

Chapter 151: The Nine Swords Fly Together

While Qing Chibai was avoiding the iron pieces, Zhang Ruochen attacked and charged towards Qing Chibai.

“Dragon Shape and Elephant Shadow!”

Although the fourth movement of Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm was a low-class of Spiritual martial technique, it was as powerful as a mid-class Spiritual Stage martial technique.

Zhang Ruochen’s body seemed to be divided into two parts, charging at Qing Chibai from both the left and right. The human shadow on the left struck out Dragon Claw Hand while the right struck out Elephant Palm Print.

Oh no!

Seeing Zhang Ruochen charging, Qing Chibai’s countenance fell and he had to gather enough Genuine Qi to make movements hurriedly. All five fingers on both hands clenched into fists and released at the same time.

“BOOM!”

Palms and fists crashed into each other.

The technique Zhang Ruochen applied was Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm. Since Qing Chibai fended off with his hands hastily, he wasn’t strong enough to block Zhang Ruochen’s palm technique.

Under the impact of the mighty palm force, Qing Chibai spat out a mouthful of blood. His inverted body flew out toward the palace below.

Jinfeng Court was more than 80 meters high. If it weren’t for being hurt, he could have reached the ground safely by displaying Meteoric Rise.

However, he was not only injured but also unable to apply the body skill at all.

Once he fell, he was bound to be seriously injured, or possibly even dead.

In order to defeat Qing Chibai, Zhang Ruochen had been hit by two sword pieces and was injured as well. Despite this, he immediately jumped off the top of the palace and wanted to save Qing Chibai. After all, Zhang Ruochen did not hate Qing Chibai but instead, saw him as a strong opponent.

At the very last minute, Zhang Ruochen grabbed Qing Chibai’s sleeves slowing down his fall.

Shortly after, came a piercing sound.

The sleeves were torn.

“PHHHF!”

Qing Chibai fell into the pond, splashing water six meters high.

Zhang Ruochen fell to the water's surface and stood on a wooden stick. He saw the piece of fabric in his hand, and then he looked out over the water.

He had reduced Qing Chibai's falling force tremendously. Together, with the buffer of the pond water, he should be all right?

Not only was Zhang Ruochen nervous, so were the young geniuses. If Qing Chibai had fallen to his death, it would be a real joke if the word spread out.

Certainly, everyone admired Zhang Ruochen too. He had obviously defeated Qing Chibai, yet even with his injury, he'd saved Qing Chibai. This breadth of mind was very impressive.

Those who had looked down on Zhang before changed their minds in this moment.

"Waaa!"

Suddenly, Qing Chibai shot up from the water not far from Zhang Ruochen. He was only three meters away. "I haven't lost yet!" he roared.

"WHEW!"

In his two fingers, there was a piece of dreadfully cold and broken sword. With Genuine Qi running and fingertips snapping, the broken sword was striking towards Zhang Ruochen.

It was the sword tip he had broken before.

He'd thrown the sword tip into the pond. Now he picked it up and turned it into a hidden weapon.

With such close distance, he could not even dodge it.

Zhang Ruochen could only try to avoid letting it hit the vital parts of his body.

"PFFFF!"

The 15-centimeter sword tip pierced into Zhang Ruochen's chest. Blood gushed out from his body.

Qing Chibai fell onto the water surface with his hair disheveled and laughed with his face upturned. "haha! I am the strongest man among the younger generation. Zhang Ruochen, do you still have any strength to fight?"

Zhang Ruochen stared at Qing Chibai, his eyes filled with complication. There was a trace of firmness in his eyes. He clenched his teeth and unfolded his arms, the Spiritual Blood inside his body gushed out from the wound.

The rich Spiritual Blood was condensed into the Nine Handle Blood Sword around Zhang Ruochen's body. With the sword tip facing downward and the handle upward, it spun around Zhang Ruochen quickly

Qing Chibai regarded Zhang Ruochen standing opposite him. His expression changed. He immediately mobilized his Genuine Qi and displayed a defensive martial technique.

"CLASH!"

The Nine Handle Blood Swords came together and condensed into a handle.

Zhang Ruochen's finger pointed forward.

The Blood Sword was like a beam of blood. It shot out and defeated Qing Chibai's Genuine Qi.

"PUFFT!"

The Blood Sword penetrated Qing Chibai's body and propelled him dozens of meters away with its powerful impact. His body hit a large rock on the shore.

A loud bang sound let out. Qing Chibai covered his bleeding abdomen with both of his hands. He fell from the boulder and fainted immediately.

No one had expected to see such a twist. It was just breathtaking. And finally, Zhang Ruochen won.

Especially considering at the last moment when Zhang Ruochen condensed his Spiritual Blood into the Nine Handle Blood Sword, and only one movement swiftly defeated Qing Chibai.

If he had used this movement at the very beginning, Qing Chibai would have been defeated long ago.

"Blood-condensed Nine Swords." Tuoba Linsu observed. "This Blood Meridian is rare even since ancient times, and we surely have to admire it."

"Zhang Ruochen didn't want to show his last card at the very beginning," declared Chen Tianshu. "But he never thought that Qing Chibai who was perfectly open in all his actions would sneak up on him at the end. So, Zhang Ruochen was actually attacking in anger at the end. He didn't think much of it and applied the movement of nine swords flying together."

Right now, no one in Jinfeng Court could remain calm. Everyone was still very excited. Especially since Zhang Ruochen's last strike had been just amazing.

When the Nine swords were shot, who could stop them?

Even Qing Chibai had been defeated. Certainly, Zhang Ruochen deserved to be No.1 in the Sword Technique Conference.

The talent displayed by Zhang Ruochen shocked the Thirteenth Commandery Princess who had hated him very much before. Now she couldn't utter a word.

Zhang Ruochen mobilized his Genuine Qi and the broken sword inside his body quivered out.

A bloody broken sword fell to the ground with a clang.

Later, Zhang Ruochen sealed his Blood Meridians in the wound and swallowed a healing Pill.

When his condition was stabilized, Zhang Ruochen looked towards Qing Chibai who had been carried away by others. He shook his head with a few disappointment in his eyes.

Without a word, Zhang Ruochen left Jinfeng Court.

“Brother Zhang, you can’t leave yet!” Chen Tianshu stepped in front of Zhang Ruochen and glanced in the direction of the Thirteenth Commandery Princess. He murmured, “You are now the best warrior in the Sword Technique Conference. You have to marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess.”

Zhang Ruochen said, “I attend the Sword Technique Conference did not for marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess.”

Chen Tianshu said with a wry smile, “No matter what the reason is, you have become No.1 in the Sword Technique Conference. If you don’t marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess, it means to show no respect for the Royal Family of Qianshui Commandery. If the Royal Family loses face, do you think they will let you go easily? I’m afraid the whole Yunwu Commandery will be diminished overnight, let alone you.”

Chen Tianshu had just finished speaking.

“BOOM!”

A loud noise broke out in the sky. In the void space two hundred meters above the ground, a tactical formation in the shape of a purple line appeared.

With the flickering of the purple line, a delicate pavilion emerged from the void space and suspended in the air. It looked like a palace inhabited by fairies.

Qianshui Commandery Prince and Ten Powerful Ministers in golden robes were all standing on the Flying Pavilion looking downwards. An ambience of valiant Martial Arts covered the entire palace.

The Young Genius below had just realized that the great man of Qianshui Commandery had been watching the Sword Technique Conference.

The golden light shining from Qianshui Commandery Prince gave people a powerful strain. He was in a very good mood and looked at Zhang Ruochen standing down below. “The world is full of genius nowadays which presents a flourishing scene,” he began. “Zhang Ruochen, you’ve defeated Qing Chibai, the top genius of Qianshui Commandery. I have great confidence in you. When are you going to marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess?”

A Genius like Zhang Ruochen would definitely grow into one of the strongest in the future. Qianshui Commandery Prince would surely refuse to let him go and definitely wanted to take him as one of his own.

Of course, Zhang Ruochen would not marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess. However, he couldn’t say anything like that unless he wished to offend Qianshui Commandery Prince.

If he did, he would harm himself and his family too.

Zhang Ruochen stood upright and slightly saluted Qianshui Commandery Prince who was standing above with joined hands. He said calmly, “To tell you the truth, there is a small misunderstanding between me and the Thirteenth Commandery Princess in which the Princess doesn’t like me either. If we get married, I’m afraid... that may not be appropriate.”

Then, Zhang Ruochen continued, “Commandery Prince, since you’ve been overlooking at the Sword Technique Conference this whole time, you should know that I didn’t want to participate in the

competition. I was forced to do it. Actually, my purpose of attending this Sword Technique Conference was not to marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess, but to meet you, Commandery Prince. I was hoping you could send reinforcements and offer help to Yunwu Commandery. If you could assist us, I will be deeply grateful.”

Hearing this, Minister Ning cried out loud in his mind. *“This little kid is going to irritate the Commandery Prince!”*

Minister Ning knew better than anyone else that Qianshui Commandery Prince didn’t want to know the purpose of Zhang Ruochen attending this Sword Technique Conference. He only wanted Zhang Ruochen to be his son-in-law and draw this top genius into his Royal Family.

For whatever reason, if Zhang Ruochen refused Qianshui Commandery Prince, he would be signing his own death warrant.

If you couldn’t use a genius for yourself, the best way to deal with it was to kill the genius.

Qianshui Commandery Prince was quite calm and showed nothing unusual on his face. “I’ve heard about the difficulty Yunwu Commandery is currently facing from Minister Ning, and I understand your feelings very well,” he said with a smile. “As long as you marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess, you will become the Prince Consort of Qianshui Commandery. By then, I’m sure Square Commandery wouldn’t dare to attack Yunwu Commandery ever again. What do you think?”

Although Qianshui Commandery Prince seemed to be very calm, only Ten Powerful Ministers knew that the Prince was giving Zhang Ruochen one last chance to remain alive.

Zhang Ruochen certainly knew the consequence of refusing Qianshui Commandery Prince and hence felt tremendous pressure. He could ignore his own life, but he had to consider the lives of his family members.

Zhang Ruochen looked in the direction of the Thirteenth Commandery Princess again and shook his head. If he promised to marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess, it would be against his conscience.

Zhang Ruochen had made his decision and was ready to give his answer.

“SWISH!”

Huang Yanchen flew down from the third floor of Jinfeng Court. Her long sapphire hair fluttered like a waterfall. She had a graceful figure and snow-white skin. She was devastatingly beautiful. She walked towards Zhang Ruochen and smiled at him slightly.

Then, Huang Yanchen acknowledged Qianshui Commandery Prince standing above. She said, “Father, actually, the cause of the disaster happening in Yunwu Commandery is because of me. Prince Huo Xing of Square Commandery was killed by me, not Zhang Ruochen. So, father, you have to help Yunwu Commandery!”

Everyone was stunned.

A thought came to their minds. Did Commandery Princess Yanchen also have a crush on Zhang Ruochen and want to steal her own sister’s Prince Consort?

Commandery Princess Yanchen had always been dominating in anything possible.

Chapter 152: Strategy of Senior Sister Apprentice Huang

Standing on the top of the Flying Pavilion and looking at Huang Yanchen beside Zhang Ruochen, Qianshui Commandery Prince's expression had a subtle change.

A weird thought came to his mind. *"Does Yanchen also have a crush on Zhang Ruochen?"*

Qianshui Commandery Prince couldn't believe that Prince Huo Xing was indeed killed by Huang Yanchen. He thought Huang Yanchen was just helping Zhang Ruochen out.

Although Qianshui Commandery Prince loved Huang Yanchen dearly, he wouldn't allow her to mess things up. After all, Zhang Ruochen won first place in the Sword Technique Conference, so he must become the Prince Consort of the Thirteenth Commandery Princess.

There was no such thing in the world as an older sister robbing her younger sister's Prince Consort.

Qianshui Commandery Prince looked serious with indistinct golden light shone on him. His eyes shined like two pink golden fireballs. He said coldly, "Yanchen, the death of Prince Huo Xing has nothing to do with you. You'd better stay out of it."

Huang Yanchen was very stubborn. Standing straight like a graceful lotus, she replied bravely, "How can I stay out of it as I am the one who killed him? I was practicing with my junior fellow, apprentice Zhang when Prince Huo Xing led his army to attack us. I killed Prince Huo Xing, but Square Commandery Prince was too timid to take revenge on me. They entirely blamed Zhang Ruochen. Many witnessed this. If you look into it, you will find the truth."

Qianshui Commandery Prince frowned slightly and said, "Huo Ming, Zhang Ruochen, and Commandery Princess Yanchen, you're allowed to enter the Flying Pavilion and explain this to me."

Zhang Ruochen glanced at Huang Yanchen, gave a grateful look, and said, "Thank you for helping me."

Huang Yanchen's attitude remained cold. She stared at Zhang Ruochen with her beautiful bright eyes and said, "Do you really think this is the end of the story? You won first place in the Sword Technique Conference, so you must marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess, or else my father will deal with you hard. Unless..."

Zhang Ruochen asked, "Unless what?"

Huang Yanchen murmured, "Unless you tell my father that your real purpose for coming to Qianshui Commandery is to ask him for my hand."

Zhang Ruochen stepped back slightly, alertly glanced at Huang Yanchen, and said, "I don't see any difference in marrying you and marrying the Thirteenth Commandery Princess. But if I have to choose, I'd rather choose..."

Looking at Huang Yanchen's cold eyes, Zhang Ruochen bit the latter half of the sentence back in order not to embarrass her. After all, it was Huang Yanchen who helped him out just now.

Huang Yanchen said seriously, "Don't be an ingrate. I'm trying to help you. Can't you see what my father wants? He wants you to be a part of the Royal Family here. If you refuse, he will definitely kill you to avoid trouble later on. Apart from that, do you really think that I want to marry you? I just want to help you because we are on good terms."

Zhang Ruochen thought about it and realized there was truth in it.

"She is such a cold and arrogant person, and she hates me to the core. Of course, she doesn't really want to marry me. Is it possible that she is just trying to help me?"

Zhang Ruochen couldn't think of any other reason why Huang Yanchen chose to do that, but with the current situation, it would be exceptionally easy for Huang Yanchen to kill him if she wanted.

"I'm still too weak! If I can be an internal student of the School of the Martial Market, even Qianshui Commandery Prince has to think twice before he decides to kill me."

Zhang Ruochen was eager to become stronger in his martial cultivation and become an internal student of the School of the Martial Market as soon as possible.

Since he had made up his mind, Zhang Ruochen no longer hesitated. Staring at Huang Yanchen, he said, "I must return you a favor someday!"

An unusual light flashed across Huang Yanchen's eyes. She rolled her eyes and said arrogantly, "It's no big deal. I did bring a lot of trouble to Yunwu Commandery by killing Prince Huo Xing. I must take the responsibility and face the consequences. How dare Square Commandery stand against you? They must pay ten times more for the land they took from you. Now, let's go inside and meet my father!"

In the distance, Xun Guihai alertly watched them whispering.

He couldn't believe the beautiful Commandery Princess Yanchen with cool charm would ever fall in love with a freshman of the School of the Martial Market. Even if Zhang Ruochen was highly talented, he was still in the Medium State of the Black Realm. What's more, he was just a prince from an inferior commandery. There was no way for him to be a fine match for Commandery Princess Yanchen!

In Xun Guihai's eyes, Zhang Ruochen was still as weak as an ant, unworthy of mentioning.

However, he had to stay alert that it would be too late to regret if Zhang Ruochen won Commandery Princess Yanchen's heart first.

"Zhang Ruochen, I won't spare you if you dare to rob Commandery Princess Yanchen from me!" Seeing them walking towards the Flying Pavilion, Xun Guihai stood up from his seat and followed.

He decided to propose to Commandery Princess Yanchen now and ask Qianshui Commandery Prince to approve the marriage.

The Flying Pavilion landed on the ground and turned in to a 40-meter violet gold palace. Many purple pillars stood in the palace with lines of bright inscriptions shining on the wall.

The moment Zhang Ruochen stepped into the Flying Pavilion, he felt a sense of invisible force on him.

The farther he got, the stronger the force was. If he was an ordinary person, who had never practiced the Genuine Qi, he might be crushed down by that force.

In Flying Pavilion, Qianshui Commandery Prince sat on the highest place in the crown and golden robe, looking very majestic and divine.

If an ordinary warrior saw Qianshui Commandery Prince, he must believe that there was a god sitting up there, and he would be forced to kneel by the invisible power of Qianshui Commandery Prince.

Ten Powerful Ministers were sitting on two sides

The ones sitting in the first places were Left Prime Minister and Right Prime Minister. They were the most powerful officials in Qianshui Commandery.

Minister Ning sat at the third place on the right side.

These 11 people sitting in the Flying Pavilion were significant to Qianshui Commandery to a large extent. They could destroy an inferior commandery easily with just one order.

Although Huo Ming was a Warrior of Division Profound with strong cultivation, he trembled and didn't dare to look at Qianshui Commandery Prince.

"Greetings, your... Your Majesty!" Huo Ming walked to the center of the palace. He couldn't withstand the force anymore and knelt down on the ground. He bowed down to Qianshui Commandery Prince.

Zhang Ruochen and Huang Yanchen remained calm. They went past Huo Ming shoulder to shoulder and stopped when they were only 30 meters to Qianshui Commandery Prince.

"Greetings, your Majesty!" Zhang Ruochen didn't kneel down. Instead, he just made a bow with his hands.

"Greeting father." Huang Yanchen stood there casually and didn't even bother to bow.

Seeing these three young geniuses, Ten Powerful Ministers all nodded slightly.

Huang Yanchen was the favorite daughter of Qianshui Commandery Prince, at the same time, she had been given birth by the Queen. She was loved by everyone since she was born. She was not afraid of Qianshui Commandery Prince at all.

Even Ten Powerful Ministers had to show some respect to her.

Although Zhang Ruochen was only a warrior in the Medium State of the Black Realm, he was able to stay calm in front of Qianshui Commandery Prince, which was very rare among the young warriors. His bow with his hands already showed his respect to Qianshui Commandery Prince.

Huo Ming, however, was not satisfactory despite the fact that he was a warrior in The Completion of the Black Realm. His performance was much worse than Zhang Ruochen's.

Qianshui Commandery Prince asked seriously, "I need you to explain to me who killed Prince Huo Xing. Huo Ming, since you are Prince Huo Xing's brother, you should be the one who knows the truth, right?"

The voice of Qianshui Commandery Prince cracked like thunder to Huo Ming.

Huo Ming was all sweat. He didn't dare to lie in front of Qianshui Commandery Prince. He answered in a shaken voice, "Your...Your Majesty, I...I heard it from my father that...my brother was indeed killed by Commandery Princess Yanchen. But...But we believe it was justified. It was nobody's fault but his own. Commandery Princess Yanchen was doing the duty on behalf of the Heaven."

Qianshui Commandery Prince smiled and asked, "Then why did Square Commandery Prince invade Yunwu Commandery under the banner of revenging Prince Huo Xing's death?"

"Well...I..."

Under the strong force of Qianshui Commandery Prince, Huo Ming fainted directly in the center of the palace.

Qianshui Commandery Prince shook his head with disappointment. He looked at Zhang Ruochen and said, "Since Prince Huo Xing was killed by Commandery Princess Yanchen, she should be held responsible. I promise that I will give Yunwu Commandery an explanation. But today, you won first place in the Sword Technique Conference, which means you must marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess, and there will be no excuse for that. Do you understand me?"

Huang Yanchen coughed and tipped Zhang Ruochen a wink.

Zhang Ruochen stared at Qianshui Commandery Prince. Dignified and imposing, he replied calmly, "Your Majesty, I..."

Just at that moment, the Thirteenth Commandery Princess walked inside quickly and knelt in front of Qianshui Commandery Prince. She cried, "Father, I don't want to marry Zhang Ruochen! I beg you to withdraw your order! I would rather marry a dog than marry him!"

Hearing this, Zhang Ruochen let out a long sigh of relief.

Of course, Zhang Ruochen also realized something funny. *"What did she mean by marrying a dog than to marry him? What's wrong with him?"*

Hearing this, Qianshui Commandery Prince's countenance fell, and he said, "This is something beyond your control! I have already given you the privilege to choose the suitors. You are the one who allowed Zhang Ruochen to participate in the Sword Technique Conference. Now, he won first place, and you should marry him without any precondition. Do I make you clear?"

This was the first time that the Thirteenth Commandery Princess saw her father being so strict. She was also a little frightened. And therefore she dared not to say another word.

If Qianshui Commandery Prince was really angry, she would also be punished severely despite their relationship.

Since it was so, she had to resign herself to fate.

"Qianshui Commandery Prince is too mighty!" Looking at the kneeling Thirteenth Commandery Princess, Zhang Ruochen thought to himself, *"If I refuse the marriage, I won't even be able to walk out of the Flying Pavilion. Do I really need to use my senior sister apprentice Huang's strategy?"*

Qianshui Commandery Prince was in a bad mood. Without a smile on his face, he asked in a low voice, "Zhang Ruochen, what is your answer?"

Chapter 153: The Excitement of Yunwu Commandery Prince

The atmosphere in the Flying Pavilion was tense as if the air had been frozen.

Zhang Ruochen stepped forward and said, "Commandery Prince, the reason I came here to Qianshui City is not only to ask for reinforcements, but also one more favor."

Qianshui Commandery Prince looked confused and asked, "What's the matter?"

"I hope you will allow me to marry Commandery Princess Yanchen." Zhang Ruochen's voice sounded steady as it passed into everyone's ears in the Pavilion.

Qianshui Commandery Prince was prepared to decapitate him if he refused to marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess.

By disturbing the Sword Technique Conference and embarrassing the Royal Family, there was plenty of valid reason to have him killed.

However, Qianshui Commandery Prince never expected that Zhang Ruochen wanted to marry Commandery Princess Yanchen rather than the Thirteenth Commandery Princess.

Every single person in the Flying Pavilion was shocked including Ten Powerful Ministers who sat on the left and right, not to mention Qianshui Commandery Prince.

Qianshui Commandery Prince's sight shifted towards Huang Yanchen, indicating he was seeking her thoughts on the matter.

Huang Yanchen pursed her lips slightly and said, "Father, both Zhang Ruochen and I are external students of the School of the Martial Market. Our relationship has always been good. We always practice martial technique together and have spent a lot of time together, which has provided the foundations for our affections. We discussed the proposal before he came here. I hope you will approve our marriage, father."

When Huang Yanchen was speaking, she looked shy like a teenage girl.

That's right. She was shy.

Zhang Ruochen didn't believe that Huang Yanchen could be shy and yet, she persuaded Qianshui Commandery Prince and Ten Powerful Ministers to believe her.

The Thirteenth Commandery Princess who was kneeling on the ground was completely shocked. She stared unbelievably at Huang Yanchen standing to the side.

"How could my sister fall in love with him?"

Right Prime Minister stood up and smiled, "Your Majesty, what shall be done?"

What shall be done?

Commandery Prince also wanted to know.

Should he have Zhang Ruochen dragged out and beheaded?

Naturally, he could not do that.

Zhang Ruochen came first in the Sword Technique Conference by mistake. The one he truly loved was Commandery Princess Yanchen.

More importantly, the feeling was mutual between them.

Should he approve the marriage between Zhang Ruochen and Huang Yanchen?

Naturally, he couldn't do that either.

Every one had acknowledged that Zhang Ruochen was the winner of the Sword Technique Conference, and so he should be the Prince Consort of the Thirteenth Commandery Princess. If the Commandery Prince approved Zhang Ruochen to be the Prince Consort of Commandery Princess Yanchen, he would embarrass the entire Royal Family as he would be violating the rules.

While Qianshui Commandery Prince was frustrated about the situation, Huang Yanchen expressed her thought to her father. She looked entreatingly at him and said, "My dear father, I know I've put you in a difficult situation. However, can you bear to watch both of your daughters lose their happiness?"

Qianshui Commandery Prince looked at Commandery Princess Yanchen, who was sad, as well as the Thirteenth Commandery Princess, who was kneeling down on the ground. He was unsure what to do.

At this moment, Minister Ning, who was sitting on the third row on the right, stood up. He laughed and said, "Your Majesty, the cultivation talent of Commandery Princess Yanchen ranks the first among all the princesses. She, at the same time, has deep feelings for Zhang Ruochen. If we approve the marriage, they will be the perfect match and will surely enter the legends."

"Once Your Majesty explains to your people the reason behind their marriage, I'm sure they would understand your decision. If Your Majesty agrees, I can handle this matter for you!"

"So it shall be! Let it not be said I am an unsympathetic prince." Qianshui Commandery Prince stared fiercely at Zhang Ruochen and said, "Zhang Ruochen, can you promise you will be faithful to Commandery Princess Yanchen if she marries you?"

Zhang Ruochen gazed at Huang Yanchen and responded modestly, "I promise I will never betray Yanchen."

"Very good! Remember what you've promised me. If you dare to betray my beloved daughter, I'll never forgive you. Well, in this case, let's have this settled. Minister Ning, please invite Yunwu Commandery Prince to the Pavilion. I need to discuss with him the marriage between Zhang Ruochen and Yanchen. We have to settle on a date and confirm the marriage."

"Yes, your Majesty." Minister Ning responded.

Then, Qianshui Commandery Prince waved his hand and said, "You are now dismissed."

Zhang Ruochen walked out of the Flying Pavilion and stood on the golden purple stairs. He let out a long breath as if he had just escaped from the gates of hell.

At the same time, he noticed that Xun Guihai was waiting outside the Flying Pavilion, wanting to meet Qianshui Commandery Prince.

Why did he want to meet Qianshui Commandery Prince?

Suddenly, Zhang Ruochen remembered the conversation between Xun Guihai and Huang Yanchen one night in Western Campus. He fell into deep thought and finally figured out what Huang Yanchen's purpose was.

"Why are you standing here dreaming? You don't look happy to be marrying such a beautiful princess like me." Huang Yanchen chased after him and stood on his left. She looked coldly and chuckled, "Don't you forget that if I didn't help you, you would already be a dead man. How are you going to make it up to me?"

"Oh, really? Don't you think it's nice to help each other out?" Zhang Ruochen put up a smile on his face and glanced towards Xun Guihai who was standing far away.

When he finished speaking, he walked out of the Royal Palace quickly and returned to the manor.

Huang Yanchen stared at Zhang Ruochen's retreating figure and her royal blue eyes narrowed. She muttered to herself, "Perhaps he has already figured it out?"

In fact, there was another reason for Huang Yanchen to return to Qianshui City, which was to prevent Xun Guihai proposing a marriage to Qianshui Commandery Prince.

She didn't want to marry Xun Guihai.

Therefore, it was a two-bird-one-stone situation that by marrying Zhang Ruochen, she helped herself as well as Zhang Ruochen.

Once Qianshui Commandery Prince approved her marriage with Zhang Ruochen, Xun Guihai would have no chance to interfere.

As for Zhang Ruochen, neither he nor Huang Yanchen wanted to marry each other. What they had to do was to find an excuse to end the engagement in the future.

The only thing that bothered Huang Yanchen was how Zhang Ruochen figured out Xun Guihai was going to propose.

Since she couldn't figure out how he did it, she stopped thinking about it. Anyhow, Qianshui Commandery Prince had approved their marriage and thus Xun Guihai would have no chance.

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Yunwu Commandery Prince was worried. He paced back and forth waiting at the manor.

The Sword Technique Conference had gathered all the top prodigies from different commanderies, where every single one of the participants was an outstanding warrior. Although Zhang Ruochen was highly talented, winning the Conference was a mission that was as hard as climbing up to the sky.

If he couldn't win the Sword Technique Conference, he couldn't marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess which would result in Yunwu Commandery having no way to defend themselves from Square Commandery's attack.

Only one day had passed, yet a few white hairs had appeared at Yunwu Commandery Prince's temples.

Yunwu Commandery Prince stopped walking around suddenly. He let out a long sigh and looked determined. He exclaimed, "If Ruochen didn't win, I'll have to fight with Square Commandery with all my might even at the risk of having my commandery be annihilated."

At the same time, Xue Kai, the royal guard of Yunwu Commandery Prince, rushed from the outside and said, "Your Majesty, Minister Ning is here and wants to see you."

"What? Quickly invite Minister Ning to come in! Wait, no. I'll welcome Minister in person!"

Minister Ning was one of Ten Powerful Ministers in Qianshui Commandery as well as the leader of the Ning family. Why did he come to visit Yunwu Commandery Prince?

He grew ever more anxious and hurried to the front of his garden. He walked quickly towards the door and saw that Minister Ning's carriage had stopped outside the manor.

Minister Ning's carriage was luxurious. It was nine-meter tall and looked like a mini palace. The shafts and the wall of the carriage were embedded with Spiritual Crystals which formed strands of the white mist of Spiritual Qi.

The Lion-Kylin beast, a fourth-class savage beast pulled the carriage for Minister Ning. Its body looked very similar to that of a Kylin. The feathers on its body glittered like a jade flame. Its eyes were as large as basins and were inscribed with 18 lines of red inscriptions. It looked as if there were 18 strands of fire burning in its eyes.

"Greetings, Minister." Yunwu Commandery Prince walked underneath the Lion-Kylin beast and bowed towards Minister Ning.

Two beautiful maids opened the curtain and revealed Minister Ning who was sitting in the carriage.

Minister Ning smiled at Yunwu Commandery Prince and said, "Yunwu Commandery Prince, I have good news for you!"

"What kind of good news?" Yunwu Commandery Prince could have a vague idea... perhaps Zhang Ruochen had...

Thinking about the possibility, Yunwu Commandery Prince became slightly excited.

Minister Ning waved towards Yunwu Commandery Prince and said, "Come on, His Majesty is expecting you and has things to discuss with you now!"

Yunwu Commandery Prince was extremely surprised that he could finally meet Qianshui Commandery Prince.

He quickly got into the carriage and sat opposite Minister Ning. He asked again, "Minister, what is going on?"

Minister Ning revealed a joyful smile on his aged face and said, "You have an amazing son. Did you know Zhang Ruochen won first place in the Sword Technique Conference? He has impressed the prince, and the prince has approved to arrange a marriage for him."

Yunwu Commandery Prince was overwhelmed and asked, "Commandery Prince has agreed for my son to marry the Thirteenth Commandery Princess?"

Minister Ning shook his head and responded, "Not the Thirteenth Commandery Princess but Commandery Princess Yanchen. Not only is Commandery Princess Yanchen the favorite daughter of the Prince, but has also obtained the highest cultivation talent among the 37 princesses and has reached the Completion of the Black Realm. Most importantly, her biological mother is the Queen. You should have heard of the Queen's superior background before."

Of course, Yunwu Commandery Prince knew the privileged history of the Queen. He was thrilled but at the same time worried and said, "Commandery Princess Yanchen is such an outstanding figure, will she agree to marry my son?"

"Haha!" Minister Ning couldn't help but laugh out loud. He replied, "This marriage was proposed by Commandery Princess Yanchen herself. The Ninth Prince has already received approval from the Prince. Yunwu Commandery Prince, such a marriage is no doubt the best thing to happen so far for Yunwu Commandery. Maybe I will have to ask for your help in the future."

The Lion-Kylin beast pulled the carriage and rushed into the Palace.

Chapter 154: Homeward Journey

Zhang Ruochen left the palace before Minister Ning and yet he bumped into Tuoba Linsu.

Tuoba Linsu gave him a seventh-class Genuine Martial Arms, a combat sword, and invited him to the most luxurious restaurant in Qianshui City for a drink.

After several drinks with Tuoba Linsu, it was almost dusk. When Zhang Ruochen returned to the manor, Minister Ning had already accompanied Yunwu Commandery Prince back to the palace.

Although Zhang Ruochen had had a few drinks, he was still completely sober. "Clash!" He took out the combat sword gifted by Tuoba Linsu and pulled out the sword scabbard.

"WAAA!"

A strand of glaring white light shone from the sword.

He vaguely heard the distant voice of a dragon roaring.

"Snow Dragon Sword!" Zhang Ruochen looked at the three words carved on the hilt and read it out.

It was over a meter long and two fingers wide. The hilt looked like a dragon head while the sword tip looked like a dragon tale.

There were 40 inscriptions carved on the sword. 30 of them were the Inscription of Ice Series and 10 were the Inscription of Light Series.

Tuoba Linsu was certainly generous to give out a seventh-class Genuine Martial Arms combat sword. What a precious gift!

Zhang Ruochen activated his Genuine Qi and transferred it into the sword. At the same time, he also urged the 17 strands of the Inscription of Ice Series carved on the Snow Dragon Sword to activate.

He could only activate 17 strands of inscriptions at most with his current cultivation. If he pushed himself to activate more inscriptions but couldn't handle the powerful force, the power of the inscriptions might get him hurt.

“Sacred Guiding Sword!”

“Sacred Bell Sword!”

“Sacred Plenilune Sword!”

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When he wielded the sword under the moon, sharp icing air emanated from the blade and condensed pieces of snowflakes in the air. They drifted down to the ground with the wind.

After an hour of practice, the Genuine Qi in Zhang Ruochen's body had been greatly consumed. Pain started throbbing in his chest wound so he stopped practicing.

“When senior sister apprentice Duanmu displayed the sword technique, she could condense snowflakes within a 100-foot radius. Although I can manifest snowflakes, there's still a long way to go for me to catch up with her.” Zhang Ruochen shook his head slightly and realized the weaknesses of his martial cultivation, he wasn't happy with his performance.

“If I can break through to the Final State of the Black Realm, perhaps I will be able to condense snowflakes within a 100-foot radius.”

Zhang Ruochen put his hand tightly over the wound on his chest. He took a healing pill and entered the Time and Space Spinel for recovery.

He spent the entire day and night healing inside the Time and Space Spinel. Together with the help of the pill, he finally recovered from his injury.

When he came out from the spinel, it was already the next morning.

When he was fully recovered, he continued practicing the Sacred Sky-piercing Sword, the seventh movement of the Sacred Sword Skill.

He remained calm and peaceful and gave full effort to practicing the sword technique. As for his marriage with Huang Yanchen, Yunwu Commandery Prince would arrange it for him.

Since Zhang Ruochen had reached the peak of the Sword Following the Heart, his speed of practicing sword techniques was relatively fast. He had already finished practicing the remaining six movements of the Sacred Sword Skill within a month.

If Zhang Ruochen successfully practiced all 12 movements of the Sacred Sword Skill and blended them all together, he could master all the movements and reach the Realm of Succeed.

After he had practiced the Sacred Sword Skill, his sword technique power seemed to have improved to a certain extent. The coherence between sword movements looked relatively smooth.

That was the result of the Succeed. Going forward, the next level was called the Perfection of Martial Arts.

It was fairly easy to practice the sword technique to the Succeed level. Yet, it was relatively hard to elevate to the Perfection of Martial Arts. The only way to level up the sword technique was through countless application and practice in the future.

During this month, not only did Zhang Ruochen practice the sword technique, but he also refined 10 drops of Half-Saint's Essence. With the aid of pills, the Genuine Qi had filled up 70% of the capacity of his Qi Lake. Hence, he was only one step away from reaching the peak of the Medium State of the Black Realm.

News of the marriage between Zhang Ruochen and Huang Yanchen had spread out, and it caused a massive shock to Qianshui City. There were numerous people who came to congratulate the Prince including both members of Ten Powerful Ministers and the Commandery Princes from other commanderies.

Undoubtedly, Zhang Ruochen didn't care too much about it and paid attention to mastering his sword technique. Yunwu Commandery Prince would take care of the royals and nobilities in Qianshui Commandery.

Unexpectedly, Square Commandery Prince had visited Yunwu Commandery Prince in person yesterday. He brought with him a large number of valuable treasures and apologized for attacking Yunwu Commandery.

He promised that after returning home, he would withdraw the soldiers stationed at the border of Yunwu Commandery and that he would return and free the Yunwu Commandery cities, property, and people that they had conquered and robbed.

However, Yunwu Commandery Prince neither said a word nor accepted the treasures from Square Commandery Prince. Instead, he sent him out of the palace bluntly.

It should be noted that since Yunwu Commandery and Qianshui Commandery were united by marriage and the one Zhang Ruochen was going to marry was the Commandery Princess Yanchen, Yunwu Commandery Prince held the bargaining power. He would surely not be easy on Square Commandery Prince.

It was time for Square Commandery Prince to feel fear!

Square Commandery Prince headed back to his palace with frustration. He visited Yunwu Commandery Prince the next day, offering more treasures and promises.

Finally, Yunwu Commandery Prince agreed to talk peacefully with Square Commandery Prince. They closed the door and started discussing a concrete compensation agreement.

Zhang Ruochen didn't know how many cities Square Commandery Prince would compensate for Yunwu Commandery. Yet, he noticed that when Square Commandery Prince left, he looked awful.

Unexpectedly, Yunwu Commandery Prince let out a loud laugh from his room and said, "My dear ninth son, let's head back to our commandery today!"

"Oh! Okay!"

Zhang Ruochen put his sword in its sheath, ready to return to the School of the Martial Market. He didn't want to stay in Qianshui City any longer.

There were 20 more days until the Intermediate Relic Exploration Test. Zhang Ruochen wanted to return to the School as soon as possible and continue practicing without any disturbance. He was striving hard to break through to the Final State of the Black Realm before the exploration test.

"If I reach the Final State of the Black Realm, I can go challenge the 'Profound Board'. I wonder where my ranking stands."

It was no doubt that he had to pay a visit back to Yunwu Commandery before returning to the School of the Martial Market.

He was worried about his mother. It would be ideal if he could take his mother back to the School with him. However, it all depended on whether his mother wanted to leave the palace and go with him.

When Yunwu Commandery Prince went to Qianshui City, he had brought with him 20 boxes of treasures. Surprisingly, he returned to Yunwu Commandery with 50 boxes of valuable treasures. Most of them were the compensation reward from Square Commandery while some of them had been given by other visitors.

He had gained much more than he had expected during his journey to Qianshui City and thus he felt wonderful.

Most importantly, the greatest gain was the arranged marriage with Qianshui Commandery.

With Qianshui Commandery backing them up, Yunwu Commandery Prince was confident that his commandery would soon develop to become a medium level commandery.

20 guards clad in armor lifted the heavy boxes of treasures repeatedly onto the Golden Feather Eagle's back.

Zhang Ruochen carried the Snow Dragon Sword and stood next to the Golden Feather Eagle. He looked tiny compared to the claws of the eagle.

The voice of Huang Yanchen came from behind. She asked, "Zhang Ruochen, I'm heading back to the School of the Martial Market. Can you give me a ride?"

Before Zhang Ruochen could even say anything, Yunwu Commandery Prince had already walked up to Huang Yanchen. He smiled and responded, "Of course. It's our pleasure to have the princess come along with us."

Huang Yanchen looked at Yunwu Commandery Prince and nodded with satisfaction. Then, she displayed Shadow of the Royal Wind Dragon. She thrust up to the sky and descended onto the back of the Golden Feather Eagle steadily.

Zhang Ruochen and Huang Yanchen had become engaged half a month ago. The wedding would be held in three years.

In other words, Huang Yanchen was Zhang Ruochen's fiancée, and their relationship had turned fascinating.

Two days later, Yunwu Commandery Prince, Zhang Ruochen, and Huang Yanchen returned to Yunwu Commandery.

News of the marriage between these two had spread all over Yunwu Commandery, therefore, when they arrived back to the Royal Palace, a grand welcoming ceremony had been arranged.

Everyone had been drowned in the joyous atmosphere especially Concubine Lin, Zhang Ruochen's mother. When she saw Huang Yanchen, she liked her very much.

What surprised Zhang Ruochen was that Huang Yanchen had turned sweet and gentle. She held Concubine Lin's hand tightly and displayed a filial affection.

He could only shake his head and gasp. He couldn't believe how good she could act.

The only person that Zhang Ruochen didn't see during the welcoming ceremony was the Queen.

In fact, this was under his expectation as the Queen wouldn't be pleased by the fact that he had arranged a marriage with the princess of Qianshui Commandery.

Zhang Ruochen recognized that Blackie was standing behind Concubine Lin. He grabbed Blackie in his hand and asked sincerely, "Blackie, while I was away, did anyone attempt to kill my mother?"

When Zhang Ruochen and Yunwu Commandery Prince left for Qianshui Commandery, he had asked Blackie to stay in the palace and protect Concubine Lin from the Queen.

Blackie shook his chubby head and said, "No! Zhang Ruochen, you're over-reacting and hence you're so worried. You have to understand that YOU are the threat in the Queen's eyes, not your mother. As for your mother, she's just a Concubine, not a threat to her. If she kills your mother, she won't benefit from it, yet she would irritate Yunwu Commandery Prince. This cunning woman will never do such stupid thing."

Zhang Ruochen looked frustrated. He nodded and said, "You've got a point. As long as Yunwu Commandery Prince is still alive, she won't dare go near my mother."

"You're just too closely involved and over-worried about your mother, and thus can't see as clearly as the people outside the circle."

Blackie added, "Don't worry! Since you're engaged to the princess of Qianshui Commandery, Yunwu Commandery Prince will only pay more attention to you and treat your mother even better. What you need to do now is to elevate your martial cultivation and become an internal student of the School of the Martial Market. By that time, the assassins will have to reconsider whether they can bear the anger of Martial Market Bank before killing you."

Zhang Ruochen responded, "I'll return to the School of the Martial Market tomorrow and focus on my cultivation in preparation for the Intermediate Relic Exploration Test."

Then, Blackie took out a green wooden box. He let out a mysterious laugh and said, "Here you go. This is a pill I refined according to the Middle Ages formula. Perhaps it can help with your cultivation."

"This is a pill you refined?"

Zhang Ruochen furrowed his eyebrows and stared at the green wooden box. He looked puzzled.

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Chapter 155: The Icy Meridians Pill

When Zhang Ruochen took the green wooden box, he felt a hint of cold on its surface.

The chill came from the pill inside the box, rather than the box itself.

While Zhang Ruochen was opening the green wooden box, the pill emitted a rich fragrance. Strands of white Pill Spirit burst out from the box like baby snakes.

He looked surprised when he saw the eight pills in the box. He exclaimed. "Icing Meridians Pills!"

"Do you recognize this type of pill?" Blackie was shocked.

Zhang Ruochen responded, "This kind of pill was very popular back in the Middle Ancient Times, but it had been monopolized by different powerful parties. No ordinary person could buy it in the market. I can't believe you can refine such a valuable pill!"

During the Middle Ancient Times, a lot of warriors refined their Meridians by taking Pills. It could enhance the tenacity of their Meridians, increase the activating speed of their Genuine Qi, and generate certain properties.

The Icing Meridians Pill, Fire Meridian Pill, Electric Meridians Pill, Wind Meridian Pill... All these pills were discovered and studied at that period of time and became widely popular among the warriors.

Taking the Icing Meridians Pill not only refined the Meridians but also generated the icy properties inside the Meridians. Once the warriors activated Genuine Qi, their bodies would turn into a frost conduit. They were able to freeze a river or mountain with just one palm.

On the other hand, the Fire Meridian Pill brought on the fire nature in the Meridians. When the warriors opened their mouths, they could spit out a blaze. When they lifted up their arms, they could use Genuine Qi to form a fireball. Some of the mature warriors could even use Genuine Qi to create a pair of fiery wings to fly in the sky.

If Zhang Ruochen became the internal student of the School of the Martial Market, he could exchange merits for the Icing Meridians Pill. However, he was still an external student at the moment, so he was not entitled to exchange many things, even if he had earned enough merits.

Since Blackie had refined the Icing Meridians Pill, it meant a lot to Zhang Ruochen's cultivation.

"The Icing Meridians Pill is suitable for the warriors with a frosty physique, but my Genuine Qi has a faint power of thunderbolt and a power of Time and Space. If you can refine the Electric Meridians Pill, it would be even better." Zhang Ruochen closed the green wooden box and put it away.

Even though the Icing Meridians Pill was not as useful as the Electric Meridians Pill, it would still help Zhang Ruochen very much.

"The Electric Meridians Pill? Sure, why not?"

Blackie fell into deep thought as if he was recalling the formula of making the Electric Meridians Pill.

Zhang Ruochen was in no hurry to refine an Icing Meridians Pill. Anyhow, he had to leave for the School of the Martial Market the next day, and he wanted to spend some quality time with his mother, Concubine Lin, tonight.

He went to Jade Palace, where Concubine Lin lived.

"Mother, why don't you move to the School of the Martial Market with me? I'm worried about leaving you in the palace alone!" Zhang Ruochen expressed his concerns.

Concubine Lin clenched her jaw and stared at Zhang Ruochen, who had grown taller. She shook her head and said, "Chen-er, don't worry about me! I'm just an ordinary person in the palace. I cannot deny the fact that the Queen hates me, yet she wouldn't dare to threaten me. I've been living here for almost 20 years, I don't want to leave..."

Zhang Ruochen gasped slightly and asked, "Are you reluctant to leave the king?"

"He is your father!" Concubine Lin said.

Zhang Ruochen had to accept the fact that there was love between Concubine Lin and Yunwu Commandery Prince. If he took her to live at the School of the Martial Market, what would other people think about the Prince?

Zhang Ruochen was silent for a while. Then, he said, "Okay! I respect your choice, Mother."

Afterwards, Zhang Ruochen took out three jade bottles and a bag full of silver coins and Spiritual Crystals. He handed them over to Concubine Lin and said, "Mother, there are 300 Blood Pills inside these three jade bottles. All of them are First-Class Blood Pills that you can completely digest. It's probably impossible for you to develop as a warrior. But if you keep taking the Blood Pill, your physical quality will be stronger than ordinary people."

"Also, there are 500 silver coins and 20 Spiritual Crystals in the bag."

He could have left Concubine Lin more silver coins and pills. However, it might not be a good thing to leave too many silver coins and pills for her.

Huang Yanchen, who had been standing to the side walked up to Concubine Lin. She took off the phoenix-shaped jade necklace she was wearing, gave it to Concubine Lin, and said softly, "Aunt Lin, this is a Fire Cloud Jade which contains three defensive charms. If you are attacked, it can protect you three times. Moreover, if you wear it all the time, it can enhance your body as well as bring you peace of mind."

If such valuable gift had been given by any other person, Concubine Lin would not have taken it. But since her son's fiancée was giving it to her, she accepted it happily.

After leaving Jade Palace, Zhang Ruochen suddenly stopped. He stared at Huang Yanchen and asked, "Senior sister apprentice, what are you doing?"

Huang Yanchen stood nearby and resumed her haughty attitude. She lifted her snow-white chin and said, "It's just a piece of jade. Why are you so fussy about it? Zhang Ruochen, there's one thing I need to clarify. I got engaged to you because I didn't have any other choice. When we go back to the School of the Martial Market, you are not allowed to tell anyone about our engagement. If I find out that there's a third person who knows about it, I'll kill you!"

Zhang Ruochen responded, "Too late! The news about our engagement has already spread all over. I'm sure the news has also scattered around the School of the Martial Market."

Huang Yanchen said, "Even if it has spread around the School, you have to deny it. Other than that, we are only engaged. There are still three more years to go before we get married. You should have known that we can't really get married. We will both have to cancel our marriage in three years. What do you think?"

"No comment!" Zhang Ruochen replied.

Seeing how straightforward Zhang Ruochen was, Huang Yanchen was not pleased, but angry. She mumbled, "I hope you don't regret what you've said today three years from now."

The next day, Zhang Ruochen, Huang Yanchen, and Zhang Shaochu made their way back to the School of the Martial Market.

Zhang Shaochu was anxious on the way back to the School. He followed behind them and did not dare to walk in front of Huang Yanchen.

Even though Zhang Shaochu had stayed in the School of the Martial Market for a year or so, the name, "Huang Yanchen," still hit his ears like a thunderclap. Every single one of the male students who heard her name was scared to death.

The title, "Three Devil Woman," was no joke.

Yet, Huang Yanchen turned out to be his ninth brother's fiancée. Zhang Shaochu feelings were complicated. He was happy but scared at the same time.

He was elated that no one dared to bully him in Western Campus anymore.

But his fear was that his ninth brother might not be able to handle Huang Yanchen, a truly formidable woman.

When they arrived at Western Campus, it had already been 3 days. There were only two weeks left before the Intermediate Relic Exploration Test.

Back to Western Campus, Zhang Ruochen went to visit Duanmu Xingling. When he reached the Black No.1, she was not there. He noticed that the table had a thin layer of dust as if she had been away for awhile.

Zhang Ruochen did not think too much about it. He was sure she would return before the Intermediate Relic Exploration Test.

Then, he went back to the Yellow No.1 and entered the internal space of the Time and Space Spinel. He took out the Icing Meridians Pill from its green wooden box.

The box held eight Icing Meridians Pills. Each of them was a fourth-class pill, which emitted a piercing blast of cold air.

When Zhang Ruochen's fingertip brushed the Icing Meridians Pill, his finger froze. A thin layer of Ice Crystals fully covered his hand.

"It is indeed a fourth-class pill. How terrific!"

If Zhang Ruochen's cultivation was only to the Yellow Realm, the chill from the Icing Meridians Pill might have frozen half of his body.

He activated his Genuine Qi where it followed the Meridians into his five fingers.

"Crack!" The frost on his hand shattered.

Under a cloak of Genuine Qi, Zhang Ruochen took one of the Icing Meridians Pills and swallowed it.

An extremely cold Pill Spirit dissolved in his stomach. All of a sudden, he had a stabbing pain in his stomach, as if the Pill Spirit had frozen his five internal organs.

The chill was intense. It was 10 times colder than the first time Zhang Ruochen took the Half-Saint's Essence.

If other warriors at the Medium State of the Black Realm took the Icing Meridians Pill, they were seeking a certain death. The icy explosion of the Pill Spirit would freeze them to death instantaneously.

Although Zhang Ruochen was also one of the warriors at the Medium State of the Black Realm, his physical quality was far better than the warriors in the same realm. Moreover, when he was cultivating in the Yellow Realm, he had reached the Ultimate Realm and drawn Chord of Gods.

Drawing Chord of Gods had transformed Zhang Ruochen's Meridians and Qi Lake. Therefore, he could handle the Icing Meridians Pill.

"PHEW!"

Zhang Ruochen activated all 36 Meridians and refined the Pill Spirit of the Icing Meridians Pill as fast as he could.

10 days later, he had completely refined the Pill Spirit. His body temperature eventually returned to normal, but his muscles and Meridians were still stiff.

He opened his eyes and let out a foggy breath.

“My body feels so heavy that I can’t lift a finger!” Zhang Ruochen looked like a dead man frozen for thousands of years who had recently been awoken. Pins and needles tingled all over his body, which felt exceptionally heavy. Every movement was painful.

He struggled to stand up for a while and started practicing his palm technique.

By practicing the palm technique, he transferred the frost into his bones and Meridians in order to enhance his physical abilities.

If another warrior attacked him with an ice martial technique, he would be able to resist easily.

Zhang Ruochen released Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm again and again. He felt that his palm attacks were not only gaining power, they were also becoming faster.

The speed of Genuine Qi flowing through his Meridians had increased 30%.

The faster the Genuine Qi circulated, the stronger it exploded.

Zhang Ruochen spent another five days practicing palm techniques in the internal space of the Time and Space Spinel. He did not stop until the Genuine Qi in his body had been completely consumed. When he stopped, he took some pills to recover his Genuine Qi.

In these five days, Zhang Ruochen had refined the remaining Pill Spirit of the Icing Meridians Pill into his body. He had elevated his Martial Arts Realm to the Peak of the Medium State of the Black Realm.

The Genuine Qi of his Qi Lake was perfectly filled up. He was ready to break through to the Final State of the Black Realm at any time.

Zhang Ruochen spent 15 days practicing in the Time and Space Spinel, which was only five days in real life. He still had enough time to break through to other realms.

“Zhang Ruochen, Duanmu Xingling is here at the Yellow No.1. I’ve told her that you’re in seclusion for refining. Do you want to meet her?” The voice of Blackie called out in the internal space of the Time and Space Spinel.

“Senior sister apprentice Duanmu is back? Maybe she has brought with her some sort of good news. Of course, I have to see her!” Knowing that Duanmu Xingling was back made Zhang Ruochen joyful, because he had a crush on her.

Suddenly, he thought of something.

Although he had spent some time with senior sister apprentice Duanmu since he entered Western Campus, he had never asked which commandery she came from.

Other than knowing that she was one of the external students of the School of the Martial Market, he knew nothing about her.

Chapter 156: The Chikong Secret Mansion

Duanmu Xingling looked as if she were 14 or 15. She had a slender figure with full breasts, a tiny waist, and exquisite features. Her large glittering eyes were framed by thick, upturned lashes. She seemed forever paused at a youthful age.

She held her hands behind her back, and her red lips turned upwards in a slight smile. She looked at him charmingly and said, "It's only been a month since I last saw you. How come I can sense a coldness in you?"

Duanmu Xingling possessed an icing cold physical quality that she was very sensitive to.

Although Zhang Ruochen had refined the Icing Meridians Pill, he had not yet completely absorbed the icing cold Qi into his Genuine Qi, and so Duanmu Xingling was able to sense it.

Zhang Ruochen did not answer. Instead, he looked at her closely and said, "Senior sister apprentice Duanmu, seems like you've made some improvements in your cultivation during the period when you left the School of the Martial Market."

"You are very observant!"

Duanmu Xingling rolled her eyes and laughed, "My cultivation exercises have broken through to a new level and have reached a more mysterious realm. My cultivation has indeed improved a lot. Given my current abilities, even though I'm incomparable to Sister Chen in speed, I won't lose to her in battling power."

Suddenly, Duanmu Xingling's eyes brightened. She stared at Zhang Ruochen and teased. "I heard that you've recently been to Qianshui Commandery, that you defeated numerous talented swordsmen, and became the first at the Sword Technique Conference. I also heard that you are now engaged to Qianshui Commandery's beautiful Commandery Princess Yanchen?"

Zhang Ruochen smiled slightly and did not hide the truth from her. He related to her the entire incident.

Hearing the end of Zhang Ruochen's story, Duanmu Xingling nodded lightly. "Ah, it sounds like you didn't have much choice either. As long as you become an internal disciple of the School, even Qianshui Commandery Prince would not kill you without great consideration beforehand. Besides, Yanchen is considered a great beauty. If you could marry her, that is no loss at all."

"Now, all the students at the School know about this, many of them admire you. Of course, most of them are jealous of you and are planning to kill you."

Zhang Ruochen appeared nonplussed. "Who wants to kill me?"

"Xun Guihai."

Duanmu Xingling smiled widely and said, "Xun Guihai has already said that if you dare to participate in the Intermediate Relic Exploration exam, he will definitely kill you. Xun Guihai has already prepared a gift to ask Qianshui Commandery Prince for marrying Princess Yanchen. Yet, you were one step ahead. Do you know he's almost mad with rage?"

Zhang Ruochen replied, "I expected Xun Guihai to hate me. After all, senior sister apprentice Huang purposely used me as an excuse for the marriage. Given my situation at the time, I had no choice but to follow through."

Duanmu Xingling's face became serious. She said, "Xun Guihai ranks the 14th on the Profound Board. He is much stronger than you think so never underestimate him."

"It's said that he once killed a Chief of the Moon Worship Demonic Sect who was at the Mid Stage of the Earth Realm. It was that battle that fame him and made him a famous figure in the external school. Given his abilities, he would only need one move if he wanted to kill you."

"There is always a solution to a problem. I can't refuse to join the Intermediate Relic Exploration exam just because of what he said," Zhang Ruochen said.

Zhang Ruochen thought for a while and continued, "Senior sister apprentice Duanmu, you've prepared for the Intermediate Relic Exploration exam for a long time. You know more about it than I. Can you tell me what I need to prepare before going in?"

Duanmu Xingling blinked her eyes and stepped closer to Zhang Ruochen. "Hasn't Sister Chen told you already?"

Zhang Ruochen said, "Senior sister apprentice and I are engaged nominally. But in fact, we are not as close as other people think. At least for me, I think I am closer to you than her."

It was clear that Zhang Ruochen's words just now were effective. After hearing them, Duanmu Xingling smiled happily and said, "What a smooth talker you are! I thought you had forgotten about me after having a fiancée. Well. I'll tell you from the beginning. First, you need to understand the history of the relics."

"Kunlun's Field has hundreds of millions of years of history. At first, there was the Wasteland Age, then there was a Great Age, the Distant Age, the Mid Age, and the New Age. Through the endless flow of time, countless great heroes have been fostered, great and bloody battles have been fought, and great miracles have been splendor.

"In the history of Kunlun's Field, who knows how many Half-Saints and Saints have been born, but now, they are all gone, and left only the relics and the places they once lived.

"The Martial Market Bank has an intelligence network across the entire Kunlun's Field. They have recorded all the relics of Half-Saints and Saints in history in 'The Shrine'.

"Depending on how dangerous the relic reflects and the opportunity of finding treasure, the relics have been divided into a few categories.

"Given the cultivation of external students of the school, even experience at the Elementary Ruin could be life-threatening. So, the School of the Martial Market only allows the top ten students of the four campuses to enter into the Intermediate Relic Exploration. It is only the exploration they are allowed to take, not experience. Do I make myself clear?"

Zhang Ruochen asked, "What is the difference between exploration and experience?"

Duanmu Xingling smiled. "Exploration means we only need to take a look at the middle-level heritage and search for treasure. If we run into something we can't defeat, we can run. But, if it was an experience, we have to complete the task assigned by the school. It would be more dangerous. Usually, only the masters of the internal school will voluntarily go to the middle-level heritage and experience."

Duanmu Xingling added, "In the entire region of the 36 commanderies of Omen Ridge, there are only two middle-level heritages. One of which is in the depths of Omen Ridge called 'Chikong Secret Mansion'. Rumor has it that the Mansion is deep in the earth and once was the holy residence of the Four-winged Earth Dragon, the Lord of Omen Ridge."

"The cultivation of the Four-winged Earth Dragon surpasses that of the human Saints. While it was alive, it was unbelievably savage. It claimed a territory of 50,000 kilometers in surrounding area. Every time it ate, it had to eat the entire city of humans.

"Even a superior class commandery like Qianshui Commandery offered tributes each year to the Dragon like Spiritual Crystals, silver coins, Pills, and blood. Each year, Qianshui Commandery would send millions of slaves to Omen Ridge to feed the Dragon. If they didn't send any, more people from Qianshui Commandery would die.

"500 years ago, the arrogant Four-winged Earth Dragon irritated the newly enthroned Empress Chi Yao. Empress Chi Yao demanded the army of the First Central Empire to surround Omen Ridge and kill the Dragon.

"In order to kill the Dragon and other strong savage beasts inside Omen Ridge, there was a world-shaking battle provoked at Chikong Secret Mansion by the First Central Empire.

"In that battle, the human clan lost two Half-Saints, and yet seven beasts of Half-Saint Class had been killed. Even the Four-winged Earth Dragon died inside the Mansion. After all beasts above the Half-Saint Class were killed, the area once filled with death became far more peaceful.

"Afterwards, the School of the Martial Market moved into Omen Ridge and assisted the First Central Empire in compressing the savage beasts. At the same time, those who lived at the edges of Omen Ridge began to take over the territory the beasts once held. After hundreds of years of development, they became countries. Your ancestor, the founder of Yunwu Commandery rose up at this time where it has been created."

Zhang Ruochen said, "Which means that the territory of the 36 commanderies in Omen Ridge was a wasteland 500 years ago and was ruled over by savage beasts and the Four-wing Earth Dragon. After 500 years of development, the humans have turned this wasteland and villages into the 36 commanderies surrounding Omen Ridge."

Duanmu Xingling nodded and smiled. "If we combined the territories of the 36 commanderies, it is only one-fifth of the territory of Omen Ridge." "Afterwards, the Martial Market School moved into Omen Ridge and assisted the First Central Empire in compressing the savage beasts. At the same time, those human who lived at the edges of Omen Ridge began to take over the territory the beasts once held. After hundreds of years of development, they became countries. Your ancestor, the founder of the Yunwu Commandery rose up at this time where it has been created."

Zhang Ruochen asked, "Other than Chikong Secret Mansion, where is the other middle-level heritage?"

Duanmu Xingling replied, "The other one is at the bottom of the Tongming River. I've heard that the Four-winged Earth Dragon built a Dragon Palace on the bottom of the river. As the Dragon set up a defense system around the boundary of the Palace, only warriors below the Heaven Realm can enter the Palace. If you want to force your way through the protections, the Dragon Palace will be destroyed.

"In hundreds of years, many warriors have gone to investigate. Unfortunately, ten have gone in and only two or three of them made it out. The danger of the Underwater Dragon Palace is far above that of the Chikong Secret Mansion."

Chapter 157: The Painter

Duanmu Xingling continued, "Warriors who enter Underwater Dragon Palace will receive great benefits. However, due to the high degree of danger, very few warriors dare to go and train there."

Zhang Ruochen said, "Senior sister apprentice Duanmu, do you think we will go to Chikong Secret Mansion or Underwater Dragon Palace for our exploration this time?"

"It should be Chikong Secret Mansion.

"Given our current Realms, Underwater Dragon Palace is too dangerous. We would probably all die inside. The School of the Martial Market only wants to train us, not send us to die."

Duanmu Xingling continued, "Of course, the Mansion is still dangerous enough that we will need to prepare a lot beforehand."

"The Mansion is deep within the earth, close to the magma layer. Therefore, it is intensely hot and dry. We will need to gather sufficient water and heat-resistant treasures with Ice nature. Of course, we have Space Treasures and we can carry large amounts of water, so we won't need to worry about that. For the other warriors, water will be a major issue when entering the Mansion. So we have an advantage there!"

Duanmu Xingling said, "We must be careful of three things. First, there are many strange and ancient underground savage beasts among the Mansion."

"Second, other warriors."

Zhang Ruochen asked, "Are you referring to the external students of the Eastern, Southern, and Northern campuses?"

Duanmu Xingling replied, "They are only part of the problem. Can you be certain that none of the 10 students from Western Campus don't want to kill you? If you were to discover a treasure inside the Mansion, perhaps those who you thought were friends would stab you in the back and betray you."

Zhang Ruochen asked, "What is the third point?"

"The Exiles!" Duanmu Xingling replied.

Zhang Ruochen was confused, so he asked, "What are the Exiles?"

Duanmu Xingling smiled. "Over 500 years, countless heretics, killers, bandits, heresy masters, and other evildoers have been imprisoned in a special area of Chikong Secret Mansion within the 36 commanderies. They were tortured and made to suffer a great deal. Many of them have starved to death. Those who managed to survive are truly the most evil of all. If we enter Chikong Secret Mansion, we might run into some of the Exiles who have been locked away."

Zhang Ruochen asked, "Since they've been shut away in a special area, as long as we avoid those areas, we will be alright, won't we?"

Duanmu Xingling shook her head and responded, "Many of the Exiles are from either the Black Market or the Moon Worship Demonic Sect. Do you think there is no spy of those places within the external students of the School of the Martial Market? Don't you think they will use this opportunity to unseal the special zone and release the Exiles?"

Zhang Ruochen said, "I understand! The School of the Martial Market is also testing us through this exploration to see if we are spies of the Black Market or the Moon Worship Demonic Sect. After all, the top 10 students of the four campuses are all highly talented. They are likely to move into the higher levels of the Martial Market Bank."

"It would not be beneficial for the Martial Market Bank if there were agents of the Black Market or the Moon Worship Demonic Sect in the higher levels."

Duanmu Xingling said, "So, before we enter the Intermediate Relic Field, we must be well-prepared for every circumstance. Although Chikong Secret Mansion is dangerous, it is also filled with opportunities. We might get more out of the three months of exploration in Mansion than 10 years of practicing out here. Everything depends on how we make use of our opportunity!"

"I've told you everything you need to know. Now I'm going to seclude myself for practice and attempt to improve my cultivation a bit more."

Duanmu Xingling stood up and turned to walk away. Suddenly, she stopped again. She smiled and said, "Zhang Ruochen, Sister Chen is now your fiancée. If you give her a Space Treasure, she will be safer when she enters the middle-level heritage."

Then, Duanmu Xingling gave a tinkling laugh and left Yellow No.1.

If Huang Yanchen's temper was not so terrible, Zhang Ruochen would have given her a Space Treasure a long time ago. He didn't need Duanmu Xingling to remind him.

Zhang Ruochen thought for a while. Then, he left his room and headed to Earth No.1 where Huang Yanchen lived.

He knocked on the door, and there was no reply.

"Surprisingly, she's not home!" thought Zhang Ruochen.

He was about to leave, but he thought better of it and turned towards Heaven No.1.

The owner of this room was Luo Shuihan.

“Senior sister apprentice Luo is also going to participate in the Intermediate Relic Exploration Test, and she will also need a Space Treasure. I’m glad that she taught me how to practice my Spiritual Power in the Half-Saint’s Sacred Glyph the last time we were at Divine Power Palace. Since she was so kind to share the Glyph with me, how could I not give her a Space Treasure?”

With this in mind, Zhang Ruochen walked towards Heaven No.1.

“Dong! Dong!”

Zhang Ruochen knocked with the door knocker. He asked, “Senior sister apprentice Luo, are you there?”

The front door did not open, but Luo Shuihan’s voice floated into Zhang Ruochen’s ears, beautiful as a lark’s song. She asked, “Why are you looking for me?”

Luo Shuihan’s voice was very calm and gentle as if she was talking right next to Zhang Ruochen’s ears.

Zhang Ruochen replied, “It’s nothing important. I just wanted to thank you for letting me use the Half-Saint Sacred Glyph last time.”

“Come on in!” Luo Shuihan’s voice called out again.

“Creak!”

The tightly closed door opened on its own as if it was pushed by an invisible hand.

Zhang Ruochen stepped inside. The ground was covered with fallen leaves. A white paved path led to an elegant tower.

The door of the tower was already open. Zhang Ruochen removed his shoes and walked in quietly.

He knew Luo Shuihan liked peace and quiet. She was living a reclusive and simple life. All the students of the School of the Martial Market had heard of her, but very few of them had actually seen her.

Everyone thought that Luo Shuihan was either training off campus or secluded for practicing.

Zhang Ruochen was very lucky to be able to see her today.

Walking into the room, Zhang Ruochen smelled a light scent. He saw Luo Shuihan, who was wearing a white robe, sitting bare-foot on the wooden floor. She held a bronze brush in her hand and was painting on a piece of Spiritual Paper.

Her paint was made from the blood of savage beasts.

She was painting a second-level superior class savage beast, the Leopard-Headed Blood Bat.

Luo Shuihan made her last stroke just as Zhang Ruochen came in.

She extended a pale, slender finger and touched the painting. A wisp of white Genuine Qi streamed out from her fingertip.

Suddenly, there was a movement in the painting and a flapping sound.

A group of blood bats flew out of the Spiritual Paper, flapping their meter-long wings. They came straight for Zhang Ruochen.

40 blood bats descended on Zhang Ruochen. They had leopard heads and vicious teeth.

Each bat was strong enough to kill a warrior at the Completion of the Black Realm. 40 of them were enough to strip a warrior at the Initial Stage of the Earth Realm to nothing but bare bones in a moment.

Zhang Ruochen immediately pulled out his Snow Dragon Sword and executed a sword technique.

“Sacred Bell Sword!”

Countless streams of Sword Breath converged to form a three-meter white bell made of swords. It encased and protected Zhang Ruochen at its center and began to spin rapidly.

Instantly, three Leopard-headed Blood Bats were sent flying, their bodies ripped apart. They dissolved into three strands of Spiritual Blood which dissipated into the air.

The white Bell Sword emitted ice cold air, causing the temperature in the room to drop sharply. The chill condensed into snowflakes that gently drifted down.

Luo Shuihan extended her pale, slender hand and caught a snowflake. Staring at the Blood Bats surrounding Zhang Ruochen, she gently nodded her head. Quietly, she called, “Come back!”

At Luo Shuihan’s order, the group of Leopard-headed Blood Bats turned like the tide. They flew back to the paper and turned back into a painting.

Zhang Ruochen put away his sword and stared at the painting on the table. “Senior sister apprentice, are you a painter?”

Luo Shuihan gently nodded. She said, “I learned for a few days from a senior painter at the Sect. Compared to the Master Painters, I still have a long way to go.”

These “painters” did not just paint. They were able to turn their paintings into Martial Arts weapons.

When the artists used the blood of beasts as paint, a finished painting could call the savage beasts to aid them in battle.

If they human blood for ink, they could summon entire armies with cavalry.

If the artists used special and precious materials to make their paint, the completed painting could summon thunder and lightning, move mountains, halt rivers, block the sun, and even set the sea roiling.

There were fewer Painters than there were alchemists, weapon refiners, or Tamers. Almost all of them were from the Art Sect.

The Art Sect was considered a large and powerful suzerain in Kunlun’s Field. Since Luo Shuihan was able to learn from a senior at the Art Sect, it meant that she was highly talented.

Chapter 158: The Final State

“Here you go. This War Map is for you. Inject Genuine Qi into the scroll and you will be able to summon Leopard-headed Blood Bats. Of course, as the Spiritual Blood in the scroll is gradually used up, the power of the War Map will eventually diminish until it returns to an ordinary scroll.”

Luo Shuihan rolled up the scroll and handed it to Zhang Ruochen.

Zhang Ruochen stretched out both hands and received the scroll graciously. "Thank you, Senior sister apprentice Luo."

Luo Shuihan nodded. She stood up from her seat and walked to a spacious inner room.

Carrying the War Map, Zhang Ruochen followed behind her.

Luo Shuihan sat on an ice chair in front of an ice table where a small and delicate Ice Cold Jade Cup had been placed.

She took out another Ice Cold Jade Cup and placed it on the opposite side.

"Have a seat! You're the first male to enter Heaven No.1, how about having a drink with me?" she asked.

"It would be my pleasure."

Zhang Ruochen walked over and sat down steadily in front of her.

When other warriors saw Luo Shuihan, they were all flustered and unable to look her in the eye. But Zhang Ruochen appeared to be very relaxed. He did not seem nervous at all.

She nodded. She waved her sleeves and summoned a jade flask that had been sitting on a shelf half a meter away. Controlled by her Genuine Qi, it landed in her hand.

"PHHF!"

Her movements were very elegant. She raised her arm slightly, and the jade flask tilted, pouring out a cup of Half-Saint's Essence which she handed to Zhang Ruochen. The glass was filled with 10 drops of Half-Saint's Essence.

Afterwards, she poured herself a glass of about 10 drops as well.

She placed the flask on the table and lifted her cup with two slender fingers. She finished drinking her 10 drops in one go.

Zhang Ruochen looked at the liquid in his glass. It was indeed 10 drops of Half-Saint's Essence! If he purchased it on the Black Market, it would cost him 4,000,000 silver coins.

It was difficult for other warriors to get even one drop. Yet, Luo Shuihan had a whole flask and had invited him to join her.

At Zhang Ruochen's speed of refinement, it would take him at least two days and nights to refine one drop of the Essence. If he drank all 10 drops at once, he would need 20 days to refine it.

The Intermediate Relic Exploration exam was to take place in 10 days. How would he have enough time to refine it?

The Saint Power of the Half-Saint's Essence was very powerful. If other warriors at the Medium State of the Black Realm drank 10 drops of the Essence at once, it would be no different from drinking poison. The warriors' body would explode in an instant from the amount of Saint Power it contained.

Luo Shuihan had given him a full cup of Half-Saint's Essence in order to test him.

If he was either unable to withstand the effects of the Half-Saint's Essence or could not refine all of it in 10 days, he had no right to drink it.

If that was the case, she would never invite Zhang Ruochen to drink Half-Saint's Essence again in the future.

Luo Shuihan drank her cup of Half-Saint's Essence and glanced at Zhang Ruochen. She put her cup back on the table and asked, "Junior fellow apprentice, don't you want to drink it?"

Zhang Ruochen took a deep breath and raised the cup. He smiled and said, "A cup of Half-Saint's Essence! Since you have shown such generosity, I'm not going to refuse it!"

He threw back his head and drank it all.

After Zhang Ruochen drank its entire contents, he immediately placed the cup back on the table and sat cross-legged on the ground, preparing to refine the potency of the Half-Saint's Essence.

Watching Zhang Ruochen drink the entire cup, Luo Shuihan's eyes lit up a little, revealing a trace of admiration.

She knew Zhang Ruochen was at the Medium State of the Black Realm. There was no way for him to refine the entire cup of Essence. It was very likely that it would burst his Meridians and kill him.

Since Zhang Ruochen had the nerve to drink it, she was not going to let him die. She had a special method that would help him compress the potency of the Essence.

Of course, she would not lend a hand until Zhang Ruochen could no longer withstand it.

However, Luo Shuihan had been waiting for entire two hours and yet, Zhang Ruochen showed no signs of his Meridians breaking. On the contrary, Zhang Ruochen's aura was becoming stronger as his body became wreathed and lifted by threads of Spiritual Blood.

"BOOM!"

The Spiritual Blood beneath Zhang Ruochen's body converged to form a circular Blood Wave with a nine-meter diameter. It covered most of the room and caused the walls to shake.

If it weren't for the fact that the room was covered with the Inscriptions of Array, the force of the Blood Wave would have caused the entire room to collapse.

Luo Shuihan revealed a trace of a smile. "Blood Qi Convergence! I can't believe he is seizing this opportunity to break through to the Final State!"

As Zhang Ruochen had used the power of the Half-Saint's Essence to break through his previous realm, given his physical quality, he should also be able to refine the 10 drops of Half-Saint's Essence and wouldn't need her help.

"His Blood Wave has a diameter of nine meters! That means he has coalesced a Divine-stage Blood Wave." Luo Shuihan stared at the Blood Wave beneath Zhang Ruochen in absolute shock.

When warriors reached the Final State of the Black Realm, they were able to use their Spiritual Blood to form Battle Formations.

A Blood Wave with a three-meter diameter was classified as a Low-class Blood Wave.

A Blood Wave with a five-meter diameter was a Medium-class Blood Wave.

At seven meters it was a High-class Blood Wave.

And nine meters was known as a Divine-stage Blood Wave.

Normally, most warriors who had reached the Final State of the Black Realm could only converge a Low-class Blood Wave.

Out of 10 warriors, probably only one, a prodigy, could converge a Medium-class Blood Wave.

Once you had formed a Medium-class Blood Wave, then you had a large chance of becoming a Warrior of Division Profound after reaching the Completion of the Black Realm.

As for High-class Blood Waves, it was even rarer. If a warrior could converge a High-class Blood wave, they were almost guaranteed to be in the top 10 of the Profound Board.

The Divine-stage Blood Wave was the most powerful Blood Wave. If a warrior could converge a Divine-stage Blood Wave, it indicated that they had a chance of becoming a Saint.

As Zhang Ruochen had condensed a nine-meter Divine-stage Blood Wave, he wouldn't even have to attack to defeat warriors in the same Realm. Rather, by activating the Blood Wave he could compress warriors with Lower class Blood Waves and Medium-class Blood Wave.

Before Zhang Ruochen drank the cup of Half-Saint's Essence, he'd known clearly that he had to break through to the Final State of the Black Realm in order to have a chance to refine the entire 10 drops of Essence within 10 days.

By breaking through to the Final State of the Black Realm, Zhang Ruochen was able to refine the Half-Saint's Essence much faster than before. His 36 Meridians were greedily refining the Saint Power of the Essence.

Zhang Ruochen slowly rotated as he hovered in his Blood Wave.

With each turn he made, the Genuine Qi in his Meridians made a large circle of vital energy.

After almost 10 days, Zhang Ruochen finished refining the 10 drops of Half-Saint's Essence and awoke from his Practice. It was the day before the Intermediate Relic Exploration.

The nine-meter wide Blood Wave dissolved into threads of Spiritual Blood and returned to his body.

Zhang Ruochen opened his eyes and stared at Luo Shuihan who was sitting opposite him. "Senior sister apprentice, how long have I been Practicing?"

"10 days and nine nights." Luo Shuihan replied.

Zhang Ruochen felt extremely hungry. If he hadn't absorbed the 10 drops of Essence, he would have probably starved to death during his Practice.

He took out a Second-Class Blood Pill and swallowed it. The feeling of intense hunger gradually disappeared and was replaced with a feeling of fullness and power.

Every muscle in his body was full of energy. The Spiritual Blood in his Blood Meridian was particularly dense, like rivers running through his body.

If a human body was to be compared to the earth, then the bones were seen as stones, the skin was mud, the bloodstreams were rivers, the Genuine Qi was the air, and the Qi Lake in the glabella was the wide blue sky.

Zhang Ruochen could clearly feel that his power had grown by leaps and bounds. The fastest speed he would be able to reach should be about 68 meters per second. His speed wasn't far from the superiors who ranked in the top 100 of the Profound Board.

"Thanks again for the Half-Saint's Essence." Zhang Ruochen stretched and lifted his hands. He said, "I need to return and prepare for tomorrow's Intermediate Relic Exploration exam. Senior sister apprentice Luo, I'll see you tomorrow."

Zhang Ruochen put away the War Map and turned to leave. Suddenly, he stopped and turned around. He smiled awkwardly and said, "I've received your gift but I almost forget I have a gift for you as well."

He took out a white jade Space bracelet and handed it to Luo Shuihan.

Seeing Zhang Ruochen take out the bracelet, Luo Shuihan was surprised. She looked confused and asked, "Ruochen, what do you mean?"

"This is a Genuine Martial Arms piece. Once you inject your Genuine Qi into the bracelet and trigger the Inscriptions, you will understand!" Zhang Ruochen smiled.

After saying that, he took the War Map and left Heaven No.1.

After he had left, Luo Shuihan picked up the jade bracelet and injected her Genuine Qi into it. The eight Inscriptions of Space lit up and created an independent internal space.

Luo Shuihan's lips curved slightly when she discovered the bracelet's secret. Then, she slipped it onto her wrist.

Zhang Ruochen had only just walked out of Heaven No.1 when he was stopped by Huang Yanchen and Duanmu Xingling.

Huang Yanchen did not look friendly. Standing two meters in front of Zhang Ruochen, she smiled coldly, looking much like the female devil and asked, "You went to see senior sister apprentice Luo?"

Zhang Ruochen replied, "That's my business. I don't think you have a right to control who I visit."

"I don't care who you see!"

Huang Yanchen tilted up her chin, revealing a narrow white neck. She looked cold and haughty. "Zhang Ruochen, I wish to purchase a Space Treasure. Name a price!"

Zhang Ruochen fell into thought. Then he took out the Spatial Ring and handed it to Huang Yanchen. "No need, here you go. Take it."

After handing the Spatial Ring to Huang Yanchen, he left Dragon Martial Temple and headed to Merit Tower. He wanted to use his merits to exchange for some items in preparation for entering the middle-level heritage.

Huang Yanchen's snow white fingers closed over the exquisite Spatial Ring and paused momentarily. She stared in the direction Zhang Ruochen had left and felt a sense of loss.

"He... gave me a ring. What does this mean?" Huang Yanchen was very out of sorts.

Although it was a Spatial Ring and was considered a rare treasure, Huang Yanchen still felt that Zhang Ruochen might have had some other meaning.

Duanmu Xingling stared at the Space ring in Huang Yanchen's hand and gently licked her lips. "Sister Chen, did he give you a ring when you two got engaged?"

Huang Yanchen shook her head.

Duanmu Xingling said, "Perhaps this is how he is making up for it!"

"Perhaps!"

Huang Yanchen squeezed the Spatial Ring tightly. Suddenly, she lifted her head and looked towards the door of Heaven No.1. Lifting her eyebrows, she asked, "Xingling, guess why Zhang Ruochen went to see senior sister disciple Luo?"

Duanmu Xingling laughed out loud and said, "Are you jealous? Sister Chen, don't you fall for him!"

"How is that possible?" Huang Yanchen's eyes went cold, glaring at Duanmu Xingling.

It was undeniable that when Huang Yanchen saw Zhang Ruochen walking out of Heaven No.1 earlier, she had felt unhappy and a strong sense of danger had appeared.

"Why would I have these types of feelings?"

Chapter 159: The Profound Dragon

When Zhang Ruochen came in first place among the freshmen of Western Campus, the School of the Martial Market had awarded him 3,000 merit points, which he hadn't used yet.

He hadn't spent any merit points as he had had no shortage of practice resources.

The place to exchange merit points was called Merit Tower.

Many students recognized Zhang Ruochen as he was entering Merit Tower. They stared at him with curiosity.

"He is elder brother Zhang, the No. 1 among the freshmen of four campuses. It's said that he is a genius comparable to the three female devils." With adoring eyes, a young man watched Zhang Ruochen walk into Merit Tower.

Zhang Ruochen was his idol and in his eyes, also a goal to strive for.

A beautiful woman at the Final State of the Black Realm had excitement in her eyes. "Have you heard that elder brother Zhang has recently defeated all commanderies' top geniuses? He became a famous figure overnight!" she gushed.

"Senior sister apprentice Xu, do you have a crush on elder brother Zhang?" Another girl in white teased with a smile.

Senior sister apprentice Xu responded, "Who would not fall in love with elder brother Zhang? He is brilliant! I would even have a one-night stand with him."

The young woman next to her smiled and said, "If you actually had an affair with elder brother Zhang, I believe senior sister apprentice Huang would definitely banish you to the ends of the earth."

The female students from Western Campus were quite bold with their sexually explicit remarks making Zhang Ruochen feel a little bit embarrassed.

Had it not been for the deterring force of Huang Yanchen, Zhang Ruochen would have been surrounded by many female students again.

Zhang Ruochen took a deep breath, tried to keep calm himself and began to pick out the items he needed in Merit Tower.

There were 13 levels in Merit Tower with each level storing various practice resources. The higher the level, the more merit points were required.

The first level offered inferior practice resources. A Second-Class Blood Pill was the cheapest. One merit point could exchange for 100 Blood Pills.

Zhang Ruochen did not lack of Blood Pills so he didn't exchange for them.

The most expensive item in the first level was valued at no more than five merit points and was less worthy for Zhang Ruochen. Thus, he didn't stay long and went straight to the higher levels.

Not until Zhang Ruochen arrived at the 7th level did he find the things he wanted to exchange for.

The Wings of Wind.

The Wings of Wind, looking like two conjoined silver pieces of iron, was carved with tiny inscriptions of Wind Series.

Once the Genuine Qi was injected into the Wings of Wind, it would take warriors and fly up to the sky with a terrifying speed of 100 meters per second.

It was known that a normal warrior at the Initial Stage of the Earth Realm could only reach 60 meters per second. Only strong warriors at the Medium State of the Earth Realm could increase their speed up to 100 meters per second.

The warriors who were ranked on the Profound Board were all geniuses. So their speed was comparable to that of warriors at the Initial Stage of the Earth Realm.

Zhang Ruochen was very aware that it was very dangerous to enter the middle-level heritage.

What's the most important thing when entering the heritage?

To survive.

Anyhow, it was an exploration journey in the middle-level heritage. Zhang Ruochen had adopted a defensive strategy that emphasized on saving his life rather than risking his life.

The Wings of Wind of inferior-class quality:

A flight speed of 100 meters per second. Frequency of use, three times. Merit points for exchange, 500 merit points.

The Wings of Wind of medium-class quality:

A flight speed of 200 meters per second. Frequency of use, five times. Merit points for exchange, 5,000 merit points.

The Wings of Wind of superior-class quality:

A flight speed of 300 meters per second. Frequency of use, 10 times. Merit points for exchange, 50,000 merit points.

Zhang Ruochen had intended to exchange for one Wings of Wind of medium level so as to help him escape when he confronted savage beasts at The Completion of the Earth Realm, and monsters or heretics in the middle-level heritage.

But seeing the listed exchange price, he quickly dropped this idea.

This is ridiculously expensive!

With only 3,000 merit points in total, Zhang Ruochen didn't have enough points to get even one Wings of Wind of medium quality.

"The Wings of Wind of inferior-class quality is not too bad but can only be used three times. Hmmm... That's enough to save my life three times."

Zhang Ruochen took out the token from the School of the Martial Market and placed it onto the pit of the Tactical Formation Wall.

The inscriptions carved on the token became brighter and connected with the inscriptions on the Tactical Formation Wall.

"WAAA!"

The wall opened a crack and a blue piece of Spiritual Paper was presented. It contained many flowing white characters and the carved drawings of the Wings of Wind.

With this piece of Spiritual Paper, Zhang Ruochen could receive the Wings of Wind in the Main Hall of Merit Tower.

Zhang Ruochen withdrew his token and found that 500 merit points had been deducted, leaving him with 2,500 merit points.

Zhang Ruochen continued to look for other items.

Zhang Ruochen exchanged for five Thunder Pearls.

One Thunder Pearl was worth 100 merit points. Once it detonated, it would explode like a thunderbolt.

Even a warrior at the Earth Realm would die if he was caught off guard and attacked by a Thunder Pearl.

Certainly, the speed of warriors at the Earth Realm was quite fast. They would be able to flee at their fastest speed if they saw Zhang Ruochen throw out a Thunder Pearl. Therefore, the Thunder Pearl could not hurt them at all.

They would only be killed if they were unaware of the imminent attack.

Zhang Ruochen spent another 100 merit points on one Anti-Poison Pearl.

Most toxic fog and miasma could be resisted as long as Zhang Ruochen carried the Anti-Poison Pearl. He also exchanged for one Detoxification Pill, just in case.

Zhang Ruochen also got some other practice resources and life-saving treasures, spending all his 3,000 merit points.

After returning back to Dragon Martial Temple, Zhang Ruochen stocked up enough drinking water, filling up two Spatial Rings and one Spatial Jade Bracelet.

The next morning, under the guidance of Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua, the top ten students in Western Campus began to fly deep into Omen Ridge via Qing Hua's carriage.

The top 10 students were Luo Shuihan, Huang Yanchen, Duanmu Xingling, Tuo Muzi, Zhang Ruochen, Sikong Shu, Ju Hailan, Mo Qinglong, Cai Chen, and Zi Qian.

Eight of them were mature students who had stayed in Western Campus for more than 3 years. Only Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian were freshmen.

Sikong Shu had a heroic character and stood on the back of the Lion-vulture. He asked, "Deputy Headmaster, are we going to the middle-level heritage at Chikong Secret Mansion?"

Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua nodded her head and confirmed. "Exactly. Needless to say, Chikong Secret Mansion is extremely dangerous. I believe all of you are well-prepared for it. Zhang Ruochen, Zi Qian, you are both freshmen, are you ready for it?"

Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian nodded at the same time.

Established on the boundary of Omen Ridge, many savage beasts existed in Western Campus. Yet, most of them were of the first-level or second-level savage beast so it was not too dangerous.

However, located in the depths of Omen Ridge, Chikong Secret Mansion was far away from Western Campus and surrounded by barren mountains and unruly rivers. It was renowned as a terribly dangerous place with many strong and fierce savage beasts.

Once external students of the school went deep into Omen Ridge, they would eventually meet their death. It was the same even with the martial arts legends in the Heaven Realm.

The deeper they went, the higher and more precipitous the mountains and the thicker the trees became. Old vines surrounded the whole mountain like a dragon.

Some areas were covered with miasma throughout the year. When normal savage birds flew over these areas, they would inhale the poison and fall down to the ground in pieces.

The mountainous region contained many tremendous flowing rivers.

Under the water, there were ferocious river Aquatic Savage Beasts. As the young warriors flew over one of the rivers, a thunderous cry suddenly came from the river.

The river was shocked to be interrupted.

The loud noise caused tinnitus to the 10 students sitting on the back of the Lion-vulture. Luckily, their powerful cultivation was strong enough to withstand the waves. Otherwise, they would have fainted.

The powerful force surge tore up the ground around the river. A number of large ancient trees shattered into wood scraps from the power of the Genuine Qi Wave.

With a pair of flesh wings on its back and a neck as thick as a tank, a black Profound Dragon over 60 meters long flew from the river and rushed to Ning Xiaochuan and the other people in the air.

“How dare you raid our disciples from the School of the Martial Market? You are courting death!”

Standing on the Lion-vulture’s head, Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua gazed at the Profound Dragon coldly. She took out a roll of white Battle Formation and unfolded it. Then a huge light ball with a diameter of 100 meters was formed, protecting the Lion-vulture and the 10 young students inside.

“BOOM!”

Two flames shot from the bloody eyes of the Profound Dragon and exploded on the surface of the white light ball, shaking it violently.

Eyes growing colder, Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua raised up her wooden wand in hand and injected Genuine Qi into it.

The inscription inside was activated immediately. And the wooden wand grew thicker like a bowl and its length increased from two meters to 56 meters.

Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua’s old body became strong and robust with her whole skeleton bulging. With her knees slightly bent, she jumped from the head of the Lion-vulture like a striking arrow. Then, she swayed her wooden wand and knocked on the top of the Profound Dragon.

“BOOM!”

Instantly, the enormous body of the Profound Dragon plummeted down and fell into the river 300 meters below, splashing surges more than 10 meters high.

The river turned bloody. It was obvious that Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua’s hit had caused great damage to the Profound Dragon.

Displaying another bodily movement, she jumped backward on the void space and returned to the Lion-vulture's back.

The 10 students sitting on the Lion-vulture stared at the Deputy Headmaster with great amazement.

No one had expected that the old woman, who looked so weak, who could barely walk, could unleash such amazing Martial Arts power.

After all, the Profound Dragon had been a savage beast of the fourth level, comparable with the martial arts legends at the Heaven Realm. The Profound Dragon had been badly injured and fled back to the water after only one hit from Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua.

Given this incident, Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua was estimated to be one of the strongest among the warriors at the Heaven Realm.

Chapter 160: The Entrance

Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua dispersed the light surrounding her body and once again became an old lady in her eighties or nineties.

"There are many extraordinarily powerful savage beasts in Omen Ridge. Some of them are so powerful that even I must flee when I encounter them." She said to the 10 young students on the Lion-vulture.

"The farther you get, the stronger the savage beasts become. If you enter Omen Ridge for practice in the future, please remember to not go too far. There are many forbidden zones."

The Lion-vulture flapped its wings and continued its flight towards Chikong Secret Mansion.

After half a day they arrived at a wasteland.

It was said that this place was turned into a barren wasteland during the war between the Human Army and the Four-winged Earth Dragon.

Below them there was an enormous canyon, a thousand meters long and 200 meters wide. The bottomless canyon plummeted straight down and made the earth seem as though it had a mouth which could devour everything in the world.

Standing beside the canyon looking down into the darkness they could only see wisps of black miasma wafting up.

There were narrow stone ladders carved into the edge of the canyon which led straight down to the darkness.

It was said that Chikong Secret Mansion could be found there, where the Four-winged Earth Dragon had once lived.

When Deputy Headmaster led the 10 students from Western Campus to the canyon, the students from the other three campuses had already arrived.

Deputy Headmaster of Eastern Campus sneered and said, "Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua, you are very late. We have been waiting for a long time!"

Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua hobbled with her wooden wand and replied, "We met a Profound Dragon on our way here, so it took us a little longer."

"According to our old rules, the order of entering the middle-level heritage is dependant on the order of arrival. So you will be the fourth to enter," said Deputy Headmaster of Eastern Campus.

"No problem!" Deputy Headmaster Qing Hua replied.

The students from Eastern Campus were the first to arrive, so the 10th student of Eastern Campus would be the first to enter.

That student was Dugu Lin.

Dugu Lin stepped onto the stone ladders, performed a technique and dashed into the canyon.

Three minutes later Dugu Lin could not be seen from the edge of the canyon.

Next, the 10th student of Nothern Campus entered the canyon and rushed into the depths below.

Then the 10th student of Southern Campus entered.

After the 10th student of Southern Campus disappeared underground, the 10th student of Western Campus, Zi Qian, started to walk forward.

The students who participated in the Intermediate Relic Exploration Test must enter into the cavern one by one. The students of the lower rankings would enter first followed by the students of the higher rankings.

This prevented the students from killing each other.

The students of the lower realm could go deep into Chikong Secret Mansion or hide somewhere after entering.

If the students of the higher realms entered first they would wait at the entrance and kill all the students of the lower realms that came in after them.

Standing among the students from Eastern Campus, Xun Guihai stared at Zhang Ruochen coldly. He didn't even try to hide his hatred and anger. He thought to himself, "*Zhang Ruochen, it doesn't really matter whether you are engaged to Commandery Princess Yanchen or not. If you die here, she will be mine.*"

He glanced at Guo Haidong, the fifth student of Eastern Campus who was standing beside him. He murmured, "Guo Haidong, you will enter Chikong Secret Mansion before Zhang Ruochen, so you can wait for him in the cavern. Once he enters the Mansion, you must kill him at any cost."

Guo Haidong accepted Xun Guihai's five drops of Half-Saint's Essence and agreed to kill Zhang Ruochen for him.

Guo Haidong smiled confidently and replied, "My elder brother Xun, I am the 874th master on the Profound Board. I can kill him without even breaking a sweat."

Xun Guihai said seriously, "Don't underestimate the enemy. Zhang Ruochen's realm may be lower than yours, but his Sword Comprehension has already achieved the Peak of the Sword Following the Heart. If you find yourself to be inferior to him, just stall for time. Lang Xin will be there very soon. Then you can both attack him from either side and he will have no escape!"

Xun Guihai glanced at Lang Xin beside him.

Lang Xin nodded and said, "Zhang Ruochen dares to steal elder brother Xun's woman, he has obviously set himself against the whole Eastern Campus."

Lang Xin was fourth of Eastern Campus and ranked 580th on the Profound Board.

Staring at the students from Eastern Campus, Duanmu Xingling squinted her eyes and reminded Zhang Ruochen. "You must be careful of Guo Haidong and Lang Xin from Eastern Campus after entering Chikong Secret Mansion. They are both Warriors of the Division Profound. One of them enters the Mansion before you, while the other one enters behind you. If they attack you together, you will find it hard to even run away."

Zhang Ruochen looked over following Duanmu Xingling's eyes, saw the two young students beside Xun Guihai and memorized their faces. He said, "Entering Chikong Secret Mansion can be very dangerous. Senior sister apprentice Duanmu, you must be careful as well."

Guo Haidong, who was the fifth of Eastern Campus, started to walk towards the canyon. Before entering he glanced at Zhang Ruochen and sneered cruelly.

Shortly after, the fifth students from Northern Campus and Southern Campus also entered the canyon one by one. Finally, it was Zhang Ruochen's turn.

He felt a little dizzy when he approached the edge of the canyon. That was a sign of being poisoned.

It was the miasma. Fortunately, he took the Anti-Poison Pearl with him which blocked most of the miasma. Otherwise, one breath of it might cause him to faint.

Zhang Ruochen transferred his Pure Jade Genuine Qi and started to circulate it through his Meridians. Doing so purified the poison in his body and he recovered immediately.

He then performed Shadow of the Royal Wind Dragon and dashed towards the cavern as fast as he could.

He only had three minutes to get as far away as he could, then Lang Xin, the fourth student of Eastern Campus, would enter the cavern and chase after him.

If the fifth student of Eastern Campus, Guo Haidong, really was waiting for him in the cavern he had to defeat him in under three minutes. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to face converging attacks from two Warriors of the Division Profound.

Although Zhang Ruochen was confident he could defeat them, he couldn't ensure that they didn't have any hidden weapons with them.

Things could get very complicated in Chikong Secret Mansion because there were no rules.

The canyon was so deep that Zhang Ruochen still hadn't reached the bottom after dashing for over a thousand meters.

The cavern was pitch black.

Zhang Ruochen looked up. The canyon was thousands of meters deep and the entrance looked as small as the eye of a needle, glowing with white light. It was like a small white crack in the dark night sky.

He felt as though he had been devoured by the earth and would never see the sun again.

If he had had a weaker mind, he would have felt very frightened and may have even passed out.

He looked down. A splash of maroon and a wave of heat appeared in the depths of the cavern.

It would be very tormenting indeed for the devils and heretics if they were really being kept here.

He transferred the Genuine Qi to his eyes and kept looking down into the cavern. The air grew ever warmer and the rocks were burning hot.

Fortunately, he had already bought an Icy Spirit. With it around his neck, he didn't feel warm at all. On the contrary, he felt rather cool.

Zhang Ruochen had no idea how deep he had gone. Finally, he reached the bottom and stood before a giant stone gate.

The stone gate was 130 meters high and 27 meters wide. The dark steel inlaid on the surface formed the shape of a dragon.

Nobody knew how heavy it was, but the giant gate stood open two meters.

He placed his hand on the gate, transferred all of his Genuine Qi and pushed as hard as he could.

But the gate didn't budge.

"The gate is too heavy! Perhaps only a master of the Heaven Realm can open it."

He stared in front of the two-meter opening and contemplated what to do next.

"Time and Space Domain!"

He released the Time and Space Domain which covered over 640 square meters around him. By using the power of the Time and Space Domain he would be able to detect if Guo Haidong was hiding behind the stone gate.

He soon sensed his presence in the Time and Space Domain.

Zhang Ruochen pulled the Snow Dragon Sword out and walked towards the stone gate.

"Boom!"

The moment he stepped inside a red spear stabbed at his back with a wave of fire.

But he was ready for it. He jumped off the ground and avoided the attack easily.

He jumped five meters in the air and thrust his sword towards Guo Haidong's neck.

Guo Haidong felt a coldness on his neck, his attack failed and he withdrew his spear quickly. He stepped back as fast as he could and narrowly escaped.

Guo Haidong was a little shocked. *"How could Zhang Ruochen possibly know I was hiding behind the stone gate?"* He thought to himself.

Zhang Ruochen put his Snow Dragon Sword back in its sheath, glanced at Guo Haidong and said, "That was a warning. I won't hold back if you attempt to kill me again!"

Holding his lance, Guo Haidong calmed down. He recalled what Xun Guihai had told him. If he was no match for Zhang Ruochen then he should stall for time and wait for Lang Xin. With their combined power they would surely kill Zhang Ruochen.

Guo Haidong smiled slightly, bowed his hands and said, "You are indeed the No.1 freshman. I admire your martial cultivation. I was merely trying to test your cultivation, not kill you."

Of course, Zhang Ruochen could tell Guo Haidong's true intentions. He replied, "If you still want to kill me, I can promise that you won't leave Chikong Secret Mansion alive."

Seeing Zhang Ruochen's demeanor, he stopped smiling. Although he was afraid of Zhang Ruochen's sword technique, he also had a trump card. Even if he could not defeat Zhang Ruochen by himself, as long as he could stall for time he would kill Zhang Ruochen eventually.

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