatly.

“I’ll try my best! The more Meridians that I open up, the more powerful I’ll become in physical quality and fighting capacity. Come on!”

Zhang Ruochen grabbed the first jade bottle, drank the Marrow-washing Liquid, and started to open up the seventh Meridian immediately.

Chapter 16: The Dawn State

Given his current physical quality and sufficient Genuine Qi in his body, Zhang Ruochen could easily open up the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth Meridians.

It only took him one day to open up five Meridians across the body, which formed five systemic circulation pathways.

However, he finally felt tired when he tried to open up the 11th Meridian.

It took Zhang Ruochen 12 hours to finally open up the 11 Meridians. He was exhausted, and his body was covered with sweat. It consumed 90% of his Genuine Qi.

When he managed to open up the 11th Meridian, his body wobbled slightly.

A thud came from inside his glabella.

“Boom!”

He had reached the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm!

The capacity of his Qi Pool was immediately increased tenfold. Right now, the pool was around 25 square meters, which was almost as large as a real pond.

Genuine Qi traveled quickly inside the Qi Pool, forming a thin layer of mist.

“As expected, this body is too weak. I must enhance my physical quality, otherwise, the most I can achieve is to open up 11 Meridians in the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm.”

If other warriors knew what Zhang Ruochen was thinking, they would be depressed about their Martial Arts.

Above all, those who could open up six Meridians at the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm were considered geniuses.

Those who could open up eight Meridians were top geniuses.

If someone could open up 10 meridians, then for sure, that person was a heathen in others' eyes, who would be admired by other warriors in the same realm.

The Seventh Prince was famous because he had opened up 10 Meridians in the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm. He was the strongest in his realm and was a big hero in the Yunwu Commandery, making other geniuses look normal.

The Seventh Prince had been the first and the only person in the Yunwu Commandery that could open up 10 Meridians in the Dawn State in hundreds of years.

Of course, right now Zhang Ruochen was the second!

"Anyway, I finally made it! But at what level is my power now?"

Zhang Ruochen cleansed his body thoroughly and found a blue robe to wear before walking out of his room.

He planned to find a place where no one was around in order to test his power.

The Manor of the Yunwu Commandery was built around three mountains, Jun Mountain, King Mountain, and Emperor Mountain. Apart from the palaces, which were built close to each other, there were some quiet parks and basins.

Zhang Ruochen and his mother, Concubine Lin, were living in the Ziyi Side Hall, which was equivalent to a cold palace. This palace was quite far from those main ones.

Outside the Ziyi Side Hall, there was a snow-covered jungle. Beyond the jungle, there sat one of the three largest mountains inside the manor, Jun Mountain.

After arriving at the foot of Jun Mountain, it was hard to find a single maidservant or eunuch, or even a royal security guard.

"Here it is!"

Zhang Ruochen stood there and began to test his power.

Zhang Ruochen bent both of his knees slightly and assumed a "Horse Stance". In fact, he was much like a giant elephant standing loftily in the snow.

He changed the stances quickly, constantly unleashing his power through his handprint. He moved faster and faster.

"The first technique of the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm, Elephant Galloping!"

Zhang Ruochen stretched his legs, leaving the bones and muscles tightened, and unleashed all the power through his palm onto the stone wall.

"Bang!"

Many breaches suddenly appeared on the stone wall, becoming increasingly wider and deeper.

All of a sudden, the five-meter-tall stone wall collapsed.

Zhang Ruochen changed his stances and quickly moved back to avoid being hit by the rocks from the wall.

“The power of this hit is equivalent to the Strength of Eight Bulls!” said Zhang Ruochen as he nodded his head gently.

For a normal warrior in the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm, the Strength of Four Bulls was already his maximum.

But he had unleashed the Strength of Eight Bulls immediately after reaching the Dawn State, so he was certainly worthy of praise. With the development of his skills, he could surely unleash stronger powers.

“Now let me try my sword techniques!”

Zhang Ruochen reached in and took out the Flash Shinning Sword from the internal space of the Time and Space Spinel. He held the blade and charged it with his Genuine Qi.

“Crash!”

The first inscription, the Inscription of Power Series, was activated now. This led to the increase of the weight of the Flash Shinning Sword, which was 153 pounds now.

Then, the second inscription, the Inscription of Ice Series, was activated as well. A blast of icy air was released from the blade, making the air around it a bit colder.

With the current skill level of Zhang Ruochen, activating two inscriptions was already his limit.

Over the past half year, Zhang Ruochen had spent much time practicing the Sacred Sword Skill and the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm, rather than on improving his physique only.

Exercises, physique, and martial techniques—each of them was a must.

The Sacred Sword Skill, which was part of the Low-Class of Spiritual, consisted of 12 sword techniques.

Unlike those Human Stage sword techniques, each one move of that sword technique was subtle and ingenious, with great variations.

If warriors in the Yellow Realm would like to fully acquire the Sacred Sword Skill, a great deal of time had to be dedicated. It could take them several months of hard work before practicing even just one move of the sword technique.

Even for Zhang Ruochen, who had practiced the Sacred Sword Skill before, it took half a year to get three of the sword techniques.

Now the Flash Shinning Sword, which was 153 pounds, was held in Zhang Ruochen’s hand. However, the sword seemed to be weightless to Zhang Ruochen now. He was amazingly skilled and relaxed when using this sword, as if he was just naturally stretching his arms or legs.

He was so skilled at using his sword that it moved the moment he wanted to move his arm in his mind.

“Sacred Guiding Sword!”

Zhang Ruochen lifted his right arm and waved the sword.

Within a second, a loud sound along with that of the wind was heard by Zhang Ruochen. Meanwhile, he saw a blast of Sword Breath flying out.

“Crash!”

A seven-meter-long, three-inch-deep icy cold sword mark was left on the ground. Grasses and rocks nearby were destroyed by the Sword Breath and the scar.

It was like a sword path!

“Sacred Breaking Plum Sword!”

Zhang Ruochen shook his arm and waved the sword!

The Flash Shinning Sword was turned into a blue light shuttle with seven phantoms. Those seven sounds were like seven swords flying out to stab the enemy.

The sound from the seven sword shadows touched the sword tip on the stone wall, causing some “Ding, Ding!” sounds.

Seven tiny holes, caused by sword tips, were left on the stone wall and displayed a plum blossom.

Sacred Breaking Plum Sword—Virtually, it was not about plums, but the glabella.

Once this technique was used, seven tiny holes would be left on the enemy’s glabella, which would look like a bloody plum blossom.

Only when one whose Sword Comprehension had practiced to the level of Sword Following the Heart could this person finally get the Sacred Breaking Plum Sword.

The Realm of Sword Comprehension could be divided into three levels: Sword Following the Heart, Heart Integrated into Sword, and Human Sword.

Zhang Ruochen was now in the realm of Sword Following the Heart, which was not far away from the Heart Integrated into Sword level.

Apart from the Sacred Guiding Sword and the Sacred Breaking Plum Sword, Zhang Ruochen also practiced one move defensive sword technique, the “Sacred Bell Sword”!

“Sacred Bell Sword!”

Zhang Ruochen continuously charged the Genuine Qi into the Flash Shining Sword. The Sword Breath was moving fast, so he used the sword to guide it to form an illusory image of a light blue bell. This illusory image was spinning quickly and parceled Zhang Ruochen, protecting him from the Bell Sword.

Once Zhang Ruochen used this one move, he could be protected from a big hit from the enemy, even if the enemy was a warrior in the Final State of the Yellow Realm. However, if the same enemy practiced the sword techniques at the level of the Spiritual Stage, he could defeat Zhang Ruochen as usual.

Sacred Guiding Sword!

Sacred Breaking Plum Sword!

Sacred Bell Sword!

Zhang Ruochen was continuously practicing these three sword techniques in order to reach the “Heart Integrated into Sword”. However, he knew it would be impossible to reach that level in a short period of time.

Zhang Ruochen went back to the Ziyi Side Hall after he had exhausted his Genuine Qi.

“In 13 days, we will have our Year-end Assessment. I must further cultivate my skills.”

Zhang Ruochen sat inside the Mystery of Time and Space with his legs crossed. He ate another Energy Pill before practicing again.

As the Year-end Assessment was approaching, all the princes and princesses of the Yunwu Commandery were busy practicing. Each one of them was eager to excel and be respected by all the people.

Only scions of the Royal Family or the noble families who were below 20 years old were eligible for the Year-end Assessment. The assessment was for enhancing youths’ motivation and making them more competent.

In previous years, Zhang Ruochen was banned from attending the Year-end Assessment, thus, he could only stand in the crowd. Of course, that was an embarrassing moment for both he and Concubine Lin.

This year, it could be different.

When Zhang Ruochen was making progress, others were also improving themselves.

The Jade Palace had belonged to Zhang Ruochen and Concubine Lin, but now it was for the Eighth Prince Zhang Ji and his mother, Concubine Xiao. Inside a luxurious room of the Jade Palace, Zhang Ji was laughing loudly. “Ahahaha! I finally reached the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm!”

A hint of satisfaction played on Concubine Xiao’s face, she said proudly, “Good job, Ji! With your current skill level, although you can’t beat the Fifth Prince or the Sixth Prince, your lord father will surely see your progress and reward your hard work.”

Zhang Ji nodded. He clearly knew he was far from good enough when compared to these two brothers.

The Sixth Prince had reached the Peak of the Dawn State at last year’s Year-end Assessment. He could have reached the Medium Stage by now.

As for the Fifth Prince, he was even better. It was said that he had reached the Final State.

The Eighth Prince smiled coldly and said, “Never mind, there is one who will be at the bottom of the list. He will only make me appear more excellent.”

“Are you talking about the Ninth Prince? He just obtained the Sacred Mark of Martial Arts, I assume he hasn’t even washed his marrow or broken out of the channels. He won’t be present at the Year-end Assessment,” Concubine Xiao said.

“Haha! Whether or not he will be present is not up to him.” A hint of a smile played on Zhang Ji’s face, but it was a cold and disdainful smile.

Chapter 17: Yunwu Commandery Prince

A voice came out of the Lin family’s Drill Coliseum.

“Sacred Guiding Sword!”

Gripping a Splendor Sword, Lin Ningshan swung the Splendor Sword and chopped down. Then a streak of Sword Breath arose in the air, leaving a seven-meter-long sword path on the ground.

A deep crack caused by the sword marred the hard flagstone.

“Clap, Clap!”

While walking into the Drill Coliseum, Lin Fengxian applauded and said with a smile, “Shan-er, your talent for swordsmanship is really amazing! It took less than three months for you to acquire one move of the sword technique of the Low Class of Spiritual. By virtue of this, you will definitely sweep away all obstacles and become the shiniest one at the Year-end Assessment!”

Lin Ningshan answered, “I have already practiced to the realm of the Sword Following the Heart. It was my deep understanding of one move of the sword technique practice that accounted for my success in such a short period.”

Lin Fengxian nodded his head and said, “Across the entire Yunwu City, there are less than 10 prodigies who have the capacity to practice their Sword Comprehension to the realm of the Sword Following the Heart before their 20s. But, you made it only at 15. Your future is very promising!”

Lin Ningshan kept on practicing her sword technique after Lin Fengxian left the Martial Arts field.

13 days passed quickly.

13 days in the Time and Space Spinel was equivalent to 39 days outside.

With the help of the Energy Pills, Zhang Ruochen finally attained the Peak of the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm from its Initial Stage. His Genuine Qi Pool was tenfold that of 13 days ago, thus completing his practice again.

Now, he could punch and give a burst of Strength of Ten Bulls.

If he displayed the Dragon and Elephant Prajna Fist, he could break out the Strength of Sixteen Bulls by enhancement of his martial technique.

A normal warrior at the level of the Dawn State could give a burst of the Strength of Four Bulls.

For a warrior at the level of the Medium State, he could unleash the Strength of Nine Bulls.

And a warrior at the level of the Final State could break out the Strength of Sixteen Bulls.

Although Zhang Ruochen was only at the skill level of the Peak of the Dawn State, he could contend against the warriors at the level of the Final State.

However, Zhang Ruochen stopped practicing for the next realm, the Medium State. He understood that even if he attained the level of the Medium State, he could only open up 16 Meridians at most.

In his last lifetime, he opened up as many as 20 Meridians when he was in the Medium State.

“I have to find ways to improve my physique. If I lose at the starting line, how can I ever fight against Empress Chi Yao?”

While walking out of his room, he saw Yun standing outside the door.

“Sister Yun-er, is today the date for the Year-end Assessment?” Zhang Ruochen asked.

“Right!”

Yun nodded her head with a little nervousness and said, “Your Royal Highness, the Ninth Prince, please do take care of yourself! I heard that the Eighth Prince has reached the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm. If he knew you were also a warrior, he would definitely embarrass you on purpose.”

“Don’t worry about me. It doesn’t matter so much.” Zhang Ruochen asked with a slight smile, “Mother will also show up at the Year-end Assessment, won’t she?”

“Sure, she will. But, she doesn’t know that you are going to attend the Year-end Assessment,” Yun said to herself, “If Concubine Lin knew that the Ninth Prince was already a warrior, she would be very pleased.”

“Your Royal Highness Ninth Prince, please let me put the royal boa robe on you. Now, you can go to the Royal Coliseum down King Mount,” Yun said.

Then, Zhang Ruochen found that Yun was holding a bronze salver, on which was stacked a suit of gold robes with a Four Claws Huge Python, a cap, one jade belt, and a pair of golden boots.

In the Yunwu Commandery, different social classes wore different clothes, and everyone had to obey the rules of clothing strictly. Only the prince could wear a royal boa robe while the princess could wear a royal finch robe.

After practicing and refining his body for three months, Zhang Ruochen had already changed into a whole new look. Tremendous changes took place in his somatotype and temperament. He was no longer what he used to be, radiating a heroic spirit of youth.

He brimmed over with health and spirits the instant that he put on the royal boa robe and cap. His face was too noble to describe, just like Carps Jumping Over the Dragon Gate and Young Eagle Transforming into Roc.

“Your Royal Highness Ninth Prince, you... you really look more like a prince than any other princes!” Yun stared at Zhang Ruochen with her heart beating continually. With two blushes of red appearing on her cheeks, she could not help being attracted by his temperament.

Zhang Ruochen smiled and said, “Yun-er, let’s go to the Royal Coliseum!”

Yun nodded slightly and said, "Concubine Lin set out early to present her respects to His Majesty. We need to hurry up to avoid the gossip from concubines and princes."

The Royal Coliseum was built beneath King Mount.

The Year-end Assessment was a meeting for the Royal Family that ranked only second to the Ceremony of Worship. Even the Yunwu Commandery Prince secluded himself for refusing to attend the Year-end Assessment.

Before dawn, princes, princesses, and concubines rushed to the Royal Coliseum early enough to wait for the presence of the Yunwu Commandery Prince.

With a trimmed mustache, the Yunwu Commandery Prince sat at the highest position of the Martial Arts arena, looking 40 years old. He glanced at those princes and princesses and said with a smile, "The Seventh Prince doesn't come back, does he?"

The queen, who was sitting next to the Yunwu Commandery Prince, answered, "Your Majesty, the Seventh Prince sent a letter half a month ago to inform us that he won't come back, for he has to handle a vital issue. Besides, in light of his martial cultivation, it makes no sense for him to attend the Year-end Assessment!"

"The Seventh Prince's absence lowers my expectations of this Year-end Assessment." The Yunwu Commandery Prince was a little disappointed.

Concubine Xiao, the biological mother of the Eighth Prince, stepped forward and said, "Your Majesty, although the Seventh Prince is absent, the Ninth Prince will attend this year."

"Oh, is that true? The Ninth Prince?" The Yunwu Commandery Prince turned his eyes to Concubine Lin.

Concubine Xiao said with a smile, "The Ninth Prince unlocked the Sacred Mark three months ago."

"Really? Haha! Concubine Lin, why didn't you inform me of this in the first place?" The Yunwu Commandery Prince was in good mood. After all, the Ninth Prince was his own son and the only prince that had not opened up the Sacred Mark.

The Yunwu Commandery Prince was quite pleased since his nine princes had all unlocked the Sacred Mark.

Concubine Lin bit her lip and whispered, "I dared not startle you, Your Majesty, as he has only just gotten it."

"In my eyes, his opening of the Sacred Mark is certainly a thing worthy of our celebration. Even if his future achievement is limited, he is still a warrior stronger than ordinary people. Where is he? Ask him to come see me," The Yunwu Commandery Prince replied.

"Everyone is here except my ninth brother. Huh! It seems he has changed a lot after opening the Sacred Mark. We all have to wait for him!" The Eighth Prince laughed coldly.

At this moment, dressed in a royal boa robe, Zhang Ruochen stepped up along the tall stone steps and said, "My Eighth Brother, is it really a good thing to say something bad behind my back?"

With an imposing appearance, Zhang Ruochen walked up to the Eighth Prince, giving him a sharp glare.

Clenching his fist, the Eighth Prince looked quite furious. How dare Zhang Ruochen speak to him in such a tone? He was so unruly!

Zhang Ruochen shook his sleeves and moved forward. When he saw the Yunwu Commandery Prince sitting at the top, he bowed to him and said, "Please allow me to pay my respects to Your Majesty!"

On hearing what Zhang Ruochen had called the Yunwu Commandery Prince, all those present were shocked by his boldness.

There was an air of chill at the meeting. Everyone held their breath and dared not make a sound.

"You called me 'Your Majesty'?" The Yunwu Commandery Prince stared at Zhang Ruochen.

The queen snorted and said, "Ninth Prince, how dare you speak like that? Do you want to disown your father?"

"Dong!"

Trembling with fright, Concubine Lin knelt on the ground at once and hastily explained that her Chen-er was too negligent to say the right appellation.

"I didn't say anything wrong!"

With sparkling eyes and a straight body, Zhang Ruochen stood out from the crowd. He added, "Being a father is duty bound to teach his son. I was brought up in poor health. Please ask yourself the following questions. As my father, have you ever taught me? Have you ever helped me? Or have you ever cared about me?"

"Being a husband ought to have three qualities: gratitude, affection, and morality. But, Your Highness, when my mother was given a beating with cudgels ordered by the queen, did you have any affection for her? My mom has suffered a lot in the past three years. Did you have any gratitude for her? On a cold winter night, we were driven from our home into the side hall as if we were banished to the side hall. Did you have any morality for us?"

"Since you couldn't be a good father or a good husband, am I wrong to call you 'Your Majesty'?"

It was the first time that someone had talked to the Yunwu Commandery Prince in such a tone. Trembling with fear, those maidservants and eunuchs knelt on the ground one after another.

The Yunwu Commandery Prince affected a long face and looked at the queen beside him. He asked in a deep voice, "Who gave that order? Who drove them into the side hall?"

The queen sat still, glaring at the Eighth Prince and Concubine Xiao.

"Dong! Dong!"

The Eighth Prince and Concubine Xiao knelt on the ground immediately. They became limp with their cold sweat exuding ceaselessly from their foreheads.

"It... was... me!" The voice of Concubine Xiao was trembling.

Although it was actually ordered by the queen, how could Concubine Xiao dare to reveal the ringleader behind it?

The Yunwu Commandery Prince gave her a snort of contempt and asked, "Only you?"

Concubine Xiao glanced at the Eighth Prince beside her, gritted her teeth and said, "Yes, nobody is involved but me."

"Alright, since you want to shoulder the responsibility alone, I'll satisfy your needs. Listen carefully! From now on, move to the Ziyi Side Hall right away!" The Yunwu Commandery Prince answered.

When hearing this, Concubine Xiao understood that she was really banished to the cold palace and it would be hard to turn her status around. Then she became limp and fainted.

After Concubine Xiao was carried away, the Yunwu Commandery Prince stood up from his seat. He looked at Zhang Ruochen and said, "It seems that you have already accomplished the process of Washing Marrow and Breaking out of the Channels and have become a real warrior. You look quite different now. Okay, for your great courage and uprightness, I will make an exception and forgive you today. Would you like to attend the Year-end Assessment?"

With a firm expression in his eyes, Zhang Ruochen said without being servile or bumptious, "Certainly!"

"Okay! Haha! This is my son indeed! You are brave enough!" The Yunwu Commandery Prince roared with laughter.

This was a world to honor warriors. The real superiors were those who were strong-willed, backboned, and haughty.

If Zhang Ruochen had behaved timidly and shrinkingly at their meeting, the Yunwu Commandery Prince would not have thought highly of him, even though he opened up the Sacred Mark.

Kneeling on the ground, the Eighth Prince clenched his fist and glared at Zhang Ruochen. He said to himself. "Zhang Ruochen, just enjoy it! At the Year-end Assessment, I will ravage you and let you know who the real superior is!"

Chapter 18: Year-end Assessment

Concubine Lin was surprised that the Yunwu Commandery Prince did not punish Zhang Ruochen for his disrespect, but instead punished Concubine Xiao. She let out a long sigh of relief and pulled Zhang Ruochen aside as if she had something to question him about.

It was still quite hard for Concubine Lin to believe what she had seen. Zhang Ruochen had not greeted the Commandery Prince Yunwu properly and had criticized him for being an irresponsible father and husband. She asked Zhang Ruochen, "Chen-er, have you really become a real warrior? Tell me the truth!"

He did not want to keep his mother in the dark, so Zhang Ruochen nodded and replied, "Yes! I have finished the cultivation and now I am a warrior."

Concubine Lin was worried about Zhang Ruochen and said, "Like you said, you just became a warrior. What if something happens during the Year-end Assessment? You don't have enough experience to handle it!"

"Look, mom, even though I haven't joined the Year-end Assessment, it doesn't mean I'll be totally safe. Don't you worry about me. I promise you that I will try my best and not do anything that exceeds my limits." Zhang Ruochen could understand why Concubine Lin was anxious, she did not know about Zhang Ruochen's ability from his previous life. Anyhow, Zhang Ruochen felt confident and ready for the assessment.

Warriors under the age of 20 had to be exclusively approved to participate in the Year-end Assessment.

The Yunwu Commandery Prince had nine sons and 13 daughters in total.

The Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth were all aged under 20. Except for the Seventh Prince, who was currently out of Yunwu City, the remaining princes would all attend the Year-end Assessment.

Aside from the lineal princes and princess, the relatives of the Royal Family could also pick the three most outstanding warriors to join the Year-end Assessment. For example, the Lin family.

The relatives gradually made their way and gathered the boundary of the Royal Coliseum, forming into alignment.

There were some significant people in Yunwu City such as Martial Arts warriors of the Earth Realm, the Master of the suzerain, and the leader of a large-scale family. They were all invited to behold the assessment at the Royal Coliseum.

The pretty and coquettish woman, Qin Ya, was also invited to the assessment. Mo Hanlin followed behind Qin Ya and asked, "Boss, the Royal Family has sent the invitations to Qingxuan Pavilion every year. Yet, you have never attended. Why do you want to watch it this year? I don't understand."

Despite the fact it was winter, Qin Ya was wearing a red blooming dress as one would in summer's heat. It exposed her snow-white arms and sensuous collarbone.

There was a faint smile of attraction in Qin Ya's eyes and her lips were rosy and glittering. She responded to Mo Hanlin, "When you meet someone that you are interested in, of course, you want to know more about him."

Mo Hanlin was shocked and asked, "The one you referring to is the Ninth Prince?"

"Haha! Do you think there is anyone else apart from him?" Qin Ya responded with a smile.

After Zhang Ruochen visited Qingxuan Pavilion two months ago, Qin Ya had sent a secret agent to track him.

What shocked Qin Ya was that the young man, who had shown such a strong determination to succeed, had not acquired the Sacred Mark in the past 16 years. Rather, he was as ordinary as any citizen of Yunwu and had always rested in bed due to illness.

Qin Ya had also discovered the wretched situation of Concubine Lin and Zhang Ruochen inside the Royal Family, as well as the conflicts between Concubine Lin and her family.

Yet, this young man, who held no power in Royal Family, had spent 100,000 silver coins for a substantial number of Pills and two Genuine Martial Arms at Qingxuan Pavilion.

Qin Ya wondered where Zhang Ruochen had gotten all the silver coins from.

Despite her high intellect, Qin Ya could not figure out what Zhang Ruochen was hiding.

Other people might not have noticed, but from Qin Ya's point of view, the Ninth Prince that everyone looked down on was mysterious.

Out of curiosity, she wanted to watch the Year-end Assessment in person and see how many secrets Zhang Ruochen had hidden. With the Pills and Arms Zhang Ruochen bought from Qingxuan Pavilion, Qin Ya thought that it might be worth going to the assessment to find out more about Zhang Ruochen.

"Hostess Qin, I didn't expect you to come to the Royal Coliseum! What brings you here?" Lin Fengxian took the initiative to greet his boss, Qin Ya, in her red dress, whom he recognized from far away. It seemed that Lin Fengxian was eager to ingratiate himself with Qin Ya.

In Lin Fengxian's eyes, Qin Ya was as mysterious as Zhang Ruochen.

Lin Fengxian had only seen Qin Ya once, so they were not close friends. However, knowing Qin Ya had control over the massive financial resources that affected the economical operation of Yunwu City, it appeared that she was definitely someone powerful in Yunwu City.

It was rumored that five out of every 10 shopkeepers worked for her in the Martial Market. That would explain why she had so much control over the financial resources.

Qin Ya had always been secretive and mysterious. No one could ever read her mind. Even if the leader of a superior family wanted to see her, it was relatively difficult.

Lin Fengxian did not care how mysterious Qin Ya was, it was her financial status that interested him. He believed that if they could become close friends, it would be of great benefit to his family.

Qin Ya finally arrived at the Royal Coliseum. She glanced at Lin Fengxian, slightly raised her eyebrows, and asked, "Excuse me, do I know Your Excellency?"

Mo Hanlin, who stood next to Qin Ya, whispered, "My hostess, he is Lin Fengxian, Head of the Lins."

"The Lins? Oh well, that is interesting!" Qin Ya's eyes blinked and an elegant smile appeared on her face. She said, "This is the Head of the Lins! Please forgive my discourtesy!"

Lin Fengxian had not expected Qin Ya to be a woman that had a way with words. He smiled and responded, "Yes! I wanted to talk to you two years ago when I bought some Pills at Qingxuan Pavilion. Unfortunately, you, my hostess, were in a hurry at the time. I only caught a quick look at you from far away. You're more beautiful after two years, my hostess!"

"Two years ago..." Qin Ya wondered, trying to jog her memory.

However, she could not recall anything at all. Yet, her smile never failed to dissolve any awkwardness.

Qin Ya turned around and looked at the Lin family warriors behind him. Her attention was caught by Lin Ningshan. "If I'm not mistaken, this is the second daughter of the Lins? Such a pretty lady! Oh, I'm so embarrassed now!"

Lin Ningshan stood behind her father, wearing a snow-white shirt, her hair swaying on her downy body. She was surely an exquisite, classically pretty, young woman.

However, it would be unfair to say she was more beautiful than Qin Ya, the sexy and attractive hostess of Qingxuan Pavilion.

All people could say was that they both had great charisma in their own way.

"Hostess Qin, what an honor it is that you know my little girl!" Lin Fengxian was shocked that Qin Ya had recognized his daughter.

Of course, Qin Ya did not actually know Lin Ningshan. However, when she was investigating Zhang Ruochen, she had found out that Lin Ningshan was one of the people who influenced Zhang Ruochen the most.

Therefore, this name, Lin Ningshan, was stored in her head.

Qin Ya then smiled and expressed herself. "One of the four prettiest women in the Yunwu Commandery, I've surely heard of her. It is said that even the honorable Ninth Prince has been following after Ningshan. I bet many girls are envious of her!"

A young warrior from the Lins sneered. "That's just the Ninth Prince's wishful thinking. Ningshan is too high up for him. Even if he were to cultivate for another hundred years, he could never catch up with Ningshan in terms of practice."

Another warrior from the Lins, who looked slightly older than 17, laughed and interrupted, "After the Year-end Assessment, Ningshan will be engaged to the Seventh Prince. The Ninth Prince has overestimated himself. To be with our Ningshan? Such a ridiculous fool!"

The two warriors who had just humiliated the Ninth Prince were Lin Tianwu and Lin Chengwu.

Lin Ningshan, Lin Chengwu, and Lin Tianwu were the three outstanding prodigies picked from the Lins to participate in the Year-end Assessment. It seemed that the Lins were extremely confident with their capabilities as warriors. Yet, Qin Ya still found it hard to understand why they were being so harsh toward Zhang Ruochen.

Qin Ya rubbed her chin lightly as if she had discovered some sort of secrets throughout the conversation. She said, "Oh! Ningshan is getting engaged to the Seventh Prince! Congratulations! This is such wonderful news for the Lin family! I guess that every woman in Yunwu City will surely be jealous of Ningshan once the engagement is announced!"

Lin Ningshan grinned slightly. You could tell how happy and joyful she was from her eyes. After all, being able to marry the Seventh Prince was no doubt the dream of numerous women in the Yunwu Commandery.

Lin Ningshan was only one step away from the dream!

There were two parts to the Year-end Assessment—the literary test and the Martial Arts Examination.

Yet, the literary test was not as important as the Martial Arts Examination.

Even if a warrior got first place in the literary test, there would only be some appreciation. On the other hand, if a warrior performed excellently in the Martial Arts Examination, there would be a rich and generous gift from the Royal Family.

The Martial Arts Examination was beginning!

The first round of the Martial Arts Examination was a power battle.

Inside the Martial Arts arena, there were several black stone trays of different sizes. They were divided into 10 different levels.

The smallest the stone tray weighed 100 kilograms with a diameter of half a meter.

The largest weighed 1,000 kilograms with a three-meter diameter.

Warriors had to take turns testing their power level according to their age, starting from the youngest to the oldest.

The first warrior who stepped into the Martial Arts arena was Zhang Yulin, the Young Commandery Princess in the Royal Family, she was six years old. She stood only a meter tall.

“Phhf!”

Princess Zhang Yulin walked toward the smallest black stone tray, the Genuine Qi in her body started running in the Meridians. She locked both of her hands on the edge of the stone tray. It seemed heavy for a six-year-old girl, yet Zhang Yulin managed to lift the 100 kg stone tray up.

“Bang!”

She tried her best to throw the stone stray out as far as she could, and it landed at around one meter.

The Young Commandery Princess looked a bit disappointed at her distance for the first stone. She quickly got over it and prepared for the second.

The second stone tray weighed 200 kg. Apparently, this was out of the princess’s limits. She could not lift the stone tray up no matter how hard she tried. She did not want to, but she had to give up.

Although the young Commandery Princess had failed to lift the second stone, her performance had already impressed the crowd in the Coliseum. They began to whisper, “The princess acquired the Sacred Mark when she was four years old. After two years of practice, she was able to lift up a 100 kg stone tray. This is absolutely impressive! I can assure you this little girl here is going to be a god’s favored daughter.”

The Yunwu Commandery Prince, who was sitting at the top of the Coliseum, also nodded his head in appreciation. There was no doubt he was joyful discovering that there was one more genius among his own children.

Later on, the Tenth and Eleventh Princesses, who were aged 14 and 10 years old respectively, also took part in the first round of the assessment.

The Tenth Princess had cultivated to the Mid Stage of the Yellow Realm. She was confident and skipped the 100 kg stone. Instead, she walked directly to and lifted the 200 kg stone tray. As she expected, she threw it seven meters away. Then, she tried the 300 kg stone. What a pity! She was unable to lift it and had to give up.

The Eleventh Princess was at the Mid Stage of the Yellow Realm, the same as the Tenth Princess, and also threw the 200 kg stone to six meters.

Given that the Eleventh Princess was four years younger than the Tenth Princess, her performance was outstanding.

All three princesses who had finished the first-round of the assessment were under 14. The heaviest stone they lifted was 200 kg. In terms of power, they seemed to be slightly weaker than the princes.

Up next, it was the real battle between geniuses.

At 15 years old, Lin Ningshan was the youngest competitor, excluding the previous three warrior princesses. Therefore, she was the next genius to enter into the Martial Arts arena.

She skipped the first nine stone trays and walked toward the 10th.

The 10th stone tray weighed 1,000 kg and had a diameter of three meters.

“Go!”

Lin Ningshan engaged the extensive Genuine Qi in her body. She locked onto the massive stone tray, which was even larger than her body, on one arm and easily lifted it overhead single-handed.

People could not believe that with such a tiny body, Lin Ningshan could handle that terribly heavy weight.

“She is only 15!” The crowd was shocked at what they had just seen.

Lin Ningshan twisted her finger and threw the massive stone out from her palm. It reached the 15-meter mark and smashed a huge hole into the ground. It was beyond everyone’s expectation!

Lin Ningshan had surely shocked every single person in the crowd. Voices were shouting all over the Coliseum. “Oh my God! This is absurd! She is definitely a genius from the Lins!”

“This young woman has fully subverted the fact that a woman’s body is incomparable with a man’s. Lifting a 1,000 kg stone with one arm? Wow! I can’t wait to discover which stage she has cultivated to!” The people continued to discuss her.

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The Yunwu Commandery Prince who was sitting at the top of the Coliseum was as shocked as the crowd and said, “Which family is this genius woman from? Comparing her talent with my Ninth Commandery Princess, I believe that there is not much difference between them!”

The queen was more than satisfied with Lin Ningshan's performance. She grinned and said, "Your Majesty, she is the daughter of the Head of the Lins. Her name is Lin Ningshan. I also think she is outstanding and want to arrange a marriage for her and our Seventh Prince. What do you think?"

The emperor responded, "Oh! I recognize this young woman! In my point of view, her talent and family background matches fairly with our son."

The Yunwu Commandery Prince's eyebrows slightly frowned as his sight moved toward Zhang Ruochen, who stood near the edge of the Martial Arts arena. "Yet, I remember Ningshan and Ruochen are cousins as well as childhood sweethearts. I have already discussed with the head of the Lins about arranging their marriage. Sadly, what happened three years ago forced us to put the marriage aside."

The queen grinned and replied, "Your Majesty! With Lin Ningshan's talent, how could she still fall for the Ninth Prince? Apparently, they are no longer a match for each other. The gap between these two will only widen with time."

"With Lin Ningshan's talent, she is more than happy to be a concubine of the Seventh Prince. The Lins will not give up the opportunity of fawning over the Seventh Prince. Anyhow, the Lins would benefit if Ningshan was married to any prince."

The Yunwu Commandery Prince thought about it and nodded his head in acknowledgment. He could not deny the fact that the talent of the Ninth Prince was pretty much incomparable to Lin Ningshan's.

In the Martial World, it was preferred for men to be superior to women.

If it was the other way around, that women enjoyed a higher status than men on a large-scale, it was not a good sign for both men and women.

Chapter 19: The Shock

Now it was Zhang Ruochen's turn to test his power in the Martial Arts arena.

"Be extremely careful, Ruochen. You know that there will be huge rocks everywhere," warned the Eighth Prince with a sneer.

Outside the Royal Coliseum, a warrior laughed and said, "The Ninth Prince, oh my God, he is humiliating himself. How can it be possible for him to lift a stone tray? It's over 100 kg. He can't even wash the marrow or break out of the channels. Three months is too short!"

"The Young Commandery Princess Yulin lifted the stone tray and she is only six. But look at the Ninth Prince. He is 16 now, and he can't even do that. That's shameful!"

"Can he just go back and hide? He's not supposed to be here to attend Year-end Assessment."

Zhang Ruochen was obviously in his own world now. He ignored the malicious comments and walked toward the Martial Arts arena with a calm, steady gaze.

On his way, he met Lin Ningshan, who had just come back.

They stopped and stared at each other. There were only five steps between them.

Lin Ningshan stared at Zhang Ruochen with a close gaze. Shaking her head slightly, she said, "Cousin, you shouldn't be here for the Year-end Assessment. Even if you are able to wash marrow and break out of the channels, it is impossible for you to lift the stone tray. Don't you know that it is not just about you? It is also about your mother and the entire Royal Family. Why? Why are you here?"

Zhang Ruochen frowned. He looked at Lin Ningshan and said, "Cousin Ningshan, I admit that you are quite outstanding and talented, however, it doesn't mean that you can denigrate others."

Now Lin Ningshan's eyes were filled with disappointment. "Can't you just listen to me? Maybe living a normal life is the best for you. You don't have to cultivate, it is just not suitable for you."

She had planned to convince Zhang Ruochen to quit because they had played together many years ago. Their great times together had pushed her to help Zhang Ruochen now.

"He is so stubborn. Who the hell does he think he is?"

Lin Ningshan felt that there was nothing she could say to Zhang Ruochen, that stupid, stubborn boy.

"All right, take care, Ruochen." With her head raised high, Lin Ningshan walked toward the exit of the Martial Arts arena.

They passed each other, going in opposite directions.

The moment that Lin Ningshan left the Coliseum, she was surrounded by many young warriors. These young men admired and praised her, treating her like a diamond.

That was because she was just 15 and was able to lift a stone tray weighing approximately 1,000 kg. In addition, she could toss that kind of stone tray to a maximum distance of 15 meters. Many warriors older than her could not do that at all.

Most importantly, she was elegant and gorgeous. As one of the top four most beautiful girls in the Yunwu Commandery, she was meant to be loved as god's favored daughter.

"Congrats, Leader Lin, we just witnessed the birth of another genius, Ningshan! We won't be able to find another one of the younger generation in Yunwu City as talented as her!" exclaimed a famous Martial Artist from Yunwu City.

The leader of the Wang Clan smiled and said, "I have heard that Ningshan and the Seventh Prince will get engaged. They are meant to be together!"

Others' compliments made Lin Fengxian, the Head of the Lin family, feel very proud.

Of course, other eyes were on Zhang Ruochen in the Martial Arts arena. It was not difficult to see that they were waiting for this prince to disgrace himself.

Families that had close relationships with the Royal Family were all familiar with the name of this prince. He was famous for his poor health.

The Seventh Prince and the Ninth Prince had both inherited genes from the Commandery Prince. But they were so different. The Seventh Prince was a genius in people's eyes, he was a hero of Yunwu City as well. However, Zhang Ruochen was an idiot in others' minds, people did not expect anything from him.

Without any doubt, Zhang Ruochen's presence today, attending the Year-end Assessment, was considered a joke.

However, there was one exception—Qin Ya, who was sitting outside the Royal Coliseum. When she saw Zhang Ruochen walking into the Martial Arts arena, she became very concentrated with her gorgeous eyes wide open.

"That's exciting. Now surprise me, Ruochen!" A hint of a smile crossed her lips.

Everyone watched Zhang Ruochen walk toward the first stone tray.

All of a sudden, people from outside the Martial Arts arena burst into laughter.

"He is 16, but he can only choose the first and the lightest stone tray to test his power. Is there anything funnier than him?"

Apart from Zhang Ji, the Eighth Prince, who had a disdainful look, other princes and princesses were feeling very awkward now. In their mind, Zhang Ruochen disgraced the entire Royal Family, themselves included.

However, surprisingly, Zhang Ruochen did not stop at the first stone tray. He walked toward the second stone tray, then the third.

"What just happened?" Everyone was confused.

Zhang Ruochen did not stop until he finally arrived at the 10th stone tray.

"What? Is he going to try the 10th tray? That's ridiculous. From what I can recall, he only obtained his Sacred Mark three months ago."

With a scornful snort, Zhang Ji commented, "What an idiot. How can he lift a tray of more than 1,000 kilograms? Even if he practices for 30 years, he can't make it!"

Lin Ningshan was staring at Zhang Ruochen as well. However, she shook her head slightly with a sigh.

Now all the people were looking at Zhang Ruochen.

"Boom!"

Zhang Ruochen stamped a foot on the ground and injected his Genuine Qi into the ground through it. Qi Billow, caused by his Genuine Qi, was spreading outward from his foot.

Driven by Genuine Qi, the huge stone tray jumped to one meter high immediately.

Zhang Ruochen reached out a hand and caught the huge tray easily. He seemed to be like a floating cloud and flowing water. This stone tray had a diameter of three meters, however, he only used five fingers to support it, kind of like holding a plate. He lifted the stone tray over his head easily.

Seeing this, the entire Royal Coliseum became so quiet that not even a breath could be heard.

Zhang Ruochen stood still like a spear. Although he was lifting a monstrous stone tray, given the relaxed look on his face, it seemed that he was using no power at all.

“How can this be possible?” Zhang Ji looked pale and his lips quivered.

Not just Zhang Ji, but other princes and princesses, all of them were shocked. With blank minds, they had no clue how Zhang Ruochen had become so different.

Others’ minds were wandering, when Zhang Ruochen suddenly punched out the bottom of the stone tray.

“Boom!”

The giant stone tray jumped to five meters high.

After that, it fell to the ground at a greater speed.

The shock wave along with the weight of the stone tray should have given the landing point a great impact, the force of more than 1,000 kg.

But Zhang Ruochen caught it again. Then, he slowly but steadily put the stone tray back to its original place with one hand.

“Boom!”

No one could calm himself down. All the people in the Royal Coliseum were busy chatting now.

People could not believe their eyes. Without a doubt, the power demonstrated by Zhang Ruochen was much greater than that of Lin Ningshan.

He was only 16, and he had just obtained his Sacred Mark three months ago.

It was a mystery and so hard to believe. But it had just happened and everyone had seen it.

Chapter 20: The Second Round of the Assessment

“His... his power... How is it possible?” Lin Ningshan thought while she was biting her lower lip and staring at Zhang Ruochen.

Lin Ningshan could not believe what she had just seen. She could not accept how powerful Zhang Ruochen had become after only three months of practice.

Lin Fengxian was also shocked by Zhang Ruochen’s performance. As if he had been petrified, his eyes could not stop staring at Zhang Ruochen.

The general warriors were able to tell how powerful Zhang Ruochen was, yet the warriors with cultivation discovered something more than that.

First of all, when Zhang Ruochen stamped one foot on the stone tray, he was able to shock a 1,000 kg stone tray up from the ground. This was not merely a kind of re-bouncing power.

To be exact, Zhang Ruochen infused the Genuine Qi in his body and directed it underground. Then, the Genuine Qi turned into layers of waves crashing into the bottom of the stone tray.

Undergoing several layers of waves, the stone tray eventually got off the ground.

Relying only on the power of re-bounce, even warriors from the Completion of the Yellow Realm were not strong enough to shock a 1,000 kg the stone tray.

Zhang Ruochen's mastery of Genuine Qi was extremely detailed and fabulous. He had no doubt surprised a large number of Martial Arts superiors in the Coliseum. Some of them even felt ashamed of their abilities and experiences compared with the obscure Zhang Ruochen.

Shocking a 1,000 kg stone tray from underground was difficult. Yet, catching the stone from a five-meter height overhead with terrifying force was simply not something a Yellow Realm warrior would be able to do.

Since Zhang Ruochen managed to use Genuine Qi and converted it to layers of waves, it crashed into the bottom of the stone tray and neutralized the force of impact of the falling stone tray.

This was the reason why he could successfully catch the falling stone tray.

Only Martial Arts warriors with superior vision would be able to identify Zhang Ruochen's exquisite technique. And because the superior Martial Artists with advanced attainment discovered certain clues throughout Zhang Ruochen's performance, they were extremely shocked and found him incredible.

"The Ninth Prince's ability to master Genuine Qi is much better than the warriors of the Black Realm!" The crowd started comparing Zhang Ruochen's competence with that of other warriors.

A Genius of Martial Arts had risen!

Zhang Ruochen then walked out of the Martial Arts arena. When he passed by Lin Ningshan, she stared at him and said, "You did a good job of hiding your cultivation! Did you insult me on purpose? Let me tell you, a person's power could be enhanced incredibly with the use of a treasure!"

"However, power alone won't ensure that you will win when it comes to a real fight. The Year-end Assessment has just started, you will see the actual difference between us later!" Lin Ningshan added.

Yet, Lin Ningshan could not even tell how excellent Zhang Ruochen was in terms of utilizing Genuine Qi. Thus, she thought that Zhang Ruochen had gotten lucky and had taken some kind of treasure for his vigorous power.

In fact, even if an ordinary person took some undefined Pills, there was a chance that they would become powerful.

Zhang Ruochen shook his head slightly after hearing what Lin Ningshan had said. It clearly did not bother him anyway as he walked toward Concubine Lin.

"Mom, I did it!" Zhang Ruochen exclaimed.

Standing among all the concubines, Concubine Lin's vision was blurry as if she had just been shot by lightning. She shivered and asked, "Chen-er...? Is this my Chen-er?"

Concubine Lin hugged Zhang Ruochen firmly and started crying.

She had been waiting so long to see Zhang Ruochen become a warrior.

Concubine Lin thought that the day of Zhang Ruochen becoming a warrior would never come. She did not believe that Zhang would have made it. But he was now a warrior, he was a young superior! He definitely impressed every single one in the Coliseum and now no one would dare to tease him anymore.

What Concubine Lin wanted was very simple—fair and equal treatment.

For the other concubines, maidservants, and eunuchs standing aside who had witnessed Zhang Ruochen turn from a feeble boy into a warrior, only one thought came into their minds. “From now on, we have to flatter Concubine Lin for our own good!”

“Yes!”

The Yunwu Commandery Prince stood up suddenly, looked at Zhang Ruochen with excitement, and said, “My ninth son! I’m so pleased to know you’ve finally succeeded, though late in your life. No matter what your Year-end Assessment result is, the Royal Family is going to host a banquet for three days to celebrate your cultivation! Ruochen, come closer to me. Let me take a look at my dear son!”

“Chen-er, go! Quickly go to greet your father!” said Concubine Lin with tears.

Concubine Lin wiped the tears from her face, held Zhang Ruochen’s hands, and walked toward the Yunwu Commandery Prince.

“Good day, Your Majesty!” Concubine Lin and Zhang Ruochen saluted the Yunwu Commandery Prince at the same time.

The Yunwu Commandery Prince took a deep look at Zhang Ruochen and asked, “I guess your cultivation has reached the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm...?”

During the first-round assessment, Zhang Ruochen fully demonstrated his power. Surely he could not hide the level of his cultivation from the Yunwu Commandery Prince.

Zhang Ruochen responded, “Yes, My Emperor!”

“Cultivating from nothing to the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm in just three months’ time is not something a normal warrior could do. Ruochen, what have you been doing recently? Have you experienced anything special lately?” The Yunwu Commandery Prince asked.

Zhang Ruochen said pleasantly, “Your Majesty, I did experience something special, but that is my secret. I have the right to keep it with me rather than sharing it with anyone else.”

The queen was furious about Zhang Ruochen’s response. She shouted, “How dare you! His Majesty is your biological father, what secrets do you have to hide from your father?”

The Yunwu Commandery Prince moderately lifted his hand and stopped the queen from continuing speaking. Yet, he looked at Zhang Ruochen with appreciation and said, “Every warrior has their secret of cultivation. If you don’t want to talk about it, I’m not going to force you. Work hard in the rest of Year-end Assessment. I’m so looking forward to it!”

Up next in the Martial Arts arena was the Ninth Commandery Princess.

The Ninth Commandery Princess, Zhang Yuxi, was a tall, beautiful lady with bright skin, exuding an elegant nobility presence.

She was one day older than Zhang Ruochen. Her Martial Arts talent and beauty were comparable to Lin Ningshan. Zhang Yuxi was also one of the four beauties in the Yunwu Commandery. She and Lin Ningshan were called the “Two Beauties in Yunwu City”.

The Ninth Commandery Princess was about to lift the 10th stone tray. She threw it 13 meters away. It seemed that her power was slightly weaker than Lin Ningshan, who made it two meters farther than Zhang Yuxi.

Zhang Yuxi frowned and walked out of the Martial Arts arena. She stood next to Zhang Ruochen with an attractive smile. “My ninth brother, be aware of me when we go hunting at King Mount, I’m one of your competitors!”

As Zhang Ruochen and Zhang Yuxi were at a similar age, they had played together all the time when they were small. After Zhang Yuxi had obtained the Sacred Mark, she had to spend most of the time practicing Martial Arts and thus their relationship was not as close as it used to be.

Zhang Ruochen felt even more distant from Zhang Yuxi now, as this was the Zhang Ruochen from the previous life. He did not have any memories of playing with her. He did not say much in front of her and just nodded to respond to what she said.

The next person who stepped into the Martial Arts arena was the Eighth Prince, Zhang Ji.

Since the Eighth Prince had cultivated to the Dawn State, he expected to easily beat down Zhang Ruochen and be praised by the Yunwu Commandery Prince at the Year-end Assessment.

Yet, the performance of Zhang Ruochen was so incredible that it seriously pounded the confidence of Zhang Ji.

Zhang Ji was under lots of pressure and started brainwashing himself. “I need to lift the 10th stone tray! Zhang Ruochen is just crap. If he can do it, I can surely do it!”

The Eighth Prince Zhang Ji had just reached the Dawn State and did not expect to lift the 10th stone tray. However, he could not lose this round to Zhang Ruochen. Beating Zhang Ruochen became his motivation and he desperately wanted to lift the 1,000 kg stone tray.

“Come on!”

The Eighth Prince locked his arms onto the massive stone tray. Every single vein in his body stuck out and the stone tray was going up moderately.

Yet, when he lifted the stone tray up to half a meter, his fingers slipped and “Boom!”—the stone tray fell down on Zhang Ji’s back foot.

“Oh!”

“My foot... Help! Please help!” the Eighth Prince screamed as if he was a hog being killing.

The stone that fell caused a fracture on Zhang Ji’s foot.

He fainted after a second due to too much pain. He fell down like a dead hog in the middle of the Martial Arts arena. Obviously, it did not go as he had planned.

Two royal security guards ran into the Martial Arts arena, moved the massive stone tray away, and carried him down for treatment.

Coming up, there was another young warrior walking into the Martial Arts arena.

The following warriors were all aged above 16. These were the geniuses being picked out from different families. Most of them could easily lift a 1,000 kg stone tray.

Among the warriors, there were three outstanding ones. All of them had cultivated to the Final State of the Yellow Realm and threw the massive stone tray 20 meters away.

The Fifth Prince, 19 years old with a Final State of the Yellow Realm cultivation, had shot the 1,000 kg stone tray 20 meters away.

The 17-year-old Situ Linjiang, who was the youngest warrior of the Situs, also with a Final State of the Yellow Realm cultivation, performed three meters better than the Fifth Prince.

Xue Kai, aged 19, was the grandson of the minister. He had also cultivated to the Final State of the Yellow Realm and even pushed the result further than Situ Linjiang to a distance of 24 meters.

Aside from Zhang Ruochen, Lin Ningshan, and the Ninth Commandery Princess Zhang Yuxi, the performances of these three warriors were brilliant among everyone in the first round of the power assessment.

Next, it was the second round of the assessment—Hunting in King Mount.

Only warriors who had lifted the 10th stone tray were eligible to enter the second-round assessment.

There were 43 young warriors who had lifted up the 10th stone tray in the first round.

The royal guards led 43 antelope-horses into the Coliseum. Each of them looked like a little elephant, wearing metallic armor with a sharp unicorn-like horn.

On every antelope-horse's back, there was a meter-and-a-half-long wire-bow and five Thunder Arrows.

The minister stood at the stone table and loudly said, "You have all fully demonstrated your ability by lifting up a 1,000 kg stone tray. You are now qualified to fight against first-level savage beasts. However, the power of a first-level savage beast is much stronger than you imagine. Moreover, their speed is also as fast as lightning.

"With your abilities, you might not be able to kill a savage beast with your Martial Arts skills. Yet, with the use of Thunder Arrows, you will be able to pierce through and take the savage beast down.

"Every one of you will be given five arrows. The more savage beasts killed and the more power that those killed savage beasts have, the better result you will obtain. Only warriors who kill savage beasts are eligible to advance to the third-round assessment—the Martial Arts competition.

"King Mount is full of so much danger that you might lose your life. If you encounter a second-level savage beast, please run at once!" the minister warned the warriors.

“Hunting in King Mount now begins!”

Lin Ningshan pedaled along the back of her antelope-horse and fully showed how elegant and dexterous her bodily movement was. She glanced at Zhang Ruochen and said, “My cousin, I admit that the power assessment is my weaker area. Now it’s my show time! I hope that you can keep up with me in this round of assessment!”

“Bang!”

Lin Ningshan struck the whip on the antelope-horse’s buttock and it immediately expanded its iron heels and streaked across King Mount.