

I Am Loaded 201

## **Chapter 201: Excuse Me... Do You Know the Way to the Inner Yard?**

Somewhere at the back of the mountain, in the Inner Yard.

Su Qianqian and Rao Yinyin sat on a huge, comfortable bed in a charming room decorated in pink and red.

“Sister Rao, do you have any idea why the dean told the Inner Yard disciples to go into hiding?”

“Something strange is going on with the Spirit Palace’s array. It appears we’re under attack again.”

Su Qianqian held her huge white sword in her arms and stared at the ceiling with a dazed look in her eyes.

Her spiritual sense extended out and beyond the roof. She could see the array’s occasional shimmer and waver. It was clear that a powerful force was attacking it viciously, and she even suspected there might be more than one assailant.

The array had protected the Tiansang Spirit Palace for many years. It had rarely displayed such violent fluctuations of energy.

The masked man had been the one who violently ripped the array apart the last time.

“There’s always someone trying to infiltrate the Spirit Palace and attack it. They have always been stopped outside our gates.”

“The Holy Vassal could not breach the Inner Yard during their last attempt too.”

Rao Yinyin’s eyes shone with indulgence as she patted Su Qianqian’s head.

Her eyes slid over Su Qianqian’s blade discreetly. She sighed inwardly.

The famed sword...

Who cared if it were a famed sword!

It was nothing but a curse that brought its master bad luck. If she could, she would abandon the cursed blade in the wilderness. Let those madmen kill themselves over it.

Perhaps the young woman before her could finally enjoy a good night’s rest.

Rao Yinyin’s heart twinged as she combed her fingers through Su Qianqian’s hair. Su Qianqian appeared to relish the touch. She lay down on the bed and released her hold on the sword temporarily.

“Wouldn’t it be wonderful if you weren’t the master of this sword...”

Rao Yinyin couldn’t help but murmur to herself when she saw how relaxed the young woman was.

The responsibility of carrying a famed sword wasn’t something someone as young as Su Qianqian could bear. One had to pay the price for such power.

The young child had lost the chance to experience the typical joys of childhood from the moment she took the sword.

“No.”

Su Qianqian shook her head and replied solemnly. “I’m going to do my duty as a custodian of this sword. Someday, I’ll make the Su family rise again.”

“If that day truly comes...”

“Yes,... he’ll... probably be thrilled...”

Rao Yinyin cupped Su Qianqian’s cheeks with her palms. She could sense the young girl’s sorrow.

Her father had died in battle for this sword. Was it really worth it?

“Alright, let’s not worry about the future. We should have a good rest tonight. When we wake up tomorrow morning, your master would have fixed everything.”

Rao Yinyin decided they were going to stop talking about this upsetting subject and smiled.

She slipped her hands under the young girl’s armpits and tickled her. Su Qianqian burst out into giggles and begged for Rao Yinyin to stop.

It didn’t take long before the two young women were tussling around on the bed.

BOOM!

A fearsome, jarring sound emerged from the back of the mountain and startled the two young women.

No outsiders ever entered these residences from the back of the mountain. The most recent arrival and addition to the group of residents was none other than Xu Xiaoshou. Was he back?

“Brother Little Beast, is that you?” Su Qianqian called out tentatively.

Rao Yinyin frowned. Regardless of how urgent Xu Xiaoshou needed to return here, they would still have expected him to enter the residence through the main gate.

But from the back of the mountain? He wouldn’t have the gall to do that!

Yet, the sound had come from the hot springs at the back of the mountain and it was the deepest and most remote part of the residence. Why would anyone be out there?

“Who is it?”

The air was still and heavy with tension. The sound of their heartbeats appeared almost deafening.

Su Qianqian was a little nervous. Was it another assassin?

She grabbed the Epitaph of City Snow. It seemed to give her strength. Something cold flashed across her eyes as calm came over her.

Thud. Thud. Thud.

A series of polite knocks came from the door. Moments passed in silence before the door creaked open.

“My apologies. I think I’m lost again. Excuse me... do you know the way to the Inner Yard?”

The man spoke in a raspy voice that sounded like his throat had not known water for a decade. It was as grating as the buzzing of a chainsaw and sent panic spiking through one’s blood.

The stranger was dressed in a long black robe. His face was concealed and his hands gloved. It was as if mere contact with a slight breeze would turn him to dust.

The only parts of him exposed were his deep, murky eyes. They appeared like the clouded eyes of the dead, and the very white of his eyes was yellow.

“The masked man?”

The hearts of the two young women sank when they saw the man.

So, the Holy Vassal was attempting to infiltrate the Spirit Palace again.

The masked man had sneaked into the Inner Yard to hunt down Su Qianqian while a fierce battle was going on outside.

Rao Yinyin instinctively stepped forward and shielded Su Qianqian and her sword. She was alarmed, and her voice was trembling. “Who are you? Why have you barged into my room?”

The masked man did not spare her a single glance. Instead, his eyes looked right past her and fell on the huge white sword. They were bright with joy and surprise.

“Step aside.”

Rao Yinyin stood stubbornly before Su Qianqian. With a wave of her hand, a pink mist appeared in the room.

“An illusion?”

A strange look appeared in the masked man’s eyes. He finally stared Rao Yinyin straight in the eye. “You will not fool me with such a minor illusion. I’ll say it again. Step aside.”

Rao Yinyin did not utter a word. Her eyes were cold as her hands moved in a flurry and went through a series of seals.

Before she could unleash her attack, the sword in Su Qianqian’s hands shook violently. Then suddenly a torrent of cold energy surged forth. It struck Rao Yinyin and blood streams from her lips as the force blasted her toward the masked man.

Without batting his eyelid, the masked man smacked her away and sent her crashing straight into a wall.

BOOM!

The wall collapsed and fell apart.

Panic seized Su Qianqian, and she could only stare at the sword in her hands in shock and bewilderment. The blade had been like family to her, and she couldn’t understand why it had suddenly spiraled out of control.

“I didn’t do it...”

“Run!”

Rao Yinyin hollered with everything that she had. She already knew that Su Qianqian hadn’t unleashed that attack.

It was the masked man’s fault for being too powerful. They were worlds apart. No matter how strong the bond between Su Qianqian and Epitaph of City Snow, he could easily wrestle control of the sword from Su Qianqian with a single glance.

“Is that Epitaph of City Snow?”

Something changed in the murky depths of the masked man’s eyes. They glinted with fondness as he stared at the sword in Su Qianqian’s hands.

“Can I... have a look at it?” He stepped forward and reached for the sword.

Su Qianqian stared at the gloved hands, and a strange sensation of trepidation seized her.

His hands did not resemble the hands of an ordinary person. Instead, the masked man’s hands...

... were exceedingly flat, like they had no thumbs!

“No.”

Su Qianqian took one step back as she clutched onto her sword tightly and stared at the man before him. He might be the most powerful enemy who had descended upon the Spirit Palace tonight.

She couldn’t run. What would happen to Rao Yinyin if she ran?

“Don’t worry. I harbor no ill will. I just want to look...”

Su Qianqian couldn’t take the screams ringing in her ears any longer. She held the sword before her. Winds suddenly whipped up and wailed as the surrounding temperature plummeted.

The masked man’s eyes gleamed again. The desire in them now intensified.

“A famed sword indeed. I...”

“Don’t come any closer!” Su Qianqian hollered. The fear and rage churning inside her exploded simultaneously as she swung her huge white blade down.

“Heavy Tomb!”

The black shadow of a tomb descended from the heavens, falling upon and melding with Su Qianqian’s enormous sword so suddenly that the air rumbled from the rush of its descent.

Then the blade stopped abruptly about ten feet away from the masked man.

A terrifying force flung Su Qianqian back. The young woman smashed through brick and mortar as she flew out the roof before finally landing in a field of flowers behind the house.

The web of her thumb had split open and blood gushed out. But she kept her grip on the sword.

The masked man looked heavenward, appearing to be caught in a bitter memory. After a long time, he turned his eyes towards Su Qianqian, who had fallen to the ground, and shook his head.

“Don’t be a fool. You’re only going to get yourself hurt...”

“No sword in this world dares to attack me. Not even a famed sword would dare to do so!”

## **Chapter 202: All Swords to the Master**

“No sword in this world dares to attack me. Not even a famed sword would dare to do so!”

Rao Yinyin laid frozen amidst the collapsed ruins when she heard those conceited words. She tried to struggle to her feet. But after such an attack from the masked man, she was no match for the sword energy still lingering in her body.

“Who is he? Judging from how powerful his sword energy is, he is probably more powerful than Elder Xiao,” she muttered to herself.

She did not know that Xiao Qixiu could not even handle the first strike from the masked man.

Xiao Qixiu did not want anyone to spread the news that the masked man defeated him with a single blow.

Rao Yinyin watched as the masked man walked out of the house and into the field of flowers. She struggled desperately to get to her feet. However, she ended up spitting out a mouthful of blood.

Partially buried under brick and mortar, she stubbornly struggled, but she was losing consciousness. Finally, her hands fell limply to her side and she descended into darkness.

“Sister Su...” she called out weakly.

“Run!”

... ..

“Child, this sword has brought you much pain, has it not?”

The masked man kneeled before Su Qianqian. He tried to sound gentle when he spoke.

“Children your age should demand the attention and love of your parents. A child like you should not be running around with such a tremendous responsibility. The attempted assassinations must have put you through an endless journey of restless nights and tasteless meals.”

Come, let me take your pain away. I will bear it in your stead.”

The masked man placed his hand over Epitaph of City Snow. Su Qianqian clenched her jaw and clutched the sword tightly with a stubborn look on her face.

But a single flick of a finger against her wrist swiftly released the sword from the young woman.

“Epitaph of City Snow...” murmured the masked man as he brushed his fingers against the massive snow-white blade.

When Xu Xiaoshou once touched it, the telepathic artifact had flung itself into its master's arms with an endearing arrogance. Yet, when held by the masked man, it dared not move a single inch.

CLINK!

The masked man flicked his finger against the blade. The clear ringing of the sword reverberated across the Inner Yard.

Every disciple hiding in their residence felt their hair stand on ends. An unbearable sensation akin to the pain of a sharp blade slicing through their souls surged through their bodies.

"A famed sword indeed. Finally, the real deal and not a fake one!"

The masked man whispered in a tone of approval before he dipped his head and continued, "I will be honest with you. I went to Tiansang Prefecture and paid a visit to the Su family."

Su Qianqian's eyes opened wide as soon as she heard him. Instinctively sensing danger in his words, a shudder coursed through her body.

"What did you do to my grandfather?" she asked as she whipped her head up, revealing eyes burning with uncontrollable rage.

"Did your family not speak to you about this?"

The masked man asked curiously. He studied the furious look in her eyes before placing his palm on her head with a smile.

"Your grandfather may be dead."

WHOOSH!

A wintry wind swept across the night sky. The field of flowers swayed with the wind, but everything else seemed to be at a complete standstill.

Su Qianqian's eyes flashed as her fingers sank into the earth.

The sword energy rampantly raging inside her flared up, and she shot to her feet.

BOOM!

The explosion of Sword Will pushed the masked man back and sent him staggering.

The seeds of the Crimson Dream Flower flooded the Heavens and burst into dust in the air. An abundance of sword energies gushed out of Su Qianqian's body as her black hair tussled around like a powerful gust of wind was blowing.

"So, you are at the final-stage Innate Level Sword Will."

The masked man finally saw what he had wanted to see, and he seemed a little disappointed.

"It is not enough. It is simply not enough."

If that is all you are capable of, you can never harm me. You cannot hurt me at all."

"I can kill you right now!" shouted Su Qianqian. She was so furious that she had slipped into a state of madness. The masked man's verbal assault made her lose all her sense of reasoning.

With a flick of her hand, she beckoned Epitaph of City Snow. The sword instantly vibrated and tried to free itself from the masked man's hold.

But a swift glance from the masked man immediately quietened down the sword.

"Kill him!" Su Qianqian ordered.

Her sword did not return to her. Yet Su Qianqian showed no hint of fear. Sword energy gathered above her head, weaving itself into an enormous white sword that slashed at the masked man.

"Your sword energy has materialized..."

His faint smile, hidden beneath a layer of black cloth, went unnoticed as he stuck two fingers out and countered the powerful attack effortlessly.

BOOM!

The ease with which the masked man had defended against the blow belied the force of the collision. Its powerful impact was unmistakable. The thunderous explosion shattered the array which protected the residence and destroyed the field of red flowers, leaving nothing but emptiness in its wake.

Under the bright spill of moonlight, the masked man blocked the enormous blade woven from sword energy with one hand. He gazed downward at the much smaller Su Qianqian and stared straight into her reddened eyes.

A soft laugh shattered the silence, its echo lingering in the quiet night.

"Your grandfather was not the only one. Those uncles and aunts of yours who dared attack me. Many of them probably did not survive."

Naturally, it is a Swordsman's honor to die by my hand."

The masked man said that as if it were the unquestionable truth. His casual tone merely drove Su Qianqian into greater fury.

She could live with the many attempted assassinations taken on her life. She would not shed a tear if anyone of them succeeded in the end.

To keep her family away from danger, she had left the Su family a few years ago. She hid at the Tiansang Spirit Palace in what had seemed like a safe place.

She had not even dared to take one step out of the Tiansang Spirit Palace's gates. She had lost her freedom, and yet all that she had done had been futile.

"I am the one with the famed sword, not them. Why did you hurt my family?" Su Qianqian wailed as tears filled her eyes.

The masked man looked at her quietly before he slowly answered, "What a naive girl you are!"

You better learn that the world does not revolve around you or your wishes. Just because you think something should unfold in a certain way does not mean that destiny will make it so.”

I was not the only one paying visits to the Su family every day. The visitors visiting your family were not any fewer than the ones visiting you at the Spirit Palace. Frankly, your family might have received more visitors than you did.”

After all, it was a much easier place to get into.”

Su Qianqian did not understand it at all. She yelled hoarsely, “But I am the one who has the famed sword!”

The masked man curled his hand inward slightly, then flicked it. The enormous sword woven from her sword energy instantly disintegrated. He placed his palm on Su Qianqian’s head again.

“Child, you must know this. Many in this world still love you and whose love goes unnoticed.”

Even I got deceived by quite a few fake famed swords. I even got a few from the Su family and a few from various places scattered across the Tiansang Prefecture.”

Gripped by emotions, Su Qianqian could not stop the rage from shaking her slender body, and she finally collapsed limply onto the ground.

“It is not true. It cannot be true. No one told me anything.”

Despite the tough facade that she had always put up, she was just a young girl who was barely sixteen. She was not even of age.

Many loved ones had sheltered her under their wings. With hardly any knowledge of the harsh realities of the world, the young girl understood little.

The masked man shook his head. His expression remained calm.

He had merely laid out what had been plain facts. Perhaps for the young woman before him, the truth was too cruel. It might be harsh to bear, but it was the reality of their world after one stripped off all pretense and lies.

“Sometimes, there is no need for words of love.”

“No. It is not true!” Su Qianqian clambered backward as she trembled violently. She could not accept it... Then her muttering stopped.

“You are lying! That’s right. You are trying to trick me!”

Her eyes widened as she stared unblinkingly at the man before her.

He was the enemy. She should not trust his words.

Hate swelled inside her and flooded her mind. The sword energies that had been coursing through her body had caused unbearable pain. Suddenly, the sword energies stayed still and then surged out of her body as if summoned.



Simultaneously, sword energies erupted from the seeds of Crimson Dream Flowers, which were adrift in the air. Meanwhile, white sword energies formed illusory swords in the sky and pointed their blade tips at the masked man.

Ten thousand blades waited in unison for the command to strike!

Su Qianqian had no blade in her hand. But it did not stop the piercing cry of a sword from reverberating across the entire Tiansang Spirit Palace and resounding through the mountain.

CLANG!

Regardless of where they were in the Spirit Palace, the sword of every Swordsman suddenly heeded their master's beckon in unison.

"All Swords to the Master?"

### **Chapter 203: A Fight to the Death**

Ye Xiaotian crashed onto the ground at the gates of the Spirit Palace and spat out a mouthful of blood.

He could not believe what was happening. He admitted that the masked man was a powerful foe, but who was this Elder? Where did he come from, and why did he possess so much power?

The pole which he held could shatter the very Heavens. Could the Gods be playing a joke on them?

Cen Qiaofu squatted on the tree stump and continued his game of chess with Xiao Qixiu. From time to time, he would smack the snowy-haired child on the ground with his pole and bark out a laugh. "Punk, you have tried twice and failed. Are you still going to try again?"

Xiao Qixiu's eyebrows twitched in fury as he watched the scene before him. He was not the one who wanted to have the game of chess with the Elder. But the latter had pressured him into playing the game!

If he had done nothing, those three white-haired men lying on the ground would never get back up again.

"And you, the young man at the back, are you done thinking? Unleash whatever attack you have got up your sleeve. My tea is getting cold."

Cen Qiaofu threw a look at the man behind him before picking up his cup and taking a sip of tea. He was talking to Qiao Qianzhi, who was standing the farthest away from him. Qiao Qianzhi had watched quietly from the sideline.

He had made tea for himself as well.

Qiao Qianzhi stiffened in surprise. He could not believe that Cen Qiaofu had caught him in the act when he had done so discreetly.

It was not his fault. To set up and activate a massive array required some time. As a Spirit Array Master, he would be faster than most others when setting up such a powerful array. However, there was no way he could activate one instantly!

“Hee, hee...”

He scratched his head sheepishly and said, “You caught me, Senior.”

Qiao Qianzhi’s weak attempt to answer what he was doing made Cen Qiaofu spit out the tea from his mouth. It spat on Xiao Qixiu’s face.

Cen Qiaofu apologetically handed a piece of cloth to Xiao Qixiu and said aloud, “I will be honest with you. I have dabbled with arrays during my time as a hermit. I think of myself as something of a Spirit Array Master too!”

Crack!

Everyone looked stunned when they heard him.

Ye Xiaotian, sprawled on the ground, seemed mortified. It appeared as if his soul had fled his body.

They had pinned their hopes on this last resort. Had it failed before they had even attempted it?

Everyone fell silent. The stillness in the air was stifling.

Cen Qiaofu shrugged nonchalantly and said, “It was just something I did to pass the time. I refine pills too, but they are not as good as the pills one of the younger ones in my family makes. I do not go around telling people about it for fear of embarrassing myself.”

“But I am passable at arrays.”

He eyed Qiao Qianzhi, then asked firmly, “Is it the Eight Pillars of Imprisonment?”

He might have phrased his words as a question, but the look of certainty on his face made it clear he knew what Qiao Qianzhi was doing.

Thud!

Qiao Qianzhi’s array wheel slipped from his hands and fell to the ground. The look on his face was that of utter shock.

The Elder had not been joking. He was a Spirit Array Master!

Cen Qiaofu placed another chess piece on the board and remarked, “Not bad at all. I did not think that you had studied Dao Qiongcang’s Divine Secret. You are going to go far!”

Qiao Qianzhi’s face turned pale. Cen Qiaofu even knew what the Divine Secret was. He was, without a doubt, a Spirit Array Master.

Their enemy had deployed many types of skills, and the threat they posed had them utterly cornered. Was there anyone who could free them from such a predicament?

The Holy Vassal had trapped five Sovereign Stage cultivators from the Tiansang Spirit Palace by deploying a single Elder!

“How about you?”

Cen Qiaofu eyed Jiang Bianyan, who was standing in one corner. He asked bluntly, “What do you plan to do?”

Jiang Bianyan grimaced before answering. “You cannot be serious, Senior,” he muttered softly.

At that moment, he truly hated himself for coming alone. If Cen Qiaofu intended to kill them, he might not walk out of the situation to return to the Holy Divine Palace alive!

They could not let the Holy Vassal run free anymore.

He had to notify the headquarters that Cen Qiaofu had joined the Holy Vassal as soon as possible. They had allowed the Holy Vassal too much latitude, and their indulgence had resulted in danger in their backyard.

Xiao Qixiu continued playing chess with composure. At that point, the bold swordsman was the only one who possessed the unwavering patience and determination necessary to play a game of chess with Cen Qiaofu.

Since their last fight with the masked man, he had expected more formidable foes from the Holy Vassal.

It was what he had expected, so he was not shocked.

CLANG!

It was then that the clear, piercing cry of a sword filled the Heavens. The blade on Xiao Qixiu’s back flew out of its sheath as if summoned.

“All Swords to the Master?”

It surprised Cen Qiaofu as well, as the Master Stage Sword Will was not something a person could easily attain. Such an achievement was no mean feat. He could not believe that he had stumbled across the person on the very day he had paid a visit to the Spirit Palace.

Shock registered in Xiao Qixiu’s eyes.

They had only a few Swordsmen with Innate Stage Sword Will in the Spirit Palace and had even fewer who had advanced to the Master Stage.

Even Su Qianqian needed some time before she could advance to the Master Stage.

“Hold on a minute!”

Xiao Qixiu shot up to his feet and accidentally flipped the chessboard over.

“Su Qianqian!”

He grabbed onto the tree stump and straightened his back. His eyes widened as he roared, “The masked man went to find the famed sword!”

Cen Qiaofu stared at the broken shards of chess pieces scattered on the ground in a stupor. Had the man just resorted to feigned shock because he did not want to lose the match?

“Was it not obvious?”

Cen Qiaofu looked up and stared at the man before him. He could not understand why Xiao Qixiu was in such a fit.

Xiao Qixiu appeared to be in a panic. He whirled around and flew away, leaving Cen Qiaofu in a rage.

“Have you forgotten what I said? Even if you do not enjoy nibbling on nuts, can you not just sit down and drink your tea?”

He smacked the tree stump. The black and white chess fragments scattered on the ground flew into the air. With a flick of his finger, he shot some pieces through the air like streaks of light.

But Xiao Qixiu did not look back as he flew away. Instead, he shoved his sword behind his back and used it as a shield. Blood spilled from his mouth as the sound of something metallic rang out behind him. He continued flying into the distance.

Cen Qiaofu frowned. He smacked the tree stump again and flicked his finger once more.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

More chess pieces shot toward Xiao Qixiu. The vast distance separating Cen Qiaofu and Xiao Qixiu did not prevent those chess shards from piercing the latter’s weakening body.

“You are not giving up, are you?”

“Why?”

It surprised Cen Qiaofu as he had infused the chess pieces with the power of the Great Path. Being hit by one of those pieces was not a pleasant experience at all. The foundation of Xiao Qixiu’s cultivation might get damaged if he did not remove them in time.

Cen Qiaofu had his mission. He could not let the man leave. He rested his pole over his shoulder and instantly caught up with Xiao Qixiu. He swung his rod at the latter.

Xiao Qixiu showed no interest in fighting him and left his back exposed.

Something flickered in Cen Qiaofu’s eyes. But it did not stop him from swinging his pole down mercilessly.

**BOOM!**

The Heavens shattered into countless glittering shards amidst a thundering explosion. With one hand thrust into the sky, Ye Xiaotian sprang to counterattack the strike.

He had been the one who had taken the blow for Xiao Qixiu!

**BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!**

Suddenly, eight pillars descended from the sky and imprisoned Cen Qiaofu within the confines of the Eight Pillars of Imprisonment.

The two founding Elders reappeared, and their eyes were ablaze with bold defiance. They declared, "We have lived long enough. We will take these odds!"

Somewhere in the distance, Jiang Bianyan sighed. He did not expect cultivators from the Spirit Palace to throw themselves into a fight with no warning. He would not get out of a battle this time.

"Let us fight!"

Upon Ye Xiaotian's command, dark lightning flooded the prison behind the eight pillars, sending violent ripples searing through the air inside.

The force behind the attack resulted from a Spirit Array Master's gradual accumulation of power. No matter how highly Cen Qiaofu thought of his abilities, he would not risk taking it head-on. He then realized the space that he was at had shackled him inside when he tried to flee.

They had gotten one step ahead of him!

BOOM!

A roaring explosion filled the Heavens and nearly blew up half the mountain.

The proximity of the Spirit Palace's array meant it did not escape unscathed. It shattered and revealed slivers of the night sky under its protective barrier.

Every disciple in the Inner Yard clamped their ears shut almost at the same time. Those disciples with lower levels of cultivation suffered from a loud buzzing in their ears after the explosion.

Fortunately, the array had shielded most of them from harm. The number of casualties remained low.

Jiang Bianyan stared at Qiao Qianzhi in a stupor. He could not believe that the latter had been the one who had set the explosion off. Could he have survived such an attack if he got trapped within the array?

Everyone waited with anticipation as the dust settled and the smoke in the air dissipated.

Had they succeeded?

Cough! Cough!

Their blood ran cold when they heard the hacking cough.

Cen Qiaofu's eyebrows raised. His face was blood-stained, but his clothes remained unchanged. His clean set of clothes concealed the extent of his injury.

But the blood dripping from his fingertips showed he had taken quite a hit.

"Truly, I cannot wait to see how far you young ones will go."

His pole got destroyed in the explosion. The Elder unhooked the ax from his belt. His eyes showed approval when they fell on Qiao Qianzhi.

"Not bad at all!" he said.

He loosened the joints of his wrists and shifted dislocated joints back into place. Then, with a firm voice, he said, "I suppose it is time for me to be serious!"

Qiao Qianzhi's lips twitched. He could feel a mild chill running down his back.

He threw a glance over his shoulder, then tightened his fists.

"It is up to you now, Xiao. I have bought you some time. As for who you are going against next, be careful."

Was it going to be the masked man?

Qiao Qianzhi swallowed hard as he felt a lump in his throat. Both foes were formidable opponents. How could they defeat them?

But the determination in his eyes never wavered. The will to fight set the light in his eyes ablaze once again.

"If my disciple's life is at stake, I will fight to the death if I have to!"

#### **Chapter 204: The Second Time the Sword is Drawn**

"A Master Swordsman?"

As he was on his way to the Spiritual Library Division, Xu Xiaoshou suddenly turned around and looked toward the Inner Yard at the back of the mountain.

He sheathed his impetuous sword, Hiding Pain, into the Black Scabbard and kept it at the ready close to his person.

With consent from the dean, he was allowed to wear the Black Scabbard out in the open instead of hiding it.

"Xu Xiaoshou, has someone just achieved the level of a Master for the Sword Will?"

Mu Zixi asked out of curiosity. The power of a Master Stage Sword Will still frightened her even now, for her experience encountering Lei Shuangxing taught her to fear it.

The blind young man had survived even after being confronted by someone at the Sovereign Stage and escaped in one piece.

She was not sure where Ye Xiaotian's Heaven Travels had sent Lei Shuangxing. But she knew that if the blind man could survive such an ordeal, he would return as someone formidable.

Xu Xiaoshou nodded in response to her question. The Sword Will he had just detected was inferior compared to Lei Shuangxing's level of prowess. But while the formation was still crude in form, likely from someone at the Master Stage level, it was far superior to what he could conjure.

"A Master Swordsman. I bet only a few in the Spirit Palace can reach such a level."

"If it came from the back of the mountain, then could it be Su Qianqian who executed it?" whispered Xu Xiaoshou.

He shuddered at the thought.

Wasn't it be such a coincidence that Su Qianqian made it to the level of a Master Swordsman just when the Holy Vassal attacked them?

It did not seem possible!

Something must have happened at the back of the mountain!

Xu Xiaoshou could not stop analyzing the situation. If he were with the Holy Vassal, would he organize such a massive operation merely to rescue Luo Leilei?

He decided he might do it, for it made sense to kill two birds with one stone.

His eyes suddenly looked focused, and it was a sign that he had figured things out.

"Epitaph of City Snow," he whispered.

He recalled the reason for the last visit by the masked man, who appeared determined to get his hands on the famed sword. He was convinced that the masked man would try to steal the sword again, for he had now shown up.

"Sister Mu, get to the library and look for the old fart. If you can find him, tell him to get to the back of the mountain."

If you do not see him around, then stay where you are," Xu Xiaoshou instructed the girl.

"You are heading over to the Inner Yard?" Mu Zixi asked, immediately becoming anxious. "What can you do if you get there? Can you beat them?" she continued.

: Ridiculed, Passive Points +1.

Her blunt remarks surprised Xu Xiaoshou. He was at a loss for a reply.

He wondered why this little sister of his had to be so forthright. Could she not be a bit more diplomatic?

While he knew he would not stand a chance against those people, he still had to go there all the same. After all, it was his new home.

Besides, Su Qianqian was there. He could not help feeling a little concerned about the young girl.

He did a quick check on the Information Bar.

: Passive Points: 15944.

He had already collected thousands of passive points. These came from all the surprised looks he received from the crowd when he emerged from the Tianxuan Gate. However, most of the points had come from the Sword Aura Jade.

That item alone contributed up to 10000 points.

However, given his current situation, the points did not seem to be enough.

He then took a brief look at the skill module.

: Passive Fist (charge point: 3.14%).

It was a spiritual technique granted by the System after it devoured two of his Innate Elemental Powers. Xu Xiaoshou was unfamiliar with its power and still gauging it, but he believed its force would be formidable.

When he last checked it, it was only at 2.11 percent. He had accumulated it by withstanding the 280 thousand blasts of sword aura at the Black Cliff.

He never imagined that one Sword Aura Jade alone could add over one percent to the charge.

“I could probably use this as a last resort in a battle with someone of my level. Who knows, it could even serve as a finishing move if I go against someone from the Holy Vassal?”

He took some time to weigh his options. After he had allayed all doubts, he decided on his course of action.

Often, one needed careful preparation before heading into battle. After all, one had to be strong at crucial times.

Such a mindset was necessary to protect one’s family, friends, and anything else one needed to defend!

“Go to Elder Sang. This is now your mission. Hurry!”

Mu Zixi opened her mouth but could think of nothing to say, for she couldn’t think of anything she could do to help at such a time.

She got out of the dean’s illusion through sheer luck, and the truth was she didn’t know how she did it. All she knew was she wouldn’t always want to leave it to fate from hereon.

But at such a dire time, she could only nod and leave in exasperation.

If she could find Master Sang, Xu Xiaoshou would have a chance to make it back alive. It was the only thought in her mind as she moved as swiftly as she could.

Xu Xiaoshou felt relieved when he saw her take off. He hurriedly made his way to the back of the mountain. He started talking to himself as he rushed to the Inner Yard.

“I cannot be the only one who suspects the masked man seeking the Epitaph of City Snow. I am sure Elder Sang, Elder Xiao, and the others might already be there to protect Su Qianqian in secret,” he muttered.

Yeah, I am sure they are there.

What if they are not...?

I best remain unseen and just observe from afar. Yes, this how I should go about it. I cannot act impulsively on this one, he thought.

I know she calls me Brother Xiaoshou. But it is not like we share some profound connection, so I do not need to risk my life for her.”



Right! This is how I will deal with it. And if the tide goes against us, well, I guess someone will have to retrieve her body then.”

...

It was a dark and cold night in the mountains.

The Master Stage Sword Will permeated the place. Tens of thousands of swords conjured out of sword qi were hovering in the air. They were everywhere, and their presence was ominous.

As soon as he broke the Sword Will formation, the masked man flicked his finger at Su Qianqian’s forehead, and blood spurted out.

Thump!

The girl’s strength left her as she slumped to the ground limply, passing out immediately.

The masked man stood there for quite a while, lowering his head and sighing.

“Vengeance is truly the greatest motivation to drive a person to make breakthroughs,” he said to the unconscious girl.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust.

Everything suspended by the Sword Will fell back to the ground where they belonged, kicking up clouds of dust into the air.

Even someone with Master Stage Sword Will could not avoid getting knocked down instantly when faced with the masked man.

“Time is upon us and I must go now. I will take the sword with me, and when you become powerful enough, you are welcome to take it back.”

The masked man looked at the little girl in white lying sprawled on the ground. Then he picked up the sword and slung it over his back before he bounded into the air.

Before he could get far, he suddenly covered his nose and mouth and started coughing violently.

Cough! Cough! Cough!

Dark clouds covered the moon as the masked man changed into a new mask in the dark. He crumpled the bloodied mask and discarded it to the ground below.

“Now, there is just one last thing...”

A glint of interest flashed in his eyes as he looked up at the moon shining through the clouds again.

“Wen Ming, where are you?”

SHING!

It was the sound of a sword being unsheathed.

The masked man turned around and saw a bloodied figure standing not far away. He looked quite familiar.

Only when the person pointed his sword at him was he reminded of who this person was.

“You have recovered, then?” the masked man asked, and the corners of his lips twitched.

Xiao Qixiu appeared to be shaking for he had not expected the masked man to strike again.

The move he had just executed was identical to the one used back then, but strangely, his state of mind seemed different this time.

However, Xiao Qixiu had little choice. He was drawing his sword, not for himself, but Su Qianqian.

“It looks like you now know who I am. So why do you still dare to point your sword at me?” asked the masked man as he chuckled.

“Put down the sword!” Xiao Qixiu shouted angrily.

“Heh, you have quite a temper.”

The masked man turned to look at Su Qianqian, who was lying on the ground, and said, “I left her alive, but I am not leaving the sword behind.”

The Epitaph of City Snow rang on his back. Despite being tied with an ordinary rope, it dared not to do anything rash.

Xiao Qixiu levitated Su Qianqian toward him with his spiritual source, and she floated toward him. He quickly checked her pulse and felt relieved that she was not severely hurt.

It was a good thing that she was safe.

But Xiao Qixiu could not allow the famed sword to be taken away just like that!

“Put the sword down!” he repeated.

The masked man looked as if he intended to toy with him. He took a step forward, and it filled Xiao Qixiu with trepidation, but he stood steadfast and did not back away.

“You are interesting.”

“Among all my enemies, you are the only one who dares to point your sword twice at me.”

### **Chapter 205: A Battle of Robbing Paths**

Xiao Qixiu had an expression of despair on his face.

He knew the other man was not bragging at all. Since he knew who the man was, he could attest to the man’s abilities better than anyone else.

Only those who truly knew the masked man would realize he was not acting pompous. He was merely stating the truth.

“Your sword is shaking.”

The masked man pointed out casually. He looked at Xiao Qixiu, who was still in shock, and he continued.

“I see a swordsman who can’t even hold his sword properly in front of his enemy. How could such a swordsman even think of protecting anyone else then?”

It should be something you must remember, especially when you stand in front of the man you fear facing the most.”

Xiao Qixiu looked at Su Qianqian, who was still in his arms, and the look in his eyes hardened.

The masked man was right. Regardless of who the enemy may be, or how powerful they were, he should never allow his sword to shake.

“But...”

The masked man continued with words as sharp as blades, striking to the very core of Xiao Qixiu’s mind.

“The sword is the foremost among all weapons. And judging from how you are already shaking, you’re already afraid before you engage in combat. How do you suppose you can fight me then?”

Those who fear treading the path cannot cut down the said path.”

Those words struck Xiao Qixiu like lightning and made his mind go blank immediately.

“Cutting down the path...” Xiao Qixiu mumbled. He was oblivious to the fact that he was already looking like a loser.

“The fight of the Great Path is one where a false step could bring about one’s doom.”

One who holds a sword yet trembles will not go far. I would advise you to give up instead, and you may even live a good life.”

The masked man continued bombarding Xiao Qixiu with words, causing the latter to look more flustered and discouraged.

Xiao Qixiu felt like a star that had lost its luster. One that dared not flicker for fear of getting overshadowed by the moonlight.

Pfftt!

Xiao Qixiu’s aura now appeared to become even weaker. The masked man snickered mockingly and said, “It looks like your path does not seem like much after all, given that someone could rob you of it with just a few choice words.”

The masked man’s words awakened Xiao Qixiu instantly, causing him to break out in a cold sweat.

Was someone taking his path away from him?

Was the masked man robbing him of his path?

The fight among those at Sovereign levels had always been a fight at the level of the Great Path. If one’s path was overwhelmed by the other party’s, the said person would be doomed and could never recover from it.

It would be like a person losing his way in life if he lost faith in his principles.

Both Xiao Qixiu and the masked man were swordsmen. But Xiao Qixiu allowed the masked man to ridicule him so much that he lost his self-belief. If it were to continue this way, it would crush his Great Path, and Xiao Qixiu would either end up dead or grievously injured in the fight.

The realization of what just happened created doubts in his mind, and Xiao Qixiu became somewhat anxious. Both men were on opposing sides, and that meant trying to overcome his opponent's path. Indeed, it was expected and understandable.

So why did the masked man have to keep berating him if he was about to succeed?

It did not feel like the masked man was trying to rob him of his path, but more like someone who was trying to win the psychological battle.

Xiao Qixiu wore a puzzled expression as he pondered.

If someone else were to be in the masked man's shoes, it would have been impossible for them to shake Xiao Qixiu's beliefs with such ease. Frankly, in encounters at the Sovereign level, it would be safe to say that very few could successfully rob their opponents of their paths.

The masked man before him was different in the sense that if he were to walk his path to the very end, then...

Xiao Qixiu would be utterly defeated.

"So what?"

Xiao Qixiu gripped his sword firmly, and his eyes gleamed like a bright moon.

Without the pressure from the masked man, he probably would not have reached such a conclusion. His mind was now clear, and all the gnawing doubts in his head were no more.

Ultimately, the goal of cultivators of their kind was to slay those whom they perceive as gods.

It included the masked man standing before him—someone he perceived to be a god.

"Put the sword down!"

It was the third time he uttered those words, and he seemed to have gone through a massive transformation. He looked prepared to cast his sword to the clouds and tear the night apart.

"Heh!"

The masked man chuckled coldly. He ignored Xiao Qixiu altogether, turned around, and was about to leave. "Take her with you and begone. I am in no mood to kill anyone tonight," he said.

His actions stunned Xiao Qixiu, who did not expect such a turn of events.

He was about to make his move, but common sense told him to do otherwise. After all, the man before him was...

However, as he recalled during the enlightenment to his path, he was reminded to move forward regardless of the odds.

Tap!

He had just made his first step when he realized that the girl in his arms grabbed the collar of his shirt. He looked down and saw Su Qianqian pursing her lips and shaking her head.

To the girl in his arms, the choice was the famed sword or his life.

It was a tough choice.

But she already knew her answer.

However, Xiao Qixiu was still deliberating.

His life or the Great Path, he contemplated.

He remained silent and halted his advance.

The night was chilly. The wind blew throughout the mountains, sweeping flowers back and forth, and the cries of the condors screeched through the night.

The shadow of the masked man grew increasingly long and faint. He stayed alert as he withdrew, waiting for the man behind him to make his move, yet he did not move.

Well, have it his way then, he thought.

The masked man then shook his head and sighed. His silhouette disappeared as he turned around a corner.

“There is too much holding you back. You are not fit to become a swordsman. You might as well give up.”

There was a rumble. Xiao Qixiu’s Great Path, manifested only moments ago, was about to crumble after hearing what the man had said. Then it gradually disintegrated.

He was still gripping his sword tightly, and his eyes filled with doubt. His confidence was broken, and it would be a challenge to get it back up again.

Su Qianqian was thoroughly shocked. It did not occur to her that one step would cause Xiao Qixiu to plunge into such internal turmoil that made him hover between life and death.

“Master...” she called out to him.

Xiao Qixiu wore an expression of pain as he gritted his teeth, and a trace of blood dripped from the corner of his mouth.

“I’m fine... Cough!”

Blood spurted out from his mouth and splattered on Su Qianqian’s terrified face. Her master was not feeling fine at all, and his life was hanging on a thread.

Xiao Qixiu dropped to his knees with a thud, and the aura emanating from him was weak, similar to that of a dying man.

He cast Su Qianqian aside immediately. The girl was in tears, struggling to get up to attend to him.

“Stay over there!”

Xiao Qixiu stabbed his sword into the ground, his eyes filled with frustration and regret.

Wrong!

He was wrong!

He finally saw how someone could go about killing people by causing them to have mental breakdowns.

The masked man had first used the foundation of the Great Path to influence Xiao Qixiu by giving him a goal of “slaying the gods” with no regard for anything else. But the masked man knew Xiao Qixiu would never raise a finger against him.

The masked man then turned and walked. If Xiao Qixiu could not catch up and draw his sword, it was tantamount to Xiao Qixiu denying the righteousness of his path.

Xiao Qixiu just got fooled.

“Cough!”

He was breaking down, and the deathly aura around him became more apparent.

When someone lost their path, it would be unbelievably difficult for them to keep themselves together.

Worse still, the one he had just faced was someone formidable—the masked man. He was doomed the very moment they met.

“Master!”

Su Qianqian shouted at the top of her lungs. She had initially wanted to keep her master alive by giving up her sword and had never expected that she could not save her master.

Xiao Qixiu looked at his beloved disciple and chuckled bitterly and finally came to realize something on the brink of death.

To be honest about it, what had happened to him was not the masked man’s fault.

If only he had kept pace and drawn his sword firmly, he thought.

Perhaps he might have successfully cut down his path.

He then cast his gaze at the path where the masked man’s silhouette disappeared. He clenched his fists. The opportunity was right before his eyes, yet he had miscalculated.

“Stay where you are, I am...”

Xiao Qixiu closed his eyes in pain. It was the end for him.

BOOM!

Suddenly, an explosion reverberated at the far end of the path before them and it sounded like someone had been pummeled to the ground.

The master and disciple, both in tears, were stunned as they cast their gaze in the direction.

An enormous crater appeared yonder, and when the smoke and dust cleared, they could see the masked man clutching his chest with a black sword sticking out of it. The scene baffled them.

Drip!

Drip!

The drops of blood sounded crystal clear as they hit the ground in the silence of the night.

Xiao Qixiu's eyeballs almost popped out of their sockets. What he saw so shocked him that the disintegration of his Great Path slowed to a halt.

Someone had stabbed the masked man in his chest!

"What the hell!"

### **Chapter 206: A Lunatic Out Jogging at Night with a Sword in the Spirit Palace**

Let us go back in time...

Xu Xiaoshou headed straight for the mountains without stopping after he parted with Mu Zixi.

Possessing the Agility Skill of the Master Stage meant that he could traverse the entire length of the Inner Yard within mere seconds, and could travel at hair-raising speed to his new home in no time at all.

He then put his long-range surveillance plan to work.

As he had upgraded his Sense Skill, he could easily see everything the three were up to in the mountains. He not only saw what they did but could hear everything said, to the extent of even hearing their noses snorting. He assessed their tones and observed their body language.

Xiao Qixiu made his appearance almost at the same time as Xu Xiaoshou did. The masked man had stabbed Xiao Qixiu effortlessly when they last clashed. Thus, he speculated that the masked man would dispose of the Elder Xiao just as quickly.

However, what happened next was not something that Xu Xiaoshou had expected.

The masked man chatted away for quite a while before he made Xiao Qixiu spit out blood. Xu Xiaoshou deemed the taunting to be just too unbelievably long.

He vaguely recalled the time he met the masked man at the Goose Lake. The masked man did not seem like a talkative person.

Of course, Xu Xiaoshou knew it may probably have had something to do with him talking too much then. He had seen how the masked man took on so many opponents on his own back then. Judging from his personality, Xu Xiaoshou could tell that the masked man was someone who did not like to talk much.

“The guy could kill the Elder with a single blow. Why would he bother wasting so much time talking then?”

It was the first question that came to his mind.

Xu Xiaoshou had been eavesdropping on the entire conversation. But despite that, there was no notification appearing on the Information Bar showing it—no one had detected him. That was the second question running through in his mind.

How could it be possible?

He understood how the masked man could mess around with Xiao Qixiu’s psychological state. But despite the distance between him and those three, he wondered why someone as powerful as the masked man could not immediately detect him while he was snooping on them.

Did he not see me?

Impossible!

But as puzzled as he was, he could only assess that the masked man simply failed to detect his presence.

Xu Xiaoshou doubted his assessment at first. But as he heard how their conversation unfolded, and when in the end the masked man walked away from Elder Xiao, he felt something did not seem right...

Somehow, the entire exchange felt like a trick to Xu Xiaoshou, for he was familiar with such modus operandi.

Then his eyes glinted when he realized the ruse.

The masked man was putting on a bluff!

It was just like how Xu Xiaoshou had bluffed his way and intimidated both Feng Kong and Shao Yi back then.

Xiao Qixiu did not notice any of it because he was caught in the middle of it, but Xu Xiaoshou could distinctly see everything from the outside.

Why would the masked man go about giving such lengthy speeches? Why would he walk instead of fly when he left?

The guy was hiding something!

Xu Xiaoshou recalled when he first met the masked man and how he had unexpectedly hurt him. When he had thought about it later, all of it had seemed almost impossible.

But yet it was what happened. Not only had Xu Xiaoshou been able to hurt the masked man, but the masked man also seemed to have coughed out blood as well.

He had previously ignored those details. But presently, when he compared what happened then with what was taking place, it led him to a conclusion.



The masked man had sustained some injury. While he was still very formidable, he would plunge into a weakened state if he were to make an attack. If he were to bear it out and entered his combat state, it would put him at risk.

He could do it, but he would probably have to pay a very steep price for risking it.

It was why the masked man had to chatter away when facing off against Xiao Qixiu instead of just going straight in for the kill.

It must have been the reason he chose to walk—he probably could not even fly.

Xu Xiaoshou got even more flustered when he came to that conclusion.

If he had misinterpreted the facts and if he were to make a wrong move, it would undoubtedly mean he was going to be killed.

Then he later saw the masked man walking at a steady pace in his direction.

The masked man did not walk toward Xu Xiaoshou intentionally. It was nothing more than a coincidence.

And how did he know this? Because there was no prompt from the Information Bar at all.

If the masked man were to walk up to Xu Xiaoshou because he saw Xu Xiaoshou, there would have been a “Watched” prompt appearing on the bar.

Xu Xiaoshou was done holding back.

The guy stole Su Qianqian’s sword and messed up Elder Xiao badly. And here he was, walking up to Xu Xiaoshou like he owned the place. Who the hell could bear something like that?

The important thing was that it seemed highly possible that the masked man was in a severely weakened state.

“This is an opportunity like no other!” Xu Xiaoshou muttered.

Xu Xiaoshou felt the urge to take action immediately.

He drew the Hiding Pain and wanted to charge at the masked man. Then he thought it might not be the best way to do it.

After all, it was the masked man he was dealing with there. If the masked man were to get angry enough to ignore his injuries and retaliate, Xu Xiaoshou might just get snuffed out before he knew what was happening!

Xu Xiaoshou wondered how he should go about it.

He turned around and looked at the long path in the woods behind him, then pondered.

The masked man had just convinced Xiao Qixiu to drop his sword and was walking around the corner before he immediately noticed that something did not look right.

There was another masked man right in front of him, and he was charging out of the woods. That in itself was bad enough, but there was more...

Not only was the man charging at him wearing a mask, but he had also covered his eyes.

What looked even more frightening was how the man was holding a black sword high, running as he practiced his techniques while muttering some words.

“White Cloud Sword Techniques, Dark Cloud Sword Techniques...”

What the hell?

What was wrong with the fellow?

Why would there be someone like that in the Spirit Palace?

The masked man looked utterly baffled.

His powers had deteriorated so much that he had even lost his spiritual sense, which naturally meant that he could not detect the lunatic in advance.

He had just finished taking on Su Qianqian’s Sword Will, and his injuries got worse. It was a painstaking effort to talk to Xiao Qixiu until he fell to his knees. It meant that he had nothing left to take on the lunatic in front of him.

So, he stepped aside and made way for the lunatic to pass. It was the first time in his life that he gave way to another person.

His reasoning was simple. The passerby was but a madman, and it was not worth it.

“Huh? Someone is around here?” muttered the lunatic.

The lunatic unexpectedly halted and quickly made way for the masked man in an exceedingly polite manner.

Suddenly, they came face to face with each other.

No one said a word for that fleeting moment...

The masked man was flustered and did his best to avoid the path of the lunatic’s attack.

Both of them gradually closed in on each other, and the lunatic muttered something again.

“It is not right that guy should move out of the way for me. I cannot hurt him.”

The lunatic then shifted to the side with his sword after muttering those words, then suddenly swung his sword in a flamboyant arc at the masked man.

The masked man almost spat blood right there and then. He wanted to move, yet the distance between the two of them was too close for him to move out of the way.

Instantly, the lunatic stabbed his black sword mercilessly into the masked man’s chest. The force of the strike was akin to a charging bull, almost crushing every bone in his body.

BOOM!

The masked man dropped to the ground and clutched at the sword sticking in his chest, never expecting to fall into the hands of a running lunatic in the dead of night.

...

Xu Xiaoshou continued to pretend to act like a lunatic, then tilted his head as if he could not understand why he ran into someone.

He then squatted down before the masked man, who was lying on the ground.

“Sorry, I did not mean to do it.”

Xu Xiaoshou wrapped his face as tightly as he could. He wanted to prevent the masked man from identifying him. He even changed the tone of his voice, hoping that it would make it difficult to establish his identity.

“Cough!”

The masked man spat blood right away, panting hard as he stared at the sword stuck in his chest.

Did the lunatic say he did not mean to do it? How could he stick a sword into someone and then said that?

The masked man then took out a piece of communication jade.

Xu Xiaoshou was fast enough to detect it and took the jade away. He said, “Dude, I honestly did not mean to do this. Do not call anyone, okay? I am scared.”

The masked man was speechless.

His body went into violent spasms from his wound, and blood was gushing out.

: Cursed, Passive Points +1.

Xu Xiaoshou could see blood continuing to ooze out of the masked man. He could finally confirm that the masked man was indeed in a very weakened state. Xu Xiaoshou then continued to chatter away.

“We are both night joggers. I am sure we can come to an understanding.”

Pfftt!

“Oops, my bad. I forgot my sword is still stuck in your body. Let me get it out first.”

“You...” muttered the masked man.

“Just stop moving!”

Xu Xiaoshou leaned down to pull the sword. He deliberately moved it quite a few times as he pretended to remove it. It almost killed the masked man on the spot.

But before Xu Xiaoshou could pull out the black sword, the masked man endured the pain and unexpectedly picked himself up off the ground. He tore off half of the mask that Xu Xiaoshou used to cover his face.

Both of them looked surprised, and the scene looked like someone had just pressed the pause button in the middle of a play, freezing the frame.

Xu Xiaoshou, stunned, forgot to keep babbling away like a lunatic, and the masked man was too shocked to release the tension of his body.

Drip!

Drip!

Trickle!

The black sword was still dripping blood, and a puddle of blood formed on the ground. The pupils of the masked man dilated quickly.

: Doubted, Passive Points +1.

: Begrudged, Passive Points +1.

Gulp!

Xu Xiaoshou swallowed hard and felt his lips drying up. His face was as white as a sheet.

### **Chapter 207: Weakened and Bullied**

“Wen Ming?”

The masked man was astonished.

He asked himself if the familiar face before him belonged to the kid he encountered the other day and from whom he had asked for directions. He wondered why the kid would appear on the mountainside.

On top of everything, the kid even stabbed him.

Xu Xiaoshou suddenly felt himself trembling. Despite all his calculations, he never thought the man on the ground would be able to do such a thing.

Without warning, he reached out to tear off the mask from the masked man’s face.

It was only fair that he returned the favor.

Whack!

However, the masked man’s movements were no longer slow. He swiftly grabbed hold of Xu Xiaoshou’s hand and dug his fingers into its flesh.

Xu Xiaoshou pulled his hand back from the pain but, to his horror, discovered that he could not pull it away.

Xu Xiaoshou was stunned.

Shouldn't he be in a weakened state?

How was it possible that he was instantly immobilized when the masked man grabbed him? It felt just like how it was in their previous encounter.

But how could it be? I now have the Master Physique, man! I have upgraded!

"Well, um... I think this is all a misunderstanding," Xu Xiaoshou said.

"Shut up!"

The masked man shouted, pushing Xu Xiaoshou down and forcing him to sit. The force he applied soon caused Xu Xiaoshou to drop to the ground.

Xu Xiaoshou's face had turned red from the pain, and it took him quite a while before he could even utter a word. "I'm not fond of this pose."

The masked man stared at him in exasperation.

Cough! Hmm!

The masked man was choking, and he almost coughed out blood.

Xu Xiaoshou immediately seized the opportunity and delivered a knee strike to the masked man.

POW!

The tremendous power of Master Physique and Recoil delivered a terrifying amount of force. Somehow, it enabled Xu Xiaoshou to throw the masked man, unable to maintain his fighting mettle, high into the air.

Xu Xiaoshou probably realized that if the masked man were to strike him, he could certainly not handle the blow.

However, he had to do something, regardless of the risk.

The masked man behaved like a sick man when Xu Xiaoshou attacked him. He was unable to parry or deflect any of the attacks and could only endure the inflictions.

To put it simply, the masked man seemed like someone who had lost his sense of judgment, for he had spent all his points in attack but had set none into defense.

Xu Xiaoshou noticed that the masked man's Spiritual Source reserve seemed to be lower than his.

He did not know if he was imagining it, but the masked man looked even weaker than when they had first encountered previously.

Back then, the masked man could still somehow maintain his level of power at the Innate Stage. Presently, it felt like his powers had dropped right down to the Acquired Stage.

Xu Xiaoshou wondered deep down if the members of the Holy Vassal became more vicious in their combat prowess when they had lower levels of powers.

As they were now quite a distance apart, Xu Xiaoshou took the chance to get up to leave. He noticed that the masked man seemed to struggle to even steady himself after getting kicked into the air.

He was shocked to find how wobbly the masked man looked in the sky. He looked unbalanced, just like how he had been when he first rode on his sword in flight.

“Wait, he cannot fly?”

Are you telling me that his power has dropped to that of Acquired Stage?” Xu Xiaoshou muttered.

He immediately shot a compressed fire seed at the masked man.

**BOOM!**

The masked man went flying even further after the explosion.

“He is weak,” said Xu Xiaoshou with raised eyebrows.

Xu Xiaoshou’s eyes widened in disbelief. He found it rather unbelievable that the man in front of him was the same man who once overpowered a host of formidable opponents from the Spirit Palace.

: Cursed, Passive Points +1.

He saw the Information Bar suddenly refreshed at that moment, causing his eyes to glint.

The attack worked?

Well, why else would the masked man curse at him if it did not, eh?

Xu Xiaoshou then shot another five fire seeds at the masked man with a flick of his hand without a second thought.

“Wen Ming! You...”

**BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!**

The deafening explosions drowned out the furious rantings of the masked man. Mushroom clouds took form in the dark sky, and Xiao Qixiu, who watched from afar, was utterly shocked.

“Is that Xu Xiaoshou?”

“Did he cut down his path successfully when he was in the Tianxuan Gate? Why is he so damn powerful right now?”

He recalled how Xu Xiaoshou had such a hard time with his battles during the Wind and Cloud Contest. Xiao Qixiu wondered why the kid’s fighting prowess had spiked so much after not seeing him for only a few days.

Hell, he shouldn’t be so powerful even if he was on drugs!

Su Qianqian was in shock as well, feeling as if the world around her had come crashing down on her.

The invincible masked man was now being beaten continuously with no way of defending himself.

She had not seen her Brother Xiaoshou for just a few days, so how did he become so powerful?

“Is this real?” The girl extended her hand and looked at her Master. She hesitated for a bit before deciding to slap herself on the cheek.

She flinched as she felt a sharp sting.

“It is real!” she cried out.

...

The more Xiao Qixiu thought about what was happening, the more peculiar he found it.

He studied the man Xu Xiaoshou had been blasting in the night sky to the point he was bleeding copiously. He then realized it was not Xu Xiaoshou who had become unbelievably strong but that the masked man had become weak.

He connected the dots in his mind and the truth was now plain to see. He immediately realized what was happening there and then.

“The guy had been bluffing all the while.”

Xiao Qixiu’s face turned red from fuming anger. He could not believe that he ended up fooled when Xu Xiaoshou saw through it at once.

He was about to get up, but the decay of the Great Path was something very challenging to put a stop to.

He felt despair.

If he had lost in actual combat, he would have gladly died with no regrets, but to end up dead in this way was a cruel joke.

“I am beyond saving, huh?”

He looked blankly into the far distance.

Tap!

Xiao Qixiu and Su Qianqian heard a light tap. It was the sound of a footstep.

The sound came from not far away. But just right beside him.

Xiao Qixiu trembled. Before he could turn to look at the figure beside him, a thin, wrinkled hand appeared before him, holding a bottle of pills.

“Vice Dean!” Su Qianqian shrieked in surprise as she looked at the bottle with tears in her eyes.

My Master Xiao can be saved!

Elder Sang had pulled his hat low, but his eyes remained focused on the prey far away, like the eyes of a hawk. His expression was dark and sullen.

“Sorry for being late. I got caught up in something.”

...

The smoke from explosions on the battlefield clouded Xu Xiaoshou's vision.

But it did not affect him. His Sense allowed him to see the masked man, twisted and drenched in blood from the bombardment, so much so he looked like he was falling apart.

The masked man may have powerful attack skills, but without Master Physique, it was still difficult for him to take on such furious attacks.

It surprised Xu Xiaoshou when he saw the Sword Will around the masked man gathering force and pulling his body together like a broken toy being glued back in one piece.

"What kind of move is this?"

"Some special spiritual technique?"

He then recalled the Sword Will Possession mentioned in the 10 Sections of the Finger Sword, wondering if that was how it worked.

He looked closely and found the familiar power emanating from the masked man's body.

"Ordinary power of thought?"

"No, it cannot be. It is anything but ordinary."

The move appeared to be of a level far higher than the psychokinesis that he came to understand and learn. At the very least, it was something that could hurt his mind and soul, even just observing it with his Sense.

"High-level power of thought then?"

Xu Xiaoshou thought no further, for it seemed like he could end the masked man with one last hit. He then pulled out his bathtub and rushed at the masked man.

"Stop!"

Xu Xiaoshou heard a rather tired voice in his mind, and it immediately doused all the fire he had for the fight.

Elder Sang?

Xu Xiaoshou calmed down right away as he gazed at the masked man falling from the sky. He felt a chill on the soles of his feet.

Holy sh\*t!

He questioned himself—what the hell has gotten into me?

Instead of pulling back after gaining the upper hand, all he thought about was delivering the killing blow. Had he assumed that he could do whatever he wanted after gaining the Master Physique?

Would it be detrimental if the masked man really got angry?

"Wen Ming!"



“You have forced my hand!”

A white blast of sword aura rumbled, rising like the morning sun, shrouding over the moon, and lighting up the entire mountain.

A snowy-white massive sword shot into the air, trembling slightly, and tore the night sky apart.

: Summoned, Passive Points +1.

Xu Xiaoshou’s face paled and he regretted he had been so bold.

He turned around and ran like hell, shouting at the top of his lungs.

“I am sorry. I did not mean to do that!”

“Help!”

### **Chapter 208: Dawn with a Slash of the Sword**

The move caused the aura from the snowy-white massive sword to emit a brilliant light that eclipsed the moon as the blade flashed in the night sky.

“Is the sun out?”

As the sword aura radiated brightly, the disciples of the Inner Yard could see the starry night light up like broad daylight. Even those at the Outer Yard could not help but turn their attention to what was happening.

“Um, is this happening because of the ongoing fight in the Inner Yard? Damn, this is something else... Our brothers in there sure are a terrifying bunch!”

“Tsk, tsk, tsk, I never thought I would ever see such a display. I wonder when I would be able to attain such a level.”

“You? Huh... Have you even gathered your energy reserve yet? I would say that you had better go to bed now so that you can save your strength for daydreaming tomorrow.”

“Huh...?”

“Shut your mouth!”

The newcomers were excitedly discussing what had just happened as they watched the skyline from their compound and the fence. A group of law enforcers clad in black guarded them.

Then they suddenly heard a loud rumble.

The snowy-white sword had ripped a spatial fissure in the sky. It made them feel like they were getting sucked into the crack in the sky, and everyone swallowed hard in disbelief and fear.

“Law Enforcer Wang, what is this?”

“Is it coming from our brothers battling it out in there?”

The man they called Law Enforcer Wang stood with his hands behind his back, looking up at the sky. His eyes carried a look of anxiety.

“Yes, it is. You people should get back to bed now.”

“This is not much of a problem.”

...

[Outside the Spirit Palace]

Several figures at the Sovereign Stage were ganging up on a shriveled old man in the sky who was armed with only a small ax.

Blood was being spilled everywhere, and the scene was incredibly harrowing.

The two Elders were the first to cave in, falling from the sky with deep cuts all over their bodies. They dropped to the ground with loud thuds and passed out the moment they hit the ground.

They were immediately incapacitated.

Ye Xiaotian and Jiang Bianyan then joined forces, yet could barely keep the terrifying assaults from Cen Qiaofu at bay. The ax could cut up their Great Path with just a swing, making it difficult for anyone to withstand his attacks for long.

“Dean Ye, it is not because I am weak. But honestly, I am nearly at the end of my limit.”

Jiang Bianyan held his hand to his chest. If he had to go any further, the effort would surely overwhelm his heart.

“I made it very clear in the letter requesting help that the invader could be from the highest levels of the Holy Vassal.”

Ye Xiaotian did not bother turning his head around as he dashed up into the sky again.

If he had known they would not take his words seriously, then he would not have only asked for help from the Holy Divine Palace but reached out to many others.

Ye Xiaotian kept his thoughts to himself and did not voice them out.

He was aghast that the Holy Divine Palace would take the matter so lightly. It was something he had never expected, and he also wondered if Elder Sang had been right all along.

It was evident that the Holy Divine Palace paid little heed to the schemes of the Holy Vassal.

Jiang Bianyan wore a woeful grimace on his face. He never expected the situation to be so terrifying.

If he had not seen with his own eyes just how powerful an assault the Holy Vassal could mount, he would have thought that they were merely a band of misfits to be preyed on easily.

“It is said that a single spark could end up burning a field. Is this what is happening now?”

He then caught Ye Xiaotian, who had just suffered another cut and was sent flying back. Jiang Bianyan looked at the man’s blood-stained silver hair and was mulling over what to say.

“How about...” Jiang Bianyan blurted.

Ye Xiaotian shot him a glance before disappearing from his sight again.

This place was his Spirit Palace.

“How about” was simply not an option for him.

BOOM!

Suddenly, a burst of brilliant white light flashed, and everyone froze immediately. The fighters at the Spirit Palace saw the Epitaph of City Snow shimmering in the sky and felt dazed by what they saw.

“That sword belongs to Qianqian.”

The wheels Qiao Qianzhi was manipulated in his hands seemed to have lost all bearing to carry out an offense. He lowered them right away.

Fury appeared in the eyes of Ye Xiaotian. His teeth squeaked from grinding them hard against each other.

“We still failed then?”

He felt bitter and disappointed. According to their plan, Elder Sang should have been protecting Su Qianqian. Did it mean that even he could not stop the masked man?

Cen Qiaofu was utterly shocked by the ominous appearance of the Sword Will. From what he knew, it was a sign that the masked man was going all out.

“Is the kid out of his mind? Does he not know just how bad his injuries are? It is suicidal!”

“Just how is it possible for anyone from the Spirit Palace to invoke such fury in him?”

Doubt cast over Cen Qiaofu, and seeing no other choice, he fled from the fight and flew off toward the eye of the storm.

Ye Xiaotian kept his wits as he applied pressure against the bloody gash on his chest and moaned in pain.

“Let us catch up with Cen Qiaofu.”

...

[Near the mountains at the rear]

Xu Xiaoshou headed straight to where Elder Sang stood.

It was lucky that Elder Sang had told him to stop his attacks on the masked man in the nick of time.

If he were to charge at the masked man without taking caution, he surmised he would end up getting chopped in half by the frightening attack.

Xu Xiaoshou had now come to his senses, but the masked man was only just getting riled up.

It was the first time anyone had beaten him up so badly. He had to admit that the kid had seen through his weakness.

The kid's ability to do it proved he was smart and had skills.

The kid caught him at his weakest and launched attack after attack, almost bringing him to his knees.

The kid was younger than him, and it did not seem like he had grown all that much since they last met. He was still puzzled by how the kid could do so much damage.

But none of it mattered anymore.

The masked man shouted furiously, and the Epitaph of City Snow shook the sky, exposing the true might of the famed sword.

White sword aura coalesced and lit up the night sky, and an icy chill fell upon the place. Then the ice-cold Sword Will sent a blast of a brilliant bluish beam of the sword that lit up the night sky again.

SWOOSH!

The sword aura blasted out, and it gave Xu Xiaoshou a shock.

There was no way he could run away from it.

He initially thought that keeping a distance from the masked man meant that he could easily get to Elder Sang. After all, he was at the Master Stage of Agility.

But he had indeed miscalculated.

It was then that he had learned he should not gauge the powers of others by using his capabilities as a measure.

After all, there was no way for bugs to comprehend the strength of giants!

Xu Xiaoshou still could not escape the masked man's attack range although he was already halfway to reaching Elder Sang. The azure beam of the sword was soon upon him, and he had no choice but to bound toward it and meet it head-on.

"Whatever..."

"Time to burn the brightest at my very last!"

He bent over and lifted his elbow. The energy of his Passive Fist was about to be ignited.

Right there!

Using his Sense, Xu Xiaoshou could see Elder Sang, who was in the mountain, lifting his hat slightly. The brightness from the beam glinted off Elder Sang's eyes hidden from sight under the hat.

"You are asking for it."

The Elder was furious. He would allow no one to touch the people he had taken a liking to, and Xu Xiaoshou was his disciple.

BOOM!

A deafening roar thundered through the night as Elder Sang's punch clashed with the beam of the sword. The air around Xu Xiaoshou, up to hundreds of meters high in the sky, shattered.

Spatial cracks spread out in the sky, looking like a voracious ancient beast opening its mouth and baring its fangs and claws, as it trying to swallow everything within its reach.

Xu Xiaoshou went flying.

To his shock, he saw the spot where Elder Sang's fist met the beam of the sword. He realized that if it had not been for the Elder pushing him away, even his Passive Fist would not be enough to withstand the furious slash from the masked man.

"So, this is what true powerful strikes are like!"

Xu Xiaoshou clenched his fist as he recognized the variance in their opposing powers. Had it had struck him, there would be nothing of him left.

Despite having access to the Passive System and supported by many passive skills, it became apparent that his level of training was far from enough for him to take on such goliaths.

He got a reality check on the spot.

Regardless of how powerful passive skills were, they could only do well when pitted against spiritual techniques of comparable levels.

Acquired Stage passive skills had no way of beating spiritual techniques of Innate Stage. He had already proven it during the match with Mo Mo at the Outer Yard.

What could he rely on to face the masked man, then?

His passion?

He thought he could do whatever he pleased when he saw the masked man react upon recognizing something in him.

But he was not pulling punches now...

Xu Xiaoshou was alarmed and broke out in a cold sweat.

Suddenly, the cockiness that had gotten to his head after he powered his way through the Tianxuan Gate vanished with that one slash of the sword.

The grey mist figure had already taught him a very severe lesson, yet he continued acting recklessly all the same.

"I should not have attacked him."

"If even Elder Sang could not beat him, then I'm in trouble."

BOOM!

Xu Xiaoshou hit into something, causing him to deviate off his course and veer to the side.

He thought he was being thrown aside by Elder Sang. One could tell just how powerful the Elder was, simply from the fact that even the black hole could not pull him in.

But when Xu Xiaoshou turned around, he saw a wrinkled Elder covered in blood all over his face, holding an ax.

“A flight accident?”

Cen Qiaofu stared at the young man in shock and utter disbelief.

He had not shed a single drop of blood, even after fighting consecutive battles with several figures at Sovereign Stage. But the kid almost tore his head off when they collided.

He wondered how he could have been blasted away by a mere kid.

He also questioned why he ended up with sword gashes all over his face after just touching the kid.

He also wondered when the kid had made his move and why he could not detect it despite his level of training.

Cen Qiaofu eventually could not contain his curiosity and asked.

“Are you a hedgehog or something?”

### **Chapter 209: You Idiot are Talking Big Again!**

: Doubted, Passive Points +1.

: Doubted, Passive Points +1.

“Huh?”

The spiritual source Cen Qiaofu had unconsciously emanated rattled Xu Xiaoshou. He wore a pained expression on his face as he felt his body go numb all over.

He was just an old man and was the victim of a collision, yet even after Xu Xiaoshou crashed into him, he could still make a sarcastic jibe.

Xu Xiaoshou then noticed several individuals, all at Sovereign Stage, arriving right behind Cen Qiaofu just when he was about to respond to his sarcasm. All of them hovered in midair with a very intimidating bearing.

But they were quite a disturbing sight to behold, for they had blood and deep gashes all over their bodies.

Xu Xiaoshou couldn't help twitching his brow at the sight of them.

“What the hell?”

He then saw the blood-stained ax in Cen Qiaofu's hand and immediately knew what had happened.

Xu Xiaoshou felt lucky that he had chosen not to argue with this old man wielding an ax. He deduced that he must have come from the Holy Vassal as well.

Did the old man cut them all up on his own?

Xu Xiaoshou's face went pale, and his aura dropped so low that it likely touched the ground. Then, he just nodded and answered the old man, Cen Qiaofu.

"Yeah, I am a hedgehog."

Cen Qiaofu was speechless.

He was at a loss for words with the answer that he got.

Cen Qiaofu ignored Xu Xiaoshou, seeing him as no more than an insect at the Origin Court Stage, and turned his attention to the two who were fighting an intense battle.

Elder Sang fixed his eyes on the masked man from afar as he trapped the terrifying sword aura with his hands. Its power would have sent shivers down anybody else's spine.

Crackle! Crackle!

The blast of the Sword Aura crackled with energy as it was about to rip the night sky apart. But it suddenly dissipated without a trace. There was not even a whiff of the sword energy lingering in the air afterward.

The Infernal Heavenly Flames technique was capable of incinerating anything in its path.

And the image of Elder Sang destroying the sword aura with his bare hands shocked Cen Qiaofu to the core.

"Who are you?" asked Cen Qiaofu.

Evidently, the old man who now stood before him was in a different league from the other younger ones he encountered.

Cen Qiaofu vaguely recalled that he had seen such a technique somewhere before, but he could not place it.

Damn! It was perhaps because this guy, although old, was still not from his era, Cen Qiaofu thought.

"Cen Qiaofu?" said Elder Sang.

Cen Qiaofu did not recognize Elder Sang. But judging from the sudden change in his expression, it appeared the old man knew Cen Qiaofu.

"Why are you here too?" asked Elder Sang.

Cen Qiaofu was shocked when he heard the tone of Elder Sang's voice. For it was a tone used when a person was familiar with the other.

Hmm, so, it appears many Juniors know me.

He unconsciously straightened his slouched back a little, and he wore a faint look of pride on his face without realizing it. "You know me?" he asked.

Elder Sang said nothing as he turned to face the masked man again. He pulled his hat down slightly, and darkness shrouded over his face.

“I have previously advised all of you to stay out of the Spirit Palace.”

The masked man’s expression immediately changed and he called out, “Qiaofu!”

Cen Qiaofu looked at the masked man, puzzled at what was taking place.

Judging from the way the old man with the hat spoke, Cen Qiaofu sensed the old man intended to make sure he never got to leave.

“Hehe, hehe, you sure like to brag.”

Crackle! Crackle!

Cen Qiaofu sensed that the temperature of the air around him spiking right after he spoke. The ground suddenly dried up and the sky appeared like a mirage as the heat rose and the sun roasted everything around him.

Fzzzzz!

A ring of white flames burst from the ground, making an enormous circle that encircled the three of them within.

The ground rumbled and without warning, a great column of white flames over hundreds of meters high engulfed all three of them.

Temperatures soared incredibly and the sky now looked hazy, as if it had been turned into a clear crystal and flowing down to earth.

“The Dragon Melting Realm?”

The masked man was shocked by what he saw, and shouted, “Are you out of your mind?”

Everyone else stranded outside the wall of flames was awed and in a stupor. They discovered that the white flames of the Dragon Melting Realm could even burn down Spiritual Sense, preventing those on the outside from knowing what was happening within.

Somehow, Xu Xiaoshou was able to use his Sense to penetrate the flames. but it was scorching hot, and he felt as if his entire body was about to catch fire.

: Attacked, Passive Points +1.

: Attacked, Passive Points +1.

“What?”

His Information Bar kept refreshing with those lines repeatedly, making him feel somewhat anxious.

He badly wanted to shut his Sense off, but the passive skill did not give him such an option.

“So, the old geezer is seriously so powerful, huh?”



Xu Xiaoshou then realized he had never seen Elder Sang in a duel before. Even when the masked man invaded Goose Lake in the past, Elder Sang had taken care of everything in a blink of an eye.

It was Xu Xiaoshou's first time seeing Elder Sang going all out like that.

Like a breeze blowing, Qiao Qianzhi flew to Xu Xiaoshou's side.

"Xiaoshou? Why are you here?"

Ye Xiaotian was shocked to find the kid there as well.

Why was the kid everywhere?

Had the merits of previously fighting Lei Shuangxing gotten to his head, and he took it upon himself to teach the masked man a lesson as well?

It sure is bold for someone who was merely at the Innate Stage.

"Did I not tell you to hide somewhere?" Ye Xiaotian asked, rather annoyed.

"Yeah, I came to hide!" answered Xu Xiaoshou with a nod.

"Why the hell are you here, then? Looking to get a beating?"

Ye Xiaotian assessed Xu Xiaoshou's condition, expecting to find injuries on the young man. But to his shock, he realized that, except for his messy clothes, the young man was unscathed.

"Hiding means getting home, right? This place is where I live now. Where else could I go?" Xu Xiaoshou answered innocently.

Ye Xiaotian glared at the kid in exasperation.

He chose not to answer the cheeky lad.

Soon, Xiao Qixiu recovered after taking Elder Sang's pills. He finally staved off the decay of his Great Path and headed toward Xu Xiaoshou.

"Good work back there," Xiao Qixiu said to the kid.

Ye Xiaotian slapped Xiao Qixiu's shoulder as a gesture of appreciation. The way he saw it, it was because of Xiao Qixiu that Xu Xiaoshou stayed alive.

However, Xiao Qixiu shook his head. He had a perplexed look as he looked at Xu Xiaoshou. He hesitated a little before he sighed and spoke.

"It was not me this time. If it had not been for the kid, I am afraid I would already be dead right now."

When they heard what Xiao Qixiu said, everyone looked astonished. Even Jiang Bianyan, who arrived late, looked surprised as well.

How could someone at a mere Innate Stage do battle with the masked man?

Xu Xiaoshou felt a little embarrassed. When he saw the look of disbelief on everyone around him, he grinned with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes and pointed at the white flaming realm.

“You see that? The sword wound on the masked guy? It was my doing.”

For a brief moment, it seemed time stood still. Everyone froze.

Qiao Qianzhi slapped Xu Xiaoshou on the head. If they were not facing such dire circumstances, he would have probably laughed out loud.

“You idiot. Bragging again, huh?” Qiao Qianzhi snarled.

: Doubted, Passive Points +3.

However, as soon as his hand touched Xu Xiaoshou’s head, it was forcibly repelled. Qiao Qianzhi looked at his hand in shock.

He then looked at Xu Xiaoshou, who was still grinning, and felt that the kid now appeared to be very different from before.

Xiao Qixiu then took a deep breath, and said, “True, it really was his doing.”

: Doubted, Passive Points +3.

Xu Xiaoshou frowned and shook his head after viewing the Information Bar.

Well, so much for that. Even when the truth was right before them, they still refused to believe it.

Seeing their expression turn from suspicion to shock, he could not help but mumble, “It was just one strike. It is not such a big deal.”

No one said anything.

Xiao Qixiu glared at him.

: Cursed, Passive Points +1.

“Are they going to fight it out, then?”

Xu Xiaoshou said as he cast his eyes on the white flaming realm, paying no further attention to the Sovereign Stage individuals around him. They then stared at the flames as well.

The blazing flames were blinding to the eyes. The Infernal Heavenly Flames were formless and colorless, and it was something Xu Xiaoshou had only witnessed for a second time.

Yeah, the first time was when he was picking up the Infernal Heavens.

“Returning to its origins then?”

Xu Xiaoshou was mulling over it when Qiao Qianzhi whacked him on the head again.

It took Xu Xiaoshou by surprise.

The hit was not painful, but it shocked him, as it would anyone unwary.

“What now?” asked Xu Xiaoshou, wondering what he did wrong.

Qiao Qianzhi wiped away the tears at the corner of his eyes, hissing as he added, “You are bra

## Chapter 210: Elder Sang Making his Move

“Huh?”

Xu Xiaoshou raised his eyebrows and asked, “You mean all of you can’t see anything?”

: Doubted, Passive Points +4.

...

Ye Xiaotian did not say a word, and instead, he swiped his palm in front of him and a screen appeared. Everything that was happening inside the white flaming area was revealed on the screen.

“What kind of spiritual technique is this?” Xu Xiaoshou asked, and his eyes lit up.

“Heaven’s Vision.”

“You can see everything with this?”

“What? Yes, of course.”

Ye Xiaotian felt something amiss after he replied and questioned, “Wait, why do you ask?”

“Hehe, hehe. No, it is not what you think it is,” Xu Xiaoshou replied cheekily.

“Huh?” Ye Xiaotian frowned.

: Doubted, Passive Points +4.

Xu Xiaoshou discreetly gauged the dean’s height and gave him a dubious look.

...

Everyone’s attention naturally shifted to the screen when it lit up, and Xu Xiaoshou stopped talking, turning his attention to the magical spiritual technique called Heaven’s Vision.

If Ye Xiaotian was not asked to project visions from other dimensions, then then the task was an effortless one for him.

He did not need the screen as his eyes alone were enough to see through the white flaming realm.

The three trapped inside the Dragon Melting Realm floated in midair. Without someone like the mischievous Xu Xiaoshou around, the atmosphere was a lot more intense.

The extreme temperatures were causing all three of them to sweat profusely. Cen Qiaofu, unused to such conditions, was isolated with just a light puff and shrouded by a cloud of smoke.

“Is this all that you have?” Cen Qiaofu mocked Elder Sang.

Cen Qiaofu tapped his ax derisively. If that was all there was that Elder Sang could muster, then the man with the hat was not worth his time.

Elder Sang grinned but had a grim expression on his face.

“Cen Qiaofu, remember this moment, for it would be the highlight of your life.”

Elder Sang merely pulled up his hat without doing anything else. Suddenly, white streams of flames emerged from the Dragon Melting Realm and surged toward Cen Qiaofu.

The extreme temperature of the Infernal Heavenly Flames was not a thing anyone would dare to touch.

Cen Qiaofu took evasive action and the streams of flames instantly collided, resulting in a massive explosion.

Shockwaves spread over the place with a rumble, and the explosion would have rocked the entire sky. But it had been contained within the Dragon Melting Realm, which spoke volumes of the skill of the person who executed the move.

Cen Qiaofu went flying from the force of the shock waves. However, he steadied himself in the nick of time and avoided colliding with the walls of white flames.

The temperature of the walls was such that even a look at them would have scorched one's soul.

Xu Xiaoshou jumped when he saw what had happened from the outside.

"Wah! It is terrifying!"

The others were clueless. But as Xu Xiaoshou was a fellow practitioner of such a power, he was aware of what was going on.

The streams of white flames were like magic spells, comprising countless compressed fire seeds within them.

The destructive potential of such a collision would have probably razed half of the Inner Yard if Elder Sang had not kept it within the confines of the Dragon Melting Realm.

"Elder Sang..."

Jiang Bianyan whispered as he watched the projection on Heaven's Vision. He recalled when he last met Elder Sang. He had been confident of being able to challenge Elder Sang as an equal.

But after a dozen years later, Elder Sang had since left him way behind in terms of power and skills.

Jiang Bianyan was not the only one in shock. Those from the Spirit Palace present were just as shocked.

Elder Sang rarely exhibited his skills. So, the impression of his capabilities remained as what they remembered from over a dozen years ago.

When they witnessed what had just happened on the projection, they could not help but be in awe of Elder Sang.

"His ability is something else."

Xiao Qixiu then added, "He is probably right. We have been too sheltered in the Spirit Palace."

They were all silent again. Xu Xiaoshou peeked at his seniors, and while saw envy on their faces, none of their faces showed any sign of regret.

"It is just a matter of different choices and paths," said Xu Xiaoshou.

All four seniors looked shocked, never expecting Xu Xiaoshou to be the one making such remarks, but they kept silent.

...

[Back inside the Dragon Melting Realm]

The explosion held significance to Xu Xiaoshou. But against the two opponents inside the white flaming wall, it looked like the move was inadequate.

The masked man held the Epitaph of City Snow in front of his eyes and managed to cut down the oncoming shock waves.

Cen Qiaofu was even more relaxed. As long as none of the shock waves hit him directly, they did him little harm.

Cen Qiaofu slashed at the sky, and a black gash instantly ripped through the Dragon Melting Realm.

However, like streams of water flowing down a waterfall, the opening on the walls quickly sealed up.

“Huh? That’s quite impressive!”

Cen Qiaofu looked surprised. The power of both the Great Path and spiritual source in his ax was tremendous, but it still could not blow up the walls.

It seemed like the power of the wall of flames had immediately burned his attack.

No. It did not burn the attack. It swallowed it up.

The Dragon Melting Realm consumed Cen Qiaofu’s power. It had transformed his power into fuel to maintain the high temperature of the place.

“Good move!”

“Well, it would seem like I won’t be going anywhere,” Cen Qiaofu said.

Elder Sang smirked and replied, “You can try.”

Cen Qiaofu charged right away with his ax in hand.

“I do not need to. If you are down, then the damn Dragon Melting Realm will just get snuffed out, I’m sure.”

Cen Qiaofu advanced toward Elder Sang at great speed, but Elder Sang was unfazed.

He lifted his hand and shouted.

“Furnace!”

The Dragon Melting Realm instantly became a furnace, and boundless white flames leaped from under the ground, quickly filling up the area within.

The imagery on Heaven’s Vision suddenly flickered and seemed unable to withstand such high temperatures.

Ye Xiaotian stabilized the skill right away. But there was only noise and they could see nothing else.

But Xu Xiaoshou could see everything using the power of his Sense skill.

The fierce counterattack not only trapped Cen Qiaofu, who was charging at Elder Sang, but even the masked man could not evade the leaping flames.

Both of them burned badly by the fierce roaring flames that seemed inextinguishable.

“What the hell is this?” Cen Qiaofu cried.

He looked flustered and hurriedly used his spiritual source to repel the flames, but his Spiritual Source was incinerated. He then repelled the white flames with his Great Path, but his foundations were singed.

The overpowering flames suddenly jogged his memory.

“Infernal Heavenly Flames? You are the disciple of Demi-Saint Infernal?”

Elder Sang did not reply. He clutched his hand, and the terrifying flames scorched their souls right away.

Cen Qiaofu’s face twisted, and the color of his head turned somewhat bleached.

“Burning down both life and path?”

Cen Qiaofu’s eyes widened, and he became quite flustered.

His body looked shriveled, yet he was still strong. But the flames burned him so severely that his skin became unbelievably creased, making him look even older than he already was.

“Qiaofu!” the masked man called out.

“The decision is in our hands and we do not need to fight any longer. We should leave!”

The masked man looked to be in excruciating pain as well. It was not the time to get a taste of the Infernal Heavenly Flames. His foundation was already damaged, and he was unable to fight Elder Sang for long.

It was why he chose not to fight Elder Sang.

So powerful was Elder Sang that if the masked man fought him, he would end up crippled, even if he succeeded in killing Elder Sang. Worse still, the damage inflicted on the masked man would be irreversible.

The loss would be immense if he fought with Elder Sang.

He pulled the Epitaph of City Snow from his back. But he found his towering Sword Will confined by the ceiling of the Dragon Melting Realm.

The masked man was in a dilemma. The flames could burn anything and everything and were indeed terrifying.

He then telepathically passed on a message to Cen Qiaofu. “Let’s give our all to cleave our way out. Let’s go!”

Cen Qiaofu nodded in response.

He had already discovered just how powerful Elder Sang was and had no intention of dallying around any further.

As Cen Qiaofu lifted his ax, Elder Sang snickered as he spoke.

“You cannot win, so you are trying to run, eh?”

Elder Sang moved his hands apart. The Dragon Melting Realm suddenly parted and took the form of two massive fireballs. The fireballs blazed like scorching suns and appeared capable of vaporizing everything in their path.

Xu Xiaoshou’s eyes almost popped out of his sockets and found the move uncannily familiar.

At that moment, he saw something even more familiar.

Elder Sang clenched his hands, and the two white scorching fireballs compressed and reduced to human-sized spheres.

The energies raging within those spheres radiated out.

The mist seeping from the leak seemed to devour anything it touched.

It wasn’t hard to imagine what would happen to those trapped inside those spheres.

Xu Xiaoshou looked shocked.

Elder Sang was using a tactic Xu Xiaoshou had long played out in his mind.

“Pill Compression Art?”