

PARAGON OF SIN

Chapter 6 - 6: Top Placement

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The Outer Competition reached a crescendo as the number of participants started to rapidly dwindle. In turn, the amount of deaths started to decline. Those who simply wished for a higher placement would verbally declare surrender without hesitation.

After they did so, a cloak of earth qi would enshroud their bodies and pull them into the platforms safely. In a few moments, they would be tunneled through to outside the platforms.

Wei Wuyin noticed an elder of the sect at a tall tower overlooking the matches. He had a skinny frame and was rather short with grey hair and a moustache. Despite looking old, he didn't have any wrinkles on his face. He could be seen as decently attractive.

Wei Wuyin had some dealings with this elder. He was named Ji Yun, a Core Elder of the Sect with a cultivation base at the Fifth Stage of Qi Condensation, Yang Growth. His qi was vigorous and exuded a vibrant vitality and potential for growth.

Elder Ji was tasked with overwatching and actively protecting those who surrendered. The platforms were filled with earthen energies, and with a special spiritual spell, he could gain an absolute awareness of all platforms. By executing a protective qi art, he would send them through the platforms and safely out.

As if his gaze was noticed, Elder Ji turned towards Wei Wuyin's direction despite being miles apart. Wei Wuyin smiled, his eyes flickering with a silver shimmer. Elder Ji calmly nodded towards Wei Wuyin, but his aged gaze held some shock.

"Metal Qi, hm. It seems...the rumors are true. He may also be close to Yin Infusion." He quietly said before refocusing his efforts on the stadium. His actions had subtly changed. Now, those in Wei Wuyin's faction were given

priority towards safety. There would also be the occasional save from death despite no declaration being made.

Wei Wuyin noticed this immediately and laughed inwardly. Elder Ji had always been a crafty fox. To think he would adjust his position and display his stance so quickly.

Wei Wuyin had revealed a portion of his cultivation on purpose, the shimmering of metal qi in his eyes. This indicated that he had cultivated to at least the Third Stage of Qi Condensation, Elemental Birth. Just with this, he'd already revealed his superiority over this generation's core disciple set.

There would only be equal but not better.

Elder Ji was already over a hundred years of age, but Wei Wuyin was under thirty, being in his mid-twenties. The difference in talent and ability was clearly defined by this and their status. As a core disciple, he was equal in sectoral status to an inner elder.

The inner disciple that had arrived with Su Mei and the others noticed the swift pre-emptive saves. He gasped in shock. He looked towards Wei Wuyin's faint smile and relaxed expression and his heart shook.

"Is the rumor true?" He thought to himself.

It wasn't just him who noticed Elder Ji's actions. There were those of higher cultivation who noticed, particularly other inner disciples and elders watching the event. A few had their eyes flicker with a curious and intrigued light, and others reacted wildly at this obvious show of favoritism.

The worst was that some of Tao Gui's and Jiu Lang's faction members would call for surrender, but would only receive it a few seconds later. A few had lost their lives as a result of this delay or was maimed as a result.

"Elder Ji has decided to break his neutrality?!" A female outer elder, with the cultivation at the Second Stage of Qi Condensation, External Flow, cried in disbelief. Elder Ji was a neutral Core Elder, someone who held little connection with those of the Core Disciples' Factions. This was one of the two main reasons he was sent to act as an overseer and protector of the event.

The other was his cultivation base. All Elders were over fifty years of age. In general, Outer Elders had First or Second Stage of Qi Condensation

cultivation bases, with the First Phase, Qi Creation, being the low-end and the Second Phase, External Flow, as the high-end. This was about the same strength of Upper-tier inner disciples and lower-tier core disciples. Wei Wuyin had promoted to the core rank nearly three years ago at the Second Stage.

Inner Elders were a little different. They were all at the Third Stage of Qi Condensation Realm, Elemental Birth. If one reaches the first truly difficult watershed of cultivation, the Yin Form Phase, then they would be directly promoted to a Core Elder. Therefore, Elder Ji, a person at the Fifth Stage, Yang Growth, was at the top. In fact, he was in the top three core elders in the entire sect.

For him to suddenly and brazenly reveal his side was beyond their imaginations!

"Impossible! Elder Ji has maintained his neutrality throughout the last generation of core disciples, there's no way he changes that!" Someone vehemently rejected the notion. However, what was happening was like a slap to his face each time. He hoped it was just a mistake, but as time went on, it became apparent as the sun in the sky.

In the sect, the core elders would often side with a faction. For example, Jiu Lang also had two core elders within her faction, but they were lower-tier core elders. The others too had core elders, but none of them reached the upper-tier.

That was because nothing the core disciples offered or showed was capable of pulling them to their side. While they may be fine with greasing the wheel in certain situations or interfering in some matters for compensation, they haven't declared their loyalties.

This had to do with the difficulty of cultivation. In fact, Jiu Lang could've had an upper core elder's support, but it didn't fall through. Everyone, including Wei Wuyin, had their hearts clench when news spread of a possible backing of an upper-tier core elder. Luckily, the core elder wanted what Jiu Lang wasn't willing to give: her primal yin and body.

If she had the backing of that elder, Wei Wuyin was sure he'd already be dead, so would all her enemies. There was no doubt in his mind. That was the influence and power of upper-tier core elders.

As for Elder Ji, his actions declared his intent.

Elder Ji turned towards Wei Wuyin and slightly smiled.

Wei Wuyin couldn't help but nod in approval, then his eyes flashed with various faint illusory images. No one knew he was in the crowd or noticed him watching, just Elder Ji, so he decided to thoroughly pull this elder into his fold.

Elder Ji's eyes widened in shock. This reaction caught the eyes of elders who were curious about his actions. A load of transmissions came into his crystal suddenly, but he didn't answer. He calmed himself down and shut down communication with everyone. His eyes turned calm and he went back to acting as protector.

Inwardly, his heart was beating fiercely. "He's reached Yin Form before thirty?! Incredible cultivation talent! To rise from an honorary disciple to a core disciple, birth metal qi and establish yin! His future...if I side with him early, perhaps the hardest hurdle of the Qi Condensation Realm, the sixth phase of False Reality, would be a possibility!" As his mind cycled through various scenarios, he realized no core disciple could hope to match Wei Wuyin's momentum in the last two hundred years, a span of time inclusive of four core disciple generations.

The subtle actions started to become blatant. Su Mei in the battle felt odd. She could feel essence energy funneling through the soles of her feet. It entered her body, pure and powerful, and strengthened her qi and physique.

The essence energy originated from the platform and miraculously increased her body's durability and toughness. As she circulated her qi, she also noticed that her recovery rate had increased. She was shocked at what was happening.

"Blatant cheating!" An inner elder a part of Tao Gui's faction, having supported him, shouted in fury. The rage in his eyes were clear, but had no outlet.

"Cheating? Pfft. You're blind, Elder Ji would never cheat. He's only ensuring that he can better save our sect's disciples by connecting them with the platform's defensive energy. Acting as he should." The female outer elder from earlier brazenly and shamelessly stated. She was someone from Wei Wuyin's faction, so she would obviously shift the narrative.

The earthen energies of the platforms were entering the bodies of Wei Wuyin's members throughout. They were suddenly stronger and filled with

boundless stamina. Anyone could see that Elder Ji was manipulating the platforms to influence certain members in a positive way.

Not only that...

"Absolutely fucking shameless!" An inner elder who was a part of Jiu Lang's faction cried with grievance. If it was just helping certain members, fine, but the earthen energies were attached to his faction's outer disciples. However, instead of receiving a boon, they were weighed down and were acting as if they had to carry a large boulder on their shoulders.

It was appalling as some of his disciples were killed then and there. Their lives reaped because of this disadvantage. Some even had bright futures. This wasn't even the start, as some members cried for surrender, but was met with weapons of death as their reply. Then, their dead bodies would be sent into the ground as if it was delayed by an accident.

Wei Wuyin couldn't help but grin at this point. To think Elder Ji was so decisive. He hadn't obtained the backing of a single core elder before, yet immediately obtained the support of an upper-tier core elder, and one of the top three. It was quite interesting how quick things shift.

The battle for the Outer Competition caused many dismayed words to sling, but no one took it up with Elder Ji. This was clear that none of them had the courage to question him.

Even the other core elders watching remained silent, only lamenting at their failure with gathering intelligence. If they had known that Elder Ji was a part of Wei Wuyin's faction, or any faction, they would've elected someone else to take responsibility. Someone neutral.

The first part of the competition soon ended. Su Mei stood proudly on her platform. She was alone and had a blade drenched in blood, her eyes icy-cold yet filled with pride.

The several hundred lone standers proceeded to the next competition. The rest of the participants were divided into ten groups. Ten platforms were used and people entered at random. The fight then was more intense, but with Elder Ji's support, Wei Wuyin's faction obtained four spots out of ten, with Su Mei occupying one of the platforms.

These ten would be promoted to the inner disciple status, and a few were even crying. One was on his knees, tears falling without end. Another yelled in triumph like a ferocious lion. Su Mei's eyes were in a daze as her labored breathing was met with applause. The crowd's excitement felt incredible to her, but all she could do was look towards a smiling figure.

Wei Wuyin gave her a smile and an approving nod that said, 'You lived up to and exceeded my expectations.'