

Chapter 591 - Banquet (One)

The Marquis of Ruyi's estate was located right at the centre of the commandery city. It was surrounded with tall walls with crenellations that rose and fell. Soldiers patrolled atop the walls, vigilantly checking the surroundings. It gave off a sense of authority naturally, a city within a city.

A slightly-plump, middle-aged man who resembled a caretaker paced around at the entrance. He constantly glanced at the moon in the sky, estimating the time. He was anxious. Why had commander Gu still not come?

That was how he thought when a figure in white clothes pierced through the sky and landed in front of the marquis' estate. She was a beautiful woman in clothes whiter than snow. The corner of her lips curled into a slight smile as she waved her jade folding around gently. She seemed like she had appeared out of thin air, kicking up a slight breeze. Her white clothes swayed with the breeze.

A large, tall man arrived right behind her, with a bronze face, thick eyebrows, and large eyes. He stood quietly behind the beautiful woman like a guard, but he did not seem meek at all. Instead, he gave off a natural sense of dignity.

They were Gu Yanying and Li Qingshan. This was the first time Li Qingshan had come to the Marquis of Ruyi's estate. He had visited the Forbidden Palace in his past life. The lofty imperial palace that had served as the residence of the emperor through the two dynasties of Ming and Qing basically seemed as simple and crude as a common house compared to the marquis' estate.

Upon considering how someone else had already taken over the marquis' estate that the Jiang clan had managed for several millennia, replacing its master, he could not help but think of a lyric he had once read. His lips moved slightly as he muttered it to himself.

Only Gu Yanying managed to hear his words, and she said, "Where once the swallows knew the mansions of the great, now where would they fly to nest and mate?" She could not help but glance at him, feeling mildly surprised inside. He had a crude air about him, but never did she think he had such literary talent.

"Commander Gu, you're finally here. His highness has already been waiting for a long time. If you still didn't come, I'd be punished." The caretaker saw Gu Yanying and beamed with joy, approaching her and bowing.

"Caretaker Zheng, is Thirteen still so strict with his rules? He actually got you to receive me in person."

"It's an honour for the commander to remember an insignificant figure like me. I am honoured to be able to personally receive commander Gu. Please come with me." The caretaker extended his hand and invited them in, leading the way at the front.

"There's no need. I'm probably a little more familiar with this estate than his highness."

With a wave of her hand, Gu Yanying turned into a white blur and shot into the gates. The caretaker followed along in a hurry, actually also moving with startling speed, sticking close behind Gu Yanying like her shadow as he called out loudly, "Commander Gu has arrived!"

Even though Gu Yanying was not using her full strength, he was able to keep up with her regular speed, which was extraordinary enough.

Li Qingshan was surprised inside. Only now did he realise that the caretaker Zheng who seemed like a servant was actually a Golden Core cultivator. He had concealed his aura far too well, and combined with his overly-submissive behaviour, he did not give off the bearing that belonged to a Golden Core cultivator at all. As a result, Li Qingshan misjudged him.

Just what kind of a person was the new Marquis of Ruyi? Having a Golden Core cultivator as a friend or a guest of the estate was easy, but having one as a servant was unimaginably extravagant.

Li Qingshan followed the two of them and passed through gate after gate until he reached the centre of the marquis' estate. He noticed a large, magnificent palace from afar. Under the moonlight, it was wrapped in a scarlet glow, which made it seem like it was burning.

On the square in front of the palace, a man with a fancy hat and luxurious robes stood with his hands behind his back, facing the wind. "Yanying, if you still hadn't come, I probably wouldn't be able to help myself and would have started the banquet first."

His voice was harsh to the ear, even slightly shrill, like a jackal howling at the moon. It pierced through the air, tempting people to block their ears.

Li Qingshan squinted his eyes, only to see that the man had a darker face and a pair of slightly-bulging eyes. There was even a faint scar over his right eye. His appearance was anything but handsome, nowhere near as elegant and graceful as the previous Marquis of Ruyi, Jiang Fu. However, he gave off a sense of heaviness and force simply by standing there, well beyond what Jiang Fu could rival.

Next were his robes. They were not embroidered with the serpents of the Marquis of Ruyi, but five true dragons. This was the bearing of a descendant of the imperial family of Great Xia. From a single glance, Li Qingshan knew that this person was far, far more difficult to deal with than Jiang Fu. If this person insisted on opposing him, then he would probably serve as quite a troublesome enemy.

"Thirteen..." "I'm already Eleven now!"

Gu Yanying was like a feather, landing right in front of the man gently. However, before she had even finished talking, the man interrupted her. His gaze towards Gu Yanying also shone brightly, possessing the most natural admiration of a man towards an outstanding woman, but he also seemed like he would never change his ways just because of a woman like her.

"It has only been a few years, yet you've advanced by another two ranks."

Originally, Li Qingshan thought that the descendants of the imperial family were ranked according to their seniority, but as it seemed, that was completely false. Instead, it resembled something like a battle ranking.

"You better just call me by my name, Si Qing!" Si Qing smiled. His gaze skipped over Gu Yanying and landed on Li Qingshan. Although the glow of the arcane artifacts on Li Qingshan was already withdrawn completely, how could it fool his eyes?

His gaze caused Li Qingshan quite the distaste, as he did not seem like he was looking at a human. It was more like he was gazing at a racehorse or a fighting dog, even evaluating his strengths and weaknesses inside.

“This must be your subordinate. Looks like you still haven’t forgotten about the traditions of the Dragon province, but your insight has worsened. He’s merely at mid Foundation Establishment, and he’s already armed to the teeth with arcane artifacts. He probably still hasn’t even grown accustomed to it!”

Gu Yanying said, “I think you’ve been stuck in the Dragon province for too long, and it’s narrowed your mind.”

“Really?” Si Qing stared at Li Qingshan for a while and smiled. “Sure enough, his murderousness is completely withdrawn, without even a hint leaking out, like a tiger resting in the forest. If he can take a step further and reach late Foundation Establishment, he really might be able to give me some anticipation.”

Li Qingshan could not help but stare at Si Qing. He showed no respect or fear at all. Si Qing’s face sank slightly, and his smile vanished. “Though, his unruliness remains untamed. You really do need to teach him the principle of respecting the strong.”

“Not everyone can be tamed. Let’s go in.” Gu Yanying changed the topic and glanced at Li Qingshan, expressing that he should avoid openly clashing with him. Li Qingshan lowered his gaze and said nothing, making him seem rather haughty.

“Please!” Si Qing raised his hand. He did not take the rudeness of this Foundation Establishment cultivator too seriously. Were people supposed to care when a dog bared its fangs at them? Not to mention a dog that was about to die.

They entered the palace together, only to see several dozen tables arranged on the two sides of the hall. The people on one side were all dressed in white—Gu Yanying’s subordinates and colleagues of the Hawkwolf Guard—while the attires of the people on the other side were divided into a few colours.

The seat at the very front for both sides was empty, facing one another from afar. Clearly, they were reserved for Gu Yanying and Si Qing. However, there was no seat for the host. This kind of arrangement was rather strange. A banquet was supposed to be about bringing endless joy to both the guests and the host, yet it seemed more like a formal negotiation.

“Greetings, commander Gu!”

The White Wolf guards saw Gu Yanying and all stood up and bowed. Li Qingshan spotted Han Qiongzhi at first glance, while Han Qiongzhi looked back quietly as well. Li Qingshan nodded towards her. Afterwards, he found Wang Pushi, but from the corner of his eye, he actually discovered another acquaintance—Qiong Rongzhi.

Although Qian Rongzhi sat at the end, she was dressed in white. She had been promoted to White Wolf guard some time recently. She smiled gently at Li Qingshan, seeming indescribably tender.

Chapter 592 - Banquet (Two)

After breaking through to Foundation Establishment, Qian Rongzhi obviously did not remain as a regular Scarlet Wolf guard. She visited Gu Yanying and stayed behind as a White Wolf guard.

Li Qingshan frowned. He could sense that Qian Rongzhi's bearing had changed yet again. The cold and sinister feeling had basically vanished from her, but Li Qingshan would never forget about her insanity.

This woman has become even more dangerous. Anyone who gets on her bad side will probably face quite a lot of trouble.

However, he was unaware that to Qian Rongzhi, his changes were even more startling. In her eyes, he gazed around complacently, like a vicious tiger roaming through the forest, proudly displaying the character for "king" on his head. However, his teeth and claws were all hidden away, refusing to show his fierceness so easily.

Originally, I thought I could reduce the distance between us, but I didn't think he would still be so powerful!

As they both thought about each other, a young girl with thick eyebrows, large eyes, and a bright face called out loudly, "Big sis, over here!"

Li Qingshan noticed that she was wearing the uniform of a White Wolf commander and how her seat was only slightly behind Gu Yanying's.

He thought, She must be Gu Yanying's assistant, the White Wolf commander! I didn't think she'd actually look like this. She might still look like a young girl, but her real age must be far greater. That only proves she possesses extremely great talent. She reached an extremely high cultivation at an extremely young age, so the rate at which she aged obviously slowed down, which is why she still looks like a young girl.

Gu Yanying said, "Under formal circumstances, you need to call me commander or ma'am."

"Does it even matter?" The young girl pouted. Her behaviour and mannerisms resembled a young girl's too.

However, with what he had experienced at the entrance, Li Qingshan dared not underestimate anyone. He stared straight at her. Although her aura was completely hidden away, he could still see certain things with the senses of the spirit turtle.

Sure enough, she was also a Golden Core cultivator!

The young girl immediately shot a glance at Li Qingshan and said harshly, "What're you looking at?"

Li Qingshan lowered his gaze again like he was embarrassed.

Si Qing smiled. "Little sister Bao'er has run out of patience a long time ago. Let's just treat it as a reunion of acquaintances today, so there's no need to rigidly adhere to all these rules. Please sit down!"

As soon as Gu Yanying sat down, the young girl huddled over, leaning against her side. "I'll sit here too!"

Originally, it was a seat for Gu Yanying and Si Long, followed by seats arranged according to each person's identity and cultivation, yet she insisted on sitting with Gu Yanying. Fortunately, the seat was quite large, so it was not a squeeze even when they sat together.

Si Qing frowned. "If a bumpkin doesn't know any etiquette or courtesy, so be it, but Si Bao, you cannot break the rules!"

"Hmph, you're a prince, and I'm a princess! Why should I sit slightly behind you? Si Qing, I only called you elder imperial brother to show you a bit of face! Would you believe me if I say I can beat you up until you call me big sister?"

Si Bao leapt up and snorted with great contempt, raising her bushy brows. The bearing she gave off was no weaker than Si Qing's, and it was rather similar to his.

"Your humble elder brother will naturally be there to experience it during the next Gathering of Dragon Ascension. I'm only afraid you don't have the courage to participate!"

Li Qingshan was very surprised. From their conversation, the two should both be descendants of the imperial clan. Having reunited after so long, even if they were not close, they still should have been able to cope with each other. He had never expected them to break out in full dispute, on the verge of fighting, over the simple issue of seating.

They were basically like two street thugs who could break out into a vicious fight with a simple, "The fuck you looking at?" "The fuck's wrong with staring at you?" They did not exhibit the self-restraint and patience that descendants of the imperial clan and Golden Core cultivators were supposed to possess at all.

"Alright, Bao'er, just sit wherever you want to sit. Look at you, you're behaving like a fighting cock." Gu Yanying pulled Si Bao back, and Si Bao leaned against her, whispering in her ear, "Heh, I'm just cutting him down to size first and showing him what's what!"

Li Qingshan saw there were two seats to Si Qing's left and right, except they were located slightly towards the back. They were beneath Si Qing but above everyone else behind, possessing a status roughly equivalent to Si Qing's. Two people sat there. When Si Qing and them entered the hall earlier, only they had not stood up to greet them.

One of them was a military general dressed in armour. His great beard was peppered with grey hairs, dangling from his chin all the way to his chest. He sat there valiantly with his eyes wide open as if he was glaring at Si Bao.

The other one was a pale-faced scholar. He propped up his chin with one hand while swinging a black feather fan gently in the other. Within his sunken eye sockets were a pair of deep and serene eyes, also gazing at Si Bao.

"Please calm down and sit, your highness. What benefit will bickering with a woman bring?" Not only did he completely look down on Si Bao with the tone of his voice, but he also seemed to stand on equal footing with Si Qing.

“You’re completely right, brother Jia.” Si Qing returned to his seat and sat down before declaring the start of the banquet. However, the atmosphere in the hall only grew heavier. It did not seem like a joyful banquet.

Li Qingshan was about to make his way over to the empty seat beside Han Qiongzhi when Gu Yanying waved at him. “Qingshan, you should sit here. It doesn’t look good if it’s empty!”

Li Qingshan did not hold back. He arrived at the secondary seat to Gu Yanying’s side, crossing his legs and sitting down boldly, earning him another glance from Si Bao. That was originally her seat.

The many White Wolf guards behind him were stunned. This was not merely an issue of seating. Cultivation, age, and experience had all been taken into account precisely to determine who sat where perfectly. It could basically represent their identity and status within the Hawkwolf Guard, and it was also a form of the most basic courtesy.

Even when Si Bao wanted to sit with Gu Yanying, Si Qing had criticised her as discourteous. By doing this, Gu Yanying was essentially ranking Li Qingshan higher than everyone else. This was not a trivial matter, earning him many envious gazes. They all conversed with their soul sense.

“Who is he?”

“I think he’s called Li Qingshan, the Scarlet Hawk commander of the Clear River prefecture!”

“Only a Scarlet Hawk commander? He’s merely at mid Foundation Establishment, so why does he deserve to sit in front of us?”

“Li Qingshan? Don’t tell me he’s that renowned coward, the commander of secluded cultivation?”

Ever since Li Qingshan became the Scarlet Hawk commander, he had left everything up to Hua Chengzan. Apart from investigating Burial Mound mountain with Hua Chengzan, he had not handled a single formal affair. He had made quite a name for himself among the Hawkwolf guards because of this.

Si Qing took note of this. “Looks like Yanying really does favour this child very much. I need to warn you then. You better not let him die at my hands later on.”

Before Gu Yanying could reply, Si Bao chimed in, “I don’t think you have that ability!” At the same time, she said to Li Qingshan through her soul sense, “Kid, you’re sitting in my seat, so let’s see if you have the right later on.”

Li Qingshan was confused. What are they on about? They talk like they’re about to fall out with each other and battle it out. He vaguely realised that Gu Yanying probably had another reason in mind for choosing all of his arcane artifacts so seriously.

“Alright, then we’ll go with a battle to the death then!” Si Qing roused with vigour. Excitement filled his face, clearly displaying the interest he felt.

“There’s no need for that. Just victory or defeat will be enough.” Gu Yanying waved her hand with a smile.

“Battles are dangerous. There’s only a thin line between life and death. He might not necessarily get the opportunity to forfeit and beg for mercy.” Si Qing took a sip of the alcohol in the cup as he smiled murderously.

As they spoke, various delicacies that Li Qingshan had not even heard of were served up one after another like running water. In particular, the jugs upon jugs of fine alcohol were faint in colour and gave off no fragrance at all, but it was like a fiery explosion when Li Qingshan took a sip. A heavy fragrance directly rushed through his mind as the fiery, scorching sensation plunged right into the bottom of his heart. It was indescribably satisfying.

“It’s easy to get drunk on this alcohol, so don’t be greedy. There are still matters to deal with later on!” Gu Yanying specially warned Li Qingshan with her soul sense.

“Don’t worry. The more I drink, the more energetic I become. Just what is it that’s so serious?”

“You’ll obviously find out later.”

At this moment, the sound of traditional stringed and woodwind instruments rang out from behind a heavy curtain. An extremely moving note trembled as the rising and falling singing invoked an inexpressible sorrow of parting. Even Li Qingshan could not help but be fazed by it, listening on quietly.

The smell of flowers assaulted the hall. Petals of flowering crabapples scattered in the hall with the wind, pure-white, pink, and bright red.

Women dressed in thin clothes with elegant figures glided over like fairies from heaven. They danced with the music, reaching the centre of the hall before suddenly spreading out, giving off rings of haze like blooming flowers. They revealed a slender woman in the very centre, but she wore a white mask, faintly outlining a flowering crabapple.

The women in the surroundings were already so glamorous, so Li Qingshan could not help but imagine how beautiful the woman in the centre would be. Li Qingshan found the woman’s figure to be slightly familiar.

The music gradually sped up, and the dancing gradually increased in intensity. They constantly changed their postures as they glided through the empty hall, enough to dazzle everyone while giving off a mesmerising sensation.

As they all drank the fine alcohol in their cups and watched this mesmerising performance, everyone seemed enchanted. However, Li Qingshan noticed that Si Qing remained indifferent, filled with boredom. Though, the military and civil officers to his left and right did watch on closely.

Gu Yanying raised her cup and toasted from afar. “Si Qing, this dancing might pale in comparison to battle dances, but it’s still quite a special performance!”

Si Qing said, “With how indulgent his lifestyle has been, it’s no wonder that the Marquis of Ruyi would die. I heard he actually also had improper thoughts towards you. He’s basically as reckless as he can get. If you had actually accepted him, the crown prince would probably pay a visit to the Ruyi commandery and personally execute that toad.”

Si Bao said, “Imperial brother, don’t you work so hard just because you want to replace big brother Ming and become the crown prince yourself?”

“What nonsense. How can I be compared to imperial brother Ming? I’d be fortunate if I can just consolidate my position as the Marquis of Ruyi.”

Si Qing’s expression changed before gradually recovering. In the end, he cast his gaze towards Gu Yanying again. Whether he could consolidate his position as the Marquis of Ruyi would completely depend on her.

After the Marquis of Ruyi Jiang Fu and the great general Han Anguo had fallen in battle, only Gu Yanying remained out of the three major pillars. She had already become the person with the greatest authority in the entire commandery.

Gu Yanying had remained in the Ruyi commandery for such a long time. She had a powerful background and was easygoing, treating people generously. As a result, all cultivators of the Ruyi commandery, whether they belonged to the Academy of the Hundred Schools or the sects, would show her some respect. She could even influence the Daemon race and change the overall situation of the Ruyi commandery.

For example, the startlingly-powerful and sinful Northmoon daemon seemed to have quite a friendly relationship with her. As a result, as soon as Si Qing arrived in the Ruyi commandery, he invited none other than Gu Yanying first to a banquet under the guise of catching up. It was all so that he could probe her out and determine who was dominant.

Gu Yanying changed her posture, spreading out her legs and crossing one over the other. She accepted the alcohol Si Bao offered up and drank it all. She smiled. “Then that’ll depend on just how capable you are.”

Chapter 593 - Banquet (Three)

The palace ablazed with light overlooked the entire commandery city, as well as the entire Ruyi commandery.

Currently, this place served as the centre of the entire region, and it was all because of the existence of two people, Gu Yanying and Si Qing, or more accurately, a daemon too—Northmoon.

Li Qingshan had overwhelmed several dozen Daemon Commanders in a brutal fashion. Although no one understood why the daemons were fighting among themselves, the terrifying strength he had demonstrated in the battle left the entire Ruyi commandery shocked.

The name Northmoon was no longer something that was mentioned casually. Instead, he became the most terrifying enemy in the hearts of human cultivators.

The three of them could basically determine the overall situation of the entire Ruyi commandery.

Gu Yanying and Si Qing’s gazes passed through the dancing and collided mid-air, sending sparks flying.

Li Qingshan, however, sat quietly with his eyes down. The soft armour on him flowed with light as he refined it. After taking a seat, he had directed all of his focus to refining the arcane artifacts on him apart from drinking heavily, preparing for the bitter battle Gu Yanying described.

He could sense the surrounding atmosphere becoming more and more tense, but he instead became slightly excited.

Si Qing placed down his cup and said loudly, "Alright, all of you back down!"

The dancers who glided about like petals all landed on the ground. They each bowed towards Gu Yanying and Si Long, about to take their leave.

"Hold on! You with the mask, you've really been disrespectful with how you bow to his highness!"

The sturdy military general to Si Long's side with a braided beard suddenly spoke. He stared at the masked woman with his extremely invasive eyes as if he wanted to see through the mask.

The woman bowed elegantly. "May I ask for your name, sir?"

Her voice was quite magnetic, very pleasant to the ear. Li Qingshan confirmed his thoughts as soon as he heard it. She was Qiu Haitang. Afterwards, he carefully studied her figure. Although she wore a set of loose, colourful clothes, it still struggled to hide her proud figure, which was filled with a mature and enticing charm.

He smiled inside. It really has been quite some time. Just how many people possess a figure like that? Though, why has she come here to perform?

E Dan. Normally, you would have no right to learn my name!"

"May I ask what sir E Dan has to say?" Qiu Haitang asked, neither too humble nor too haughty.

"I just want to see what you look like. If you're ugly and you defile my eyes, then I'll punish you severely. However, if you're pretty and charming, you will be heavily rewarded."

E Dan smiled indecently without the slightest attempt at covering it up. He was like a crude, wild beast, directly judging a woman's worth based on their appearance. Probably even an alluring beauty would not be enough to satisfy him.

This was the unscrupulousness that the strong showed to the weak, able to put forth endless exorbitant demands.

Si Qing, who placed great emphasis on etiquette, chose to remain silent at a time like this. He was slightly displeased by how Qiu Haitang had bowed to Gu Yanying first, so he allowed E Dan to make trouble.

If the weak sat a little to the front, or if they bungled the order they should bow in, it was rudeness, or even great disrespect. However, when the strong wanted to tease a woman in public, there seemed to be nothing wrong with it.

Qiu Haitang remained silent for a while, letting out a gloomy sigh from underneath the mask before removing the mask gently.

She had not performed this dance willingly. Instead, she was no longer the sect master of the Sect of Clouds and Rain and had been sent to perform by the new sect master. The sect master had also

instructed her to charm and get on the good side of this prince Si Qing. She refused to do so, so all she could do was wear the mask.

The current sect master could tell she was unwilling, so she did not compel her to perform without a mask. After all, she felt that wearing a mask added a hint of mysterious charm, which might lead to an even better effect.

E Dan's eyes lit up. Her face was like a flowering crabapple sleeping in spring, white with hints of red. She was solemnly beautiful yet also charming to the bone. She was truly a rare beauty. Coupled with that figure of hers, she would definitely be fantastic in bed.

"Sure enough, you do have some charm. You will be heavily rewarded!"

"Thank you, sir."

E Dan smiled. "But if you want your reward, you'll have to return to my chambers with me."

If she had been a woman hungry for power, seeking every opportunity to become involved with these prominent figures of the Dragon province, she would probably agree immediately.

Qiu Haitang said, "Thank you for your kind intentions, but there's no need for you to go so far for me."

E Dan's smile coldened before gradually recovering. He asked, "Are you a virgin?"

This question itself was already quite humiliating. Qiu Haitang closed her lips and refused to answer. She had never thought the cultivators from the Dragon province would actually be so rude.

"If you are, I'll accept you into my harem. Of course, I'll have to check for myself too. If you're not, then you will be heavily punished. Hahahaha!"

As if he had just said something extremely fascinating, E Dan laughed aloud.

The Hawkwolf guards were all furious. Although most of them did not know Qiu Haitang, this woman had clearly been called here by Gu Yanying. Insulting her was equivalent to provoking Gu Yanying. And, everyone would feel irritated if an outsider harassed a beauty of the Ruyi commandery like that anyway.

However, taking E Dan's impressive cultivation in mind, they were furious, but they dared not speak up. Only E Dan's laughter echoed through the entire hall.

Si Bao was unable to bear with it anymore. Right when she was about to speak up, she suddenly heard a sneer from behind.

"That's utter dogsh*t!" Li Qingshan had downed many cups already, so he was slightly tipsy. After hearing E Dan's words, how could he hold himself back?

"Kid, who are you talking about!?" E Dan's laughter came to a halt as he glared at Li Qingshan as if he was in disbelief that a measly Foundation Establishment cultivator would actually speak to him like that.

Qiu Haitang looked over too and stared at Li Qingshan in surprise.

"Is there another dog here? Sigh, if this dog is a purebred with a pure colour for a coat, I'll spare him. But if it's a dogsh*t mongrel, then I'd like to see how dog meat tastes."

“Get over here!” E Dan scrunched up his eyebrows and bellowed at Li Qingshan.

With a bang, the cups, plates, and bowls before Li Qingshan shattered, splattering food everywhere.

A layer of ice armour rose up from the soft armour on Li Qingshan, leaving him unscathed. He stood up slowly, even holding a jug of alcohol, as he looked up at E Dan.

“Sure enough, a mongrel! Your words are like flatulence, and your flatulence is like talking! All of it is dogsh*t!”

This was no longer mockery and sneers, but a naked insult right to the face. Si Qing’s expression changed as well, while E Dan’s face went from red to violent and then to black.

Si Bao giggled. It was no wonder her big sis valued this person so much. Just this courage alone was very rare. She said to Li Qingshan with her soul sense, “Curse away. I have your back!”

E Dan took a step forward. With a great bang, the entire palace seemed to shake as his aura crushed down on Li Qingshan like an ocean.

Qiu Haitang was only indirectly affected, yet she felt like she was about to suffocate. What a powerful sense of malice!

Li Qingshan tossed the jug of alcohol aside like he was not affected at all, walking over to E Dan. He stared straight at E Dan with his eyes that clearly contrasted between the dark irises and eye whites, shining vaguely with red light.

E Dan’s heart skipped a beat. This gaze! How despicable! If it weren’t for today, I only need a single hand to crush this little animal to death! But I can’t do that during the banquet considering the bigger picture.

During the banquet, it was very common for each side to provoke the other. If Gu Yanying and Si Qing targeted each other’s subordinates, then they would be stooping too low in terms of status. However, if anyone began fighting because they could not help themselves, then the situation would be different.

“You little animal, do you think you can live under the wings of someone else for your whole life?”

“Why don’t you try and kill me, you mongrel?”

Chapter 594 - Banquet (Four)

“You!”

E Dan grabbed Li Qingshan’s collar with one hand and threw a punch at his face. If the punch landed, then he would definitely die on the spot with his brains splattering everywhere.

Bang! Fierce winds surged through the surroundings, ruffling everyone’s clothes.

“Qingshan!” Han Qiongzhi cried out.

The fist stopped firmly before Li Qingshan, blasting aside the air.

Li Qingshan showed no fear, and his sneer instead became heavier. E Dan’s fist trembled as veins bulged on his forehead as if he could follow through with the punch at any time.

“E Dan.”

The scholar with the black feather fan suddenly spoke up. Perhaps this kid was a sacrificial pawn that Gu Yanying had specially found for this. If he actually lost his temper and killed a Hawkwolf guard on the spot, the situation would become extremely disadvantageous.

E Dan slowly let go of Li Qingshan’s collar and said viciously, “Qing Shan. That’s your name. I’ve remembered it!”

“Li Qingshan,” Li Qingshan corrected him with a smile as he thought, If I don’t butcher a mongrel like you in the future, I’ll write my surname backwards.

The Hawkwolf guards all looked at his proud figure. There was both admiration and plenty of pity in their eyes. They no longer felt so dissatisfied with him taking the secondary seat.

Just as E Dan had said, Gu Yanying was strong, but she could not protect a person forever. Especially during clashes among great organisations, a Foundation Establishment cultivator that became involved could be utterly crushed from the slightest carelessness. Provoking the strong like this was not a very clever decision. In the future, if an opportunity presented itself to E Dan, he would kill him in a single strike. As long as he left no evidence behind, no one could do anything to E Dan.

Li Qingshan returned to his seat and nodded at Han Qiongzhi, expressing that she did not have to worry.

He had not decided to do this completely on a whim or to play the hero. Gu Yanying had helped him launder all the resources he had accumulated for free, so he obviously had to pay her back, standing up for her and demonstrating his value.

Si Qing said, “Let’s cut the talk and get down to the business. Yanying, have you chosen your fighters?”

“You can go!” Gu Yanying waved her hand with a smile, and Qiu Haitang bowed to take her leave before glancing at Li Qingshan deeply. She said with her soul sense, “Thank you for your assistance, commander Li. Once we return to the Clear River prefecture, I will definitely properly thank you in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain.”

The rash kid from the country of the past had already become a man of indomitable spirit in the blink of an eye, but he was just the same as before, standing tall and proud, challenging the strong fearlessly.

Li Qingshan nodded with a smile before casting his gaze towards Si Qing. He was curious what he meant by “fighter”. The bitter battle that Gu Yanying had mentioned was about to show itself.

“Of course!” Gu Yanying smiled as she clapped her hands gently. “Qian Rongzhi, Yan Xixin, please come to the front.” She paused before she said, “Li Qingshan, you can wait for now!”

Li Qingshan only heard a noise from behind, and a late Foundation Establishment White Wolf guard stood up and made his way to the front. His cultivation must have been towards the apex among White Wolf guards.

Qian Rongzhi emerged from the corner, but she left everyone astounded. Li Qingshan was still at mid Foundation Establishment after all, but she was only at early Foundation Establishment. Without any impressive identities or backgrounds, it had already been very startling that she had been directly promoted to White Wolf guard, yet she had been specially chosen by Gu Yanying now.

Li Qingshan noticed how the two of them were carrying at least two arcane artifacts on them each. If it were only the White Wolf guard known as Yan Xixin, then so be it, but it was impossible for Qian Rongzhi to be that wealthy. Even if she did possess such wealth, she would never show it considering the type of person she was. They had probably been prepared for them by Gu Yanying too so that they could handle the bitter battle tonight.

As for Si Qing's side, three people stood forward too. One was an old man with peppered hair in a long gown, one was a bare-chested, burly man riddled in scars, and the last one was a small, short dwarf who resembled a monkey.

The three of them were all at late Foundation Establishment, and they were all geared with arcane artifacts. Although they remained silent, Li Qingshan could sense a faint aura of murderousness coiling around them. He was extremely familiar with this feeling.

Li Qingshan thought, These three people have probably all gone through a myriad of battles and killed countless people. Only by undertaking countless battles to the death can you develop a bearing like that. And, they're armed with arcane artifacts, so they're definitely well beyond what regular Foundation Establishment cultivators can handle. However, with how peaceful the world has been, how did they manage to develop something like this?

"The three of them are my fighters. I think I have far too great of an advantage over you. Yanying, were you intending to go easy on me?" Si Qing smiled like victory was within his grasps.

Gu Yanying said, "Cut the nonsense. If you like to speak so much, then why don't you tell us the rules of this battle? Are we going with the convention of a revolving team battle?"

Si Qing seemed extremely interested. Perhaps due to drinking alcohol, his face glowed red. It was completely opposite to the bored demeanour he had when watching the performance earlier. There was basically a hint of fanaticism.

"Most of the people over there should be from the Green province, so you might not understand the traditions of our Dragon province too well. Allow me to explain. The customs and culture of the Dragon province are oriented towards battle and revere warriors. Even the games played among children involve clashing with wooden swords, and these swords are replaced with real swords when they grow older. Basically everyone practises martial arts, and anyone with some talent will enrol in the Academy of the Hundred Schools and focus on cultivation."

Li Qingshan had heard about it too. In the Dragon province, cultivation methods were extremely widespread. Regular people could come into contact with Qi Practitioner cultivation methods with ease, and the number of cultivators they possessed were much higher than the eight other provinces. Under these circumstances, powerful figures obviously rose up in great numbers.

Centred around the imperial clan of Great Xia, all official positions, whether civil or military, were occupied by cultivators, while esteemed positions like the three ducal ministers, the nine ministers, and the six ministries were all held by great cultivators of the third heavenly tribulation. However, Li Qingshan had no idea why Si Qing was saying all this. Was he showing off the strength of the Great Xia empire?

Si Qing paced around the centre of the hall and said loudly with his voice that was shrill like a jackal's, "As a person of the Dragon province, do you know what we normally love the most? It's attending arenas to watch fighters kill each other!"

Basically all the cities in the Dragon province, whether big or small, had arenas. Meanwhile, those who took part in these battles in the arena, also known as duels, were called "fighters". They could range from regular martial artists pitted against bears and tigers while wielding weapons to cultivators battling it out with arcane or spiritual artifacts.

The arena was always in a great commotion. Under the cheers of thousands of people, people died, and the sand became splattered with blood every moment of the day. Even brothels and facilities of entertainment like the Parlour of Clouds and Rain were unable to rival the popularity of arenas.

Li Qingshan gazed at the three people there and said with his soul sense, "Commander Gu, so this is the bitter battle you speak of!" He felt rather unhappy. Although he was quite battle-hungry, he refused to serve as the pastime of "higher people" like fighting cocks and dogs.

"Do you know how the princes and princesses of the imperial clan come about?" Gu Yanying smiled.

"They were obviously born from the emperor and his consorts."

"They're not. The emperor hasn't even seen most of the present princes and princesses in the very beginning until the day they became princes and princesses."

"What's this all about?"

"In the Great Xia empire, any child with the bloodline of the imperial clan has the right to become a prince or princess."

"Then how many princes and princesses do they have to confer?" Li Qingshan asked in surprise. Great Xia had been around for several millennia, constantly propagating and widening their family tree. There were probably millions or even tens of millions of people with the bloodline of the imperial clan now.

"If they want to become princes or princesses, all they have to do is register, and they will receive the best guidance from the imperial court and be able to use the resources of the imperial clan. They're arranged to fight in a duel every once in a while. Less than a tenth actually become princes and princesses in the end."

"Don't tell me the other ninety percent are..."

"Dead. They either walk out in infinite glory, or they're carried out. They won't even have the right to be buried in the imperial tomb. The chances of survival are far too low, so the number of people who register aren't as high as you imagine it to be, but of course, it's not low either. The Si family has never lacked geniuses."

Li Qingshan was astounded. The way they groomed princes and princesses was basically like how they would nurture gu. It was extremely brutal. Only true geniuses would be confident enough to take part in such an elimination, and those who survive in the end would definitely be geniuses among geniuses.

Right from the beginning, he felt Si Qing was much more difficult to deal with than the Marquis of Ruyi Jiang Fu, but he could not help but raise his guard a little more now. He dared not look down on him or

be careless at all anymore. And, he also understood what Gu Yanying meant by “Thirteen” and “Eleven” earlier. Clearly, that was not a ranking based on age, but on strength.

Even among the princes and princesses, Si Qing was outstanding. The difficulty in becoming a prince or princess was high, but they would receive the support of the entire imperial clan upon succeeding, so it would not be strange at all if they possessed powerful cultivation methods or even arcane treasures.

His true strength had probably exceeded regular Golden Core cultivators. Even if he was like the Dark Queen, possessing methods to challenge Soul Nascence cultivators, it would not be strange at all. This was also the only way for a Golden Core cultivator to serve him willingly as a caretaker.

Li Qingshan glanced at Si Bao in front of him again. She obviously became a princess in the same manner, and with how she was bold enough to stand up to Si Qing, she must have been extremely powerful as well. He truly had not thought of that.

He also understood what Gu Yanying was saying. Duels were not merely bloody games to serve as pastimes. Even the emperor of Great Xia had probably undertaken countless duels before ascending to the throne.

Gu Yanying said, “In the Dragon province, duels are a rather sacred thing. There are some rules about duels that even exceed the law. Even the emperor cannot change them without good reason. Pay close attention. If you break them, even I will struggle to help you.”

Li Qingshan nodded and listened quietly to Si Qing.

In the cultivation world, duels were not a form of low-level entertainment to numb citizens or comfort nobles who were in search of bloodiness and excitement. At the same time, fighters were not slaves or some kind of special, lowly existence who used their lives to fulfill the deviant interests of higher people either.

Basically every cultivator of the Dragon province had participated in duels with others as fighters. In many places, especially in large clans, the coming-of-age ceremony for their children would often be a duel, inviting all of their friends and family to serve as witnesses.

The children would have to personally kill a powerful wild beast or even a daemonic beast to prove that they had the right to adulthood. If they failed the challenge, then they were not adults. This would continue until they either succeeded or died in battle.

Si Long gave a vivid explanation about some traditions and rules regarding duels, and the Hawkwolf guards were all shocked by the sight he described. They were speechless.

Si Bao’s gaze drifted away. She remembered the foul air and sharp teeth that assaulted her face several years ago and subconsciously rubbed her right arm.

It was a daemonic beast several times larger than her with a smooth and slick hide. It studied her with its deep eyes while chewing her arm. Blood spilled out from the corners of its mouth, landing on the snowy, white ground.

Chapter 595 - The First Battle

Snowflakes drifted through the air as the surroundings flickered with figures of people; they were cheering her on loudly, but not a single person came to help her.

This was one of the iron rules of the arena. Unless the fighter personally admitted defeat, no one could interfere with the duel.

She widened her eyes as if she had blanked out from fright, or perhaps she could not let down the hopes placed on her, refusing to let go of her dignity as a genius.

The daemonic beast swallowed her arm and leapt up, lunging towards her. Even now, she was unable to forget its elegant and fierce posture. Death stared her right in the face.

A white figure rushed out. With a splash of blood, the daemonic beast collapsed on the ground. The duel had been interrupted, and she fainted.

Afterwards, she learnt that while the person held great status, she had broken the iron rules of the sacred duel, also suffering a rather severe punishment.

“Bao’er, what’s wrong?” Gu Yanying noticed Si Bao’s strange behaviour and asked.

“Screw duel. How boring. It’s not like this is the Dragon province. Let’s drink, let’s drink!” Si Bao filled two cups to the brim and shoved one into Gu Yanying’s hand while keeping the other for herself. She clinked the cups before drinking it all.

Gu Yanying smiled. “I almost forgot. A ‘dragon fighter’ is sitting right next to me!”

“Dragon fighters” were the highest honour of fighters. They were titles the Great Xiao empire conferred, and they possessed great glory.

“That title is worth nothing to me!” Si Bao said in disgust. Afterwards, she managed to reattach her arm, and she did not lose another duel again. However, she was simply unable to understand why Si Qing, no, basically everyone around him, was so enthusiastic about duels and liked it so much.

When the daemonic beast had almost eaten her, she had subconsciously looked at her mother, only to see a contorted face roaring, “Bao’er, kill it! Kill it!”

As the cultivation community of the Green province had become lazy and laid-back with the peace of the world, the Dragon province remained submerged in this crazy atmosphere throughout the years. Bloodthirstiness and battle-hungriness flowed through the veins of every single citizen of the Dragon province.

Li Qingshan’s eyes shone brightly. He had never thought the Dragon province was such a good place. If an opportunity ever presented itself in the future, he would definitely go there and take a look, but he basically had an opportunity tonight.

Based on the tradition of the Dragon province, when two parties encountered a dispute they were unable to settle, they could deal with it using a duel.

With Si Qing and Gu Yanying’s identities, if they directly began fighting, then that would be equivalent to falling out and declaring war. If they sent out subordinates and disciples one cultivation realm lower for

battle, then this problem no longer existed. They could also compare the forces they had accumulated too.

With a flip of his hand, Si Qing tossed an item into the air. It expanded as it sailed through the air, landing in the centre of the hall and standing firmly. At first glance, it seemed like a huge tent. It was round at the bottom and pointed at the top. Its surface was covered in inscriptions, producing rings of light. A dragon shimmered, wrapping around the entire thing.

“A Dragon Arena!” Si Bao was mildly surprised. She had never thought Si Qing would actually bring out this.

If “dragon fighter” was the greatest honour a fighter could receive, then “dragon arenas” were the strongest among arenas. They required tremendous amounts of resources and effort to create, which could instead be used to forge countless arcane artifacts. And, once they were created, they had no offensive or defensive capabilities.

If it were not for the wealth and the enthusiasm towards duels of the imperial clan in the Dragon province, there were no cultivators or sects that would create a Dragon Arena.

“Same rules as before, a revolving team battle. We’ll have a total of three people fighting, with the next person taking their place if they die in battle or admit defeat. Pills, talismans, puppets, and so on are forbidden. Only arcane artifacts on you are permitted!”

Si Qing waved his hand, and the old man in a long gown walked up first, entering the Dragon Arena before everyone else. Originally, the order that people fought would be hidden away, just in case the opponent could come up with counter-tactics. Si Qing demonstrated plenty of confidence by doing something like this.

Gu Yanying said, “Alright. Rongzhi, you go first. If you win, I’ll reward you with the three arcane artifacts on you.”

The Hawkwolf guards were all amazed and envious. They never thought the reward for a battle would be so great. That was three arcane artifacts after all. Just how many dangerous missions did they have to complete normally to earn enough contribution for a single arcane artifact?

They could not help but think, The three people on the other side are powerful, but if I had a few arcane artifacts on me, victory is not completely impossible!

“Yes, commander,” Qian Rongzhi lowered her head. She showed no joy or fear. Before this woman, all acts were useless, or she would have never been chosen to participate in the duels in the first place.

She had already made up her mind. If there was something amiss about the situation, she would immediately forfeit. The three arcane artifacts were not that enticing to her.

“Commander, your subordinates requests to partake in the duels!”

Before Qian Rongzhi had even finished speaking, Li Qingshan heard a voice filled with dissatisfaction ring out from behind. He glanced back, only to see that was from a late Foundation Establishment White Wolf guard. His face was frosty and proud, roughly thirty or forty years old. He must have been a genius

too, with a great chance at undergoing the second heavenly tribulation. He was also equipped with a few arcane artifacts.

Clearly, Gu Yanying had never expected Li Qingshan to make it perfectly in time, so she had already arranged three people for the duels. This fellow colleague had been one of them. He was already displeased with being switched out on the spot, and now that he heard such great benefits existed, he was unable to stay put anymore.

Gu Yanying said, "Wei Ke, you aren't suited for battles like these."

"Your subordinate insists." Wei Ke refused to accept this. The commander is looking down on me far too much. With my strength, am I supposed to be even more incapable than a woman who just established a foundation?

Hua Chengzan had once enjoyed the wonderful title of the "greatest genius" in the Clear River prefecture, while Wei Ke also had that title in the Leping prefecture. However, unlike Hua Chengzan, he did not sink to degradation from a bunch of setbacks. Instead, he maintained that title even until now, reaching his current realm of cultivation smoothly. He had always been favoured by Gu Yanying, so of course he was rather narrow-minded.

Qian Rongzhi said, "I'm willing to forgo this opportunity and let Wei Ke take my place."

Gu Yanying originally frowned, but when she heard Qian Rongzhi's words, she could not help but smile. "Don't worry, you won't be able to escape. If you don't do your best later on, I won't spare you."

Qian Rongzhi said nothing more, simply lowering her head even more. The hell snake slithered rapidly across her body as if it was choosing its prey.

Si Bao berated him, saying, "Wei Ke, the commander has already confirmed her choice, so why don't you back down quickly?"

"Hehe, that's easy to deal with. We can just add a person, can't we? Your highness, didn't you obtain an impressive fighter lately?" The pale scholar waved the black feather fan and chuckled.

Si Qing said, "But brother Jia, that bastard's unruliness remains untamed. He has tried to escape several times already."

"Only wild beasts can contend with wild beasts. I think if we don't send him into battle, it'll probably be very difficult to kill this little brother surnamed Li here and now." Jia Zhen glanced at Li Qingshan, his eyes deep and sunken.

Li Qingshan grinned resplendently, revealing his teeth.

Gu Yanying nodded towards Wei Ke and said, "Be careful!"

"Thank you, commander!"

Wei Ke was overjoyed. He stepped into the Dragon Arena with his head held high, and his surroundings changed. Extremely-vast empty space constantly extended off into the distance. There was a tiny black speck in the distant horizon, which was the old man in a long gown who had entered first.

From Li Qingshan's perspective, the tent gradually became transparent. From above, he saw a vast region several dozen kilometers across, with Wei Ke and the old man facing one another in there.

He felt like he was watching cricket fighting. The Dragon Arena served as the cricket pot, while the two people were the tiny crickets.

Si Qing said, "Yanying, you can pick the battleground first!"

Wei Ke was about to approach the old man for a battle to the death when the surrounding landscape suddenly twisted. When he returned to his senses, the earthen ground beneath him had already become fine sand, while the flat land had turned into rising and falling sand dunes, obscuring the old man.

In the beginning, he suspected it to be an illusion, but when he grabbed a handful of sand, he discovered it was real. The surroundings were even filled with dense earth spiritual energy.

He beamed inside. If that were the case, his chances at victory had increased yet again. His cultivation affinity was the earth element, so under these circumstances, he could obviously unleash a hundred and twenty percent of his strength.

Li Qingshan was surprised too. As it turned out, this was the so-called "picking a battleground".

Dragon Arenas were not as simple as a space developed for duels. They were layered with multiple different spaces, where each layer was a different environment. They could be deserts, swamps, mountains, or rivers, and it was all just to increase the interest and unpredictability of the duels.

Choosing a suitable environment and earning a favourable geographic position could allow people to strike first and change the outcome of the duel. Gu Yanying had chosen this desert as the battleground of the duel after much consideration.

And, in an open desert like this, no matter how much experience the old man had in battles, he would struggle to make use of the environment. All he could do was fight recklessly with his own strength before evening up the difference in their strength a little.

In the desert, Wei Ke used a technique. With a rumble, the ground beneath him trembled, and the sand gathered into eight tall towers. Eight colossal earth puppets emerged, shaking off the sand on them.

Wei Ke glanced at the earthen-yellow ring on his hand, and his confidence swelled. This Clay Idol ring truly is an arcane artifact after all. Its power is startling. After I combined it with my own techniques, it has become even more powerful. Any single one of these eight earth puppets can defeat Qian Rongzhi. Victory is mine.

In the distance, a golden streak of light whistled over with a long trail, flying past the sand dunes. Wei Ke controlled the puppets in a hurry, standing guard right in front of him.

The golden light arrived nearby, and only then did he make it out to be a golden spike. It was covered with strange inscriptions as it revolved rapidly, passing through a puppet with ease and arriving before Wei Ke's chest.

Wei Ke summoned a green flying blade, which collided with the golden spike and produced a clang. The golden spike was sent flying. Fortunately, his flying blade was a high grade arcane artifact, while his opponent's golden spike was only an inferior arcane artifact.

Right when Wei Ke eased up and was about to launch a great counterattack, he suddenly heard a series of whistles through the air. They were dense in number, singing shrilly through the air.

Wei Ke's pupils widened, reflecting specks of golden light. Several dozen strands of golden light formed an array, crossing over the sand dune and shooting over.

An arcane artifact that came in a set!

The number of spiritual artifacts and arcane artifacts a cultivator could wield was limited. However, if they came in a set, then they were not bound by this limit. However, spiritual artifacts like that were already extremely rare, let alone arcane artifacts.

Gu Yanying frowned, while Si Qing smiled. "The Heart Piercing Spikes of the Heavenly Spirit, amounting to a total of thirty-six. Although every single one of them are only of inferior grade, their combined strength suffices just enough."

A while later, Wei Ke was brought out of the Dragon Arena. His face was filled with panic and a refusal to accept what had happened, lying on the ground without moving at all. There was a bloody hole in his head.

Originally, he had a chance to reach Golden Core, but now, everything was over. Dead geniuses were not geniuses.

Chapter 596 - Hatred

Under the attack of the Heart Piercing Spikes of the Heavenly Spirit, Wei Ke was unable to put up a fight at all. From the beginning till the end, he had not even caught a glance of the enemy. He only constantly used defensive techniques, holding on with his protective arcane artifact.

Right when he had basically consumed all of his spiritual qi, unable to last much longer and thinking about cutting his losses, the opponent unleashed a special attack. The thirty-six Heart Piercing Spikes of the Heavenly Spirit merged together into one and launched a full-powered strike, piercing through his protective arcane artifact in a single stroke and killing him on the spot.

As a spectator, Li Qingshan saw everything with great clarity. The old man had actually been hiding in a sand dune. Although the Heart Piercing Spikes of the Heavenly Spirit were arcane artifacts that came in a set, they could not be used from several dozen kilometers away, and the user of the arcane artifact would basically be completely vulnerable when they used it.

They could not even spare the effort to unleash their protective arcane artifacts. If Wei Ke had managed to calm down right from the beginning, searching for the old man and throwing his life at him, then the old man definitely could not maintain such a ferocious attack, and the outcome of the battle would be unknown.

However, he had been far too flustered. The missions of the Hawkwolf Guard were all carried out with an absolute advantage in information, numbers, and strength. It had probably only been a little more

dangerous when they targeted the White Lotus cult in the past, but they probably had Gu Yanying and Si Bao presiding over the operation, so they were not at an absolute disadvantage. Wei Ke immediately panicked when he faced a crushing disadvantage like this.

If it had been Wang Pushi instead, he definitely would not have been so useless after going through several years of bloody war between the humans and daemons in the Clear River prefecture.

As he thought of that, Li Qingshan refined another arcane artifact on him. Only one remained.

Gu Yanying let out a gentle sigh. She went up to close Wei Ke's eyes, and his expression returned to normal. She retrieved the arcane artifacts and ordered, "Rongzhi, you're up now. Only victory is permitted!"

Gu Yanying was not someone who was harsh to her subordinates. When Wei Ke entered the arena earlier, she had even specially warned him to be careful. Now that it was the early Foundation Establishment Qian Rongzhi's turn to face the same opponent, she had ordered her to win. Not only were the Hawkwolf guards surprised, but even Si Qing took another good look at Qian Rongzhi.

Qian Rongzhi only answered with a "yes" obediently before entering the Dragon Arena with her head lowered.

Gu Yanying asked, "Do you need to change the battlefield?"

Whenever a side lost a person in battle, they could change the battlefield. Not only would the person remaining in the battlefield deplete their spiritual qi, but their method of battle would be completely seen through too, so it was very difficult to win consecutively.

Qian Rongzhi shook her head, so docile that Li Qingshan basically wondered whether she had been replaced by someone else.

Qian Rongzhi's heart was filled with hatred. After successfully establishing a foundation, she broke through the greatest bottleneck she faced due to her insufficient talent. The cultivator's willpower, ability to comprehend, and toughness of their souls began to play a more important role.

Her ability to understand had never been weak, while her willpower was extraordinarily tough. Through the constant refinement of pain from the hell snake, her soul was pure and powerful too, far greater than what any regular cultivator possessed. She also had the Heaven Climbing Vine to absorb spiritual qi from another world. She could be described as going directly from being mediocre to a genius.

When she thought she could finally ease up and gradually plan and develop, she had been "promoted" to White Wolf guard, constantly under Gu Yanying's watch. That basically felt like a pair of eyes glued on her constantly, reading all of her thoughts. Everything she possessed, even her life, seemed like it could be taken away from her at any time. It was far more miserable than blending around in the Academy of the Hundred Schools under the identity of a measly Qi Practitioner.

Gu Yanying had not shown any hostility at all. As a matter of fact, it was possible to say she treated her with special care, but her existence alone was a torture to Qian Rongzhi.

She was favoured and privileged in the world, beautiful, powerful, and loved by everyone. That graceful bearing of hers probably came from never enduring any pain or hardships, while that proud heart of hers had probably never been crushed or trampled on by anyone.

Everything that Qian Rongzhi had never possessed, everything that Qian Rongzhi could only desire, just happened to be like muck to her. Even that cold, merciless Li Qingshan, someone as vicious as a tiger, viewed her in a special light.

Gu Yanying, there will be a day when I dig out your eyes and rip off your wings so that you understand how it feels to crawl along the ground!

With a thought like that, Qian Rongzhi stepped into the Dragon Arena.

In order to prevent any unfair sneak attacks or ambushes, the duel would only begin after a while. This was also to the new fighter's advantage, as they could use the time to find the opponent, prepare techniques, or ready their arcane artifacts.

Logically speaking, after witnessing the duel earlier, Qian Rongzhi should have been looking for her opponent and then launching a vicious attack. Sure enough, she readied her arcane artifacts immediately, and a barrier of light rose up around her, followed by another one. Her three arcane artifacts were actually all defensive.

Afterwards, she used the final bit of time before the duel began to cast a defensive technique on herself before crossing her legs and sitting down.

Just how afraid of dying is she? Everyone could not help but think that. They had no idea how to respond.

The old man in a long gown was mildly surprised too. Originally, he thought that she would launch a powerful barrage of attacks at him, and he obviously had a way to deal with it considering all the battle experience he possessed, but never did he think his opponent would actually be so pessimistic with no interest in offence at all.

Li Qingshan thought, That's not a bad move to take. The power behind arcane artifacts is connected to the cultivator's cultivation. Her cultivation is nowhere close to Wei Ke's, so if she only uses a single defensive artifact, it's extremely likely for it to fail from a single strike, which would cost her her life on the spot.

And, with her cultivation at early Foundation Establishment, using two arcane artifacts simultaneously is basically her limit. The only way for her to use three arcane artifacts is if she stays put and focuses on defending, but doesn't that guarantee her defeat?

Only defending would always lead to defeat in the end. Among the five elements, metal based attacks were the strongest, and her spiritual qi was nowhere near as plentiful as her opponent's. Even though this move was her only choice, it had also cut off her sliver of chance at victory.

Li Qingshan personally believed he was skilled at fighting, but even he was unable to understand what Qian Rongzhi was trying to do. Was she objecting to Gu Yanying? But she was not the kind of person to do something as useless as that.

Then he saw Gu Yanying standing with her arms crossed, smiling as if she had anticipated this a long time ago. Thinking about it, it made sense. She had been the one who gave the three arcane artifacts to Qian Rongzhi in the first place. At the same time, he was simply unable to think of how Qian Rongzhi could defeat such a powerful opponent in her position.

She knows defeat is certain for her, so she wants to waste away my spiritual qi like this. How can a person be that foolish? This is the perfect opportunity for me to recover my spiritual qi. You're in no hurry, so there's even less of a reason for me to be frantic.

That was how the old man thought as he downright continued to hide in the sand dune, catching his breath and recovering. As long as he could restore all of his spiritual qi and defeat Qian Rongzhi in a single strike, then he could enter the third duel in almost perfect condition.

But before long, he felt yin qi surge in his surroundings. Black snakes silently slithered through the sand before he realised it, swarming over to entangle and bite him.

I see! Li Qingshan thought.

As Qian Rongzhi powered the arcane artifacts, she had secretly used the methods of the school of Legalism to launch a sneak attack against the old man underground.

But how are such inferior techniques enough to deal with an opponent like him? Li Qingshan shook his head secretly.

The old man rejoiced instead of panicking. He let out a great laugh. "I've been waiting for this moment!"

The black snakes gathered over, but a layer of golden light blocked them, so they were unable to advance any further. As it turned out, the old man had already been prepared. If she held her position and did nothing, then so be it, but as soon as she tried attacking, she would definitely have to split her focus and deplete her spiritual qi. It was the optimal time for him to kill her in a single strike.

These were not real hell snakes, only shadows possessing a sliver of the aura of the real thing at most, conjured from Qian Rongzhi's spiritual qi. Otherwise, if she could use the true powers of hell, it would be extremely terrifying regardless of whether they were minor or major hells.

Thirty-six streaks of golden light burst out of the sand dune where Qian Rongzhi stood, rushing into the air. They merged into a single Heart Piercing Spike of the Heavenly Spirit, glistening with golden light as it shot through the air in an unstoppable manner.

This was the move that Wei Ke had died to.

It had already been extremely difficult for Qian Rongzhi to wield three arcane artifacts. Now that she split her focus, the situation became even worse. With a clang, the tiny, rhombus shield on the outside was sent flying. The golden light plunged straight in, piercing another barrier.

Out of the three defensive layers Qian Rongzhi had set up, only a single one remained, and it clearly was unable to stop the Heart Piercing Spike of the Heavenly Spirit's full-powered strike.

Facing life-threatening danger, Qian Rongzhi finally frowned, exhibiting an expression of pain and torment.

“Are you afraid? It’s already too late!”

The old man showed excitement that completely contrasted against his age. Killing enemies in the arena and seeing their regretful, fearful faces was something that brought him the greatest joy.

Right as he thought that, a sense of danger abruptly filled his heart. Among the dense, black snakes, an extremely colourful, tiny snake suddenly leapt out, colliding with his protective barrier and passing through somehow, biting his neck.

He had already placed all of his attention into his strike, so he was unable to dodge in time. Immediately, intense agony filled his entire body.

He had been through countless battles. Who knew how much damage and pain his body had been through already. Even if his arm was cut off, he would not bat an eye, but this pain was unbearable for anyone, or why else would hell use it?

Even Li Qingshan with his steel-like willpower would rather have his flesh shaved from his bones again than let the tiny snake get him. He thought, I didn’t think she could already make the snake leave her body!

Back to Qian Rongzhi, she seemed to be in great pain, but there was not even a hint of regret or fear on her face. Instead, there was a faint sneer.

Having lost its master’s control, the Heart Piercing Spike of the Heavenly Spirit only continued on with its momentum, clearly not enough to penetrate an arcane artifact. It turned back into thirty-six spikes and fell out of the air.

Qian Rongzhi leapt up. She was already holding a spiritual artifact sword in her hand, targeting the sand dune the old man occupied. From left to right, she swung her sword.

With a flash, a part of the sand dune had been sliced off, together with an old man’s head that hurled into the sandy air.

He had been entangled by the hell snake, so even his thought process came to a halt from pain. His soul sense and techniques all stopped functioning. When Qian Rongzhi beheaded him, his brain instead recovered some clarity, and he praised loudly, “What a snake!”

The two of them had stood in a stalemate for such a long time, only taking a single move to determine their fates. It seemed simple, but who knew how many times they had clashed mentally with their schemes.

The twist in the events left everyone dumbfounded.

“Hahahaha!”

Seeing a subordinate being killed, Si Qing did not feel pained at all. Instead, he laughed and clapped his hands loudly before raising a cup and drinking to his heart’s content. “She has actually nurtured a true hell snake. This loss was well-deserved. With her willpower and perseverance, she already has the right to practise the Illustrations of Naraka.”

Qian Rongzhi had killed her opponent and won three arcane artifacts, but she showed no joy at all. She crouched down silently, and the tiny snake followed a black trajectory, slithering back onto her wrist and vanishing into her skin again.

The hell snake was one of her greatest secrets. At crucial times, it could achieve something as wondrous as turning the tables, but she had now exposed it before everyone under Gu Yanying's coercion.

Once the opponent was aware and prepared, the effects would diminish drastically. It was equivalent to losing a life-saving trump card. The venomous snake had its fangs plucked out. As a result, she hated Gu Yanying even more, hating her down to her bones.

Chapter 597 - Accepting a Disciple

After laughing, Si Qing recovered his coldness and nodded gently. The man covered in scars entered the Dragon Arena. The first thing that he did was fly into the air, staring down with his arms crossed.

Because Qian Rongzhi's colourful, tiny snake came from hell, it existed between the tangible and the intangible. It was very difficult to discover using the soul sense of cultivators, making it a powerful weapon for sneak attacks and assassinations. However, it was still visible to the naked eye. As long as he maintained a certain distance from his opponent, it would not be so useful anymore.

It was at this exact moment that the surrounding landscape twisted and changed, going from a rising and falling desert to a vast wasteland littered with orangey hills, dyed bright red by the setting sun.

Qian Rongzhi sat on a hill. She set up the three defensive artifacts again and started recovering.

The scarred man extended his hand towards Qian Rongzhi before closing it forcefully.

Rumble. The hill beneath Qian Rongzhi began to tremble, collapsing loudly, and she just hovered in the air. Suddenly, a huge, earthen-yellow hand reached towards her from below, having been transformed from the collapsed mountain.

Qian Rongzhi was unfazed, watching as the five fingers closed around her firmly. The tiny, rhombus shield on the outside released a resplendent glow, but the barrier of light it created constantly twisted under the pressure from the earthen hand.

She was like a firefly in a child's hand, releasing its glow in vain, extinguishing at any time.

However, she completely focused on defending this time, pouring all of her attention into the three defensive artifacts. Although two minor realms of cultivation separated them, defensive arcane artifacts could not be overwhelmed so easily with one measly technique.

The scarred man smiled viciously and drew a black, octagonal war hammer with a long handle.

Gu Yanying said, "A high grade arcane artifact! With your subordinate's cultivation, wielding a high grade arcane artifact should still be a little difficult, right?"

Wielding mid grade arcane artifacts at Foundation Establishment was basically the limit already. As for high grade and supreme grade arcane artifacts higher up, they could not unleash its full strength even if they managed to refine it somehow. They would be like children wielding huge blades. If they forcefully used it, it would even damage their soul sense.

Si Qing smiled. "The Earth Shattering Hammer of the Eight Directions he wields doesn't completely rely on soul sense. You'll see if you keep watching, Yanying."

Gu Yanying smiled and said nothing. She thought to herself, Just as Si Bao anticipated, he's still the same as before. Even without Qingshan, defeating him in three rounds won't be anything difficult.

Even though the personal strength of the cultivators determined the outcome of the duel, choosing suitable environments, arcane artifacts, and tactics also played a crucial role. Si Qing was a cruel person, so the arcane artifacts he geared his fighters with were all powerful. He wanted them to be able to kill in a single strike.

The scarred man lifted the Earth Shattering Hammer of the Eight Directions high over her head. He swung it around and around. With each cycle, the handle would become longer, and the head of the hammer would become larger.

The sound of wind whistled loudly as an earthen-yellow tornado reached towards the sky, filling the air with dust. Even the setting sun became a hazy yellow.

As it turned out, not only was the scarred man's cultivation extraordinary, but he was even a powerful Body Practitioner too. He combined his brute strength and soul sense to wield the Earth Shattering Hammer of the Eight Directions, which allowed him to unleash startling power.

The scarred man's figure blurred within the tornado. The Earth Shattering Hammer of the Eight Directions suddenly stopped revolving, but the tornado continued to whistle loudly. A huge, octagonal war hammer extended out, smashing towards Qian Rongzhi. The disturbance it created was like a natural disaster, absolutely frightening.

Taking advantage of how Qian Rongzhi could not move, he pushed the power of this strike to the limit, wanting to smash through her three layers of defence in a single strike and crush her into mince meat.

Qian Rongzhi's expression remained the same with no surprise or fear. She uttered three words indifferently.

Boom!

With a great rumble, the earth shook violently, and a shockwave kicked sand and dust over thirty meters into the air, expanding into the distance. At the same time, fissures spread out in all directions.

Only after a very long time did the dust settle.

The scarred man's face was unnaturally red. His face was contorted, becoming even more hideous. His chest rose and fell as he heaved violently, but it was not only because of his strike. He stared fixedly at the unscathed Qian Rongzhi.

In the final moment, his earth-shaking strike had landed a few meters away from her. The shockwave it created was not enough to get through her protective arcane artifacts.

Qian Rongzhi stowed the three defensive arcane artifacts away, leaving herself completely vulnerable. The scarred man only needed to use a single technique and he could heavily injure her, but he could only watch helplessly as she turned around to leave.

The three words that Qian Rongzhi had uttered were, "I admit defeat!"

Arenas were bloody and brutal, but it was not a matter of life or death every single time, or they would never be able to afford to go through so many people no matter how many geniuses they had. Normally, the duel would come to an end as long as one side admitted defeat, and the other side would be forbidden from killing them. If they did, they would break the iron rules of the duel and face extremely severe punishments. It would not even be strange if they paid with their own lives.

If the scarred man had already launched the strike and was unable to control it anymore, it would already be too late for Qian Rongzhi to admit defeat. She would lose her life for nothing. However, she happened to have grasped the limits of his control, the moment when he was about to launch the attack but had not launched it yet.

The scarred man already struggled with controlling this attack a little. If he were allowed to carry through with it, then so be it, but he had forcefully changed his strike in the final moment. His arms burned with pain, having held his breath until he groaned. He was already secretly injured. At the same time, his aura that could tear through everything had reduced drastically.

Li Qingshan had always despised her behaviour, but even he could not help but cheer for her inside right now. The actions she had taken seemed simple, but it required a careful grasp over the rules and her mentality, as well as willpower that could not be shifted by anything. If Wei Ke had even half of her willpower, he would not have died here.

Qian Rongzhi walked out of the Dragon Arena and bowed towards Gu Yanying. "I've managed to do what you asked, commander!"

Gu Yanying smiled. "Very good." Even Si Bao became filled with admiration over Gu Yanying's ability to judge people.

"Yanying, this subordinate of yours is truly extraordinary. She only used a single attack from beginning to end, yet she left one of my powerful fighters dead and the other injured, while she managed to walk away calmly, completely unscathed. May I ask if she has a master? I'd be interested in taking her on as my disciple. I wonder if Yanying is willing to part with her?"

Si Qing did not have much lust after women, but he did favour powerful fighters who could battle very much. Qian Rongzhi managed to catch his fancy quite well.

Although Qian Rongzhi had exposed one of her great secrets, the extraordinary willpower and ability she had demonstrated earned everyone's recognition. She had both lost and gained something with that.

Gu Yanying nodded at the White Wolf guard Yan Xixin, and Yan Xixin immediately accepted her orders, entering the Dragon Arena to face the scarred man, giving him no opportunity to catch his breath. Only then did she carefully consider Si Qing's proposal.

"Don't you even think about it! Even if she's taking on a master, it'll be me!"

Before Gu Yanying could even reply, Si Bao cut off Si Qing immediately. It was not just to rub him in the wrong way, but also because her impression of Qian Rongzhi had changed completely after the two battles.

There had always been far fewer female cultivators in the world than male cultivators. Even if they possessed talent, their nature limited them, and they often possessed insufficient courage and willpower, which made it even rarer for them to reach Qian Rongzhi's level. As a result, she considered accepting a disciple and messing around a little.

Qian Rongzhi immediately knelt down on the ground, bowing her head towards Si Bao. "Thank you for your generosity, commander. I've been thinking of taking on a master for a long time already. I'm willing to have the commander as my master."

At the same time, she calculated inside, I planned on finding a suitable master in the first place, which will make the path of cultivation easier, and I'll have access to even more resources. This is a heaven-sent opportunity. As long as I can establish this relationship, even Gu Yanying can't target me too much, giving me an additional safeguard. And, Si Bao is much easier to deal with than Gu Yanying. Not only will I receive many benefits for free, but I can also shorten my distance from Gu Yanying too.

"Hehe, I haven't accepted any disciples yet! Since you've been thinking of taking on a master for a long time already, then you can be my first disciple, Rongzhi!"

Qian Rongzhi's face stiffened, and all of her hairs pricked up, as the speaker was not Si Bao, but Gu Yanying.

Si Bao was sitting with Gu Yanying. Qian Rongzhi had only called her commander, so Gu Yanying's words made perfect sense, as if Qian Rongzhi had always wanted her as her master.

Gu Yanying smiled at the kneeling Qian Rongzhi and jokingly said, "What's wrong, my dear disciple? Why won't you stand up?"

"Your disciple... your disciple is overjoyed. To be able to accept me as your disciple, I will never let master be disappointed." Qian Rongzhi raised her hand slowly, gazing at Gu Yanying's smiling face and revealing an expression of great sincerity, except her complexion was rather pale.

Gu Yanying broke out into laughter. However, it was not because she was touched or delighted, but because she found this extremely novel and interesting. As she gazed at her disciple with her sharp gaze, it would be better described as her staring at a peculiar object.

Si Qing said, "Congratulations on accepting such a great disciple, Yanying. She'll definitely become an outstanding talent with just a bit of guidance."

"That's most definitely true." Gu Yanying stared straight at Qian Rongzhi and smiled.

The Hawkwolf guards all congratulated Qian Rongzhi in admiration. Who knew how many young geniuses in the Ruyi commandery had once asked Gu Yanying to be their master, but she turned them all down flatly. Having gained a master like her, a tremendous opportunity had basically fallen into Qian Rongzhi's lap.

However, this tremendous opportunity had fallen into her lap so heavily that it left Qian Rongzhi light-headed. She wanted to get a little closer to her and wait for opportunities to get revenge, but she had never thought she would become so close. This was far too dangerous to her right now.

She was like a tiny snake in the talons of a great hawk soaring through the sky. The snake could only allow it to toy with it. As soon as it tried to bite back, the talons would loosen, and the snake would be smashed to death.

Si Bao was perplexed. Gu Yanying had once said she had absolutely no plans to take on any disciples even across her entire life so that she could focus on cultivation. Why had she suddenly changed her mind? This Qian Rongzhi was very impressive, but she could not be regarded as particularly outstanding or startling. At the very least, she was nowhere close to that greatest disciple of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga whose name echoed through the Green province.

Gu Yanying touched Si Bao's smooth cheeks with a smile and said nothing. With Si Bao's personality, she would never turn down Qian Rongzhi's bow, but this game was a little too dangerous for her.

Like the clash with the White Lotus Mother in the past, having a disciple like this would be quite interesting.

As all of this unfolded, the battle between the two cultivators in the Dragon Arena had already reached a white-hot intensity.

Chapter 598 - The Great Banyan Tree King

Yan Xixin, who belonged to the Hawkwolf guards, did not use any fancy tricks. He wore a set of shiny armour with a sword in one hand and a large, rectangular shield in the other to protect his entire body.

The surroundings had already gone from a wasteland to a glacier. The ice was over thirty meters thick, clearly to limit the scarred man's earth element techniques.

Under these circumstances, not only would it take up tremendous amounts of spiritual energy for the scarred man to use earth element techniques, but they would also be nowhere near as effective as they were in the wasteland earlier either. Even the rate at which he recovered his spiritual qi slowed down slightly. He could only depend on the Earth Shattering Hammer of the Eight Directions to launch attacks.

Snow drifted through the air. Wind whistled wildly as the Earth Shattering Hammer of the Eight Directions tore through the beautiful landscape, swinging over. Not only was it vicious, but it was also startlingly fast under the simultaneous control of the scarred man's soul sense and brute force.

Yan Xixin slid to the left, but he was still unable to escape from the range of the war hammer's attack, so he tilted his huge shield slightly. With a great boom, pieces of ice were smashed into the air on his right side. They were all as sharp as blades, brushing past his body viciously. Fortunately, he had the armour to block it all.

The scarred man grunted as some of the power rebounded back at him.

Not only could the huge shield in Yan Xixin's hand redirect most of his power, but it could also reflect a small part of it. That should not have been enough to cause him any real harm, but when Yan Xixin blocked the attack, he immediately slashed out with his sword.

Blood splattered from the scarred man's shoulder. He let out a furious roar. A small wound like that was nothing, but the battle was extremely dissatisfying. He seemed to have gained the upper hand firmly, but he was unable to stop himself as he gradually slid towards the abyss of defeat.

His battle experience was extremely plentiful. He purposefully revealed openings many times to lure Yan Xixin into attacking, but Yan Xixin played it safe, completely unswayed by the bait. However, whenever the scarred man tried to recover, Yan Xixin would immediately press closer to him and pressure him.

The scarred man wielded the Earth Shattering Hammer of the Eight Directions even more violently than before, but everyone present could tell that the outcome of the duel had already been determined. Although Yan Xixin's reactive fighting tactic was very safe, it was extremely reliable too, trumping over his opponent's battle tactic extremely well. It took a far smaller toll on him compared to his opponent.

Si Qing said, "Yanying, so this is the trump card you managed to nurture!"

"I'm really not an expert in this aspect."

Gu Yanying glanced at Si Bao with a smile. She was the true master at duels. Originally, she never anticipated Li Qingshan to return on time. Having arranged Qian Rongzhi and the other two, she was obviously relatively confident she could emerge victoriously, which was why she had agreed to these duels.

Wei Ke's miserable defeat did leave her rather surprised. Fortunately, Qian Rongzhi had made up for his failures, while the true trump card was originally Yan Xixin. But now that she had Li Qingshan as a safeguard, there was even less reason for her to worry. She was confident that even if this guy faced all four of them, he would not lose.

Si Bao mockingly said, "Si Qing, it's been so many years, yet you're still so unskilled with duels. Advancing and retreating where necessary and able to both attack and block is the superior way. Battles tactics that involve momentary domination can only defeat weaker opponents. Once your offence is thwarted, all you can do is admit defeat."

Li Qingshan agreed with her very much. In his past life, there was a saying with regards to soccer, "Offence sells tickets. Defence wins championships." Fierce charges and attacks seemed intense and fascinating, but playing steadily and safely guaranteed victory.

He also began to reflect on the way he fought all this time. Had he been overly reliant on the tiger demon's claws and fangs and neglected the profound shell of the spirit turtle? When he faced opponents of similar strength, it would often be very difficult to achieve victory in one fell swoop through a powerful attack. Instead, it would also require defence and patience.

Si Qing sneered and replied, "Pursuing victory mindlessly has already deviated from the true meaning of duels. I've always objected to your title as a dragon fighter. And, there's no need to boast right now. The true outcome has yet to be determined!"

However, Yan Xixin won the round before long, but with his fighting style, he obviously could not take the opponent's life. Just this aspect alone turned off Si Qing. When Qian Rongzhi had killed a powerful subordinate of his, he praised her ecstatically, but now that the scarred man had emerged alive, there was not even a hint of joy on his face. He completely disapproved of Yan Xixin too.

Li Qingshan smiled inside and thought, I couldn't tell, but this guy is so enthusiastic about this! Even going on about some true meaning of duels!

He did not know that many people in the Dragon province were like this. Duels had already become sacred. There were not a lot of people who did whatever it took just to achieve victory.

The battleground of the third duel had already changed to an extremely dark and thick forest. The huge trees plunged into the sky like skyscrapers, unbelievably large and thick. Their broad, dark-green leaves blotted out the sun in the sky.

The ground was completely covered in roots. Aerial roots dangled down in the air as verdant snake-like vines coiled around the vegetation in the thick, milk-like mist. And, if someone paid attention to them, they would discover they squirmed about.

Li Qingshan had also witnessed the lushness of tropical rainforests in his past life, but compared to this jungle, it was basically comparing a child to a giant.

A cultivator as skinny and small as a dwarf moved between the trees as swiftly as the wind under the shrouding of mist and darkness. Not only did he conceal all of his aura, but his figure had completely merged with the surroundings.

If they had not been spectating from the outside, where their viewing angle was locked onto the fighters at all times, probably even a moment of negligence would be enough to lose sight of him. No one knew whether it was because of his arcane artifacts or because of the wonders of his cultivation method. Perhaps, it was a combination of both.

An environment like this was without a doubt an assassin's paradise, and the dwarf was the strongest assassin.

"I specially collected this rainforest from the Mist province. It contains a part of the Great Banyan Tree King's roots."

Si Qing said proudly. The value of Dragon Arenas was not completely inherent. Instead, it also depended on the special and peculiar battlegrounds collected. It was like stamp collectors gathering precious stamps one by one, finding great pleasure throughout the entire process.

The Great Banyan Tree King!

Li Qingshan's mind shuddered. He had heard about him, one of the Ten Daemon Kings, greatest Daemon King of the Mist province, a long time ago. How had Si Qing of all people managed to collect a part of his roots?

Si Bao said, "You're merely taking advantage of the tree king's mild nature. Since you've come to the Green province now, are you bold enough to touch even a scale on the dragon king?"

Gu Yanying took a sip of alcohol and smiled. "The tree king's roots span thousands of kilometers. Who knows how many creatures depend on them, so gathering a root or two is nothing special at all. However, since something special like that exists, this battleground definitely won't be a regular battleground."

"That's right. If you can find the Great Banyan Tree King's roots and drink its sap, then you can rapidly recover your spiritual qi. And, it'll fill you with energy as if you've just set foot into the arena."

Conversations outside originally could not be heard within the Dragon Arena, but Si Qing's voice rang out clearly in the rainforest so that both fighters knew about this, ensuring the fairness of the duel.

Li Qingshan felt even more shocked. Although banyan trees had the reputation of being able to grow into a forest from a single tree, just how large was the Great Banyan Tree King to span thousands of kilometers?

He frowned and said, "Isn't this unfair then? The forest is so thick. Your people will obviously be extremely familiar with the Great Banyan Tree King's root, but how are we supposed to distinguish it?"

"You won't be able to miss it as long as you have eyes."

Si Qing laughed aloud. With a wave of his hand, the depicted scenery departed from the two fighters, rising high into the air and overlooking the entire rainforest from the Mist province. All he saw was a huge, towering tree jutting out of the forest, even taller than those trees that resembled skyscrapers. The crown of the tree was like a cloud, blotting out the sky. It was the reason why the rainforest was so dark.

E Dan even sneered. "Bumpkin!"

Li Qingshan could not be bothered with arguing with him. He widened his eyes and gazed at the towering tree as he thought, And they only call this a root? What's his main body like then? He found it even more difficult to imagine how majestic the Great Banyan Tree King would be.

The determining factor of this duel was clearly who could obtain more tree sap from this "root".

Yan Xixin flew out of the sea of trees immediately and grasped his bearings, rushing towards the towering tree in the centre. Meanwhile, the dwarf darted through the forest, moving even faster than him. He arrived near the giant tree, but he did not get any closer. Instead, he lurked near a path where Yan Xixin would definitely pass by to launch an ambush.

Si Qing continued, "The Great Banyan Tree King's root is gentle. It won't even fight back when it's damaged. However, the sun vines on him aren't so easy to deal with."

Yan Xixin shivered inside. Sure enough, withered, yellow vines coiled around the huge tree. Apart from being extremely thick, there was nothing particularly conspicuous about them. However, there were plenty of dangerous, carnivorous plants among the rainforest of the Mist province that stretched fifty thousand kilometers. Among them, sun vines possessed the greatest infamy.

If cultivators became entangled by them, they would completely go numb, and in the blink of an eye, their cultivation would leak away completely, followed by their vitality. It was rumored that even their souls would not be able to escape in the end, trapped in the sun vines forever.

Sun vines normally only grew on the roots of the Great Banyan Tree King. Only the Great Banyan Tree King could support them permanently. If other trees became entwined, they would wither away very quickly.

As Yan Xixin contemplated what he would do, a black figure darted out of the sea of trees, moving like lightning. He had remained vigilant the entire time, so he immediately blocked with his huge shield. With a clang, the two of them brushed past one another, and a mark appeared on the shield.

He was secretly surprised, This dwarf moves far too quickly, so quickly that I actually struggle to determine where his attacks come from, so I can't rebound his attacks.

The two of them clashed in the air. The dwarf's attacks were swift and sharp, but Yan Xixin held his ground firmly. He could not be defeated so easily. He thought, In order to maintain this speed and attack, it'll definitely take a larger toll on him than me.

But a while later, the dwarf suddenly shot backwards towards the towering tree. The withered, yellow vines suddenly sprang alive, extending towards the dwarf madly and becoming dancing dragons and snakes.

The dwarf used his startling speed to maneuver wildly between the sun vines. There had been multiple times when he was almost caught. He had to pull in his body violently in order to dodge.

His figure was already different from a regular person's, so he was like a ball when he pulled himself in, launching towards the huge tree. With a flash of light in his hand, he cut through the thick tree bark and jade-green tree sap spurted out, landing in his mouth. Immediately, he riled up with vigour, and his spiritual energy recovered completely. Then, he launched himself out again, leaving the giant tree to continue his battle with Yan Xixin.

From beginning to end, he had not stopped for even a second.

Chapter 599 - Fire Devouring Folk

Yan Xixin personally believed he neither possessed the speed to dodge the sun vines or such a powerful attack that could cut through the tree bark in a single strike. He could only rely on his own recovery, and before long, he would run out of energy, while his opponent could replenish himself endlessly. Under these circumstances, even if there were ten Yan Xixins rotating through the battles, they would still be wasted away forcefully. The situation was extremely disadvantageous.

Si Bao thought, Oh no. Originally, we still had a sixty percent chance of victory with this round, but with this, we probably don't even have a thirty percent chance.

Gu Yanying expressed for her to not worry and glanced backwards.

Li Qingshan had already refined the five arcane artifacts, drinking heartily as he watched the duel in the Dragon Arena. His expression seemed rather similar to Si Qing's.

Right now, he agreed with what Si Qing said very much. Duels truly were more interesting than dancing. Of course, if sect master Qiu were naked, that would be a whole different story.

Si Bao directly turned around and glanced at Li Qingshan, If we lose this round, then Si Qing will still have two fighters, and they'll both be in perfect condition. Big sis trusts him so much, but is he really that powerful?

Li Qingshan grinned back at her, which Si Bao found extremely dissatisfying. "What're you grinning for? You've drunken so much! Have you already come up with an idea?"

"Not yet, but when I go in later, hic, I'll obviously have one," Li Qingshan said. There was no need for him to find a way to deal with the rainforest environment. If Yan Xixin lost, they would obviously change the battleground.

Si Bao could see there was no drunkenness in Li Qingshan's eyes at all. Instead, they blazed with a will to fight, shining even brighter than before.

A while later, only forty percent of Yan Xixin's spiritual qi remained, while the dwarf was unscathed. He launched towards the huge tree again. Not only did he want to win this round, but he even wanted to maintain his strength and win the next one.

He did this to prevent Yan Xixin from forfeiting when he had basically run out of spiritual qi. If that happened, he would not be able to make use of this advantageous environment anymore.

Yan Xixin's eyes suddenly lit up. Now! He stowed his shield away and used a technique. A swathe of yellow sand rose up in the sea of trees, whistling towards the dwarf and swallowing him.

This was not a real sandstorm, but the earth element technique "Shrouding Sand". It was specially used to obscure the opponent's six senses, to cut off their soul sense. If earth element cultivators encountered an undefeatable opponent, they could easily escape with this move.

The dwarf happened to be weaving between the sun vines. If his vision became obscured and he ran into a sun vine, his life would immediately be in danger. He would get burnt for playing with fire!

The dwarf sneered coldly. He showed no fear at all. He watched as the sand swept over, but before it could even approach him, the sun vines extended out and produced a gentle glow.

Yan Xixin was currently maintaining the technique, but he suddenly discovered that his spiritual qi was being depleted at a rapid rate. If he tried to keep up the technique, all of his spiritual qi would be drained away before long.

Si Qing smiled. "Yanying, this move your subordinate has taken isn't particularly clever. Even if spiritual and arcane artifacts become entangled by sun vines, they'll lose all of their powers before long. It's even more difficult for techniques to be of any use."

Qian Rongzhi took note of this. The sun vines were rather similar to the Heaven Climbing Vine she possessed, but there was nothing strange about that. Many vines were parasitic plants. Draining spiritual qi could be considered as their instincts.

Strange plants like sun vines and Heaven Climbing Vines only amplified these instincts, while Heaven Climbing Vines possessed the ability to cross through worlds. It was far more powerful than sun vines, except it was far too difficult to nurture.

Ever since she reached Foundation Establishment, she basically spent all the resources she had built up over the years to buy spiritual water so that she could nourish the Heaven Climbing Vine. Despite her efforts, it was not even a foot tall. Although the rate at which it siphoned spiritual qi had become slightly faster, she did not use any of it at all, leaving it all to the Heaven Climbing Vine to nourish itself.

This required extremely great willpower. With the purity of the spiritual qi the Heaven Climbing Vine siphoned, it was extremely enticing to cultivators. It was basically like drugs from Li Qingshan's past life. They would become addicted after tasting it once.

Chu Tian did not necessarily have much difficulty in understanding the principle of accumulation and delayed gratification, but he was unable to resist the temptation of the pure spiritual qi. Coupled with how he wanted to maintain his title of “genius”, he was eager for quick successes and benefits.

Any additional restraint and accumulation now would lead to additional benefits in the future. If the Heaven Climbing Vine could grow to the level of sun vines one day, then who could still be her opponent in the world?

These thoughts had only flashed through her head with lightning speed. With another slash, the dwarf obtained another mouthful of tree sap.

The sand that had its spiritual qi drained smashed into him. Yan Xixin continued to maintain the technique tirelessly, but it was merely a sandstorm now. It was unable to interfere with cultivators like him.

The dwarf launched back. As soon as he left the vicinity of the sun vines, he felt the sand suddenly become denser, bombarding him like secret weapons. However, this had always been an offensive technique without any lethal power, so it obviously could not get through his protective spiritual qi.

A sword slash whistled over. The dwarf had been anticipating a sneak attack, so he dodged it with ease. Afterwards, another huge sand man rushed out of the sand, lunging towards him with its arms outstretched.

The dwarf destroyed the sand man with a wave of his hand, and a figure burst out of the sand man’s chest. It was Yan Xixin. He had hidden in the sand man to approach him.

The dwarf sneered inside, Puny tricks. Are you trying to force me back into the range of the sun vines? Even if you ignore the fact that it’s impossible, what can you do to me even if I do retreat?

He drifted backwards, and the impact from the sand immediately plummeted. If Yan Xixin were bold enough to pursue him here, then that would be equivalent to walking towards his doom. The sun vines would definitely choke him to death.

However, Yan Xixin charged over without even looking back, casting aside his sword and shield and wrapping his arms around the dwarf firmly. The dwarf paled in fright. If he had been elsewhere, he could dodge with ease, but he had already entered the range of the sun vine. The dancing vines attacked him from all directions, basically sealing off all of his room to move about.

He never thought Yan Xixin would be bold enough to charge in here either, so although he was fast, he was unable to avoid being caught. The two of them rushed towards the towering tree, but before they could even approach the trunk, sun vines swept over wildly, wrapping them up into a ball of vines in the blink of an eye.

It was easy for the dwarf to break free from Yan Xixin’s embrace, but it was impossible to break free from the sun vines. He could feel his spiritual qi flood out of his body like a dam had given way as his body weakened and grew numb. It was impossible for him to muster the strength to fight back. He was in shock as he called out with difficulty.

“The spiritual qi in me surpasses yours. If you don’t admit defeat quickly, not only will I win, but you’ll lose your life for nothing too. Even your soul won’t be able to escape.”

Yan Xixin said calmly, "I might die, but your cultivation will basically be crippled. And, my body is tough with plenty of vitality, so the one who dies first might not necessarily be me!"

The dwarf's expression changed drastically. If he really lasted until Yan Xixin died, not only would his cultivation be completely gone, but he would be heavily injured too. His future in cultivation would basically be destroyed. To a cultivator, this was basically something as horrifying as death.

Li Qingshan felt admiration towards Yan Xixin. Yan Xixin was not particularly talkative, nor was he confident like Wei Ke, but he was over ten times more vicious and decisive than Wei Ke. He had forcefully changed this battle of certain defeat to mutual destruction.

The dwarf's viciousness was riled up too. "Then let's see who gives way first!"

But in the blink of an eye, the spiritual qi the dwarf had recovered from drinking the banyan tree sap had been drained away completely. Tiny vines directly plunged into his body, sucking away at his body. On the other hand, Yan Xixin showed pain on his face, but there was no fear or hesitation at all.

Watching as his cultivation was about to be reduced to nothing, the dwarf finally gave in and called out, "I admit defeat!"

The way assassins fought was about fleeing far away if their first and only strike failed. Although he possessed plenty of courage and decisiveness, he was unable to persevere. He could not help but consider for his own safety, refusing to go ahead with something as foolish as mutual destruction.

Si Qing's face sank. With a wave of his hand, the towering tree and the vicious sun vines all vanished from the Dragon Arena. They had returned to the original empty battlefield.

Yan Xixin and the dwarf fell out of the air together. For a moment, neither of them could move.

In the blink of an eye, Yan Xixin's cultivation had already fallen to mid Foundation Establishment. He had paid quite a heavy price for this victory. Fortunately, the basis of his cultivation was not damaged, so he could gradually recover as long as he had sufficient pills.

He removed his helmet, revealing his honest and ordinary face. He was also badly shaken, but he smiled victoriously.

The dwarf left the Dragon Arena and knelt down before Si Qing in a hurry, requesting for punishment. He knew that Si Qing hated weak and spineless people the most.

Si Qing had been extremely displeased. However, after considering how one of his three most powerful fighters had already fallen in battle, perhaps it would be good too if he could preserve his life. Victory was guaranteed in the last round anyway, so he relaxed and said indifferently, "Stand up! Victory and defeat are common in battle. Bring that bastard over."

Clank! The sound of rattling chains rang out from the back of the palace. A cart with a cage on it was pushed over, and the temperature in the hall suddenly increased.

Li Qingshan only saw a ball of blazing fire trapped in the cage. Only after a closer glance did he realise it was not fire, but a completely naked man. He sat down with his legs crossed, covered in large, thick chains. The shackles were all engraved with inscriptions, clearly made for subduing cultivators.

The man did not move at all, but the feeling he gave off was like a volcano that could erupt at any time. He hid explosive power.

He was riddled with muscles and extremely sturdy. The colour of his skin was anything but normal, a reddish-yellow like blazing fire. His hair stood on end, rising upwards, which seemed even more like flames. He had a scarlet-red horn on his forehead with a tiny, scarlet-red tail on his back. Li Qingshan could tell with a single glance that he was not human.

Li Qingshan was surprised inside. This is my opponent! I didn't think he'd be an otherfolk!

Gu Yanying was surprised. There were many otherfolk in the Dragon province, but Fire Devouring folk were violent and bellicose in nature. They could not live in the Dragon province. Most of them dwelled in lands of remote wilderness, with the majority in the Mist province. How had one ended up in Si Qing's hands?

Si Qing said, "This was one of the spoils I captured when I was hunting for suitable battlegrounds in the Mist province. It took quite the effort to capture him."

He turned towards the otherfolk and said, "Zhu Lie, I only have a single question for you. Do you want to live or do you want to die? I've basically run out of patience already. If you want to die, then I'll give you what you want today. If you want to live, then pick up your weapon and fight!"

Chapter 600 - Fighting Zhu Lie

Ever since Si Qing captured Zhu Lie in the Mist province, he had admired his battle prowess quite a lot. He was basically a natural-born fighter, so Si Long wanted to take him on as a servant.

However, Zhu Lie was like a trapped beast, frequently trying to run away. Si Long gave him plenty of punishment and torture to wear away his feral nature. At the same time, he gave him delicious food or even seductive women that the Mist province lacked to erode at his willpower.

Now, it was finally time for his efforts to bear fruit.

Under Si Qing's stern and eager gaze, Zhu Lie opened his mouth and spat out four words after quite a long while. "I want to live!"

Si Qing laughed aloud, overjoyed. He waved his arm.

Clank! Clatter! Jangle!

Zhu Lie's shackles were removed, striking the ground loudly. The cage opened up.

With a whoosh, Zhu Lie turned into a ball of fire and charged out of the cage. Waves of heat swept out into the surroundings, the flames directly reaching towards Si Qing. The hot wind made his robes ruffle loudly.

Si Qing did not move at all. He stared into Zhu Lie's blazing eyes, displaying unwavering determination. If you run away or attack me again this time, only death awaits you.

Before this determination, Zhu Lie finally lowered his head. "Where is my weapon and armour?"

This guy is going to be a tough opponent. If I don't use the Demon Suppression Statuary, defeating him truly won't be easy with just the Arts of the Boundless Ocean.

Li Qingshan thought. The abilities of otherfolk had always been stronger than regular people, and Fire Devouring folk were renowned for being battle-hungry among otherfolk. With his strength at mid Foundation Establishment alone, defeating an otherfolk who was equivalent to peak Foundation Establishment was almost impossible.

Gu Yanying said without looking back, "Li Qingshan, if you lose this round, I won't spare you!"

Li Qingshan skewed his lips. "Victory and defeat are common in battle. Commander, are there any rewards if I win this final round?"

Gu Yanying smiled. "Kid, you have quite the appetite, don't you. Aren't you satisfied with these arcane artifacts?"

"I'm satisfied! I'm very much satisfied!" Li Qingshan said, but he communicated through his soul sense, Did I exchange for these arcane artifacts or did I win them?

"That'll be up to you. A real man shouldn't haggle over every single detail. The duel is about to begin. Get ready to fight!"

Li Qingshan looked at the Dragon Arena and thought, At least I'll be able to explain their origins and avoid any suspicion with these arcane artifacts! If I lack anything in the future, I'll just demand them from this woman!

The Dragon Arena immediately became a sea of fire. Golden-yellow and fiery-red lava flowed slowly on the ground as the ash shrouded the sky.

Yan Xixin made use of the time Si Qing spent conversing with Zhu Lie to catch his breath and recover some of his spiritual qi. He had no idea what had happened outside. Gazing at the sky, he thought, Looks like the final opponent is a cultivator who primarily practises the fire element.

He was in no hurry to admit defeat. At the very least, he had to understand the opponent's origins and techniques to increase his final colleague's chances at victory as much as possible. Naturally, this final colleague was Li Qingshan.

Suddenly, light poured through a black cloud, and a huge fireball smashed through the cloud, rushing over from the horizon with a long tail like a meteor. It was still over five kilometers away, but it was already unstoppable.

Yan Xixin's expression changed; he said firmly, "I admit defeat!"

When he uttered those three words, the meteor was already less than three kilometers away. The waves of heat assaulted him, and Yan Xixin's face was dyed red, but the meteor had no intentions of stopping.

Si Qing said, "Zhu Lie, do not forget about the iron rules of the arena!"

With a great boom, the meteor exploded loudly, turning into thousands of sparks.

Zhu Lie leapt out, lifting a fiery-red trident high into the air and stabbing down at Yan Xixin's head. He completely ignored Si Qing's order. Making him agree and submit was already his limit. Pent-up fury and killing intent to vent filled him, so why would he spare any opponent?

Yan Xixin was in no state to fight back. Just when he was about to die, the trident stopped right in his face, where the tip was only an inch away from his eye. The dense aura of flames it contained slowly erupted, about to turn Yan Xixin's head to ash.

A pale, slender hand extended out from thin air, grabbing the scorching hot handle. Zhu Lie stared at the beautiful woman in white before him in surprise and anger. He poured all of his strength into his trident, but it would not advance even an inch further.

Gu Yanying waved her left hand gently. Zhu Lie and his flames flew backwards, tumbling away at a speed even greater than when he first arrived. In the end, he landed in a river of lava. She brought Yan Xixin out of the arena. "Let's continue with the next round!"

Although Zhu Lie had tried to kill him without any consideration for the rules, it never ended up happening. If she allowed Zhu Lie to kill Yan Xixin, then not only would Zhu Lie pay with his life, but she would even directly win the next round and the overall duel. However, she did not want to sacrifice Yan Xixin.

"Yanying's bearing is extraordinary as always. You have my admiration!" Si Qing forced out a faint smile. He had been in the wrong here. He secretly made up his mind to properly deal with Zhu Lie after winning the duel.

Zhu Lie leapt out of the lava. His face was twisted viciously, his anger intensified, and his killing intent burned violently like fire.

At this exact moment, Li Qingshan stood up and entered the Dragon Arena. Immediately, the sounds of waves rose up. The entire battlefield went from being a boundless sea of fire to a vast, deep-blue lake.

Li Qingshan could not help but smile, but he was also rather disappointed.

He understood what Gu Yanying was trying to say. Truly, only victory was permitted with this round. If he still could not win even when possessed such an advantage, then he was better off hanging himself.

The three prior victories had basically followed Gu Yanying's original plan, while the last round was basically a free win. However, exactly because it was far too easy, Li Qingshan instead felt rather disappointed.

On the other hand, Zhu Lie was unworried as if he had grown accustomed to this. Roaring flames ignited on his trident, and he swung it backwards. "Damn water, evaporate away!"

Si Qing said, "Don't tell me you think you can defeat Zhu Lie with some mere geographical advantages! Water trumping over fire only holds for conventional thinking. In the Mist province of the south, the Fire Devouring folk and Merfolk also understand this logic, but they have waged war for years. Are you telling me that your subordinate's talent for controlling water even surpasses Merfolk?"

Gu Yanying said, "You only really know for sure once you try it in this world."

Li Qingshan parted his hands. The almost-transparent Gentle Wave gloves emitted azure light. The surface of the lake immediately began to surge violently as a water dragon whistled over, followed by a second one, a third one... In the blink of an eye, nine water dragons rushed into the air, coiling around and lunging towards Zhu Lie.

“Hmm?” Si Qing was mildly surprised. “Isn’t he only at mid Foundation Establishment? How can he do something like this?”

Li Qingshan sucked in a deep breath. This was already his current limit, and he had only achieved this with the amplification of the Gentle Wave gloves. Of course, this was merely the limit of his human cultivation.

He thought to himself, I already possess an advantage like this. If I still end up using the Demon Suppression Statuary and the Traitorous Demon sword, it’ll be meaningless even if I win, and I’ll reveal my trump card for nothing. I refuse to believe that I can’t defeat this measly fire devourer with all these arcane artifacts and the Arts of the Boundless Ocean.

Zhu Lie opened his mouth and spat out roaring flames. The flames reduced the nine dragons to clouds of white steam before they could even approach him, drifting over the surface of the lake.

“Interesting!”

Li Qingshan rejoiced instead of being surprised. He formed a seal and went with the flow, using a technique. Immediately, the mist became thick like milk, reducing visibility to a minimum. He hid his aura in the heavy mist, but he could clearly see Zhu Lie.

However, Zhu Lie was completely unaffected, charging towards Li Qingshan. He was not as swift and elusive as Gu Yanying, but he was still startlingly fast. He swung down with the scarlet-red trident violently. “Do you think you can disguise that stink of yours just like this? Die!”

Li Qingshan grabbed the tip of the trident with his left hand and twisted his body, throwing a punch at Zhu Lie’s chest with his right hand. Water spiritual qi coiled around his hand like a whirlpool. Zhu Lie punched back, and the fierce flames smashed through the whirlpool, colliding with Li Qingshan’s fist.

The two of them clashed with brute strength as water and fire collided violently, equally matched with one another. However, fire was far more destructive than water. Li Qingshan could feel his hands become red-hot, where even breathing became scorching.

Zhu Lie’s chest swelled, and Li Qingshan thought, Oh no, he’s going to spit fire again!

A single breath from Zhu Lie had nullified the nine water dragons he had summoned with his full strength, so he understood the power behind this attack. In his opinion, they should not be called Fire Devouring folk, but Fire Spitting folk.

Li Qingshan felt his body colden before heating up again. The cold came from his soft armour, which immediately lit up with inscriptions and formed a thick layer of ice armour. The heat came from the arriving flames.

Zhu Lie was surprised at first before grinning viciously. He never thought Li Qingshan would actually be bold enough to confront him directly, which was perfect for him to vent his fury. The flames he spat out became even more intense, becoming scarlet-red in colour.

Under the flames, the ice armour began to melt very quickly. Li Qingshan used the Arts of the Boundless Ocean to channel his spiritual qi, and only then did he gain control over the situation, but his spiritual qi depleted rapidly.

Suddenly, Zhu Lie shut his mouth and brought his head down in a headbutt. With a clank, most of the ice armour shattered. The scarlet-red horn pierced through bit by bit. It would not take long for it to pierce his defence.

With a thought, the waistband on Li Qingshan let out a ring of water. As soon as it came into contact with Zhu Lie, it all surged over to him, surrounding him in a ball of water.

The ball of water was different from regular water. It was extremely heavy and thick like glue. Zhu Lie immediately became immobilised like an insect trapped in resin, turning into amber over time. The flames on his body were suppressed as well.

Sure enough, these arcane artifacts can help me quite a lot in battle. If I could slash out with the Traitorous Demon sword right now, I'll definitely be able to behead him!

Li Qingshan thought as he launched a palm strike. Although it contained the great force of the Cloud Parting Form, it was nowhere close to the power that the Traitorous Demon sword had in vanquishing foes.

With a bang, the ball of water was smashed apart, and Zhu Lie flew out. The ice armour around Li Qingshan shattered as well.

As it turned out, in the moment he sent Zhu Lie flying, Zhu Lie's trident had emerged from the ball of water and struck the chink in the ice armour. Meanwhile, the fire-red armour had mostly blocked the force of Li Qingshan's palm strike. Their fighting spirit surged.

"Let's go for another three hundred clashes!"

"Alright!" Li Qingshan rushed over to receive him. His entire body began to spin, turning into a water tornado as he collided violently with the ball of fire.

Steam surged and obscured their figures. Fire and water raged as they flashed about. The sounds of collisions rang out constantly. Who knew how many times they had clashed in that moment!

Yan Xixin murmured to himself, "This makes no sense!"