

Three days had passed. Although Zhang Ruochen sustained heavier and heavier injuries, he refused to leave the room. Instead, he continued to practice Shadow of the Royal Wind Dragon in the Hurricane Secret Room.

Zhang Ruochen improved quickly in the environment and pressure of the Secret Room.

Now he only slammed into the wall 10 times every minute. If he did well, sometimes only seven times per minute.

This was the signature of improvement at Shadow of the Wind Dragon!

Being slammed against the stone wall didn't just injure him, it was also a form of training for his body.

Zhang Ruochen could feel his body growing stronger and stronger. His bones were tougher, his muscles more powerful after every Practice.

At the same time, the Genuine Qi in his body was becoming more pure, and his Meridians tougher.

"Although the environment of the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room is very harsh, it allows me to quickly consolidate my foundations in this Realm. If I continue practicing like this, I will only need three months to perfect my cultivation in this Realm."

Zhang Ruochen calculated that he would be attacked hundreds of times each day he spent practicing in the Secret Room.

Two weeks time passed very quickly.

Zhang Ruochen had little to no rest at all while Practicing in the Secret Room. If he wasn't Practicing, he was healing.

He probably would have had a mental breakdown by now if it hadn't been for his strong Spiritual Powers.

Even so, he felt completely exhausted. He was dizzy, dazed and felt as though there was no energy in his body at all.

After two weeks of training as though possessed, Zhang Ruochen reaped many benefits.

Now in the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room he only hit the stone walls five times every minute.

In his best state he could hover in the hurricane for 30 seconds. After 30 seconds he could use the wind power to control his center of gravity and ensure he did not slam into the stone wall.

...

Chen Xier entered Mount Saint Crossing and came to the entrance of the Secret Practicing Rooms. She wore a snow silk robe and her face was made up. Her hair was in a bun in which she continued to wear a white bell.

With every step she took you would hear a delightful jingle.

This was Chen Xier's fifth trip to Mount Saint Crossing in the last fortnight.

"He still hasn't come out of the Secret Practicing Room?" Chen Xier asked.

The silver robed elder stood up and replied, "He's been Practicing for a fortnight, he should be out soon!"

The silver robed elder knew Chen Xier's identity, so he did not treat her as one of the younger generation. He spoke to her as an equal.

Chen Xier tapped her chin with a pale finger. The trace of a smile tugged at her lips, "Only a warrior of the Black Realm, yet he can stay an entire fortnight inside the Earth Stage Secret Practicing Room. Elder Yao, why do you think he is able to accomplish this?"

The silver robed elder replied, "In the last decade, Huang Yanchen performed the best in the Secret Practicing Rooms. In her first visit she stayed a total of three days. Although she was already a warrior at the Initial Stage of the Earth Realm at the time."

"On her second trip to the Secret Practicing Room, she lasted a fortnight. At that time her cultivation had already reached the Mid Stage of the Earth Realm. Furthermore, her physical quality is classified as Wind Nature and that's part of the reason she was able to do so."

"Zhang Ruochen's physical quality is not of Wind Nature, and his Cultivation is only in the Black Realm. Yet he is more powerful than Princess Commandery Yanchen. He must be very close to the Ultimate Realm of the Black Realm. Perhaps he entered the Secret Practicing Room for the purpose of breaking into the Ultimate Realm."

Having heard the analysis of the silver robed elder Chen Xier's face changed, "Hasn't it been said that no one has ever reached the Ultimate Realm?"

The silver robed elder smiled, "Although that is what people say, it doesn't necessarily mean that no one has ever reached the Ultimate Realm. A warrior who has managed to reach the Ultimate Realm would not tell people they have done so. For example, if Zhang Ruochen were to reach the Ultimate Realm, he would certainly never say so."

Chen Xier nodded.

If Zhang Ruochen really was trying to break through to the Ultimate Realm, then there was more reason than ever not to allow him to escape her.

...

Zhang Ruochen dragged his injured and exhausted body out of the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room.

All he wanted to do now was have a good nights sleep.

Chen Xier immediately went forward when she saw Zhang Ruochen leaving the room. In a clear and concerned voice she asked, "Junior brother apprentice Zhang, why are you injured so heavily?"

Zhang Ruochen had a confused expression on his face upon seeing Chen Xier, "Senior sister apprentice Chen, why are you here?"

Chen Xier replied, "I calculated that you would be leaving today so I came to pick you up."

"Pick me up? And go where?" Zhang Ruochen asked.

Chen Xier rolled her eyes at Zhang Ruochen, "Somewhere to rest and recover of course."

Although Zhang Ruochen had not rested for a fortnight and was very tired, he remained alert and vigilant.

After all, he and Chen Xier were not very close, so why would she be so nice to him?

"I don't think there is any need!" Zhang Ruochen replied.

Chen Xier asked, "What do you mean 'there isn't any need'? Given your current state, are you going to leave the Inner Academy to find somewhere to stay? That would be too dangerous. What if you run into Zuo Lengxuan again?"

It had to be said, Chen Xier was very intelligent. Everything she said hit on one of the worries in Zhang Ruochen's heart.

Zhang Ruochen thought it over for a moment and decided, "OK then!"

Students of the Inner Academy only had to exchange 100 merit points for their own Practice building.

Most of the Inner students had their own Practice buildings, just like Chen Xier did.

12 serving girls came out to welcome Chen Xier and Zhang Ruochen when they entered her Practice building.

"Greetings, master." The leading maid said to them. Her cultivation had reached the Final State of the Yellow Realm. She was pretty and seemed to be about 20 years old.

The maids were rather confused as this was the first time their master had brought back a male to the Practice building.

Chen Xier glanced at Zhang Ruochen and smiled, "In the Market School anything can be obtained with merit points. For example, these serving girls. The cheapest maids can be exchanged for one merit point. If the transaction is successful she belongs to you forever. If you have enough merit points you can exchange for maids of the Black and Earth Realm."

Chen Xier ordered, "Are the blue tea, green tea, and seven spirits medicinal spring water ready to serve?"

"As per your orders the medicinal water has been prepared." Two of the maids spoke in unison.

Chen Xier nodded, "You two take junior brother apprentice Zhang to the medicinal water immediately and see to his injuries."

Zhang Ruochen glanced at Chen Xier, confused, "I've only met her twice, why does she care so much about me?"

Even if Chen Xier was Huang Yanchen's younger cousin, there was no need to go this far.

What did she want?

At the moment, Zhang Ruochen was very tired and did not want to think about it. He followed the two maids and came to a bath.

The medicinal water in the bath shone in seven different colors and emitted a strong fragrance.

Seven spirits medicinal spring water was made using seven different types of medicinal liquids combined together. Each of the medicinal liquids cost over 100,000 silver coins. The seven spirits combined would cost over a million silver coins.

Even legends of martial arts in the Heaven Realm would only use the seven spirits medicinal spring water when they were very heavily injured.

A bath of such water could buy half a city. It was very extravagant.

Lying in the medicinal water, Zhang Ruochen couldn't even explain how relaxed he felt. His pores opened to absorb the healing properties of the water.

Gradually Zhang Ruochen fell into a deep sleep in the bath.

...

Huang Yanchen arrived at Chen Xier's Practice building. With one hand she held her sword, and with the other she struck out.

Boom!

The copper ring was shattered and fell to the floor.

Two giant copper doors suddenly opened under her attack.

Two maids hurried out and knelt on either side of her, pleading, "Princess Commandery Yanchen, our master is currently secluded and Practicing. You can't enter right now."

Huang Yanchen held her sword and stood up straight. Her eyes sharp. "Is that so? How come I saw her returning from Mount Saint Crossing?"

"CLASH!"

A beautiful human silhouette flew out of the Practice building and appeared in front of a maple tree, leaving a shadow behind.

It was Chen Xier.

There was a smile on Chen Xier's face as she walked towards Huang Yanchen, "Cousin, who has bothered you and made you so angry?"

Huang Yanchen's eyes were cold and there was not a trace of a smile on her face. Getting straight to the point she said, "Where is Zhang Ruochen? I want to see him immediately."

"Haha! So you have come to find junior brother apprentice Zhang."

Chen Xier did not appear concerned at all. On the contrary, she smiled even more brilliantly and replied in a soft voice, "Junior brother apprentice Zhang was injured heavily while Practicing in the Hurriance Secret Room. Right now he's recovering in a bath of seven spirits medicinal spring water."

Huang Yanchen became even colder, "Cousin, he is my fiancée. If he needs to recover he should do it in my residence. It's not appropriate for him to stay at yours!"

Chen Xier continued to smile, "It's because of the incident at the Tianyue Tower last time. He's worried you're still mad at him and didn't dare seek you out. Instead he decided to stay with me for a while. Please return home cousin. I'll look after junior brother apprentice Zhang for you. As long as he's here, no one will hurt him."

Huang Yanchen had no intention of leaving and her eyes darkened, "Chen Xier, don't exaggerate. I know what you're planning and I will tell you this once. Zhang Ruochen is my fiancée. He is engaged to me, not you. If any woman has her eye on him they will become my enemy."

Chen Xier laughed, "Haha! Who would have thought that you actually consider him your fiancée? I thought it was just a fake engagement. Don't worry cousin, if any other woman has her eye on him I'll teach them a lesson for you."

Huang Yanchen and Chen Xier had fought since they were children, so she knew Chen Xier very well.

Chen Xier was a person who would do anything to achieve her goal. She must have seen Zhang Ruochen's potential and was now deliberately taking action to steal him away.

Not only did she want to steal Zhang Ruochen, she also wanted to challenge Huang Yanchen. Only by stealing Zhang Ruochen could she demonstrate that she was better and more attractive than Huang Yanchen.

Huang Yanchen had no time for Chen Xier's games, "Where is Zhang Ruochen? I am not leaving without him today. If anyone dares to challenge me, I won't show any mercy."

Chen Xier smiled, "Cousin, don't say I didn't warn you. Men don't like being controlled by women. If you take him away by force it might be counterproductive."

"I don't need you to lecture me on my actions."

Huang Yanchen's dark eyebrows tightened and she stared coldly at Chen Xier. Sweeping aside her blue hair and her headed towards the seven spirits bath.

Chapter 192: A Very Troubling Problem

It had to be said, Chen Xier's words did help her to calm down a little.

Huang Yanchen's steps were light and there was a light fragrance surrounding her. She walked to the seven spirits bath and saw Zhang Ruochen recovering inside.

She did not immediately wake him in the bath but rather examined him carefully in silence.

He had been heavily injured in the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room.

TAP! TAP!

Chen Xier had followed her in and stood opposite Huang Yanchen. She smiled and asked, "Cousin, I don't understand. With your high standards, are you really in love with Zhang Ruochen?"

Huang Yanchen stood there with her sword clasped in her hand. She looked like a pure goddess in a painting. There was not a trace of emotion on her face when she spoke. "You'd better not interfere with my business with Zhang Ruochen. I've warned you, don't blame me if I act against you."

Chen Xier laughed. "Haha! You've put me in a difficult position. Zhang Ruochen is very talented, and my heart has also been moved by him. What do you say we fight for him fairly?"

"Fight fairly? That is not possible." Huang Yanchen replied.

"You have so much confidence in yourself." Chen Xier seemed to be trying to pick a fight. She was pushing out her chest, offering a glimpse of her full-bodied figure.

Huang Yanchen's eyes narrowed and she glared at Chen Xier. "In the 36 commanderies of Omen Ridge, there are many men who are more talented than Zhang Ruochen. Why must you fight me for him?"

Chen Xier pursed her lips and smiled. "Since there are many men more talented than Zhang Ruochen, why can't you just give him to me?"

Huang Yanchen's gaze hardened. She stopped repressing the anger in her heart. "Fine! If you can stand, unarmed, against 10 strokes of my sword, then I will give you a fighting chance."

CLASH!

The sword in Huang Yanchen's hand flew out on its own. It dissolved into a streak of blue light and emitted a long streak of sword Qi. It flew towards Chen Xier's chest.

Chen Xier laughed. She twisted her body and flew two meters up into the air, avoiding Huang Yanchen's first strike.

Huang Yanchen's cultivation had already reached the Mid Stage of the Earth Realm and she was faster than before. Her speed reached over 100 meters per second. She moved quickly to grasp the sword hilt and swung it in mid-air.

"Floating Cloud Sword Song!"

The sword Qi became a giant sword net rising up from the ground towards Chen Xier.

Chen Xier's cultivation was almost on par with Huang Yanchen's, however, Huang Yanchen had the advantage when it came to speed. Her Genuine Qi was strongly infused with the power of wind nature.

Huang Yanchen's sword technique was energetic and carried with it a sense of invincibility.

Chen Xier's Genuine Qi was infused with the power of wood nature and slightly inferior to Huang Yanchen's, but had an advantage when it came to refining Pills. Thus, Chen Xier was not only a warrior but also a Second-Class alchemist.

"Green wooden shield."

Green hued Genuine Qi flowed out from Chen Xier's outstretched palms. It condensed into a green shield a meter across and protected her from the front.

BOOM!

The powerful sword Qi slammed into the shield and shattered it.

Chen Xier took this opportunity to leap backwards and landed atop a maple tree not too far away.

It was as if she was completely weightless. She stood only on a single leaf yet remained hovering in the air rather than plummeting to the ground.

SWISH!

Huang Yanchen released the Genuine Qi in her body and created a giant vortex of Genuine Qi. Within the vortex flew streaks of wind blade turning the vortex into a shapeless sword.

"Chop!"

Huang Yanchen pointed with her sword and streaks of Wind Blade sliced towards Chen Xier. Like a hot knife through butter, the wind blades chopped the tree into firewood.

Chen Xier leapt into the air again and arced towards the surface of a lake in the distance.

"Strong Wind Lifting the Clouds!"

Huang Yanchen increased her speed and whipped her sword around, creating a huge sword Qi which rippled across the lake and sent a giant wave surging towards Chen Xier.

"I have to leave now!"

Zhang Ruochen opened his eyes in the seven spirits medicinal bath and let out a gentle sigh. While Huang Yanchen and Chen Xier were fighting, he climbed out of the bath and left Chen Xier's practice building quietly.

Zhang Ruochen was still very tired and heavily injured, however, when Huang Yanchen arrived at the seven spirits bath he'd woken up instantly.

Since his Spiritual Power was very strong, he woke up immediately if anyone came near him while he was asleep.

He had woken some time ago and heard the entire conversation between Huang Yanchen and Chen Xier.

Overhearing their conversation, Zhang Ruochen had pretended to be asleep.

“Does senior sister apprentice Huang already regret our fake engagement? That shouldn’t be the case. I must be missing something. Given her proud personality, how could she possibly think I’m good enough for her?” Zhang Ruochen gently shook his head. He did not feel happy about what Huang Yanchen had said, rather, it gave him a headache.

“And what is the deal with senior sister apprentice Chen? We’ve only met twice.”

Zhang Ruochen turned around to have one last look and saw that Huang Yanchen was still fighting with Chen Xier. The entire practice building and grounds had been destroyed, and one of the towers had been shattered into debris by the sword Qi.

Luckily, he’d left while they were fighting, otherwise, he would have had no idea how he could resolve the issue.

Given Huang Yanchen’s personality, anything could happen.

As soon as he left the practice building, Zhang Ruochen heard a tinkling laugh from behind.

“I didn’t think you would be able to walk out of there alive.” Duanmu Xingling walked over. She smiled cheekily and revealed two rows of snow-white teeth.

She had obviously been waiting outside for a while.

Seeing Duanmu Xingling, Zhang Ruochen felt like she was his guardian angel. “Senior sister apprentice Duanmu, I’m so happy you’re here! I’ve really messed up this time. You have to help me.”

Duanmu Xingling smiled merrily, “Oh really? You bothered Chen Xier on purpose, and now you realize that it was a bad idea?”

“Can you not be sarcastic? Besides, I’ve never bothered her intentionally. I don’t understand what’s happening. Really, I only feel a distant admiration for everyone, including senior sister apprentice Huang. I had no idea things could develop to such an extent.” Zhang Ruochen frowned deeply. His mind was a mess and he was completely at a loss.

“Really?” Duanmu Xingling’s eyes lit up a little. She asked, “You don’t have feelings for Sister Chen?”

“I really don’t.” Zhang Ruochen replied solemnly.

“OK! Since you’re asking me so nicely, I’ll help you this time.” Duanmu Xingling nodded lightly. “This isn’t a good place to talk. Let’s go to my practice building to avoid this mess first. If they come chasing after you, you won’t be able to leave!”

Zhang Ruochen gradually calmed down as he approached Duanmu Xingling’s practice building.

Although he was a rookie and completely ignorant when it came to dealing with feelings, he managed to clear his mind quickly and organize his thoughts.

“What do you plan to do about your relationship with Sister Chen? Even though she always appears to be cold and never shares her emotions with others, I can see that she truly has feelings for you. If you really think she will voluntarily break off the engagement after three years, then you have another thing coming.” Duanmu Xingling laughed with crinkled eyes.



Zhang Ruochen frowned as he thought. He still didn't believe Huang Yanchen could really have feelings for him. He shook his head and said, "I think... senior sister apprentice Huang is not someone who easily develops feelings for someone, much less for me. She could be acting in her own interest and to protect her reputation, that's why she rushed to senior sister apprentice Chen's practice building. After all, I am her fiancée by name, she wouldn't want people to gossip."

Duanmu Xingling laughed, "Junior brother apprentice, did you put all your attention into practicing? Do you really have no idea about women at all? If Sister Chen did not care for you, do you think she would rush to Chen Xier's practice building? Perhaps she herself doesn't even know how she feels about you."

"What should I do?" Zhang Ruochen asked.

"What can be done? Sister Chen and Chen Xier are both God's favored daughters of the School of the Martial Market. Do you know how many people want their favor? You don't know how lucky you are."

"Senior sister apprentice Duanmu, can you please take this seriously?"

Duanmu Xingling composed herself and became serious. "I think you should not see either of them for a while, and then observe their behavior."

Zhang Ruochen nodded lightly. "I'll just have to live here for a while. I hope you can keep this secret for me."

"No problem." Duanmu Xingling smiled. "As long as Sister Chen doesn't misunderstand and think I'm trying to get in on this too, haha!"

For the next five days, Zhang Ruochen stayed in Duanmu Xingling's practice building. The wounds on his body gradually healed and his spirits returned to their normal levels.

He bought a large number of healing Pills and once again made his way to Mount Saint Crossing and the Earth Stage Hurricane Secret Practicing Rooms. He put the issues with Huang Yanchen and Chen Xier aside and focused on quickly breaking into the Ultimate Realm of the Black Realm.

He was very eager to reach the Earth Realm. Once he achieved this, he would be able to protect himself.

When that time came, he wouldn't have to hide from Huang Yanchen and Chen Xier. He would be able to accept missions from the School of the Martial Market and go train elsewhere. As long as he didn't see them, he wouldn't have to think about such things.

Zhang Ruochen performed much better in the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room this time and he gained a deeper level of understanding for Shadow of the Royal Wind Dragon.

WOOSH!

The wind raged in all directions in the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room.

Zhang Ruochen worked hard to control his center of gravity and began the paces in the wind. He was like a Shadow, constantly changing positions to utilize the wind power.

BOOM!

He lasted a full 40 seconds before he was caught off-guard by a sudden wind above him and slammed into the ground, completely shaken out of his bearings.

Time passed very quickly in the Practicing Room.

A fortnight passed very quickly, and Zhang Ruochen improved greatly. On average, he would hit the wall about once per minute, and about 120 times in two hours.

When he entered the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room for the third time, he was even better at controlling the wind power. He only hit the wall 10 times in two hours.

On his fourth visit to the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room, Zhang Ruochen could walk easily through the wind without the need to worry about losing his center of gravity.

After three months of practice, Zhang Ruochen had entered the Practicing Room five times and spent a fortnight inside each time.

He spent the rest of the time mostly in Duanmu Xingling's practice building, either recovering or meditating on the developments of Shadow of the Royal Wind Dragon.

On the seventh day of his sixth visit to the Hurricane Secret Room, he finally reached the level of succeed with the Shadow of the Royal Wind Dragon. He was able to reach a speed of 81 meters per second and successfully broke into the Ultimate Realm of the Black Realm.

Chapter 193: The Internal Student

It seemed as though Zhang Ruochen's speed had improved slightly, but actually it was at the extreme limit of a warrior in the Black Realm.

When he was about to attain his extreme speed, a barrier between heaven and earth seemed to be punctured and erupted with powerful Spiritual Qi waves.

All of the Spiritual Qi in the Secret Practice Room turned into droplets and rolled towards him, gathering into a beam of light on his head.

"Waaa!"

Inside the Secret Practice Room many sacred and ancient illusory images appeared, just like the marks of gods. They were suspended in the void of space and began to chant.

The second Chord of Gods!

The light of god interweaved with the Spiritual Qi and poured into Zhang Ruochen's body. With a boom, the Qi Lake in his glabella exploded into pieces.

Soon after, the broken pieces quickly restructured and condensed into a new Qi Pool which was a hundred times bigger than before.

Actually, it could no longer be called a Qi Lake. It was a Qi Sea.

Not only had Zhang Ruochen reached the Ultimate Realm of the Yellow Realm, but he also successfully opened a Qi Sea and entered into the Martial Arts Realm of the Initial Stage of the Earth Realm.

Many god marks appeared on the wall of the Qi sea, shining brightly.

Each mark emitted a faint light of god, illuminating Zhang Ruochen's Qi sea like stars.

Affected by the god marks, the Genuine Qi in his Qi Sea contained a hint of divinity.

Though Zhang Ruochen had just arrived in the Initial Stage of the Earth Realm, his Genuine Qi was purer than many warriors in the Completion of the Earth Realm.

This was the benefit of the second Chord of Gods!

He had not just challenged one realm. He had, in fact, challenged two realms, achieving great progress in his martial cultivation.

After an hour in the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room, the Spiritual Crystals on the stone walls became dim and dissolved into dust. All of the Spiritual Qi in the Spiritual Crystals was absorbed by Zhang Ruochen.

The array stopped working in the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room.

The whole Secret Room became silent and dark.

"Why did the array suddenly stop?"

Elder Yao, who was guarding the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room, noticed something unusual in the room. He opened the gate right away and went in.

When Elder Yao walked into the Secret Practice Room, the illusory images of gods were already gone, leaving Zhang Ruochen sitting quietly in the center of the room.

"Presbyter, why did you come in?" Zhang Ruochen opened his eyes and was a little surprised.

"What's going on with you?"

Looking around, Elder Yao was astonished to find that the stone walls, which were supposed to be embedded with Spiritual Crystals, was full of holes. And all 786 Spiritual Crystals had turned into dust.

"786 Spiritual Crystal contain an enormous amount of Spiritual Qi. Where did it go?" Elder Yao said to himself.

He stared at Zhang Ruochen with sparkling eyes and felt that something had changed. He asked with surprise, "Have you reached the Earth Realm?"

"In fact, I have broken through the realm!" Zhang Ruochen stood up and was also shocked by the holes in the stone wall.

Zhang Ruochen never expected that Chord of Gods could cost as much Spiritual Qi as that contained by hundreds of Spiritual Crystals. Had he not been practicing in the Secret Room, he would have had a great effect outside.

Elder Yao looked at Zhang Ruochen and thought for a moment. "I will report this to the senior officials of the School. This must be kept absolutely secret." It looked as if Elder Yao had figured something out.

"I understand." Zhang Ruochen replied.

Elder Yao continued, "Since you have attained the Earth Realm, you are now also an internal student. You are now able to register and receive your token. After you become an internal student, you'll receive more benefits. The school will spend a considerable amount of resources fostering a genius like you."

After watching Zhang Ruochen leave the Hurricane Secret Practicing Room, Elder Yao felt very perplexed and said to himself, "Has he really reached the Ultimate Realm of the Black Realm?"

Elder Yao left Mount Saint Crossing for Presbyter Hall.

The Presbyter Hall was comprised of the Silver Gowned Elder Hall and the Golden Robe Presbyter Hall.

There were 158 members in the Silver Gowned Elder Hall, 54 of whom were in the Internal Academy. Other silver gowned Elders were sent either to take office in one of the four campuses, or take charge of the business of the Martial Market Bank in one of the 36 commanderies.

The Hall Master of the Silver Gowned Elder Hall was Lei Jing, who was 94 years old. But he appeared to be in his 50s. With big eyes and a powerful back and shoulders, he bore his age well.

After hearing the report of Elder Yao, Lei Jing had a serious look on his face and pondered for a while. Then Lei Jing said, "It's impossible for him to have broken through to the Ultimate Realm. But I guess he could be close to it. According to the latest information, four months ago he had a secret battle with Yan Lixuan, the No.1 of the Profound Board, in Liu Chuanshen's mansion. At the time, the fastest speed he could achieve was 76 meters per second."

"Based on what you said, over the last four months, he has been practicing a single, advanced martial technique in the Hurricane Secret Room. If we assume that he has practiced his martial technique to succeed level, his speed will definitely have improved. I estimate that his speed will be at least 77 meters per second before he breaks through to the Earth Realm."

A chill came over Elder Yao. "Hall Master, supposing Zhang Ruochen obtains his fastest speed of 77 meters per second in the Black Realm, could he be listed in the top ten among this generation within Kunlun's Field?" Elder Yao asked.

Lei Jing nodded his head and answered, "Yes. After all, he has just attained the Earth Realm. It is too early for us to draw any conclusions now. If he can break through into the Heaven Realm within 5 years, I will definitely meet him in person."

Elder Yao frowned and said, "There are very few warriors who could reach the Heaven Realm before their thirties. Even after 5 years, Zhang Ruochen will still only be 22 years old. Could a 22-year-old warrior really break through into the Heaven Realm?"

Lei Jing gave a slight nod, and also thought that Zhang Ruochen would be unable to do it. But he mused for a while and said, "I think we could give priority to him on practice resources, and offer better treatment referring to warriors of Earth Board."

“There are only three warriors of the Earth Board in the whole Internal Academy. All of them are incredibly talented and deserve special treatment from the silver gowned Elders. But Zhang Ruochen is only in the Initial Stage of the Earth Realm. If we treat him the same as warriors of Earth Board, I think other students would be discontented.” Elder Yao was a little worried.

Lei Jing smiled and answered, “You could assign a mission to him. If he can’t become one of the top 10 in the Internal Academy within a year, you could then withdraw his privileges.”

“Well, there’s one more thing. Before I came, I found that when Zhang Ruochen was in the Black Realm, he ranked 37th on the Board of Bounty Hunter in Black Market. The reward for him was 14,700,000 silver coins. But now after attaining the Earth Realm, his reward will be much higher, which may attract many villains from the Black Market to hunt him down. I fear he won’t be able to deal with them with his present cultivation.” Elder Yao said.

Lei Jing answered, “Any strong man must go through a tough growth process. If we help him clear away all threats, it may not be in his favor. He has to face the crisis alone and overcome it himself. I believe this will be best for him.”

Elder Yao nodded his head slightly and walked away.

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After leaving Mount Saint Crossing, Zhang Ruochen went to get his token of internal student and officially become one of the internal students in the School of the Martial Market.

Being an internal students would definitely bring him a lot of benefits.

For instance, he could exchange his credit merits for a Practice Mansion and get his family to live in Devil Martial City where the School of the Martial Market would insure the safety of all the students’ families.

In addition, all internal students would receive one drop of Half-Saint’s Essence every month. They could also exchange their merit points for Half-Saint’s Essence. One drop of Half-Saint’s Essence would cost 200 merit points.

Of course, apart from the benefits, internal students should also help to handle affairs for the School.

They should complete at least one mission per quarter.

Fulfilling a task would help them get merit points.

Though Zhang Ruochen became an internal student, he was not in a hurry to exchange his merits for a Practice Mansion. Instead, he went to Duanmu Xingling’s Practice Mansion.

“Have you broken through to the Earth Realm?” Duanmu Xingling was quite joyful and looked Zhang Ruochen up and down. Then she said with a charming smile, “I’m really curious about how strong you are now. How about having a battle with me right now?”

Zhang Ruochen smiled and answered, “Okay! I also want to know how powerful I have become.”

It had been 8 months since Duanmu Xingling entered the Internal Academy. With the help of abundant practice resources from the Chikong Secret Mansion, her cultivation had reached the Advanced Stage of the Earth Realm. Such an awesome practice speed!

And most importantly, Blackie refined plenty of Icing Meridian Pills in Duanmu Xingling's Practice Mansion, all of which were consumed by Duanmu Xingling.

That's why she practiced so rapidly, or else she would have been stuck in the Mid Stage of the Earth Realm.

Just when Zhang Ruochen and Duanmu Xingling were about to start their duel, an unexpected visitor came to the Practice Mansion and stopped the battle.

That unexpected visitor was Huang Yanchen.

"Sister Chen, since our last mission of seeking colorful buckhorn in Black Wind Canyon, we haven't seen each other for a long time, right?" Sitting on the side of stone table, Duanmu Xingling ordered her maid to serve some tea with a smile.

Huang Yanchen and Zhang Ruochen also sat at the same table.

It seemed Huang Yanchen had not heard what Duanmu Xingling said. She stared at Zhang Ruochen and looked poker-faced. "You have become an internal student, haven't you?"

Zhang Ruochen remained calm and said with a faint smile, "I just made it today."

Huang Yanchen nodded and hesitated for a moment. Then she said, "I exchanged merits for a Practice Mansion for you. It's close to my mansion. Here is the key!"

Huang Yanchen took out a key and put it on the table.

Zhang Ruochen was startled by what Huang Yanchen had just said and his eyes twitched. He never thought Huang Yanchen would do this for him. He pondered for a moment and said, "Thank you! Senior sister apprentice Huang!"

"You don't need to thank me. I just don't like to see you living in junior sister apprentice Duanmu's mansion. Don't you know you will disturb her practice?" Huang Yanchen said.

Duanmu Xingling sighed slightly in her heart.

Zhang Ruochen also perceived the change in Huang Yanchen's tone. Previously, Huang Yanchen called Duanmu Xingling "Xingling". But now she called her "junior sister apprentice Duanmu".

"It was my living in senior sister apprentice Duanmu's Practice Mansion that drove them apart." Zhang Ruochen sighed.

Zhang Ruochen did not like this feeling.

All three of them fell into silence, making the atmosphere very awkward.

Duanmu Xingling broke the silence and said with a smile, "Umm... I'm going to take on a mission and need two helpers. Since junior fellow apprentice Zhang has attained the Earth Realm, we can work

together to accomplish it. The reward for this mission is high, 600 merit points. If we complete it we will each get 200 merit points. What do you think?"

Zhang Ruochen knew that Duanmu Xingling had intentionally changed the subject. So he immediately asked, "What is the mission?"

#### **Chapter 194: Major Task**

Duanmu Xingling said, "I was planning to go to the Red Elementary Relic to hunt down the Golden-Eyed Soul-Eating Beast, a third-level savage beast. This beast's eyes are worth 600 merits in the School of the Martial Market. However, I don't think I am able to defeat it because of its great power. Can you do me a favor?"

The Golden-Eyed Soul-Eating Beast's eyes had a very high medicinal value. They could be used for refining third-class pills.

*It's not so dangerous to hunt a Golden-Eyed Soul-Eating Beast whose eyes are worth 600 merits. I could go to the Red Elementary Relic with her.*

Zhang Ruochen pondered that while looking toward to Huang Yanchen.

Huang Yanchen said disdainfully, "It's a waste of time to only get 600 merits. I have a better mission. It is the most important task the school has issued recently."

Duanmu Xingling looked shocked. She asked, "What task?"

Zhang Ruochen also had a curious look on his face.

"A half year ago, the black market leaders and the Moon Worship Demonic Sect destroyed the properties of the Martial Market Bank in Yunwu Commandery. They also developed their influence on a larger scale. They began building branch gang to control the economy and trying to exclude the Martial Market Bank from Yunwu Commandery," said Huang Yanchen.

"Just moments ago, in order to handle this situation, the School of the Martial Market assigned a mission. If either external or internal students of the school kill a completed warrior of the Yellow Realm of the black market or of the Moon Worship Demonic Sect, they can earn one merit point."

"One warrior in the initial stage of the Black Realm is worth 10 merit points."

"One completed warrior of the Black Realm is worth 100 merit points."

"One warrior in the initial stage of the Earth Realm is worth 500 merit points."

...

"The stronger the enemy a student kills, the more merit points he can get. If someone can wipe out a whole branch of the black market or of the Moon Worship Demonic Sect, killing all major members beyond the Black Realm, he can earn 1,000 merits."

“Stronger branch gangs are worth even more merits. For instance, a branch gang of the heresy in Peiyun District is worth 5,000 merits because their leader is a strong warrior who has completed the Earth Realm.”

“If someone manages to exterminate a chief of heresy or of the black market, he will earn many merits.”

Zhang Ruochen’s interest was aroused. He asked, “Does the Martial Market Bank want an all-out war with the black market and the Moon Worship Demonic Sect?”

“Not exactly an all-out war. Battlefields are only in Yunwu Commandery, and only internal and external students can take part. Presbyters are forbidden,” replied Huang Yanchen.

Zhang Ruochen nodded and said, “It would be hard for the Martial Market Bank to control the situation if presbyters are involved. It may arouse an all-out war among the 36 districts. It seems like the Martial Market Bank just wants to take revenge on the black market and the Moon Worship Demonic Sect.”

Duanmu Xingling frowned gently. “All heretics of the black market and Moon Worship Demonic Sect are sinister and cruel. Sister Chen, are you sure you want to take this dangerous task?” she asked.

“We’ll see. If we don’t take it, other students will. No one wants to miss this golden opportunity,” said Huang Yanchen.

Huang Yanchen gazed directly at Zhang Ruochen. “Zhang Ruochen, would you rather go hunt the Golden-Eyed Soul-Eating Beast down with Duanmu or kill the heretics with me?” she asked.

Zhang Ruochen gave a wry smile. He knew that a promise made to either side would offend the other.

How could he choose?

“The Realm of my cultivation has not been steady. I have no intention of taking any tasks within this month except to consolidate my Realm,” said Zhang Ruochen.

Huang Yanchen bit her crystal lips slightly, cast a cold glance at him and stood up with pride, leaving Duanmu Xingling’s Secret Mansion without a word.

Zhang Ruochen watched her go. He took a deep breath and shook his head. “The black market and Moon Worship Demonic Sect have been hidden in the dark all along, and their forces are not weaker than the Martial Market Bank.” Huang thought it about superficially. To deal with the black market and Moon Worship Demonic Sect is definitely going to be a dangerous task because they must have some strategies to defend themselves.”

Duanmu Xingling nodded and said, “You are right. By no means are the black market and Moon Worship Demonic Sect two push-overs. Although they will not fight back on a large scale, they may send some young masters to deal with disciples of the Martial Market Bank.”

“Maybe it is just a way for the School of the Martial Market to train their students. Perhaps all possibilities have been taken into consideration” said Zhang Ruochen.

Duanmu Xingling smiled at him. She said, “Are you sure you won’t go to Yunwu Commandery with Sister Chen? I think she might be angry.”



“I will play it by ear!”

Zhang Ruochen put the key to the secret mansion on the table and left.

He left the Internal Academy and headed to the mansion of Liu Chuanshen while Blackie was still staying in Duanmu Xingling’s place.

Even though his fame on the Bounty Hunter Board had made many people want to kill him, he was safe in Devil Martial City. It would be a daunting task to kill an internal student of the School of the Martial Market, even for a Heavenly Realm warrior in Devil Martial City.

Moreover, Zhang Ruochen had reached the Initial Stage of the Earth Realm, rising to the rank of Martial Arts Master. Not just any killer could take his life.

When he arrived at the mansion of Liu Chuanshen once again, the first person he met was Zhang Shaochu.

Zhang Shaochu had been staying in Devil Martial City constantly. He had been promoted quickly, and reaching the Completion of the Black Realm.

“Ninth brother, thanks for your Half-Saint’s Essence which helped my growth a lot. Now my fastest outbreak rate comes up to 56 meters per second. Although I still have no hope rushing at a Warrior of the Profound Division, I can be counted as a top master below the Warrior of the Profound Division.” Zhang Shaochu said proudly. He had never imagined he could complete the Black Realm so quickly.

According to his original estimation, he had to spend at least three years to reach the present realm. With Zhang Ruochen’s help, his growth rate had ascended by leaps and bounds.

Looking at Zhang Shaochu, Zhang Ruochen considered for a moment, took out the spiritual paper and inscription pen, and then scribbled down the instructions to the Guardian Fist Technique, a mid-level Spiritual Stage martial technique.

“Fourth brother, since your martial cultivation has reached the Completion of the Black Realm, it is time to practice other exercises. I possess a fist technique named ‘Guardian Fist Technique’, which can temper your skills. If you can practice this fist technique successfully, your Body of Martial Arts will scale new heights.” Zhang Ruochen handed the spiritual paper to Zhang Shaochu.

Zhang Shaochu took the paper and read the Guardian Fist Technique carefully, soon he feeling it delicate. He put it in his sleeve instantly and said lowly to Zhang Ruochen, “Ninth brother, is this fist technique at least a low-class of spiritual martial technique?”

Zhang Ruochen smiled. He said, “It is nothing but a fist technique. If you practice it successfully, you can dash to the Warrior of the Profound Division.”

Zhang Shaochu smiled embarrassedly. “I do not have the physical ability to become a Warrior of the Profound Division. Ninth brother, did you know Senior Sister Apprentice Zi has made great progress, ranking higher and higher on the *Profound Board*, now the 142nd position. She even has the chance to dash to the top 50!” *he said*.

Zhang Ruochen nodded and said, “I would expect no less of someone with her high aptitude.

Zhang Ruochen took his leave of Zhang Shaochu and checked the rate of Kong Xuan's practice.

Kong Xuan's abilities had enhanced considerably since Zhang Ruochen gave her the *Peacock Canon*. She had completed the Yellow Realm within four months, and she had practiced the first level of *Peacock Canon* successfully, opening 27 meridians in her body.

Kong Xuan's achievement was beyond Zhang Ruochen's expectation.

Even proud sons of heaven like the Ten Prodigies of the Omen Ridge could not open so many meridians in their bodies.

Moreover, Kong Xuan was only 17 years old and her own great achievement amazed even herself.

She knew that she owed her extraordinary change to Zhang Ruochen.

If Zhang Ruochen had not given her the *Peacock Canon*, which provided her many practice resources, she could not have reached her present realm. She would still have been stuck in the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm.

But Zhang Ruochen didn't think so. In his opinion, Kong Xuan's intelligence helped her even more than the *Peacock Canon* or practice.

When Kong Xuan saw Zhang Ruochen, she saluted him at once and said with great respect, "Master."

Kong Xuan wore a pure white cloth, which matched her slender body well. Her black hair was like a waterfall and her two big eyes were full of spirituality. She could feel that Zhang Ruochen's development had become stronger through an intangible pressure.

Her master could see through her with just one eye.

Zhang Ruochen smiled and said, "I've told you, don't call me 'master' and don't salute me, either. Your cultivation has reached the Completion of the Yellow Realm, hasn't it?"

"Yes!" Kong Xuan stood up and put her hands on the chest, compressing her lips slightly. She was about to say something else, but she bit it back.

Zhang Ruochen knew she wanted to say something. He smiled at her and took out the second level practice skills of the *Peacock Canon* and held it in front of her. He asked, "How much power can you break out now?"

"Strength of 78 Bulls," said Kong Xuan softly.

After hearing that, Zhang Ruochen gave her the second level practice skills of the *Peacock Canon* and four drops of Half-Saint's Essence.

"With your strength, you now have an opportunity to win first prize at the next Yellow Board contest in an inferior district. But I hope you continue to stimulate your body's potential, to refine your Body of Martial Arts and to condense the Genuine Qi before breaking into the Black Realm. If you can learn to break out Strength of 90 Bulls while still in the Yellow Realm, it will help you a lot," said Zhang Ruochen.

Chapter 195: The Grand Pure Spiritual Fire Sky

In order to reach the Ultimate Realm of the Yellow Realm, the power of 100 bulls had to be utilized.

Since Zhang Ruochen had the advantage of possessing practice skills, in addition to the practice experience from his previous life, he was able to open 36 Meridians in his body with the help of the Scripture of Emperor Ming's Emyrean. On top of the efficacy of all kinds of cultivation resources, he had broken through to the Ultimate Realm.

Without either the Scripture of Emperor Ming's Emyrean or the experience from his last lifetime, he would never have been able to reach the Ultimate Realm, even with unlimited cultivation resources.

Although Kong Xuan did not practice the Scripture of Emperor Ming's Emyrean, the exercise that she was practicing was Peacock Canon, one of the strongest exercises of the half-peacock human clan. Therefore, she was able to open up 27 Meridians in her body.

Among all the young warriors, she was considered very outstanding.

Despite the fact that she could not break through to the Ultimate Realm, it was possible for her to strike out with the power of 90 bulls.

Kong Xuan said, "Master, I've already reached the peak of the Completion of the Yellow Realm. There's no way for me to go any further..."

Zhang Ruochen laughed and said, "Haha! If you don't have any Half-Saint's Essence, then your cultivation will probably not increase. But with the help of four drops of Half-Saint's Essence, your cultivation will probably be able to rise up a bit more."

The Half-Saint's Essence was able to expand the Qi Pool of Yellow Realm warriors so that their Qi Pool would be enlarged. At the same time, the essence could also refine the warriors' physical quality and help strengthen Kong Xuan's physical quality.

When Zhang Ruochen's cultivation was in the Yellow Realm, he did not have the chance to utilize the Half-Saint's Essence to refine his Body of Martial Arts. So it could be said that the cultivation resources that Kong Xuan received were far better than his.

However, Zhang Ruochen was not someone who cared about such minor things as cultivation resources. Instead, he was happy to nurture Kong Xuan to become a top master. Then, he would have a more powerful assistant to help him perform the tasks that he could not publically interfere in.

"With your current cultivation, you won't be able to refine the Half-Saint's Essence, so I will help you," Zhang Ruochen said.

When Zhang Ruochen had refined his first drop of the Half-Saint's Essence, he was at the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm. Given his cultivation at that time, he had struggled to withstand the powerful effects of the Half-Saint's Essence and had been on the verge of giving up.

Given that Kong Xuan's martial cultivation was only in the Completion of the Yellow Realm, she had no chance of being able to refine the Half-Saint's Essence.

“Thank you for your help, master! I’m sure that my cultivation will be elevated after this.” Kong Xuan was excited and saluted Zhang Ruochen.

Kong Xuan and Zhang Ruochen began their seclusion. One needed to refine the Half-Saint’s Essence, while the other needed to stabilize the realm.

Liu Chuanshen prepared a Secret Room for Zhang Ruochen that had once been his place for seclusion.

Once the Secret Room was closed, only people from the inside could open the door. This helped warriors stay away from any distractions from the outside world and also kept people from breaking into the Secret Room.

Kong Xuan sat cross-legged in the middle of the Secret Room. Under the guidance of Zhang Ruochen, she consumed the first drop of the Half-Saint’s Essence.

The power of the Half-Saint’s Essence felt like a breath of icy air surging into her body. Shortly after, it froze her body and a thin layer of Ice Crystals appeared on her skin.

At the moment when Kong Xuan’s consciousness became vague, a warm current entered her body from her back. It seeped into her Meridians, Blood Meridian, and Qi Pool to help her refine the Saint Power of the Half-Saint’s Essence.

She adopted the method that was recorded in the Peacock Canon. She activated her Genuine Qi, and focused all her attention toward refining the Half-Saint’s Essence.

Zhang Ruochen also sat cross-legged behind Kong Xuan and pointed his finger at the Sacred Meridian on her back. Genuine Qi constantly surged out from his fingertip, as if it had transformed into a blazing fire, and entered Kong Xuan’s body through her Sacred Meridian.

Eventually, Kong Xuan was able to independently master the Saint Power of the Half-Saint’s Essence and began to actively refine the Saint Power. A gentle blue light radiated from her skin.

“Her talent is indeed very good!” Zhang Ruochen withdrew his finger and nodded in approval as he watched Kong Xuan.

Afterward, he sat off to the side and practiced the Scripture of Emperor Ming’s Emphyrean instead of wasting time looking at Kong Xuan.

He had already practiced the “Ming’s Purifying Jade Sky”, the second level of the Scripture of Emperor Ming’s Emphyrean. He could now progress to the third level, “The Grand Pure Spiritual Fire Sky”.

Not only did the third level of the Scripture of Emperor Ming’s Emphyrean have exercises, but also a spiritual method called the “Spiritual Fire Genuine Qi”.

In other words, once he reached the third level of the Scripture of Emperor Ming’s Emphyrean, the Genuine Qi in his body would turn into fire and become “Spiritual Fire”.

Spiritual Fire, on the other hand, was more terrifying than normal fire as it could change and mutate.

Zhang Ruochen sat cross-legged and refined in the Secret Room. He put his hands together and Genuine Qi surged out from his palm to form a fire-like shape.

The fire gradually spread between his fingers and wrapped around his arms, shoulders, chest, and finally, it completely wrapped his body inside the flame.

It was strange that the fire apparently carried no heat, and Zhang Ruochen's clothes suffered no fire damage.

Along with practicing the third level of the Scripture of Emperor Ming's Empyrean, Zhang Ruochen's cultivation had increased steadily. The Pure Jade Genuine Qi in his body had transformed into Spiritual Fire Genuine Qi.

One month passed quickly. Zhang Ruochen had finally consolidated his realm so that his Genuine Qi was like an everlasting flame.

It looked like the Qi Sea in the space between his eyebrows had turned into a massive stove.

If he fully activated the Genuine Qi in his body, a flame-shaped mark would appear between his eyebrows and explode with red-hot energy.

"The quality of my Genuine Qi has finally converted after practicing to the third level of the Scripture of Emperor Ming's Empyrean." Zhang Ruochen was exceptionally happy as he could feel that his body was full of power. He had finally become one of the Martial Arts masters.

Kong Xuan had fully refined the four drops of the Half-Saint's Essence with the help of Zhang Ruochen. Her cultivation had been greatly increased. Currently, she was able to break out with the Strength of 88 Bulls at most.

Although she did not reach the Strength of 90 bulls as Zhang Ruochen had expected, what she had achieved was indeed brilliant.

Even when Zhang Tiangui, the top prodigy of the 36 commanderies in Omen Ridge, reached the Yellow Realm, he was not as strong as Kong Xuan.

When Zhang Ruochen finished his seclusion, Kong Xuan had also opened up her Qi Lake and broken her cultivation through to the Initial Stage of the Black Realm.

He brought Kong Xuan, who had just broken through to a higher realm, to the Internal Academy and reached the secret practice mansion that Huang Yanchen had exchanged for him.

He took out a key and opened the door of the secret practice mansion.

This mansion was extremely spacious, it had a Martial Arts field, a library, and dormitories. There was even a garden to grow Spiritual Doses to feed the savage beast in the savage beast yard.

"I guess it costs more than a hundred merit points to exchange for this magnificent secret practice mansion." Zhang Ruochen was quite shocked and felt incredible upon entering the mansion.

This mansion was even larger than the secret practice mansions of Duanmu Xingling and Chen Xier. It did not look like a mansion where a student lived.

What Zhang Ruochen was not aware of was that Huang Yanchen had indeed spent a hundred merit points in exchange for the secret practice mansion for him. Yet, because of a few words from the silver-

gowned Elder Hall Master, he expanded the mansion 10 times larger and it was comparable to the mansion of a silver-gowned Elder.

That was the privilege of being a student on the Earth Board.

Kong Xuan was also astonished by Zhang Ruochen's secret practice mansion. She asked, "Master, I guess that this mansion cost at least hundreds of thousands of silver coins?"

"Well... I'm not sure what's going on. I'll go ask senior sister apprentice Huang in person later."

He gazed at Kong Xuan and said, "From now on, you will help me arrange everything in this mansion. If you need any maids or servants, just let me know."

"Thank you for trusting me, master," said Kong Xuan.

He was definitely fortunate to be able to live in the Internal Academy. The Academy was safe and full of a dense Spiritual Qi and it was incomparable to any other place.

After everything had been arranged, Zhang Ruochen headed toward Huang Yanchen's secret practice mansion. Since the two mansions were close to each other, Zhang Ruochen arrived outside her mansion in just a moment.

However, no one opened the door when he knocked. It seemed that there was not even a maid inside the mansion.

"Maybe senior sister apprentice Huang received a mission from the School of the Martial Market and went to the Yunwu Commandery to kill the heretics of the Black Market and the Moon Worship Demonic Sect?"

After Zhang Ruochen left Huang Yanchen's secret practice mansion, he headed to Duanmu Xingling's. He did not expect that the one who answered the door would be Blackie.

Blackie walked on two feet and squeezed a bamboo stick between his paws. He glanced at Zhang Ruochen and asked, "Zhang Ruochen, are you looking for the little girl, Duanmu?"

Zhang Ruochen saw that Blackie had grown even plumper and laughed, "Yeah. Is she here in the mansion?"

Blackie shook his head and responded, "She left for the Yunwu Commandery a month ago to complete a mission and hasn't returned yet. I thought that you've also gone back to the Yunwu Commandery. What's up? Why haven't you gone on a mission?"

Zhang Ruochen also shook his head and revealed a meditative look. He asked, "Did many students go to the Yunwu Commandery?"

Blackie said, "I heard that 90% of the Internal Academy students have made their way to the Yunwu Commandery, even the external students of the four campuses have rushed there to earn merits. The little girl, Duanmu, didn't want to go at first. However, she herself ran off to the Yunwu Commandery after receiving a letter."

Zhang Ruochen said, "Well, it's indeed a good chance of earning merits when the Martial Market Bank declares war on the Black Market and the Moon Worship Demonic Sect."

Blackie continued, "I also heard that you've been picked by the Elders and become their key nurturing student. Think about it, you've just broken through to the Earth Realm and you can enjoy the privileges of being a student on the Earth Board."

"How do I not know anything about this?" Zhang Ruochen was slightly shocked.

He then recalled his luxurious secret practice mansion and could not believe that this was the prestigious treatment of an Earth Board student.

Blackie responded, "I'm sure the entire School of the Martial Market knows about it!" "Many people have said that you received such treatment because of Commandery Princess Yanchen. Some have also said that since you hang around Chen Xier, the superior officials wanted to take special care of you. Fortunately, those students have all rushed to the Yunwu Commandery. Otherwise, they would have challenged you out of jealousy."

Zhang Ruochen laughed casually and said, "Since I can enjoy the privilege of being an Earth Board student, I guess I'll receive quite a lot of cultivation resources?"

An ordinary internal student would receive one drop of the Half-Saint's Essence every month and was allowed to enter the first level of the library to study the martial techniques as well as the exercises.

A student on the Earth Board would surely receive better resources.

Blackie asked, "So, Zhang Ruochen, what's your plan?"

"I'll go get the cultivation resources, and... I think I'll return to the Yunwu Commandery and find out what kind of masters are in the Black Market and the Moon Worship Demonic Sect." Zhang Ruochen narrowed his eyes and displayed a terrifying spirit.

Since he had reached the Earth Realm, he wanted to fight with more warriors in order to help himself become even more powerful.

Chapter 196: Lingyue Town

Contrary to Zhang Ruochen's expectations, his four months of accumulation netted him a single drop of Holy Water and 40 drops of Half Saint's Essence.

If he'd gotten these items on the Black Market, a drop of Holy Water and 40 drops of Half-Saint's Essence would definitely cost more than 20,000,000 silver coins.

Such rich resources would shock even the legendary warriors of the Heaven Realm.

Of course, the Martial Market bank had its own sources; for them, the actual cost of a drop of Holy water and 40 drops of Half-Saint's Essence would probably be just a tenth of the market price, if not lower.

“Ordinary external students only receive a drop of Half-Saint’s Essence once a year from the school while the Internal students receive one per month. I, on the other hand, received 10 drops per month and a Holy Water drop per quarter. Earth Board students truly are treated luxuriously!” Zhang Ruochen was definitely in a good mood.

After getting his cultivation resources, he gave Kong Xuan 10 drops of Half-Saint’s Essence to raise her physical quality.

Kong Xuan still couldn’t directly refine the Half-Saint’s Essence with her current cultivation. Therefore, Zhang taught her a method where she slowly absorbed Half-Saint’s Essence that had been poured into a pool of Holy Water.

Although this method diluted the efficacy of the Half-Saint’s Essence, this was the best way for Kong Xuan to refine it.

Afterwards, Zhang Ruochen gave Zhang Shaochu the remaining 10 drops of Half-Saint’s Essence to help him become a Warrior of Division Profound.

His physical quality wasn’t quite on the level of a Warrior of Division Profound, Still, with the power of the Jingang Fist and copious amounts of Half-Saint’s Essence, Zhang Shaochu still had a chance to reach the level of a Warrior of Division Profound.

After all, Zhang Shaochu was talented enough to become an external student of the Western Campus.

10 drops of Half-Saint’s Essence cost several million silver coins, enough to buy a whole city. Only someone like Zhang Ruochen would be generous enough to provide such gifts to others.

After settling their affairs, Zhang Ruochen and Blackie departed Devil Martial City and headed back to Yunwu Commandery.

To avoid detection, Zhang Ruochen hid inside the Time and Space Spinel before leaving Devil Martial City. He refused to emerge until they left the city far behind.

“Do you really need to be so careful? Devil Martial City isn’t that dangerous,” Blackie said, glancing at Zhang Ruochen.

“The Black Market and Moon Worship Demonic Sect has undercover spies all over Devil Martial City,” Zhang Ruochen said. “They even sent them to infiltrate the Internal Academy of the Martial Market School. I need to be careful, or I’ll never see the blow that kills me.” Zhang Ruochen fell silent and put on a metal mask that covered half his face.

It was important to keep in mind that the price on Zhang Ruochen’s head was very high. In fact, he currently ranked 37th on the Board of Bounty Hunters.

Because of this, Zhang Ruochen couldn’t casually reveal his identity. If he drew the attention of Heaven Realm heretics, he couldn’t escape them with his current cultivation.

“I’ve almost finished refining that Electric Meridian Pill you wanted. I’d best continue refining it in the internal space of the Time and Space Spinel.” Blackie hopped into the air, transformed into a black thread and slithered into the internal space of the Time and Space Spinel.



Blackie had spent most of his stay at Duanmu Xingling's secret practice mansion researching how to refine the Electric Meridian Pill. After countless experiments, the final, refined pill was almost in his grasp.

Zhang Ruochen's Martial Soul possessed both space nature and thunder nature in tandem.

"If he can actually refine that Electric meridian Pill, it should elevate my Genuine Qi quality and Martial Soul degree even further." Zhang Ruochen was really looking forward to this.

The royal family would definitely be affected by the Martial Market Bank's declaration of war against the Black Market and the Moon Worship Demonic Sect located in Yunwu Commandery. For this reason, Zhang Ruochen decided to return to Yunwu City.

Without a doubt, Yunwu City would lie at the center of this brewing storm.

Perched on the back of his third-level lower-class Snowflake Eagle, Zhang Ruochen took out the tome entitled "Mystery of Time and Space". He studied the book in his hands while continuing to meditate on the secrets of the Space Domain.

After breaking through into the Earth Realm, Zhang Ruochen's Space Domain had already expanded to a maximum range of more than 300 meters: his domain could cover a fairly wide region of space now.

However, his mastery of the Space Domain was elementary at best. Currently, he could only use simple techniques like "Spatial Warps" and "Spatial Freezing".

According to the "Mystery of Time and Space" volume, by drawing on massive power of the Space Domain, one could swiftly cast "Spatial Movement", "Spatial Rift", "Spatial Collapse", "Spatial Dreamscape" and many other terrifying techniques.

"Spatial Rift" and "Spatial Collapse" could kill people without leaving any traces. An opponent would be swallowed by space before they could even react.

"Let's study this 'Spatial Rift' technique first."

Zhang Ruochen held up the "Mystery of Time and Space" volume, activated his Martial Soul and gradually released his Space Domain, extending it around him to cover an area of around 300 meters.

"Spatial Rift!"

Zhang Ruochen flicked his fingers. 10 meters away, space distorted around a patch of air, ripples spreading outward like waves on water.

Otherwise, his attempt was unsuccessful.

"This 'Spatial Rift' really is more difficult to practice than the 'Spatial Warp'. If I manage to successfully practice this 'Spatial Rift' technique, it will definitely strengthen my destructive power.'

Zhang Ruochen kept practicing and practicing.

The longer he studied, the more he came to understand the nature of the 'Spatial Rift'. At times throughout his practice, he was able to create small fractures in space, tiny 'Spatial Rifts' that formed in the air.

Time flew by, as did the Snowflake Eagle. After two days of travel, the Snowflake Eagle crossed the border into Yunwu Commandery.

“Spatial Rift!”

Zhang Ruochen stood upright on the Snowflake Eagle’s back, transferred his Genuine Qi to his fingertip and gestured with his arm. The space around him shivered slightly.

“CRASH!”

A half-meter long Spatial Rift resembling a gaping maw appeared in the air. This fissure sucked in all the air around it, forming a powerful vortex with the Spatial Rift at its center.

Zhang Ruochen caught a glimpse of the primordial nothingness within the Spatial Rift, a chaos that could swallow the world.

The Spatial Rift stayed open for just a brief window of time, then immediately closed.

“Magnificent! So this is the power of space! A Heaven Realm Warrior hit by this Spatial Rift would surely die, or at least suffer serious injuries.” Zhang Ruochen allowed himself a small smile as he watched the Spatial Rift slowly close up.

Zhang Ruochen was obviously aware of the keen danger sense warriors of the Heaven Realm possessed. If the ripples of a nascent Spatial Rift appeared, they would immediately retreat from that area.

At his current level, Zhang Ruochen couldn’t use his Spatial Rift technique to harm warriors from the Heaven Realm.

That is, unless he successfully mastered “Spatial Collapse”. Once he unlocked that technique, warriors of the Heaven Realm wouldn’t be able to escape even if they wanted to.

That being said, the “Spatial Collapse” was more difficult to practice than the “Spatial Rift”.

Zhang Ruochen was barely able to cast “Spatial Rift” as is: he needed more time to become adept at the “Spatial Collapse” technique.

He leaned down and gently stroked the Snowflake Eagle’s feathers. “Hey, Snowflake Eagle,” he said. “You’re probably tired too after flying for two days non-stop. Let’s land on the ground and rest for a bit.”

The Snowflake Eagle let out a sharp grunt and quickly dove towards the ground.

Zhang Ruochen led the Snowflake Eagle along an official road with green flagstones, eventually reaching a fairly old town.

There were many old towns like this in Yunwu Commandery. Though they weren’t as prosperous as large-scale cities, they contained all the necessities of life.

This village was called “Lingyue Town”.

Recently, Lingyue Town has been thrown into turmoil by multiple incidents where warriors gone shopping had gotten into huge altercations with each other.

This turmoil didn't keep warriors away from Lingyue; instead, it attracted even more of them to the town.

Lin Ningshan and Lin Chenyu, two external students from the Yuntai Suzerain, were currently in Lingyue Town.

"Brother, why is the Yuntai Suzerain intervening in the war between the School of the Martial Market, the Black Market and the Moon Worship Demonic Sect?" Lin Ningshan asked while guiding his massive, five-meter tall savage beast forward.

Lin Chenyu, leading a savage beast of his own, had a pale look about him and gave off a sense of coldness. "Do you really think the Martial Market School can defeat the Black Market and Moon Worship Demonic Sect on its own?" he said with a sneer. "Our senior officials ought to reach some kind of accord with the Martial Market School so the Yuntai Suzerain can send us to intervene in this war."

They passed by two other warriors who were drinking on the street while discussing recent major events.

Lin Chenyu and Lin Ningshan stopped to listen, each interested in what these warriors had to say.

The warrior sitting on the left had only one eye. He possessed a burly physique, both tough and stocky, and spoke in a rough voice. "Rumor has it that Earth Blaze City, controlled by the Black Market, is located near Lingyue Town," he said. "The students of the Martial Market School have fought seven bloody battles there in an effort to destroy Earth Blaze City. Hundreds of warriors have already died."

The warrior sitting on the right only wore a pair of hide trousers. He was bare-chested and held a saber the size of a door that must have weighed at least 500 kilograms.

"Hasn't the Black Market suffered great losses?" the bare-chested warrior replied.

The warrior on the left shook his head. "Some Black Market warriors lost their lives," he said, "but the Martial Market School suffered bigger losses. They say seven School students have disappeared here in Lingyue Town. Some of them were caught, while others were killed by the Black Market."

"How many resources does the School spend fostering a single student? Even losing just one external student would give the Martial Market School cause for distress. I even heard that the School has sent some masters to Lingyue Town in preparation to raze both the Black Market and Earth Blaze City to the ground..."

Lin Chenyu and Lin Ningshan glanced at each other and prepared to leave. Suddenly, the two warriors stood up and blocked their way.

"Hey! You two! You're not some of those masters sent by the Martial Market School, are you?" The big guy in savage beast hide trousers asked, brandishing his saber and sneering at them with cold eyes.

These two warriors were masters from the Black Market. Their conversation had been deliberately choreographed to draw out students from the School of the Martial Market.

Since Lin Chenyu and Lin Ningshan both looked fairly young and had stopped to listen to their conversation, the Black Market warriors had concluded they were probably students from the School.

Even if they were just students from the School, discovering them was a huge achievement. These two wicked masters would never let a chance like this slip through their fingers.

#### Chapter 197: The Black Tiger Hall

Lin Chenyu raised his eyebrows slightly, stared disdainfully at the two warriors and sneered, "Get out of my way before I lose my temper!"

The warrior carrying the massive saber moved to flank Lin Chenyu's left side. "It seems I was right," he said coldly. "Only a student from the School of the Martial Market would be so arrogant."

The one-eyed warrior ran his tongue across his lips. "Such a pretty little girl!" he said, staring at Lin Ningshan's beautiful body with a sleazy smile. "What's your age?"

Lin Ningshan's brow wrinkled. "Your left eye," she said, "did someone gouge it out to punish your disgusting attitude?"

"Such a sharp tongue!"

The one-eyed warrior's face fell. "I guess you two don't know who we are," he said with a sneer. "We're the Hong Brothers— Hong Lei and Hong Meng of the Black Tiger Hall. Little girl, if you behave and serve your uncle well, maybe you'll come with us to the Earth Blaze City alive. If you don't, death is your only fate!"

"Black Tiger Hall!" Lin Chenyu exclaimed, a faint spark of light flashing in the pupils of his narrowed eyes.

All in all, the Black Market in Yunwu Commandery was divided into 10 powerful factions. Black Tiger Hall ranked ninth among them in strength.

Though the power of Black Tiger Hall couldn't be compared to the Hades Department, they were still an evil school that frightened many warriors in the Yunwu Commandery.

Both Hong Lei and Hong Meng were masters of the Black Tiger Hall.

"Run! Black Tiger Hall members are monsters in human form that will devour us whole!"

"I can't believe it's Hong Lei and Hong Meng. They said that one lusts after women, the other has a lust for killing and that both are the cruelest villains from Black Tiger Hall."

...

...

The moment they heard the name "Black Tiger Hall", all the warriors and citizens in the area fled in a state of panic, as if they'd come face-to-face with ravening beasts or natural disasters.

Hong Lei and Hong Meng looked upon the fleeing warriors with amusement, then turned their gazes back over to Lin Chenyu and Lin Ningshan, looking even more smug than before.

"Black Tiger Hall might be a power to be reckoned with in the Yunwu Commandery, but it's nothing to write home about in Omen Ridge." Lin Chenyu told them, voice shrill and scornful.

“So you guys really are students from the Martial Market School. Perfect! Once you’re captured, we should be able to exchange you two for oodles of cash and cultivation resources!”

“Speaking of which,” Hong Meng said, “the little girl’s body and face are first-class. I’m sure I could sell her to Rosefinch Tower for a high price.”

Hong Lei’s eyes were fixed on Lin Ningshan’s chest. “We should have some fun with the girl before selling her!” he said, letting out a tittering laugh.

“How dare you!”

Lin Ningshan clenched her teeth. She drew her saber, eyes burning like twin stars, and thrust at them with blinding speed.

“Sacred Guiding Sword! ”

“Swish!” She hurled an eight-meter line of Sword Breath from the edge of her sword that carved a furrow along the ground as it rushed outward.

“Ha ha! The little girl has a pretty face and brilliant sword skills. Oh, I just can’t contain myself!”

Hong Lei used a martial footwork technique to step sideways and dodge Lin Ningshan’s Sword Breath.

Just as Lin Ningshan prepared to unleash the second movement of her sword technique, Hong Lei materialized behind her back and set his dagger against her neck. “Little kid,” he said, giggling into her ears, “you still have a long way to go before you can catch up to me.”

Lin Ningshan, shocked at Hong Lei’s speed, felt a surge of icy air pouring off his dagger. In moments, her neck was practically frozen from cold; she didn’t dare to move an inch.

Her opponent had defeated her in a single move, even though she was a qualified Martial Arts master that had reached the Dawn State of the Black Realm.

These two Black Tiger Hall heretics truly had strong abilities; they couldn’t be underestimated.

“Her skin is as white as snow. Oh, how i want to kiss it!”

Hong Lei leaned in, lips seeking Lin Ningshan’s snow-white neck. Suddenly, his body shivered and he spat out a mouthful of blood. He clutched his chest with both hands and staggered backwards.

Hong Lei turned and saw Lin Chenyu standing 10 steps away. “You...” he said, voice hoarse. “You...!”

“Bang!”

Hong Lei fell to the ground, blood gushing from his body.

Lin Chenyu held up his bloody sword, a blade that had appeared out of nowhere. He turned his frosty gaze towards Hong Lei. “If you’ve got the guts to mess with my sister, clearly you’ve grown tired of life,” he said with a gentle chuckle.

Hong Meng had been keeping an eye on Lin Chenyu from his position on the sidelines. Even so, he hadn’t seen the stroke Lin Chenyu used to take Hong Lei’s life.

“You’re a Warrior of Division Profound?” Hong Meng stared at Lin Chenyu, hands involuntarily trembling at his sides.

Only Warriors of the Division Profound could be so formidable.

Although Hong Meng’s cultivation had reached the Completion of the Black Realm, he knew that a Warrior of Division Profound could kill him in a single move.

“Lin Chenyu, the 974th name on the Profound Board,” Lin Chenyu said, lips curving up into a smile.

After confirming that he was a Warrior of Division Profound, Hong Meng immediately turned and tried to escape.

“So now you want to run away?”

Lin Chenyu’s eyes narrowed, He swung his sword and hurled forth an arc of Sword Breath.

“Sacred Wave Sword!”

Lin Chenyu also used a Sacred Sword Skill technique, but since his mastery of sword techniques was far above Lin Ningshan’s, his Sword Breath flew dozens of meters.

“SHUNK!”

Hong Meng’s head flew free from his body and landed on the ground like a ball.

Ruby blood spilled onto the earth.

Lin Chenyu sheathed his sword. “Ningshan,” he said. “Take both their heads back to the Yuntai Suzerain. I should be able to exchange them for two third-class pills.”

Now that the Yuntai Suzerain had joined this war, disciples of the Yuntai Suzerain would naturally receive rewards for killing Black Market warriors.

“Awoo!”

A deafening roar echoed down the street from a distance, stirring up a hurricane.

Sand and stones suddenly flew through the air, spiraling up into the sky like falling leaves.

Lin Chenyu searched for the source of the sound. All he could see was a golden-spotted giant tiger wandering around near the far end of the street.

Every step the giant golden-spotted tiger took made the ground tremble.

A man with wild, ruffled hair and a full beard rode on the giant tiger’s back.

He carried a broad, giant silver axe nearly a meter long on his back. Dozens of grim looking warriors followed behind him and surrounded Lin Chenyu and Lin Ningshan.

“Do you think you can just walk away after killing a member of Black Tiger Hall?” the man asked, looking down on Lin Chenyu from his tiger steed. He gave off an aura of power and vigor.

Lin Ningshan's face turned pale. She retreated six steps and hid behind Lin Chenyu out of fear for this man.

"Who are you?" Lin Chenyu asked, his countenance turning grave.

"Nie Zhenghan of the Black Tiger Hall."

The man with the giant silver axe over his shoulder shifted his gaze towards Lin Ningshan. "I know you're students from the Yuntai Suzerain, not the Martial Market School," he said. "However, you owe the Black Tiger Hall a wergild for killing Hong Lei and Hong Meng. That girl will be our blood price. Come, men; let's take her back with us to Earth Blaze City!"

"I'd like to see you try it!"

Lin Chenyu leapt into the air. Large amounts of Genuine Qi surged from his body through the sword he held in his hands, activating the inscriptions along the blade.

"BOOM!"

Rays of light spilled from the tip of the sword as it pulled in the surrounding Spiritual Qi.

Nie Zhenghan sneered, drew the silver war axe from his back and jumped off the back of his giant golden-spotted tiger, soaring more than 10 meters into the air. As he descended, he swung his ax towards Lin Chenyu with blinding speed.

"Sacred Plenilune Sword!"

Lin Chenyu mustered all his Genuine Qi as he swung his sword.

"CRACK!"

Lin Chenyu's sword was sundered by the giant silver axe. The giant axe traced a silver line in the air, cleaved through Lin Chenyu's body, and severed his right arm.

"AHHH...!"

Lin Chenyu shrieked and put pressure on the bleeding stump of his arm. He fell to the ground, rolling back and forth in the pool of his own blood.

"Pah!"

Nie Zhenghan spat on the ground and shouldered his silver war axe. "Since you're a disciple of the Yuntai Suzerain," he said with disdain, "I'll let you live this time!"

Nie Zhenghan then turned to look at Lin Ningshan, lifting her chin up with his finger to better drink in her beautiful face. "You're certainly a pretty woman," he said with a smile. "We'll bring you back to be the Hall Owner's concubine."

Lin Ningshan was in shock, her mind a complete blank. She couldn't believe what just happened: how could a powerful warrior like her brother get his arm chopped off by a single swing of an axe?

Looking behind Nie Zhenghan, Lin Ningshan was scared to death.

“You...you should let me go...I’m the Seventh Prince’s fiancé...” Lin Ningshan swung her sword, forcing back the two evil warriors trying to seize her.

“Forget about the Seventh Prince. After tonight, you’ll become the Hall Owner’s woman,” one of the warriors said with a chuckle.

“Ha Ha! Perhaps she’ll be shared among the brothers of Black Tiger Hall!” Another warrior said, prowling towards Lin Ningshan.

“Don’t waste any time,” Nie Zhenghan said, sounding a little annoyed. “Tie her up and send her to Earth Blaze City.”

Two warriors who had cultivated to the Final State of the Black Realm simultaneously attacked Lin Ningshan. They quickly took her down, bound her in metal chains, and strapped her to the giant, golden-spotted tiger’s back.

Lin Ningshan had always been a very arrogant individual who never suffered such setbacks. If she was to be taken to Earth Blaze City, she would undoubtedly fall into the hands of a den of monsters.

What should she do now?

The heretical warriors all looked on her with smoldering eyes, seeming to strip the clothes from her body with their gaze. Lin Ningshan felt completely helpless and scared. Tears dripped from her eyes.

Just as the marching warriors of Black Tiger Hall reached the entrance of Lingyue Town, they ran into a young man wearing a metal mask.

The youth, leading a Snowflake Eagle behind him, looked to be in his teens. He slowly strode forward and stopped in front of the gathered Black Tiger Hall heretics.

“You’ve got some nerve, Kid, standing in the way of the Black Tiger Hall!” one of the Evil Warriors grunted. “Are you looking for someone to end your life? If you aren’t, beat it!”

Nie Zhenghan shot a glare at the Evil Warrior. The heretic’s mouth snapped shut and stayed shut.

The other Evil Warriors couldn’t tell how powerful the young man was. Nie Zhenghan, however was able to judge the young man’s strength based on the Snowflake Eagle he held—a third-level savage bird.

A third-level savage bird’s combat power was equal to the ability of a warrior from the Earth Realm.

It could also move much faster than an ordinary Earth Realm warrior.

To tame a third-level savage bird and use it as a mount, the youth had to be someone extraordinary.

Nie Zhenghan stared at the young man and gave him a small cupped-fist salute. “I’m Nie Zhenghan of the Black Tiger Hall. What should I call you?” he asked.

Zhang Ruochen looked at Nie Zhenghan, then turned his gaze towards Lin Ningshan, currently tied up on the back of the giant golden-spotted tiger. “Black Tiger Hall?” he said, keeping his expression blank. “The Black Tiger Hall of the Black Market?”

Nie Zhenghan narrowed his eyes. “That’s correct,” he replied.



Zhang Ruochen nodded. "Good," he said. "I was looking for you guys. If you bring me to Earth Blaze City, I'll consider sparing your lives."

Zhang Ruochen never thought he would encounter heretics of the Black Market in such a small town.

Since he had bumped into them, he decided to build some experience and earn merit...by destroying one of the branches of the Black Market.

Chapter 198: Collapse at the First Blow

After hearing Zhang Ruochen's words, the Evil Warriors were stunned speechless at first. Then they laughed out loud.

An Evil Warrior, who rode on a Bell Horse with an iron stick that was about the size of a bowl in his hand, laughed and said, "Little boy, are you a fool? You're going to spare our lives? Do you think you're the Ten Prodigies of Omen Ridge?"

Lin Ningshan, who sat on the back of the giant golden spot tiger, looked up and glanced at the teen in the distance who was wearing a mask. She felt he was somewhat familiar.

His temperament had changed greatly. He wore a metal mask so Ningshan did not recognize him, yet she felt that he was a kind of familiar.

She could tell that the teen had blocked the way of the heretics of the Black Tiger Hall on purpose. Who was he indeed? How dared he oppose the Black Tiger Hall?

A desire to survive stirred in her heart. She shouted, "I'm a disciple of Yuntai Suzerain, can you please save my life? I'll be very grateful and give you a substantial reward."

Nie Zhenghan glanced at Lin Ningshan and said with a cold and deep voice, "If you dare to say one more word, I shall cut out your tongue."

Lin Ningshan felt intimidated by Nie Zhenghan's powerful aura of Martial Arts. She instantly closed her mouth and stared at the teen in the distance pathetically.

Now, he was her only hope.

Nie Zhenghan gazed at Zhang Ruochen and said in a deep voice, "Could it be that you really want to fight against the Black Tiger Hall?"

Zhang Ruochen said blankly, "I'll say it once again, I just want to go to Earth Blaze City. If you can lead the way I'll spare your life. Of course, you people of the Black Tiger Hall have done all kinds of evil, therefore you must be punished. I can spare your lives, but you must suffer greatly."

"Are you going to punish us?" Nie Zhenghan asked.

"I am thinking that you should be put in prison for 10 or 20 years," Zhang Ruochen responded.

"What a tone! I, Ji the Third, would like to see how strong you are!"

With an iron stick in his hand, the warrior rode on the Bell Horse and suddenly rushed toward Zhang Ruochen.

“Rumble!”

The Bell Horse dashed forward, making the earth shook.

Ji the Third’s cultivation was in the Final State of the Black Realm. He was the right-hand man of Nie Zhenghan. The Blood Soul Stick in his hand was a third class Genuine Martial Arms that had killed numerous masters of Martial Arts.

With the Genuine Qi swarming into the Blood Soul Stick, the nine Inscriptions of Fire Series in it were activated instantly.

The Blood Soul Stick was totally covered in flames and let out a “Chichi!” sound.

“Waaa!”

Ji the Third held the stick with one hand and suddenly attacked toward Zhang Ruochen’s head. A hot wave of flames transformed into streams of flame lights that swarmed toward Zhang Ruochen.

Zhang Ruochen stood still and did not move an inch.

Ji the Third felt very delighted because he thought that he had met a fool who was intimidated by his momentum. Therefore, he didn’t dare to move even an inch.

Lin Ningshan was pretty nervous as well. Her bright eyes fastened on the teen in the distance. “Could it be possible that he just bluffed on purpose?”

“Boom!”

The Blood Soul Stick was blocked by a layer of Genuine Qi when it was only half a foot away from Zhang Ruochen’s head.

Ji the Third could feel the tremendous power that swarmed out from the Blood Soul Stick. It made the flesh between his thumb and index finger split and the Blood Soul Stick flew out of his hand.

“Duang!” The Blood Soul Stick fell on the ground and smashed a 500 kilogram stone.

Ji the Third was terribly shocked and exclaimed, “The Genuine Qi hood that can protect the body! Be careful, he is a Martial Arts master of the Earth Realm.”

Riding on his Bell Horse, Ji the Third immediately fled.

Zhang Ruochen didn’t try to kill Ji the Third. He stood still as he had before, looked pretty calm.

The evil masters of the Black Tiger Hall were all greatly shocked. Their faces turned pale as they gazed at the teen across from them, feeling quite impressed.

Although the teen wore a metal mask, they could still tell that he was very young and definitely no more than 20 years old.

The teen was fairly terrified because he had reached the Earth Realm at such an early age!

Nie Zhenghan ranked fourth in the Black Tiger Hall, but he had not reached the Earth Realm until he was in his 50s.

Nie Zhenghan took out his giant silver axe and held it in his hand. He gazed at Zhang Ruochen vigilantly and asked, "Are you an Internal disciple of the School of the Martial Market?"

Zhang Ruochen smiled slightly and said, "That's right."

All of the Evil Warriors of the Black Tiger Hall felt nervous now. They already knew that masters of the School of the Martial Market had come to Lingyue Town and they had prepared emotionally. However, when seeing the master of the School of the Martial Market in person, they also felt nervous.

This was the Internal disciple of the School of the Martial Market. Of course, he was a top master.

"Attack!"

Nie Zhenghan shouted out loudly.

The Evil Warriors of the Black Tiger Hall all scattered and formed a huge circle around Zhang Ruochen.

Every Evil Warrior held a jade stone in his hand and infused Genuine Qi into it. Then, an Inscription of Array flew out from it.

Over 10 Inscriptions of Array combined together and formed a huge array. The Evil Warriors who held them were totally integrated and became a whole.

"Combined Attack."

Zhang Ruochen stood at the center of the array without showing any panic. He just nodded and said, "Interesting."

Combined Attacks were used widely in the Martial Arts world.

The Array Master carved the Inscription of Array in advance in the jade stone, which was called an "array base". Warriors only needed to infuse their Genuine Qi into the array base of the jade stone to activate the Inscription of Array.

The more array bases, the stronger the warriors. Besides, the Combined Attack would be more powerful as well.

A set of Combined Attacks needed at least two array bases and two warriors to activate the array.

Some super Combined Attacks could have over 10,000 array bases. Its power was strong and beyond imagination.

Generally speaking, if 10 warriors in the Dawn State of the Yellow Realm used a Combined Attack, they could deal with a warrior in the Initial Stage of the Black Realm.

The aim of the Combined Attack was to allow warriors to release the Genuine Qi in their body in a short period of time and combine it together so they could explode out a power that was several times stronger than they could individually.

Controlling this kind of Combined Attack would exhaust the Genuine Qi of the warriors very quickly.

If the warrior who attacked exhausted his Genuine Qi, then the array would collapse without even being attacked.

There were a total of 67 Evil Warriors of the Black Tiger Hall. Among them, 57 were in the Yellow Realm, 9 were in the Black Realm, and only Nie Zhenghan was in the Earth Realm.

All of them held the jade stone array base. The jade stone array base that Nie Zhenghan held had 20 Inscriptions of Array. Every Inscription of Array was very thick and strong, just like an array pole, and they supported the array.

Among the nine warriors in the Black Realm who held the jade stone array bases, some controlled three inscriptions, others controlled 10 inscriptions. The inscriptions were very thick and became the second level poles of the array.

The 57 warriors in the Yellow Realm only controlled one Inscription of Array.

Under the effect of the Combined Attack, 67 warriors combined their power together.

“A set of Combined Attacks would cost a million silver coins at least!” Zhang Ruochen thought to himself.

“Fire Dragon lock,” Nie Zhenghan shouted out loud.

The Incipations of Array were fully activated. They continued rotating and streaks of flames condensed outward.

The flames mingled together and formed a 10-meter-long fire dragon. It flapped its wings, stretched out its giant claws, and swung toward Zhang Ruochen’s head.

“So vulnerable!”

Zhang Ruochen thrust out a palm out and a strong palm force swarmed out, forming a one-meter-palm print of Genuine Qi.

“Boom!”

The palm print of Genuine Qi shattered the fire dragon.

“Awesome!” Nie Zhenghan felt quite shocked.

The power of the fire dragon could have severely injured him with just one of its claws, yet it was shattered by Zhang Ruochen with a single palm. This teen’s cultivation really was unfathomable.

“Splitting the Heaven and Earth!”

Nie Zhenghan held up the giant silver axe in his hand and all the Incipations of Array swarmed toward the axe.

The giant silver axe emitted a harsh light and chopped downward.

A 10-meter giant axe shadow broke the void space and chopped toward Zhang Ruochen’s head with great force.

It was a giant silver axe, a level six Genuine Martial Arm with 35 inscriptions on it. It was impossible for Nie Zhenghan to activate all 35 inscriptions at once with his cultivation.

But relying on the power of the Combined Attack, he fully activated the 35 inscriptions and demonstrated its horrifying power.

Zhang Ruochen reached out his arm, and the Blood Soul Stick, which had fallen to the ground earlier, flew to his hand under the influence of his Genuine Qi.

Though the Blood Soul Stick was a third-class Genuine Martial Arm, it could explode out incomparable power when it was in Zhang Ruochen's hand.

"Boom!"

Zhang Ruochen swung his arm, and the Blood Soul Stick collided with the giant silver axe and created a deafening sound.

Shattered by the great power, the Blood Soul Stick broke into pieces of iron and flew toward the Evil Warriors nearby.

"Pfft! Pfft..."

Over 10 Evil Warriors' bodies were pierced straight through by broken pieces of iron. They wailed in agony on the ground.

Nie Zhenghan was knocked back over 10 feet by the force of the impact. There were many bloody gashes on his arm. His fingers were in so much pain that the giant silver axe nearly flew out of his hand.

A casual attack from Zhang Ruochen not only disintegrated the Combined Attack, but also injured Nie Zhenghan, who ranked fourth in the Black Tiger Hall.

"Escape, everyone! We're unable to deal with this guy!" Nie Zhenghan shouted, and mounted his giant golden spot tiger, hoping to escape.

"I offered you a chance before, but you didn't take it. Do you think that you can escape from here now?"

Zhang Ruochen executed the Shadow of the Royal Wind Dragon and moved one step forward. He directly flew forward over 10 feet and stood over Nie Zhenghan's head.

Nie Zhenghan's expression changed. He slashed upward with the giant silver axe in his hand.

"Boom!"

Zhang Ruochen pulled his palm downward and a stream of powerful palm force swarmed toward Nie Zhenghan. Nie Zhenghan was sent flying and his body hit the wall, leaving a body-shaped hole in it.

"Boom!"

The whole room collapsed and Nie Zhenghan was buried inside of it.

With his whole body covered in blood, Nie Zhenghan crawled out from the ruins. He gazed fearfully at the teen wearing a mask across from him and clenched his teeth. He said, "Even in the... in the Internal

School of the Martial Market, there are few people who possess your cultivation. Yet, they are all well-known. Who are you?"

Chapter 199: My Benefactor

Zhang Ruochen approached Nie Zhenghan, arms folded behind his back. "Who I am doesn't matter," he said. "All that matters is this; will you show me the way to Earth Blaze City or not?"

"Go to hell!"

As he shouted, Nie Zhenghan unleashed his inner Blood Meridian power, enveloping his entire body in blood fog. A Blood Wave roughly three meters in diameter coalesced under his feet. Behind him rose the shadow of a huge, bloody tiger and a phantasmal soldier.

Gripping his silver war axe in both hands, Nie Zhenghan dashed forwards and swung to split Zhang Ruochen in half.

Zhang Ruochen shook his head slightly, shifted his body and quickly disappeared. In the next moment, he reappeared in front of Nie Zhenghan and struck Nie Zhenghan's glabella with a single finger.

A dull thud echoed through Nie Zhenghan's head. The barriers around his Qi Sea broke. Genuine Qi exploded out from his Qi lake, shattering his Meridians and Blood Meridian as it flowed forth.

"SHUNK!"

Nie Zhenghan's eyes grew dull. Blood poured from his mouth as he fell lifelessly to the ground.

Zhang Ruochen hated killing people, but even he refused to show mercy towards Evil Warriors from the Black Tiger Hall.

Nobody knew how many common folk had died at the hands of the Black Tiger Hall. Killing an evil warrior from the Black Tiger Hall would save many people's lives in the future.

"This sixth-level Genuine Martial Armament axe should be worth more than 400,000 silver coins," Zhang Ruochen thought as he picked up the discarded giant silver axe and charged towards the other Evil Warriors.

"BOOM!"

Silver light burst forth as he swung the axe.

A line of blood spread across the body of an Evil Warrior. That Evil Warrior fell to the ground.

Unlike other warriors who cut people in half with an axe, Zhang Ruochen could wield the axe as deftly as a sword. When he attacked the Evil Warriors, he left only bloodstains on their necks.

Thanks to successfully practicing the Shadow of the Royal Wind Dragon, Zhang Ruochen dashed forward with unexpected speed. The Evil Warriors, whether Yellow Realm or Black Realm, simply could not escape Zhang Ruochen's pursuit or evade his attacks.

Despite that, Zhang Ruochen didn't wipe them all out. Instead, he only killed Nie Zhenghan and the nine Evil Warriors of the Black Realm. When the Evil Warriors of the Yellow Realm turned to flee, Zhang Ruochen let them go without pursuit.

Zhang Ruochen spared their lives because when the School of the Martial Market posted bounty missions, they assigned merit and rewards based on the threat level of the mission targets. Warriors ranked below the Completion of the Yellow Realm weren't as valuable targets; therefore, it wasn't worth Zhang Ruochen's time to stop these lower Realm warriors from fleeing.

Zhang Ruochen only needed to kill the Black Market warriors who had reached the Completion of the Yellow Realm. The government forces of Yunwu Commandery would exterminate all the lower Realm Evil Warriors themselves.

After all, the government forces were working hand-in-hand with the School of the Martial Market.

Zhang Ruochen crouched down and looted many refined resources from the corpses of Nie Zhenghan and the other nine Evil Warriors. There were Pills, Genuine Martial Armaments, Spiritual Crystals, silver coins and even jade array stones.

Zhang Ruochen laid the 10 jade array stone pieces out in a row and nodded to himself. "I may have let the other Yellow Realm warriors run away with their jade array stone," he thought, "but these 10 pieces of jade array stone should still be worth 800,000 silver coins in total."

Nie Zhenghan and the nine Black Realm warriors possessed top-notch jade array stones that could be used to form a Combined Attack.

In contrast, the other warriors from the Yellow Realm possessed far inferior jade array stones. Even combined, they could not equal these 10 pieces of jade array stone.

All the refined resources Zhang Ruochen had looted added up to 1,500,000 silver coins in value. The giant silver axe and the 10 pieces of jade array stone were the most valuable pieces of plunder.

"As expected, the accumulated wealth of these Black Tiger Hall Black Realm warriors can't even compare to the riches the students of the Martial Market School possess." Zhang Ruochen lost interest in the plunder and simply tossed it all into his space bracelet.

Even a freshman from the external campus of the Martial Market School had at least ten thousand or more silver coins on hand, let alone the senior students, who had fortunes of more than 100,000 silver coins.

With the exception of their jade array stones, even the Warriors of the Black Tiger Hall that had cultivated to the Black Realm only had 10,000 silver coins on their person. They couldn't even be compared to students of the Martial Market School.

Even as a powerful Earth Realm warrior, Nie Zhenghan's most valuable possession was that giant silver axe, a sixth-level Genuine Martial Armament that cost him decades of savings.

In comparison, an internal student in the School of the Martial Market would be embarrassed to go out if they didn't have millions of silver coins on their person.

Students from the Martial Market School were 10 times richer than other warriors of the same Realm.

“Those Nine Evil Black Realm Warriors plus the Evil Warrior of the Earth Realm should be worth 800 merit points!” Zhang Ruochen thought, smiling slightly.

Rather than leave, Zhang Ruochen chose to wait in that same spot.

He’d let those Evil Warriors at the Yellow Realm go on purpose, using them as part of his plan to lure in the powerful warriors of Black Tiger Hall.

Zhang Ruochen didn’t want to outright break into Earth Blaze City if it wasn’t necessary.

He knew things about Earth Blaze City that even the other students in the School of the Martial Market weren’t aware of.

Earth Blaze City was a huge black market that controlled all the other black markets in the southeast region of Yunwu Commandery. As the third major branch of the Black Market, many of their masters called this city home.

Because of this, they definitively would have installed a Defender Array somewhere in Earth Blaze City.

With Zhang Ruochen’s current cultivation, he probably wouldn’t survive an attack from a Defender Array unscathed.

Of course, if he had to charge headfirst into Earth Blaze City, there were a few strategies he could employ. For instance, he could destroy the Defender Array first. Without a Defender Array, Zhang Ruochen could waltz into Earth Blaze City at his leisure. Save for those warriors who had reached the Completion of the Earth Realm, no one could stop him with his current cultivation.

“BANG!”

Lin Ningshan broke the seals on her internal Meridians, channeled Genuine Qi to shatter the chains shackling her body, and leapt off the giant, golden spotted tiger.

She didn’t leave immediately. Still in a state of shock, Lin Ningshan stared from a distance at the intriguing young man wearing a metal mask.

“Who would have thought he could defeat 10 Evil Warriors in a row? Even their Combined Attack couldn’t hurt him. At the very least, he should be my senior.”

Though they were both in their teenage years, he had reached the Earth Realm and could sweep away a whole crowd of evil masters. Meanwhile, she did not even have the ability to retaliate against these evil masters.

How could the gap between us be so big?

The young man’s powerful cultivation and heroic bearing shocked Lin Ningshan. Drawn in by curiosity, she walked carefully towards him and bowed elegantly, “I am Lin Ningshan,” she said, “an external student of the Yuntai Suzerain. We came here to fight alongside the School of the Martial Market against the Evil Warriors of the Black Market and Moon Worship Demonic Sect. You have me at a loss, sir; how should I address my savior?”



Zhang Ruochen was not fond of Lin Ningshan and had not planned on rescuing her. Keeping his back turned to her, he couldn't stifle his own feeling of curiosity. "Is the School of the Martial Market really collaborating with the Yuntai Suzerain?" he asked doubtfully.

The Yuntai Suzerain was seen as one of the top powers in the 36 commanderies of Omen Ridge, the local bully that could stand up to the School of the Martial Market, the Black Market and the Moon Worship Demonic Sect as an equal.

The Yuntai Suzerain enjoyed the highest status among all the commanderies; even the other Commandery Princes only held their positions due to the influence of Yuntai.

For instance, the Royal Family of the Yunwu Commandery had close ties to the Yuntai Suzerain; nearly every Commandery Prince was a Yuntai Suzerain disciple, in fact.

Lin Ningshan considered Zhang Ruochen's question before replying: "The Yuntai Suzerain is certainly a force for justice among the 36 commanderies of Omen Ridge. We have established cooperative relationships with both the government forces and the School of the Martial Market.

The Yuntai Suzerain also has many businesses in the 36 commanderies that were attacked by the Black Market and the Moon Worship Demonic Sect on a regular basis. Since the School of the Martial Market wishes to deal with the black market and the Moon Worship Demonic Sect, we in the Yuntai Suzerain will definitely lend them their strength."

Zhang Ruochen kept his mouth shut and tried to look indifferent and aloof. He really didn't want to continue this conversation with Lin Ningshan.

However, Lin Ningshan didn't notice his indifference and continued to size him up. The more she looked at him, the more she felt a sense of familiarity. Still, she had no inkling he was Zhang Ruochen.

"Benefactor, could you please tell me your name?" she asked again.

"I'm not your benefactor," Zhang Ruochen replied, "so you don't need to know my name. I advise you to leave as soon as you can; if you don't leave soon, I fear you'll lose your chance to walk away!"

Lin Ningshan was a very clever person, and quickly grasped the meaning behind Zhang Ruochen's words. "Did you let the Yellow Realm warriors go on purpose to lure the Black Tiger Hall masters to Lingyue Town?" she asked, a gleam in her eyes.

In the past, Lin Ningshan looked down on Zhang Ruochen and always acted cold and arrogant around him; they barely ever exchanged words.

Today, no matter how much indifference Zhang Ruochen displayed, she still enthusiastically stayed by his side, eyes glimmering with adoration.

Zhang Ruochen took a deep breath. "You know full well that the masters are on their way, so why are you so keen to stay here?" he asked.

Lin Ningshan seemed to hesitate. Just when Zhang Ruochen thought she would leave, she instead let out a bright laugh. "Even Iron Hunchback, the Hall Owner of the Black Tiger Hall, is no match for your mighty power," she said.

“You’d best be careful, though: the Iron Hunchback’s cultivation has reached the Final State of the Earth Realm, which makes him 10 times stronger than Nie Zhenghan. He’s one of the most famous villains in the Yunwu Commandery.”

“Iron Hunchback, the Hall Owner of the Black Tiger Hall, will arrive here soon from Earth Blaze City,” Zhang Ruochen said with some impatience.

“My cultivation may be low, but I’m still willing to give you a hand,” Lin Ningshan said with a chuckle. “There’s always strength in numbers.”

Zhang Ruochen had entered this conversation with the intention of warning her off. He never thought Lin Ningshan would make an offer like this, so he didn’t know how to refuse her.

Women were truly strange; they never cared about men who treated them well, but were drawn towards aloof men like moths to a flame.

Zhang Ruochen decided to simply keep ignoring her. He drew his Abyss Ancient Sword, caressing the hilt of the blade with both hands. “Abyss sword,” he mused out loud, “today will be our first battle together in over 800 years.”

The Abyss Ancient Sword hummed in his grip and gave off a high-pitched whistle, almost as if was responding intelligently.

“Is a rusty, broken sword really more beautiful than me?” Lin Ningshan thought from a distance, pursing her lips as she stared unhappily at the young man in the metal mask.

She felt like she was talking to a boring block of wood, and yet his mysterious nature stirred feelings of adoration in her heart. She desperately wanted to learn how powerful he was.

If only he would look into my eyes! Maybe then he would realize the girl standing next to him is much prettier than his sword.

Lin Ningshan kept staring at the young man’s back, ardently hoping he would turn around and meet her eyes, if only for just a moment.

## **Chapter 200: A Fierce Battle against Evil Warriors**

Zhang Ruochen stood in front of Lingyue Town’s entrance, a broken sword in hand. Neither sad nor anxious, he held his sword like it was an extension of his body.

Lin Ningshan still hadn’t left. She just stood beside him, eyes fixed on the mysterious youth in the metal mask.

Soon enough, smoke billowed over the horizon, along with the rumble of iron heels pounding the earth.

“Hall Owner! That’s the young man who killed Nie Zhenghan,” a Yellow Realm Evil Warrior said with a cold tone, pointing towards Zhang Ruochen.

Iron Hunchback rode up on a snow-white Scud Tiger. He looked down on Zhang Ruochen and grinned. “He’s just a pipsqueak,” he said. “Ha! For a moment, I thought Si Xingkong had come to Lingyue Town.”

Iron Hunchback had trembled in fear when he heard an internal student had killed Nie Zhenghan. He thought that Si Xingkong, the No.1 figure of the Internal Academy, had come to deal with the Black Tiger Hall. Once he saw this young man though, all the fear in his heart blew away, leaving only contempt.

“Rumble, rumble, rumble...!”

More than two hundred Evil warriors rode forth on horseback and galloped around Zhang Ruochen in a semi-circular formation; they were all under the command of Iron Hunchback, Owner of the Black Tiger Hall.

Dust surged forth and howls echoed everywhere.

Lin Ningshan had not expected so many powerful warriors to come. Shock and doubt filled her heart; how could the young man defeat so many Evil masters by himself?

66 meters away from Zhang Ruochen, Iron Hunchback raised his hand slightly, motioning for all his Evil Warriors to halt.

Iron Hunchback looked down at the 10 corpses lying on the ground and frowned. “Boy,” he said with a growl. “You have a lot of nerve, not even trying to escape!”

“Why would I want to escape?” Zhang Ruochen replied. “I’m right where I want to be; right where you are.”

Iron Hunchback’s eponymous hunchback made him look no more than a meter tall. Standing up on the Scud Tiger’s back, he sneered down at Zhang Ruochen. “You seem to have an inflated opinion of yourself. Don’t think you’re hot stuff just because you’re an internal student of the School of the Martial Market. Did you know we’ve locked up four students from your School? One of them is even an internal student.”

“Eh? This is news to me!”

Zhang Ruochen was taken a little aback. “Well,” he said at last. “If you set them free, I’ll spare your life.”

“Ha! No prisoner ever goes free from Earth Blaze City once we get our hands on them.” Iron Hunchback said, letting out a clear, belly-shaking laugh. Suddenly, his demeanor turned cold. “Assume formation!” he said in a deep tone of voice. “Surround this maniac and don’t let him run away.”

108 Evil Warriors rushed out from behind Iron Hunchback’s hump. Eight of them had cultivated to the Black Realm while the other hundred had cultivated to the Yellow Realm.

Each warrior channeled Genuine Qi through the jade array stone in their hands, instantly activating their Inscriptions Array. Zhang Ruochen was completely surrounded by this array.

“Another Combined Attack! Haven’t you learned how useless they are against me?” Zhang Ruochen said.

Iron Hunchback laughed. “Nie Zhenghan’s Combined Attack was incomplete, so of course it wouldn’t threaten you,” he said. “Now, my 108 men have formed a complete Combined Attack formation with no flaws or gaps. Do you really think you can withstand their power?”

“The way I see it, unless you have your own Earth Realm warriors ready to launch a Combined Attack, you’re powerless to stop us.”

Zhang Ruochen was sick and tired of Iron Hunchback’s nonsense. He drew his Abyss Ancient Sword and channeled his Genuine Qi through the blade. He activated all 29 Power Series inscriptions, increasing the weight of the Abyss Ancient Sword to 3,300 pounds.

The Abyss Ancient Sword had 66 Power series inscriptions in total. If all these inscriptions were activated, the weight of the ancient sword would increase to 7379 pounds.

Each basic Power Series inscription increased the sword’s weight by 110 pounds.

However, Zhang Ruochen had only cultivated to the Initial Stage of the Earth Realm. His Genuine Qi was finite and currently could only catalyze 29 inscriptions.

A sword weighing 3,000 pounds would cause horrible injuries if swung with physical strength alone. With Zhang Ruochen’s powerful Spiritual Fire Genuine Qi, the power of the Abyss Ancient Sword was amplified even further.

Never mind Zhang Ruochen; even a warrior who had reached the Completion of the Earth Realm couldn’t withstand a Combined Attack from 100 warriors of the Completed Yellow Realm and 10 warriors of the Completed Black Realm.

However, the Black Tiger Hall couldn’t train that many elite warriors. In fact, they were forced to mix together Evil warriors with superior and inferior levels of martial arts practice. Even if they were all warriors from the advanced stage of the Yellow Realm, they could only form the Inscription Array with great difficulty and reduced combat strength.

From Zhang Ruochen’s perspective, their ‘powerful array’ was full of loopholes.

If Zhang Ruochen wanted to defeat them, he need only find and attack those weak points.

“Shatter for me!”

Zhang Ruochen launched himself into the air, fire smoldering behind his eyes.

He grasped his sword hilt with both hands and swung straight down.

The Abyss Ancient Sword resembled a fire dragon as it launched a fiery, 10 meter-long line of Sword Breath towards the ground.

“BOOM!”

The Combined Attack formed from these 108 warriors simply could not withstand Zhang Ruochen’s all-out attack.

In moments, the Sword Breath shattered their Inscription Array. Nine Evil Warriors were bisected, split halves flying apart and leaving only a pool of blood.

Another 20 Evil Warriors were seriously injured by the Sword Breath impact, blown back and scattered like leaves caught in a gust of wind.

Zhang Ruochen destroyed this Combined Attack of 108 warriors with just a single sword stroke.

Standing off in the distance, Lin Ningshan was struck dumb by the sight of this mysterious teenager's power.

“Strong Wind and Flying Snow!”

Frozen Genuine Qi poured off of Zhang Ruochen's body and dissolved into the air. The air temperature dropped rapidly. A short time later, delicate snowflakes started pouring from the sky!

The snow grew heavy.

A hundred square meters of heavy snow poured down, making it seem like the dead of winter. The Evil Warriors of Black Tiger Hall felt chilled down to their very bones.

“The Strong Wind and Flying Snow technique, with continual Genuine Qi...” Iron Hunchback whispered, his face drawn and pale. He no longer looked at Zhang Ruochen with contempt.

Iron Hunchback's cultivation was higher than Zhang Ruochen's. He had reached the Final State of the Earth Realm. Despite this, Iron Hunchback was unable to wield this “Strong Wind and Flying Snow with Continual Qi” technique.

Only individuals with a special physical quality possessed the talent to manifest this vision of heaven and earth and alter their environment in such a way during battle.

Zhang Ruochen did not possess a Frost physical quality. Rather, he had swallowed Icing Meridians Pill to instill his Meridians and Genuine Qi with the nature of Frost. This was how he was able to manifest this vision of “Strong Wind and Flying Snow.”

If Zhang Ruochen wished, he certainly could have manifested the visions of “Strong Wind Thunder” or “Strong Wind Fire” using the Thunder and Spiritual Fire nature of his Genuine Qi.

“CHOP!”

Zhang Ruochen swiped his arm through the air. The drifting snowflakes swiftly condensed into dozens of Sword Breath projectiles.

“PUFF!”

“PUFF!”

...

Seven Evil Warriors screamed in pain as Sword Breath pierced their flesh.

The snowflakes spread through the air, covering a hundred square meters. Every one of those snowflakes could turn into a blade for Zhang Ruochen.

After seeing more than 30 of their number cut down in succession, the terrified Evil Warriors turned and fled, no longer daring to face Zhang Ruochen.

In the same instant, Zhang Ruochen heard a howl from behind his back, along with the sound of rumbling earth and the whistle of sand and stones flying everywhere.

A powerful surge of Genuine Qi brushed against Zhang Ruochen's shoulder blades.

"I, the Hall Owner, have come to face you, boy!"

Standing on the back of his Scud Tiger, Iron Hunchback charged towards Zhang Ruochen and swung down at him with his gilded sabre.

BAM!

Zhang Ruochen countered Iron Hunchback with his own sword stroke.

The gilded sabre in Iron Hunchback's hand was a level six Genuine Martial Armament that weighed around 2,200 pounds after its inscriptions were activated.

Combined with his arm strength and the ferocious impact of his third-level savage beast Scud Tiger, Iron Hunchback unleashed a mighty force that rivaled Zhang Ruochen's.

When these two swords collided, a wave of energy erupted from the point of impact, blasting away dozens of Evil Warriors.

Zhang Ruochen stood his ground even as both his feet started sinking into the earth.

*"He's more than earned the right to be called Hall Owner of the Black Tiger Hall: the other common warriors were nothing compared to this,"* Zhang Ruochen thought as the shock of the blow rendered his arm numb.

Iron Hunchback was even more surprised as he saw a notch appear along the edge of his sabre.

*"How could a mere broken sword damage my Golden Knife, a sixth-level Genuine Martial Armament?"* Iron Hunchback thought, realizing he couldn't afford to underestimate Zhang Ruochen.

*This young man was really strange.*

*When did the Internal School of the Martial Market acquire such an impressive figure?*

Iron Hunchback was a famous, powerful warrior who had practiced Martial Arts for dozens of years. He had gained a wealth of fighting experience through countless murders and become the Hall Owner of the Black Tiger Hall. He definitely also had a couple deadly tricks up his sleeve. For these reasons, Zhang Ruochen would have to keep his guard up throughout their fight.

*"Against all odds, he has the skills to fight in melee against Iron Hunchback, the Hall Owner of Black Tiger Hall; he even seems to be winning."* Lin Ningshan held her breath as she stared at the calm, mysterious teenager.

In the past, Lin Ningshan had believed Zhang Tiangui, the Seventh Prince, was the greatest talent in the world, a figure beyond compare. However, the mysterious teenager in front of her challenged her worldview.

Even her father, the leader of the Lin family, could not talk about the Iron Hunchback without a sliver of unease.

This mysterious teenager's power must be greater than her father's—no, even her grandfather's.

*“If he can kill Iron Hunchback, he’s bound to become a famous hero known throughout the Yunwu Commandery,”* Lin Ningshan thought.

“Eat this, boy!”

Iron Hunchback clenched his teeth. His Golden Knife exploded with golden rays of light that flowed along the inscriptions carved into the saber.

“Broken Moon Sword Technique, First Form: Sword Wind and Waning Moon.”

The Broken Moon Sword Technique was a Superior class broadsword technique of the Spiritual Stage.

Iron Hunchback had inherited this technique from a great master. Although he only learned a single attack, this solitary technique allowed him to kill many strong enemies and become the Hall Owner of Black Tiger Hall.

No one in the same realm would ever be able to withstand this attack of his.

Three years ago, he even used this technique to kill a wounded warrior from the Completion of the Earth Realm. It was this battle that made his name a household word across the Yunwu Commandery and raised Black Tiger Hall to ninth place among the local black markets.

This lone, Superior class broadsword technique from the Spiritual Stage had changed Iron Hunchback’s life.