

A Record 301

Chapter 301: Baleful Qi

"I don't believe it would be wise to continue this battle any further, Fellow Daoist Lu Ji. Let's make a retreat," Xue Han said to Lu Ji through voice transmission.

"My sword has already been drawn several inches out of its scabbard, I can't just sheath it again for no good reason," Lu Ji replied in a cold voice.

As soon as his voice trailed off, he drew his longsword completely out of its scabbard, sending an enormous streak of white sword qi hurtling directly upward.

"Impressive!" Daoist Hu Yan chuckled as he swept a hand through the air, and a crimson longsword appeared behind him out of thin air.

The golden spirit patterns on the sword's blade were glowing radiantly, and there was a massive sword projection that was over 10,000 feet in length around it. Crimson flames were surging out of either side of the sword projection, resembling a pair of giant fiery wings that had spread open in the sky.

All of a sudden, the air temperature within a radius of hundreds of kilometers elevated sharply, and scorching heat permeated throughout the entire area.

At the same time, the spirit patterns on the giant black axes wielded by all of the black Dao Warriors also lit up with scorching flames, and they lashed out at the azure-armored Dao Warriors and Ubiquitous Pavilion cultivators.

The Holy Puppet Sect cultivators had already resigned themselves to death, and all of them were so elated by this turn of events that many of them had burst into tears. All of the sudden, the tide of the battle was turned once again.

Xue Han heaved a faint sigh upon seeing this, and he was just about to fly toward Lu Ji when Yun Ni and Bai Fengyi rose up into the air to get in his way.

With that, the melee on the plaza resumed.

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On the Thunderstorm Sea, somewhere hundreds of thousand of kilometers away from the Holy Puppet Sect.

Han Li was standing in mid-air, facing Zhong Luan from afar.

He had used his lightning teleportation array several times up to this point, but he had been unable to shake off Zhong Luan.

"You won't be able to escape from me even if you flee to the corners of this realm, Han Li!" Zhong Luan declared as a mocking sneer appeared on his face.

"That's quite a bit of insolence from someone who's only gained some slight mastery over baleful qi laws. It looks like you're not much better than that idiot junior martial brother of yours!" Han Li jeered.

A cold look appeared in Zhong Luan's eyes upon hearing this. "I didn't think you would be able to identify my baleful qi laws. It appears I may have underestimated you."

"I'm assuming you've been using baleful qi to track me this entire time and to unleash those sneak attacks against me, right?" Han Li chuckled.

"Indeed. The reality is that you've been bringing me with you this entire time, and I haven't had to do anything," Zhong Luan openly admitted with a mocking sneer on his face.

Han Li's expression remained unchanged upon hearing this, but internally, he was rather intrigued.

He didn't actually know much about baleful qi laws as it was a very uncommon type of laws, so he wasn't familiar with what was special about it.

That black thread that Zhong Luan had shot into his body earlier was one that had been manifested from baleful qi laws, and through it, he seemed to be able to track his location and teleport himself to his side.

Aside from that, Han Li could also clearly sense a violent and baleful energy accumulating in his heart. Even with his enormous spiritual sense, he was unable to forcibly suppress it, and the more he tried to do so, the quicker this baleful energy grew.

Han Li had a feeling that once this baleful energy developed to a certain point, that would be when his opponent would unleash his killing blow. Hence, the best course of action would be to finish this battle as soon as possible.

With that in mind, Han Li swept a sleeve through the air to summon his Heavy Water True Axis amid a flash of black light, then sent it hurtling directly toward Zhong Luan.

A faint smile appeared on Zhong Luan's face, and instead of taking any evasive measures, he flew directly toward the axis.

In the instant that the Heavy Water True Axis was about to crash into his body, he transformed into a cloud of black mist once again, allowing him to pass through completely unscathed.

Han Li immediately made a hand seal upon seeing this, and the Water Dao Rune on the Heavy Water True Axis began to glow brightly, while the axis itself swelled to around twice its original size and began to revolve rapidly.

All of the water-attribute spiritual qi in the area was churned up into a frenzy by the axis, which was releasing bursts of incredibly powerful tearing force, and it didn't take long before an enormous vortex took shape on the surface of the sea.

All of a sudden, the cloud of black mist that Zhong Luan had transformed into was sucked into the vortex, quickly vanishing into it before he had a chance to react.

However, Han Li knew that this was far from the end of the battle, and he made a beckoning motion to draw the Heavy Water True Axis back to himself, where it hovered in the air in front of him.

As a result, the vortex of water that had risen up into the heavens cascaded back down into the sea, raising a series of massive waves as it did so.

However, even after the waves had completely subsided, Zhong Luan was still nowhere to be seen.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this. Just now, a burst of aggression had risen up inexplicably in his heart without any warning, and wisps of black mist were also beginning to seep out of his glabella.

Right at this moment, a black shadow suddenly appeared in the seawater down below, much like the ink of a squid, and it quickly spread to stain all of the seawater in a radius of over 10,000 feet black.

Black waves began to churn incessantly on the surface of the sea with wisps of black mist surging out from within.

All of a sudden, a series of enormous waves rose up from all directions like a giant black flower, and its petals closed in around Han Li, attempting to devour him whole.

Han Li immediately tried to take evasive measures, but right this moment, a flash of black light suddenly appeared on his glabella, and he was struck by a burst of sharp pain in his consciousness.

As a result, he was momentarily immobilized, and before he could do anything else, he was completely enveloped within the black wave along with his Heavy Water True Axis.

Han Li inspected his surroundings to find that he was situated in a completely pitch-black space.

Through the use of his Brightsight Spirit Eyes, he was able to see wisps of black mist hovering in the air around him, but he was unable to see very far through it.

At the same time, he discovered that his spiritual sense had also been severely limited, and at this moment, all he could sense was a seemingly boundless expanse of baleful qi around him.

He took a deep breath before sweeping a sleeve through the air, and his Heavy Water True Axis immediately began to revolve rapidly before launching itself forward.

A dull thud rang out as the Heavy Water True Axis struck a wall of water, which shuddered violently a few times before releasing wisps of black mist to ensnare the Heavy Water True Axis, rendering it completely immobilized.

The more immortal spiritual power he tried to inject into the Heavy Water True Axis, the tighter the surrounding wisps of black mist bound themselves to the axis.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly as he made a hand seal with one hand, and an azure longsword shot out of his sleeve, then split up into 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords amid a flash of azure light before flying away in all directions.

Each sword was glowing with azure light that was releasing more azure sword projections, amounting to several thousand sword projections that instantly filled the entire surrounding space.

If there were anyone situated outside this inky-black space at this moment, then they would be able to see that it was a black ball with a diameter in excess of 1,000 feet, and it was hovering above the sea, constantly absorbing the inky-black seawater down below.

At the same time, countless bulges were appearing incessantly on the surface of the black ball, stretching it into an irregular shape and making it resemble a spiky black ball.

Situated in the sky not far away from the spiky ball was a black crane with a golden crown and a metallic black plumage that had a faint fiery sheen, indicating that this was no ordinary creature.

Atop the crane's back sat Zhong Luan with his legs crossed. His black saber was resting across his hands, and he was staring intently at the black ball up ahead.

All of the spirit patterns on the surface of the black saber were flashing incessantly, and black qi was also surging over its blade.

"He's causing quite a ruckus in there, Master," the black crane said in a high-pitched voice as it swiveled its head around to face Zhong Luan.

"No matter. The more violently he struggles, the faster the baleful aura would converge, and the more he'll be corroded by my baleful aura. When he's completely spent and exhausted, that's when we'll put an end to his life," Zhong Luan replied with a smile.

"We wouldn't have to go through so much trouble if we weren't trying to uncover the secrets that he's harboring. There's no way he would be able to withstand your Black Emperor Immortal Slaying Blade, Master," the black crane said in a fawning voice.

"I'm truly curious about secrets Fang Pan was so desperate to uncover. If I can uncover all of those secrets, that would certainly be worth all the extra time and effort I'm investing here," Zhong Luan said.

As the two of them were conversing with one another, the unrest in the black ball gradually began to fade until it had completely subsided, and at this point, all of the black seawater had already been fused into the black ball.

However, strangely enough, not only had the black ball not become any larger, it had shrunk down significantly instead, and at this moment, it was resembling a giant black crystal.

"Looks like it's about time," Zhong Luan declared as he rose to his feet atop the black crane's back, then sprang up into the air and flew over to the black ball before gently laying a hand upon it.

A burst of black light suddenly appeared at the center of his palm before transforming into a black vortex, and a plume of black smoke immediately surged out of the black ball before entering Zhong Luan's body through the vortex.

As more and more black smoke emerged, the black ball shrank down further and further, and Han Li's figure was gradually revealed.

At this moment, his entire body was completely stiff and still, and his eyes were tightly shut. The baleful qi law thread on his glabella had already disappeared, having been replaced by an inky-black baleful rune that appeared as if it had become a part of his body.

The 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords and the Heavy Water True Axis beside him were all enveloped in a thin layer of black crystal, and they were struggling to break free, but unable to do so.

Zhong Luan gave a pleased nod upon seeing this, then raised a finger toward the baleful rune on Han Li's glabella.

As soon as his fingertip came into contact with the baleful rune, all of the secrets hidden in Han Li's mind would immediately be fully revealed to him.

However, right at this moment, Han Li's eyes suddenly sprang open, and a flash of blue light appeared in his pupils. A translucent thread then shot out of his glabella to shatter the baleful rune before hurtling directly toward Zhong Luan's glabella.

Chapter 302: Fierce Clash

Zhong Luan was clearly caught off guard by this turn of events, and he reflexively sprang back, but didn't take any measures to try and ward off the translucent thread, merely allowing it to fly toward his own glabella.

All of a sudden, a burst of azure light erupted out of the copper headgear on his forehead, and a projection of a four-eyed tiger-like beast emerged before opening its mouth to devour the translucent thread.

Meanwhile, a layer of golden scales had already appeared over Han Li's arm, and his fist was glowing with radiant golden light as he threw an almighty punch toward Zhong Luan's chest.

Zhong Luan forcibly suppressed his own bewilderment as he hurriedly raised his saber before him, then pressed a hand against the flat of the blade to brace it against Han Li's punch.

A resounding boom rang out as a burst of golden light exploded in the sky, and Zhong Luan was sent flying back like an asteroid from the force of the clash, crashing heavily down onto the surface of the sea to raise a flurry of massive waves.

Han Li didn't stop there, making a hand seal with both hands before sweeping his sleeves through the air, and the 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords immediately shattered the black crystal around them, then flew through the air as streaks of azure light before plunging into the sea in pursuit of Zhong Luan.

At the same time, the Water Dao Rune on the Heavy Water True Axis abruptly lit up, and it also broke free from the black crystalline material before crashing down toward the surface of the sea.

All of this had taken place in the span of just a few seconds, and only after this sequence of events had unfolded did the massive black crane in the sky finally react before flapping its wings vigorously downward.

The fiery black light on its wings brightened considerably, and they released a pair of massive black fireballs that hurtled toward the Heavy Water True Axis.

Two resounding booms rang out in succession as black flames erupted over the surface of the Heavy Water True Axis, diverting it slightly to the side and causing it to plow through the sea for a moment before it righted itself and continued to fly back toward Han Li.

Han Li only took a brief glance at the giant black crane before directing his gaze back to the surface of the sea.

Deep in the water, a black shadow rapidly rose upward before flying out into the open with a black saber held tightly in his hand, and he lashed out behind him without any hesitation.

The spirit patterns on the surface of the saber light up, and one saber projection after another swept toward the sea like waves crashing against the shore.

Immediately thereafter, a series of glowing azure flying swords flew out of the water amid a string of splashes, and they crashed into the waves of saber projections with a piercing grinding sound.

The black saber projections were shattered one after another, while the azure longswords were also stopped in their tracks.

Meanwhile, Zhong Luan continued to fly back through the air before landing on the black crane's back, and he cast a furious gaze toward Han Li.

"I didn't think that you were able to free yourself from the corruption of my baleful qi. Even if your spiritual sense far exceeds that of your peers, there's no way you should've been able to do that. Could it be that you've cultivated the forbidden Spirit Refinement Technique?" Zhong Luan asked.

Han Li remained silent, displaying no intention of offering any response.

He swept his sleeves through the air, and the 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords immediately flew back to him, fusing into a single azure longsword before landing in his grasp.

"It looks like you really are harboring many secrets. No wonder Fang Pan was so determined to hunt you down. I'm really looking forward to capturing your nascent soul and seeing everything concealed in it!" Zhong Luan chuckled.

"Silence is a virtue," Han Li said with an indifferent expression, following which the Mantra Treasured Axis in his body abruptly began to revolve in reverse.

At the same time, over 40 of the Time Dao Runes on the Mantra Treasured Axis lit up at once, and he instantly vanished from the spot, not even leaving any afterimages in his wake before appearing on the black crane's back as if through instantaneous teleportation.

Before Zhong Luan even had a chance to figure out what had happened, Han Li's azure longsword had already been plunged through his heart.

Zhong Luan's eyes widened with incredulity as he looked down at the sword protruding out of his chest and the black blood that was pouring out of the wound, which had already seeped through his robes.

"Master!" the black crane screeched in a shrill voice.

Meanwhile, Han Li pulled his longsword out of Zhong Luan's chest without any hesitation before darting back through the air.

He had only just flown off the black crane's back when Zhong Luan's body disintegrated into a cloud of black mist. As it turned out, that had only been a clone formed by baleful qi.

A cloud of black smoke then appeared elsewhere in the sky, and Zhong Luan re-emerged. At this point, all of the mockery in his eyes had been replaced by a cold and solemn look.

Han Li was feeling a little frustrated. His Mantra Treasured Axis still hadn't recovered all 108 of its Time Dao Runes yet, so he wasn't able to fully utilize his Reversal True Axis ability. As a result, he was unable to instantly slay an opponent of Zhong Luan's caliber with a single strike.

"I have indeed underestimated you. I didn't think that you would've also mastered the laws of speed just like Fang Pan, and your speed is even superior to his. No wonder you were able to kill him," Zhong Luan said with a serious expression.

Han Li naturally wasn't going to correct Zhong Luan's miscalculation of his law powers, and he asked, "The fact that you were able to survive that blow must have something to do with Fang Pan, right?"

"That's right. I did indeed prepare that clone as a safeguard against that junior martial brother of mine. He was developing a little too quickly, so I had no choice but to be wary of him, and I certainly didn't think that the clone would save me from someone else instead," Zhong Luan mused.

As he was speaking, he was discreetly making a string of hand seals with one hand concealed behind his back.

The circles of strange patterns on the palm of his hand began to glow with crimson light, and the skin beneath his black cloak was also beginning to take on a red coloration.

A hint of fear and alarm flashed through the black crane's eyes upon seeing this, and two balls of black light were flashing beneath its wings, clearly indicating that it was preparing itself to flee the scene at any moment.

Han Li had naturally noticed all of this, but his expression remained completely unchanged. His Heavy Water True Axis was hovering in front of him like a shield, and he held his azure longsword in one hand, while in his other hand were two balls of Heavy Water Veined Lightning, which he kept concealed up his sleeve.

A burst of chanting rang out as Zhong Luan's pupils turned a crimson color, and wisps of red mist began to rise up from his body. At the same time, his black saber was also gradually taking on a crimson hue.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this, and he could sense a clear change in Zhong Luan's aura. He could still detect baleful qi rising up from his body, but it wasn't the same type of aggressive baleful qi as before.

"It's time to put an end to this battle," Zhong Luan declared as he vanished from the spot as a crimson shadow.

In the next instant, he appeared below Han Li to his right before slashing his saber diagonally upward, lashing out at Han Li from an extremely awkward angle.

Han Li seemed to have already anticipated this, and he swung his longsword downward to clash against the crimson saber, then took advantage of the impact of the clash to fly back through the air and open up some distance between himself and Zhong Luan.

At the same time, the two balls of Heavy Water Veined Lightning had slipped out of his sleeve and fallen down in front of Zhong Luan.

The purple lightning veins on the surface of the balls of veined lightning abruptly lit up, immediately following which came a thunderous explosion.

A devastating halo of purple lightning spread through the air in all directions, encompassing the entire surrounding area in a radius of several thousand feet.

Before the first explosion had a chance to subside, the other ball of Heavy Water Veined Lightning also lit up, but the lightning veins on this one were golden instead of purple.

Another violent explosion rang out, and two enormous black suns rose up above the surface of the sea one after the other, while golden and purple lightning flashed incessantly.

The eruption of light was so bright that it was impossible to see Zhong Luan within it, and the sea down below churned violently as countless tiny black specks of heavy water erupted in all directions, causing the surrounding space to shudder violently.

The explosions had released waves of spherical shockwaves that swept up enormous waves over the surface of the sea, and the black crane had already fled into the distance as a ball of black flames.

At this moment, it was hovering in the sky over 100,000 feet away, looking back at Han Li and Zhong Luan with a fearful look in its eyes.

"It looks like the Divine Devilbane Lightning is still the more powerful of the two," Han Li remarked to himself as he looked at the purple and golden lightning that was flashing above the surface of the sea.

Out of the two balls of Heavy Water Veined Lightning that he had just tossed out, one of them had been refined using the power of the purple crystalline that he had obtained from the Thunderstorm Sea, while the other one had been refined using Divine Devilbane Lightning following latest refinement of his Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords.

Of the former, he had already expended far too many of them while carrying sect and Transient Guild missions, so he didn't have many left, and as for the former, that was very difficult to refine, so he didn't have many of those, either.

Having just detonated one of each, it was clear that the Heavy Water Veined Lightning that was infused with Divine Devilbane Lightning was the more formidable of the two.

As the explosion subsided, torn scraps of a black cloak could be seen floating on the surface of the sea, and there was a cloud of blood mist hanging in the air, but instead being elated to see this, a grim look appeared in Han Li's eyes.

He could sense Zhong Luan's aura permeating throughout the entire surrounding area in a radius of tens of thousands of feet.

Right at this moment, the surface of the sea, which had already been stained crimson, began to bubble and froth, and it didn't take long before a layer of large bubbles had appeared over the entire surface of the sea in a radius of several hundred kilometers.

Chapter 303: Astonishment

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly as he cast his gaze toward that area to find the crimson sea churning incessantly.

Turbulent waves were surging on its surface while over 100 massive shadows were slowly rising up from the depths, bringing with them an overwhelmingly nauseating bloody odor.

Han Li activated his Spirit Refinement Technique to protect his consciousness, and he unconsciously tightened his grip on his sword as he inspected the surface of the sea with blue light flashing in his eyes.

Finally, all of the shadows rising up from below emerged out of the water one after another, revealing them to have been a series of different marine demon beasts of all types of different descriptions.

Han Li had seen all of these demon beasts in some of the books that he had read in the past, and he knew that their cultivation bases varied drastically, with the most powerful ones among them already at the True Immortal Stage, but at this moment, all of them were floating belly up on the surface of the sea, and they couldn't have been any more dead.

Each of them had a giant round hole in their abdomen, from within which blood was pouring out incessantly, spreading through the seawater like a massive crimson veil.

Han Li could see that the skin and flesh around those wounds were spread outward, indicating that their bodies had detonated from the inside, rather than the injuries being a result of external force.

All of a sudden, a near animalistic roar rang out, and massive waves swept over the surface of the sea down below.

A massive crimson hand that was over 1,000 feet in size suddenly parted the waves and reached out of the sea to make a grab for Han Li, who immediately darted back in an attempt to avoid it.

However, right as he did so, another identical giant crimson hand emerged from the water right in the path of his retreat before grabbing toward him as well.

Han Li hurriedly changed directions as a streak of azure light, but right at this moment, two more massive crimson hands emerged, one in front of him and one behind, and they were closing in on him from both directions.

The huge crimson hands were astonishingly fast, to the point that Han Li was caught between them before he had a chance to react.

Immediately thereafter, the seawater began to churn violently, and an enormous figure that was over 10,000 feet tall slowly rose up from the depth.

As it turned out, it was a giant crimson figure with clearly defined muscular lines all over its body, and it was completely naked with the exception of an azure loincloth around its waist.

It was like a giant that had just been skinned, and there was still blood all over its exposed muscles. Its face was extremely twisted and horrific, but some semblance of Zhong Luan could still be seen in it.

Aside from the pair of arms attached to its shoulder, the crimson giant had a pair of arms growing from beneath its ribs as well, and it was none other than the hands attached to that lower pair of arms that Han Li was trapped between.

At this moment, Han Li felt as if he were being crushed between a pair of massive mountains, and his bones were creaking and groaning incessantly.

He let loose a loud roar as a layer of golden scales appeared over both of his arms, and he pushed back at the pair of giant palms with all his might.

With his tremendous strength, he was able to push the giant palms slightly to the sides to open up a small gap.

The crimson giant immediately let loose a thunderous roar in response, and it exerted even more force through its hands, forcibly eliminating the gap that Han Li had just barely created between them.

Han Li's face was bright red as he let loose a low roar, and in the next instant, all of his muscles began to bulge as his body swelled up rapidly like a balloon, quickly transforming into a giant golden ape that was over 10,000 feet tall.

At the same time, white light appeared over his body, and seven specks of blue starlight appeared on his chest and abdomen, while his body swelled even further in size.

The giant ape let loose another low roar as it glowered at the crimson giant, then spread its arms open forcefully, and not only was it able to force the crimson giant's hands apart, it was able to grab onto them as well.

The golden ape then twisted its own arms, forcing the crimson giant's hands outward, and the sound of cracking bone instantly rang out, immediately followed by a roar of pain.

However, at the same time, the crimson giant reached out with its other two hands to lock the golden ape's arms in a vice-like grip.

Immediately thereafter, it began to chant an incantation in a rumbling voice, and as it did so, a series of strange corkscrew-shaped patterns on the palms of the hands that were locked around the giant ape's arms, and a pair of crimson snakes slithered out before winding themselves around the golden ape's arms.

Han Li immediately felt a burst of scorching pain shoot through his arms, and he hurriedly released the crimson giant's hands before stumbling back around a dozen steps.

After opening up some distance between himself and the crimson giant, Han Li looked down to find circles of corkscrew-shaped marks running all the way up his arms to his shoulders, and it was as if it had been branded into his skin.

"With my baleful blood mark on your body, you're as good as dead," the crimson giant declared in such a thunderous voice that the surrounding space was quivering incessantly.

As soon as his voice trailed off, it continued to chant its incantation, and a series of giant crimson runes began to appear over its body.

Han Li could feel the scorching pain in his arms becoming more intense by the second, and he leaned forward to plunge his arms into the seawater in an attempt to lessen the pain, but to no avail.

What was even more alarming was that all of his blood essence was currently surging violently through his body like a wild horse that had been let off its reins.

He could clearly sense that the temperature of his blood essence was rapidly rising, as if it were about to be set alight, and it wouldn't be long before it tore through his veins, causing his body to detonate.

If it weren't for the fact that he was a Profound Immortal with a physical body far more formidable than the average True Immortal, and he had cultivated the Organ Refinement Origin Arts, his organs would've most likely already exploded by now.

Han Li was astonished by this turn of events. The baleful qi law powers being wielded by his opponent was extremely difficult to deal with. First, it was the violent baleful qi that had swayed his spiritual sense, and now, this burst of blood baleful qi was attempting to control his blood essence.

He took a moment to compose himself, then attempted to quell the unrest in his blood essence using his immortal spiritual power, but to no avail, once again.

With so many types of power true spirit blood essence infused into his bloodline, his blood essence was far more powerful than that of the average True Immortal, and it was impossible for him to suppress it with his immortal spiritual power alone.

All of a sudden, a draconic roar rang out from within Han Li's body, following which a giant five-clawed golden dragon projection emerged behind him amid a flash of golden light before roaring to the heavens.

The giant ape's face became twisted with agony, and it also let loose a roar of pain.

"You possess a true spirit bloodline in your body? This is fantastic! The heavens are truly smiling down upon me!" the crimson giant exclaimed in an elated voice.

It then made a strange hand seal with all four of its massive hands, and a series of crescent-shaped runes appeared over its body, shimmering with a magma-like crimson and yellow glow.

Immediately thereafter, a clear phoenix cry rang out, and a rainbow phoenix projection emerged behind Han Li as well, hanging in mid-air right next to the golden dragon.

The black crane, which had already retreated to over 100,000 feet away, was very surprised to see this.

"He has more than one type of true spirit bloodline in his body! Normally, possessing multiple true spirit bloodlines would be a great asset, but given Master's abilities, those true spirit bloodlines will only work against him!" the black crane chuckled.

As soon as its voice trailed off, an Azure Luan Bird projection appeared behind the giant ape amid a flash of azure light, followed by a Lightning Bird projection amid a flash of silver lightning.

Immediately thereafter came the projections of a Five-colored Peacock and a giant black turtle.

"Impossible! How could he have this many?" the black crane exclaimed in an incredulous voice.

At this moment, it wanted nothing more than to grow a pair of hands to rub its own eyes. It was simply in complete disbelief that someone could possess so many powerful true spirit bloodlines, particularly a human, which had the weakest physical body among all races.

Another agonized roar erupted out of the giant ape's mouth, and the true spirit projections hovering behind it suddenly began to struggle violently, with someone trying to rise up into the heavens and others trying to descend into the sea.

The crimson marks on the giant ape's arms also began to glow brightly, and the unrest in its blood essence was becoming even more violent, causing it to crash through its veins like a wild bull.

This scorching sensation that came from within his body was even more painful than having his skin peeled and his bones plucked out.

Han Li could sense that the blood essence in his body was only continuing to grow more violent, and it would break out of his body as soon as it reached a certain threshold.

Once that happened, he would end up just like those dead marine demon beasts floating on the surface of the sea.

Chapter 304: Baleful Spirit Threads

The crimson giant could tell that Han Li was close to reaching his limits, and a ghastly smile appeared on its hideous face as it roared, "It's time for you to die!"

With this declaration, Han Li immediately felt the agony in his body increase by severalfold, and it was as if there were countless sharp needles piercing back and forth through his meridians and even his bones.

A layer of faint golden light appeared in his eyes, and he threw his head back and let loose a thunderous roar as he gave up on trying to suppress his blood essence with his immortal spiritual power, dedicating it fully to activating his Provenance True Devil Arts instead.

A layer of purplish-golden scales appeared over his body, and two fearsome-looking heads and four purplish-golden arms emerged on his shoulders and below his ribs, respectively.

The six eyes on the three giant ape heads sprang open in unison, and a short silver horn appeared on the forehead of the two heads on either side of the central one.

After unleashing his Holy Nirvana Physique, the true spirit projections that were threatening to break free flew back into his body one after another, and as a result, Han Li grew significantly taller once again, allowing him to tower over the crimson giant.

The purplish-golden scales all over his body connected together to form a suit of purplish-golden armor with countless antiquated runes inscribed onto its surface, and it encased Han Li's entire body while giving off an extremely formidable aura.

In the distance, Zhong Luan was looking on with an astonished expression.

He couldn't understand for the life of him how Han Li had managed to escape from the control of his baleful blood mark, and a sense of unease had welled up in his heart at the sight of this new transformation that Han Li had adopted.

In reality, Han Li wasn't confident that his Provenance True Devil Arts would be able to suppress the true spirit blood essence in his body, and he had only unleashed so that all of his true spirit bloodlines would be unified and guided to a collective cause, rather than continuing to rampage under the effects of the baleful blood mark.

Back in the Spirit Realm, he would often use all of his true spirit bloodlines to unleash his Holy Nirvana Physique, so this was not an alien process to him.

His three heads grinned in unison, following his six giant arms flashed through the air in a blur, unleashing countless projections that hurtled directly toward Zhong Luan.

All of a sudden, countless golden fist projections emerged to obscure the entire sky before abruptly vanishing into the thin air.

Almost at the exact same moment, the space around the crimson giant surged and churned violently, and countless golden fist projections emerged out of thin air before crashing toward it with devastating force.

The crimson giant immediately raised its four arms and swung them rapidly through the air to unleash a flurry of fist projections of its own, and a string of resounding booms rang out incessantly.

Before the clashes between the golden and crimson fist projections had a chance to subside, an enormous figure sprang up into the air, then came crashing down upon the crimson giant like a mountain. Raised above the enormous figure's head was a huge crimson longsword, which was also being swung down with tremendous force.

In response, the crimson giant raised two of its hands and made a grabbing motion to conjure up a huge crimson saber, which it used to parry the massive azure longsword.

A thunderous boom rang out as the azure sword struck the crimson saber, sending a burst of astonishing force crashing down. The crimson giant was forced to one knee, and the back of its huge saber had also sunk deep into the flesh on its shoulder.

At the same time, massive waves swept over the surface of the sea, and even countless fish and marine demon beasts that were situated thousands of kilometers away were killed from the force of the almighty blow.

After forcing the crimson giant to one knee, Han Li strode forward before stomping a foot down onto the giant's chest.

Crimson light flashed within the giant's eyes, and a massive opening abruptly appeared on its chest, within which were countless jagged white fangs that closed in viciously around the giant ape's leg like an enormous bear trap.

However, all it saw was a blur flash before its eyes, following which it was struck by a burst of sharp pain in the chest.

As it turned out, the white fangs in its chest didn't even get a chance to open up before it was trodden on by the giant ape's foot, instantly snapping several dozen of them.

Furthermore, such was the force behind the enormous ape's stomp that a massive hole had sunken into the crimson giant's chest.

The crimson giant threw up a mouthful of blood as it thrust its long saber upward with all its might while punching at the giant ape with its other two hands.

The giant ape didn't back down, continuing to force its sword downward while retaliating with its four remaining fists.

The crimson giant's two arms were no match for the ferocious barrage from the giant ape's four arms, and it was being comprehensively dominated.

A string of loud thumps rang out, and all of the seawater down below was quivering incessantly with every single thump.

Before long, the crimson giant's chest and arms had been pummeled into a mangled mass of flesh and blood, presenting a sorry sight to behold.

Right at this moment, Han Li suddenly reached out with two of his hands to grab onto the pair of arms that Zhong Luan was using to hold his saber. As a result, he was able to liberate his sword-wielding arms, and he pulled the sword back before slashing it toward the crimson giant's head.

The crimson giant was greatly alarmed by this turn of events, and it immediately attempted to take evasive measures, but it was unable to go anywhere as it was being crushed under the giant ape's weight.

A thunderous howl rang out as half of its head was cut off by the crimson longsword, and having lost its head, the crimson giant's four arms instantly slumped down in a limp manner.

"Master!" the black crane called out in alarm from afar.

Never in all of its years by Zhong Luan's side had it ever seen him be reduced to such a sorry state, and its eyes were filled with wariness as it cast its gaze toward Han Li.

All of a sudden, the giant ape raised a hand, and a burst of golden light appeared on its palm as it prepared to lash out at what remained of the crimson giant's head.

However, all of a sudden, the crimson giant's body suddenly dissolved into a puddle of viscous bloody sludge that enveloped three of the giant apes hands and one of its feet.

The sludge then immediately began to exert enormous suction force that locked those hands and that foot firmly into place, making Han Li feel as if he had stepped into quicksand.

At the same time, a series of peculiar golden threads appeared within the sludge, resembling a school of fish that was swimming through it, and they were traveling toward the giant ape's arms and leg.

A sense of foreboding welled up in Han Li's heart as he detected the low fluctuations emanating from these golden threads, and he hurriedly drew upon his immortal spiritual power with all his might to try and extricate his arms and leg, but he was only able to pull them out around 10 feet before they refused to budge any further.

At this point, the golden threads had already arrived and were piercing toward him like golden needles.

Despite the layer of purplish-golden scales that covered his entire body, the golden threads were still able to pierce into his flesh without any impediment.

As soon as the golden threads entered his body, Han Li was immediately struck by a numb sensation, immediately following which all of his immortal spiritual power began to surge out of his body in a frenzy like floodwaters through a broken dam.

All of those thin threads were like a series of wide rivers that were channeling his immense immortal spiritual power out of his body and into that huge puddle of bloody sludge.

Han Li struggled vigorously to try and break free, but with the rapid loss of immortal spiritual power, the light radiating from his body gradually turned dim, and he also shrank down rapidly in size.

In just a few moments, he had reverted back to his normal human form, and half of his body was trapped in the sludge.

He was still completely unable to move, but thankfully, the golden threads that were funneling his immortal spiritual power out of his body had also disappeared.

Prior to unleashing his Holy Nirvana Physique, he had already stowed away his Transient Guilt mask, and at this moment, his exposed face was slightly pale, while his brows were tightly furrowed.

Over 1,000 feet away from him, a part of the puddle of sludge began to surge like a wave, quickly manifesting the top half of Zhong Luan's body, while the bottom half of his body was still fused with the sludge on the surface of the sea.

"I really did underestimate you. You've forced me to use the baleful spirit threads that took I've been accumulating over the course of tens of thousands of years. If I don't manage to unearth all of your secrets, this will have been an extremely severe loss," Zhong Luan said in a cold voice.

His complexion wasn't much better than Han Li's, indicating that the immortal spiritual power that had been funneled away hadn't been directed into his body.

"Whose orders are you acting under? Why do you insist on hunting me down at every turn?" Han Li asked with a cold look in his eyes.

At the same time, he had already summoned an Immortal Origin Stone, which he was holding in his hand that was concealed within the blood sludge, and he was quickly absorbing the immortal spiritual power inside.

"I don't know whose instructions Fang Pan was acting under, but you should worry about yourself right now. How about you tell me why Fang Pan and the others were so eager to hunt you down? That would save me the effort of having to search your soul. The soul search technique that I use is rather unique, and I'm sure you wouldn't like it," Zhong Luan said.

"It just so happens to be the case that I've always been quite interested in soul search techniques, so I actually wouldn't mind seeing just what's so unique about yours," Han Li replied as a faint smile appeared on his face.

"Fine. If you insist on being punished, then I'll grant your wish," Zhong Luan harrumphed coldly.

As soon as his voice trailed off, he made a grabbing motion with one hand, and the long crimson saber appeared in his grasp.

Immediately thereafter, he began to slide rapidly toward Han Li like a wave, then raised the crimson saber in his hand, and all of the patterns on the blade of the saber began to radiate dazzling crimson light before the saber was swung down upon Han Li.

Chapter 305: Pulling Out All the Stops

Han Li clenched his fists tightly before raising them with all his might, but he couldn't raise them at all, as if there were a pair of mountains strapped to them.

The crimson saber projection reached him in the blink of an eye, but right when it was no more than 100 feet away and was about to strike his head, it suddenly slowed down to a snail's pace, as if it had sliced into layers of extremely resilient golden fabric.

At the same time, Han Li's Mantra Treasured Axis appeared behind him amid a flash of golden light, and it was slowly revolving while the 40 or so lit Time Dao Runes on its surface were releasing circles of golden ripples.

Several hundred feet away, Zhong Luan could sense the law fluctuations emanating from the Mantra Treasured Axis, and he discovered that no matter how much force he exerted, he was unable to force the crimson saber projection down any faster.

A thought immediately occurred to him, and his expression changed drastically as he exclaimed, "Could this be... the power of time laws? Burn him to death! Hurry!"

Upon realizing that Han Li was able to wield time law powers, he immediately decided against trying not to harm Han Li's soul, and he shifted his focus to taking down his opponent as quickly as possible.

The longer the battle wore on, the more he came to realize that Han Li wasn't someone that he could enforce his will over as he pleased.

As soon as his voice trailed off, a shrill cry rang out in the sky, and the giant black crane swooped down from the heavens while flapping its wings vigorously to send a sea of scorching black flames sweeping directly toward Han Li.

As soon as the black flames entered the golden ripples, the speed of their descent also slowed down to a crawl, rendering them unable to get close to Han Li for the time being.

Right at this moment, a tiny fiery silver figure appeared on Han Li's shoulder amid a flash of silver light, and it patted its own belly as it cast its gaze toward the oncoming sea of black flames, looking as if it were eager to embrace the feast being offered.

"Go on," Han Li instructed, and the fiery silver figure instantly sprang up into the air, then transformed into a giant silver fire raven that flew directly toward the sea of black flames.

At the same time, a vast expanse of silver flames emerged from its body as well to clash against the black flames, while the silver fire raven itself pounced at the giant black crane.

High up in the sky, a fierce battle ensued between the two huge birds, one silver and one black, as they released bursts of flames out of their wings.

At this point, Zhong Luan's expression had already become extremely grim. He continued to force his saber down with one hand while making a hand seal with the other before plunging it into the bloody sludge down below.

As soon as he did this, circles of runes instantly appeared out of thin air around his hand before spreading outward in all directions.

The bloody sludge on the surface of the sea instantly began to churn as massive waves were raised before sweeping toward Han Li, but they were also unable to escape the fate of being slowed down by Han Li's Mantra Treasured Axis.

The giant crimson waves around Han Li resembled a series of tall crimson walls that surrounded him from all directions, and it seemed that he was able to deal with all of the oncoming attacks with ease, but in reality, he was struggling immensely.

He had exhausted too much of his immortal spiritual power, and even though he had been able to replenish some of it using an Immortal Origin Stone, he still wasn't going to be able to support his Mantra Treasured Axis for long.

Han Li made a hand seal with one hand as he chanted an incantation, and a vast expanse of azure light instantly surged out of the bloody sludge down below.

Immediately thereafter, 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords appeared before traversing arduously through the sludge, releasing countless streaks of azure swordlight that intertwined to form a huge ball of azure light beneath him.

Immediately thereafter, an earth-shattering draconic roar rang out, and the ball of azure light beneath Han Li exploded violently as an azure coiled dragon rushed out before ascending straight toward the heavens.

Han Li was standing atop the dragon's head, and thanks to the Azure Coil Sword Array, he was able to force his way out of the bloody sludge and rise up into the air.

He had only just steadied himself when the Mantra Treasured Axis behind him shrank down into a ball of golden light before flying back into his body.

Han Li's expression remained unchanged as he scrutinized Zhong Luan intently while flipping a hand over to produce an azure pill. After swallowing the pill, he summoned another Immortal Origin Stone, with which he began to replenish his immortal spiritual power while making a grabbing motion with his other hand.

The azure coiled dragon immediately split apart into 72 azure flying swords once again, then fused into a single azure longsword that flew into his grasp.

With the Mantra Treasured Axis gone, Zhong Luan was able to move at his normal speed again, and he slammed his hands down onto the bloody sludge below to raise an enormous wave that propelled him into the sky.

At the same time, he opened his mouth to release a translucent crimson thread that shot into the palm of his hand.

The flesh on his hand was instantly exposed before slowly squirming as it fused itself into one with the crimson saber in his hand, and a pained look appeared on his face as he gave an involuntary groan.

At the same time, the patterns on the surface of the crimson saber in his hand began to bulge like veins while pulsing incessantly, as if it really were a living creature with blood coursing through its veins.

Zhong Luan's body was still fused with the bloody sludge down below, and a series of cobweb-like golden patterns had lit up all over his body, extending all the way down into the crimson sea below.

As the veins on the crimson saber continued to pulse, the bloody sludge in the sea began to turn into pure baleful blood qi that flowed into the saber through these golden veins.

As a result, the saber swelled to around twice its original size, and it was giving off extremely formidable law fluctuations while the baleful blood qi emanating from it filled virtually the entire area of the sea.

By the time Zhong Lan was no more than 1,000 feet away from Han Li, all of the bloody sludge below him had completely flowed into his crimson saber, but the veins on the blade were still pulsing incessantly, as if it were yet to be satiated.

His muscles began to slowly atrophy, and his cheeks also became sunken, making it appear as if the crimson saber were sucking him dry.

"Die!" Zhong Luan roared as he swung his crimson saber through the air in a circle, causing the surrounding space to tremble violently while unleashing a vast expanse of saber projections that swept toward Han Li.

A grim look appeared on Han Li's face as he tightened his grip around his longsword, but instead of defending himself, he yelled, "Let heaven and earth be turned on their heads!"

The orientation of the sky and the sea was instantly flipped, with the boundless sea taking the place of the sky, while the cloudy sky appeared down below, presenting an extremely bizarre sight to behold.

This was naturally quite jarring to Zhong Luan, and it was very difficult for him to process exactly what had happened in a short time.

All he could see was that his all-out slash was suddenly being directed toward the sea, which was the complete opposite direction to where Han Li was.

He immediately gritted his teeth and forcibly changed the trajectory of his slash, wrenching his crimson saber upward so that his attack would be back on track.

The massive saber projection unleashed by the crimson saber was glowing with golden light and emanating formidable baleful blood qi as it tore Han Li's body in half down the middle.

More saber projections immediately followed in a relentless barrage, and only after unleashing over 300 slashes did Zhong Luan finally exhaust all of the baleful blood qi in his crimson saber.

A string of resounding booms rang out as crimson light exploded in the air, and the clouds churned violently, while the surrounding space also shuddered incessantly.

"There's no way you're not dead after that!" Zhong Luan chortled, and at this point, the saber in his hand had already reverted back to its original black color.

As soon as his voice trailed off, the sound of someone snapping their fingers rang out in the sky, and heaven and earth were immediately restored to their original orientation.

The sky was still filled with dark clouds, but a deep trench that was several hundred kilometers in length had appeared in the sea down below, within which crimson baleful qi was surging incessantly, parting the seawater like a miraculous act of the gods.

Zhong Luan's entire body instantly stiffened upon seeing this, and he slowly shifted his gaze upward with an incredulous expression, where Han Li was standing with a mocking sneer on his face, completely unscathed.

"How..." Zhong Luan murmured to himself.

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Han Li's sneer grew even wider upon hearing this, and he eagerly rubbed some more salt into Zhong Luan's wounds. "Everything you saw just now was nothing more than an illusion."

The all-out attack that he had just unleashed had exhausted virtually all of his immortal origin stones and baleful blood qi, leaving him unfit for further battle. In contrast, Han Li had taken advantage of this opportunity to replenish a large chunk of his immortal spiritual power through the use of Immortal Origin Stones.

At this point, it seemed like the outcome of the battle was already decided.

"Don't think you've won just yet!"

A vicious look appeared in Zhong Luan's eyes as he raised an arm, and the black saber, which had already detached itself from his body, was sent hurtling rapidly toward Han Li.

In response, Han Li lashed out with his azure longsword to strike the black saber, but in the instant that the two blades clashed, a tiny crack suddenly appeared on the surface of the black saber amid a flash of crimson light.

Han Li immediately tried to stay his sword upon seeing this, but it was already too late.

A resounding boom rang out as a crimson sun that was over 10,000 feet in size rose up over the surface of the sea, radiating incredibly dazzling crimson light.

In the next instant, a burst of devastating shockwaves erupted in all directions, sweeping up enormous waves that swept over the surface of the sea down below.

Having just detonated his bonded treasure, Zhong Luan threw up a mouthful of blood, then crushed a black jade pendant that he was already holding in his hand.

A cloud of black mist surged out of the crushed jade pendant to envelop his body, and he vanished on the spot right before the waves arrived.

Chapter 306: Avoiding Trouble

Meanwhile, high up in the sky tens of thousand of kilometers away, Zhong Luan's giant black crane steed let loose a sharp cry, sending a wave of scorching black flames sweeping toward the giant silver fire raven situated over 10,000 feet away.

Immediately thereafter, it turned toward the direction where the crimson sun had just exploded with a hint of lingering fear in its eyes.

Thankfully, it had been chased all the way here by the silver fire raven. Otherwise, just the shockwaves from that explosion alone would've been almost too much for it to withstand.

In the face of the oncoming wave of black flames, the silver fire raven flapped its wings vigorously to release a series of balls of silver light, which exploded one after another into silver flames to destroy the approaching black flames.

A hint of wariness flashed through the black crane's eyes, and it jeered, "Cease your futile resistance, your master is already dead!"

The silver fire raven faltered slightly upon hearing this, then let loose a sharp cry as the silver flames around its body swelled up before forming a giant fireball that was launched through the air, absorbing all of the scorching black flames in its path.

The black crane had no intention of continuing this battle any longer, and it swooped down from the sky while the silver fire raven was obstructed by its black flames.

All of a sudden, it changed directions in its flight, and a cloud of black mist appeared in the air tens of thousands of feet away in that direction.

Zhong Luan then stumbled out of the black mist before landing on the black crane's back right as it was flying past.

"We have to get away from here! Hurry!" Zhong Luan yelled in an urgent voice as soon as he landed on the black crane's back.

The black crane didn't dare to delay, and it immediately flapped its wings vigorously to fly away.

However, right at this moment, countless arcs of golden lightning intertwined in the air up ahead over 10,000 feet away, immediately following which a golden lightning array that was several dozen feet in size appeared.

Han Li then emerged amid a tumbling thunderclap with an azure longsword that was crackling with arcs of golden lightning, which he swung down upon Zhong Luan.

A hint of despair appeared in Zhong Luan's eyes at the sight of Han Li. He had just detonated his bonded treasure, yet it hadn't managed to harm Han Li at all.

He made a grabbing motion in front of his own chest, and a translucent round shield instantly flew out before situating itself in front of him.

At the same time, what little remained of the baleful blood qi in his body surged forth to manifest a suit of crimson armor.

Before the spirit patterns on the suit of armor had a chance to completely take shape, the azure longsword had already arrived.

An earth-shattering boom rang out as several dozen bolts of golden lightning erupted from the surface of the crimson shield, dancing through the air like whips of the lightning gods.

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A string of crackling rang out incessantly, and an acrid charred odor wafted through the air.

Immediately thereafter, a faint crack rang out, and the crimson shield in front of Zhong Luan was shattered, following which Han Li's longsword came slashing down.

All of a sudden, a burst of azure light appeared in front of Zhong Luan's forehead. The azure light was coming from his copper headgear, and it was able to stop Han Li's sword in its tracks.

Han Li let loose a loud roar as golden scales appeared over his arms, and he forced his azure longsword down with all his might.

At the same time, arcs of azure lightning erupted out of the runes on the sword to complement its attack.

"No!"

Zhong Luan let loose an indignant roar as the copper headgear on his head cracked open.

Without anything left to oppose it, Han Li's longsword came crashing down to slice Zhong Luan's head into two, and the black crane began to plummet toward the sea as if it had been dealt a heavy blow.

Right as it was about to land in the sea, it suddenly flapped its wings and increased its altitude before flying away into the distance.

Without even requiring an instruction from Han Li, the Essence Fire Raven immediately set off in pursuit.

Meanwhile, Han Li grabbed onto Zhong Luan's collar to catch his lifeless body, and after sweeping his spiritual sense over Zhong Luan's remains, his brows furrowed ever so slightly.

Right at this moment, the shockwaves from the explosion of the crimson sun arrived, and even they were less than a thousandth as powerful as they would've been at the epicenter of the explosion, they still swept past Han Li as gusts of fierce wind, evoking within him a sense of lingering fear.

He had only noticed that something was wrong in the instant that the black saber exploded, and it was already too late for him to defend himself. In that dire situation, all he could do was call upon his Mantra Treasured Axis again to delay the explosion of the crimson sun for a brief moment, and that window of opportunity allowed him to unleash his Reversal True Axis ability to escape.

After that, he used his spiritual sense to determine Zhong Luan's location, then chased him down with his lightning teleportation array.

All of a sudden, a burst of black light flashed in Zhong Luan's right sleeve, and a black nascent soul wearing a transparent cloak flew out from within, then instantly vanished from the spot with a flash of black light.

However, immediately thereafter, a loud explosion rang out, and the nascent soul stumbled out of thin air several thousand feet away amid a burst of violent spatial fluctuations.

It turned around with a horrified expression to find Han Li looking at it in an expressionless manner with a vertical black eye on his glabella.

"The Law Destruction Eye..."

Zhong Luan's heart was plunged into complete despair.

Before the nascent soul had a chance to get away again, Han Li slashed his sword through the air to unleash a streak of azure sword light, which swept up Zhong Luan's nascent soul and the transparent cloak that it was wearing before tearing both to shreds.

Even after Zhong Luan's nascent soul was completely vanquished, Han Li still made sure to inspect the surrounding area carefully with his Brightsight Spirit Eyes.

Only after verifying that not even the slightest hint of Zhong Luan's aura remained did he withdraw his Brightsight Spirit Eyes, following which he stowed Zhong Luan's storage bracelet away before setting off in pursuit of the black crane.

At this point, the silver fire raven had already caught up to the black crane, and it had formed a massive ring of silver flames to trap the black crane inside.

The black crane was struggling with all its might to escape, but to no avail.

Never could it have imagined that its master would be defeated by such an ordinary-looking young man, yet this was the undeniable reality, and it had no choice but to believe it.

With Han Li closing in at a rapid rate, the black crane hurriedly yelled in a panicked voice, "Spare me, Senior! I'm a primordial bird with an innate mastery over fire-attribute laws! If you spare my life, I'm willing to accept you as my master! Also, I know a lot of Zhong Luan's secrets!"

However, Han Li paid no heed to the black crane's desperate pleas for mercy, and he made a hand seal with one hand while plunging his azure longsword straight down with his other hand.

A massive sword projection that was over 1,000 feet in length erupted out of the tip of the sword, piercing through the black crane's head in an instant.

The black crane let loose an anguished howl before plummeting toward the sea, followed closely by Han Li, who reached down to pluck its nascent soul out of its head.

The nascent soul was a projection of a tiny black crane, and it was struggling with all its might in Han Li's grasp with a horrified look on its face.

The Essence Fire Raven swooped down and transformed into a fiery silver child that landed on Han Li's shoulder, and there was a clear look of yearning in its eyes as it gazed upon the black crane's nascent soul.

"You can have it soon," Han Li reassured with a smile, then closed his eyes as a burst of azure light emerged from his hand to envelop the nascent soul.

A short while later, Han Li slowly opened his eyes with a series of mixed emotions in his heart.

The black crane didn't have many memories that contained information on Fang Pan, but from what little memories pertaining to Fang Pan that it did have, Han Li could tell that Zhong Luan was telling the truth in that he didn't know who had instructed Fang Pan to come after him.

In the black crane's memories, Han Li also saw that earthy yellow palace situated in the vast desert, as well as the black chains that littered the entire floor of the palace, and he immediately thought of the Origin Separation Law Chains.

He saw the large black chair at the center of the palace and a figure dressed in the white cloak seated on the chair, but no matter how hard he tried, he was unable to make out the figure's facial features.

The black crane seemed to have been extremely fearful of this person, to the point that it didn't even dare to look directly at him.

After a brief moment of silence, Han Li tossed the black crane's nascent soul to the fiery silver child, then flew onto the black crane's back to recover Zhong Luan's storage bracelet, among other items.

The fiery silver child gleefully accepted the black crane's nascent soul, eagerly devouring it whole.

A burst of light then began to glow through its round little belly, as if there were a scorching flame burning in its stomach.

After extracting the black crane's demon core, Han Li turned back to the Essence Fire Raven to find that after devouring the black crane's nascent soul, it was beginning to stumble around as if it were drunk.

However, through their spiritual connection, he could sense that it was fine, and he made his way over to the fiery silver child before plucking it up with one hand and withdrawing it back into his body.

After that, he pulled out a pill and devoured it, then cast his gaze back toward the Holy Puppet Sect with a contemplative look on his face.

Given the situation that he had witnessed earlier, the Holy Puppet Sect was most likely beyond saving, so if he were to go back, he would've only been risking his own safety for no reason.

Furthermore, he had only been hired by the Holy Puppet Sect for protection, and he certainly wasn't going to risk his life for the sect.

On top of that, Zhong Luan had ventured into the Holy Puppet Sect's restricted area prior to his, and even though he didn't know what Zhong Luan's objective was, now that he had slain Zhong Luan, going back to the Holy Puppet Sect would've only spelled trouble.

As for the reward for this mission, he was happy to leave it. After all, he had reaped a great deal of spoils from killing several True Immortal cultivators on this mission, and those spoils were more than enough compensation.

With that in mind, he took one final glance in the direction of the Holy Puppet Sect before flying away as a streak of azure light.

Chapter 307: Immortal Puppet

The seasons passed, and over a year flew by in a flash.

On this day, a streak of azure light descended onto the Crimson Dawn Peak, then faded to reveal Han Li.

He hadn't made any effort to conceal himself, so it didn't take long before all of the servants in his cave abode were assembled to see him in the courtyard, but Meng Yungui and Sun Buzheng weren't among them.

"When did you get back, Qianqian?" Han Li asked as he swept his gaze over the eight servants.

"I only got back less than a month ago. Here are some spirit medicine seeds found by my brother and Brother Sun, they asked me to pass the seeds onto you," Meng Qianqian said as she handed Han Li a storage pouch.

Han Li accepted the storage pouch, then flipped a hand over to produce three more storage pouches that he offered to Meng Qianqian as he said, "Good. If you get the chance to meet them, pass these spirit stones and pills onto them. Also, you can distribute these pills among everyone in my stead."

Meng Qianqian accepted the storage pouches as she nodded in response. "Yes, Elder Li!"

"Has anything of note happened on our Crimson Dawn Peak or in the sect during the past few years I've been away?" Han Li asked.

"Everything has been fine on our Crimson Dawn Peak, and not much has happened in the sect, either. However, I've heard that a Golden Immortal Stage dao lord will be coming out of seclusion soon and will be preaching about the Great Dao, but the spots are very limited, and generally speaking, only direct disciples are entitled to attend," Meng Qianqian replied with a hint of longing in her eyes.

The same expression was mirrored on the faces of all of the other servants, but at the same time, they were also looking a little dejected. After all, they would've been sure to benefit immensely from hearing the preaching of a Golden Immortal, but they knew that True Immortal servants like them had no chance of being allowed to attend.

"While it's true that hearing the preaching of a powerful cultivator is a brilliant opportunity, everyone's cultivation path is different. You can listen to the experiences of others, but ultimately, you have to figure things out for yourself. In order to fulfill the Great Dao, you must forge a path of your own, do you understand?" Han Li asked.

Meng Qianqian faltered slightly upon hearing this before nodding in response, and the disappointment in the eyes of all of the servants immediately faded.

"Alright, if there's nothing else you have to report, then you can all go for now," Han Li said with a dismissive wave.

Meng Qianqian and the others extended a collective bow before departing.

Meanwhile, Han Li remained standing on the spot for a while before entering his cave abode, and after activating all of the restrictions, he made his way into his secret chamber before sitting down with his legs crossed.

With a sweep of his sleeve, he summoned a trio of storage treasures, which he had obtained from the three True Immortals that he had slain back at the Holy Puppet Sect.

Prior to this, he had been focused solely on making the return journey, so he didn't get the chance to examine his spoils. Now that he had finally returned to his cave abode, he was naturally eager to see what he had obtained.

With that in mind, Han Li picked up a storage bracelet before emptying all of its contents, which spilled out onto the floor.

However, after a quick inspection, his brows furrowed slightly in disappointment.

These were the belongings of the burly man who had attempted to fight Han Li on his own, and he was so impoverished that his belongings consisted only of a few materials and spirit medicines, as well as several ordinary spirit treasures. Aside from that, there were only around a dozen Immortal Origin Stones, a pile of spirit stones, and some other miscellaneous items.

Given how impoverished he was, it was no wonder that he was willing to risk his life for that Ubiquitous Pavilion mission.

Han Li could only lament his own ill-fortune, but nevertheless, he still patiently categorized everything before stowing them away into his own storage bracelet. After that, he picked up the thin old man's storage treasure before emptying its contents as well.

This time, he was much more pleased with what he saw.

The majority of the old man's belongings consisted of materials of a high caliber. In particular, there were several crimson crystals around the size of human heads, and they were giving off fiery red radiance, as if they were red-hot chunks of metal.

These crimson crystals were filled with extremely abundant spiritual qi, and there were fiery patterns on their surface that were giving off fire-attribute law fluctuations, indicating that it was a type of material that contained law powers.

Aside from that, there were also around a dozen treasures, most of which were spirit treasures, as well as several vials of pills, over 500 Immortal Origin Stones, and a large pile of spirit stones.

Han Li stowed these items away as well before turning to Zhong Luan's storage bracelet, which he had saved for the finale.

He had already anticipated that Zhong Luan was most likely going to be quite wealthy, but he was still astonished by what he saw after emptying out the storage bracelet's contents.

There were countless types of spirit materials and spirit medicines, some of which contained law powers, and setting aside the spirit treasures, pills, and scriptures for now, there were around 5,000 to 6,000 Immortal Origin Stones as well.

The spiritual light radiating from all of the Immortal Origin Stones illuminated the entire secret chamber, and with all of this, in addition to everything that he had saved up thus far, he would most likely have sufficient funds to support his own cultivation for the next few centuries.

Han Li immediately stowed the Immortal Origin Stones away before slowly sorting through the rest.

"Origin Separation Treasured Scripture?"

Han Li faltered slightly after injecting his spiritual sense into a white jade slip, and a thought immediately occurred to him, following which he hurriedly began to inspect the jade slip's contents.

By the time he removed the jade slip from his forehead, over two hours had already passed by.

The initial section of the jade slip contained a devilish True Immortal Stage cultivation art of a very high caliber by the name of the Origin Separation Yin Devil Arts. It was said that one could cultivate this cultivation art to the High Zenith Stage, and it was no lesser in rarity than his Mantra Axis Scripture.

However, no matter how formidable this cultivation art was, there was no way that Han Li would abandon the Mantra Axis Scripture for it. What he was more interested in were the secret techniques recorded in the latter section of the jade slip. In particular, there was a secret technique that allowed one to conceal their aura by sealing themselves, and that was very intriguing to Han Li.

However, these secret techniques were very difficult to grasp, and they weren't something that he could master anytime soon.

With that in mind, Han Li stowed the jade slip away before continuing to sort through everything else.

"Hmm? What's this?"

All of a sudden, Han Li spotted a strange-looking yellow ball among the treasures. It had a diameter of roughly half a foot, and there were numerous profound yellow patterns engraved onto its surface, giving it quite a mysterious appearance.

The ball had been buried under some materials earlier, so he hadn't noticed it initially. Furthermore, there were several white talismans adhered to the ball's surface, seemingly acting as a seal.

Han Li brought the ball closer to his eyes for inspection, but was still not able to see anything special about it.

Furthermore, it wasn't giving off any energy or aura fluctuations, and it didn't appear to have been a treasure.

After a moment of contemplation, he decided to try and examine the item using his spiritual sense.

However, as soon as his spiritual sense came into contact with the ball, the talismans adhered to its surface immediately began to emit dazzling white light that formed a covert array that was invisible to the naked eye, keeping his spiritual sense at bay.

Han Li was rather intrigued to see this, and he began to carefully examine these talismans.

While it was true that these talismans were quite remarkable, it was clear that someone had placed them down in a hurry, and given Han Li's mastery in talismans, it wasn't going to be difficult for him to remove them.

After a brief pause, he made a hand seal and cast a series of incantation seals into the talismans while opening his mouth to release a burst of azure flames that enveloped the golden ball.

Moments later, several dull thumps rang out in succession as all of the white talismans disintegrated into specks of white light that were devoured by the azure flames.

In the next instant, circles of spirit patterns appeared on the golden ball's surface, immediately following which beams of yellow light began to radiate from the yellow ball, making it appear as dazzling as the sun.

The restrictions in the secret chamber immediately reacted, and countless azure runes appeared on the walls, forming an azure light barrier that attempted to contain the yellow light, but it was able to quickly pierce through the light barrier.

Han Li was rather taken aback by this, and he made another hand seal to activate all of the restrictions around the cave abode, conjuring up light barriers of different colors to envelop the entire cave abode.

The dazzling yellow light continued to proliferate outward, and it was able to pierce through several more layers of restrictions, but was ultimately intercepted.

A faint crack rang out from the yellow ball, following which a series of bulges appeared on its surface, and it rapidly began to swell in size and transform.

In the span of just a few seconds, the ball transformed into a yellow-robed middle-aged man with an authoritative appearance who appeared to have been in his thirties.

This is... an immortal puppet!

The yellow-robed man had an earthy yellow complexion that was giving off a faint metallic gleam, it was giving off an immortal spiritual aura, much like a humanoid immortal treasure, much like Daoist Xie's past form.

Han Li suppressed the excitement in his heart as his gaze fell upon the yellow robe worn by the puppet.

Some of the designs on the yellow robe were ones that he had seen on many past occasions on other puppets in the Holy Puppet Sect, leading him to wonder if this puppet was also from the same sect.

With that in mind, he immediately thought back to when he first encountered Zhong Luan outside the Holy Puppet Sect's restricted area, and it occurred to him that this was most likely the very thing that Zhong Luan had ventured into the restricted area to obtain.

He had always been quite interested in puppets, and if this really were a True Immortal Stage puppet, then this would be a massive haul in itself.

Thus, Han Li immediately cast an incantation seal into the puppet's body, and two specks of light emerged in the puppet's eyes, while a layer of yellow light surfaced over its skin.

Immediately thereafter, a mountainous aura erupted forth, causing the surrounding spae and the entire cave abode to tremble violently.

Chapter 308: Modifications

Han Li was watching all of this unfold with a calm expression, but internally, he was nowhere near as calm as he looked.

However, the disturbance only lasted less than a second before abruptly subsiding, and the light radiating from the puppet's body faded, as did the enormous aura it had displayed.

Han Li exhaled as a stunned look flashed through his eyes.

The enormous aura that had just erupted out of the puppet's body had been extremely formidable, and he was unable to gauge exactly how powerful it was, but he was certain that it was beyond the True Immortal Stage.

With that in mind, Han Li had to suppress his excitement once again as he made another hand seal.

However, this time, no matter what he tried, the puppet displayed no further reaction.

After some contemplation, Han Li closed his eyes and released his spiritual sense to inspect the puppet's internal makeup.

A short while later, he withdrew his spiritual sense out of the puppet's body, then opened his eyes with an uncertain look on his face.

He had never come into contact with an immortal puppet before, but given his expertise in the art of puppetry, he had already managed to track down the core area of the puppet, but to his surprise, the area was empty.

Aside from that, the entire puppet was missing an energy source, so the reaction it had just displayed was most likely only from a tiny amount of residual energy left in its body.

By his estimates, it was most likely going to require an enormous amount of Immortal Origin Stones to operate this puppet.

All of a sudden, a thought occurred to Han Li, and he flipped a hand over to produce the golden ball that was Daoist Xie's core.

Han Li made a hand seal and cast an incantation seal into the ball, and it quickly transformed into a palm-sized golden crab amid a flash of golden light. The crab clutched at its own head with its pincers and shook it around a little, then stood up in a rather unsteady fashion.

The crab then cast its gaze toward Han Li as it asked in a slow voice, "What is it, Fellow Daoist Han? Why have you..."

It had been in a state of slumber ever since its return, and even now, it was still rather groggy and lethargic.

However, its voice suddenly trailed off as it turned around to stare intently at the yellow-robed puppet behind it.

"That's an immortal puppet, and a linked puppet, at that! This is truly a rare find!" Daoist Xie murmured to itself with golden light glowing in its eyes.

It flew up from Han Li's hand as it spoke and landed on the puppet, crawling joyfully up and down its body while touching the puppet with its pincers.

All the while, Han Li merely looked on in silence.

Only after a full 15 minutes had passed did Daoist Xie stop what it was doing before turning to Han Li as it asked, "Where did you obtain this immortal puppet from, Fellow Daoist Han? I can tell you that it's a puppet of a very high caliber."

There was a clear hint of excitement in its voice as it spoke.

"That's a long story, but this puppet should have some close ties with a sect known as the Holy Puppet Sect," Han Li replied in an ambiguous manner.

"Holy Puppet Sect... I've never heard of such a sect before," Daoist Xie murmured to itself before turning back to inspect the puppet again.

"By the way, what did you mean by linked puppet just now, Brother Xie?" Han Li asked.

"Linked puppets are a very rare type of puppet. Generally speaking, once a puppet is refined, its power will be set at a certain level, and there's very limited potential for growth. However, linked puppets are different in that their combat prowess depends on the power of the spiritual sense of its user, as well as its degree of affinity to the user. To put it in simpler terms, it functions much like a treasure," Daoist Xie explained.

"I see. It seems like you're very interested in this puppet. Is it something that you can use?" Han Li asked.

"I haven't had a chance to fully examine the puppet yet, but it's an earth-attribute puppet, so generally speaking, only someone who's using an earth-attribute cultivation art will be able to use it. If you can reach the peak level of affinity with it, it should be able to display mid-Golden Immortal Stage power," Daoist Xie replied.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon hearing this. "You possess lightning-attribute powers, so..."

"That's right, I won't be able to use this linked puppet," Daoist Xie confirmed with a nod.

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"I see," Han Li replied with a hint of disappointment in his eyes.

While he possessed sufficiently formidable spiritual sense to use the puppet, he wasn't very adept in any earth-attribute cultivation arts, so even if he were to use the puppet, he wouldn't be able to use it to its full power.

Daoist Xie was silent for a moment, then suddenly said, "Having said that, if you give me a suitable environment and sufficient resources, it may not be entirely impossible."

An elated look appeared on Han Li's face as he hurriedly asked, "What do you need, Brother Xie? I'll do my best to provide you with the right conditions."

If Daoist Xie could successfully control this puppet, then he would have a Golden Immortal Stage ally on his side.

"Firstly, I'll need a lightning array. The array isn't very complicated to set up, but it requires something that can continuously provide lightning power as its core, and that is the key that'll decide whether the modification will be successful. On top of that, I also require a large sum of Immortal Origin Stones and lightning-attribute top-grade spirit stones to ensure that the modification process isn't interrupted for even a single moment," Daoist Xie said.

It opened its mouth to spit out a small golden jade slip as it spoke, and the jade slip flew toward Han Li, who caught it before injecting his spiritual sense into it.

The jade slip contained the method required to set up a lightning array, and just as Daoist Xie said, it wasn't very complicated.

Aside from that, in order to maintain the array, close to 1,000 Immortal Origin Stones and a huge sum of lightning-attribute top-grade spirit stones were required. It seemed like a massive cost, but it was no problem with Han Li's current wealth.

"Alright, I'll be able to set up everything for you in seven days at the very most," Han Li said after a brief moment of contemplation.

Daoist Xie wasn't all that surprised to hear this, and it replied, "it looks like you've done quite well for yourself since your return to the Immortal Realm, Follow Daoist Han. In that case, I'll be counting on you."

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Several days later.

Countless purple veins had been engraved onto the floor of the secret chamber, forming a large circular array. The yellow-robed puppet was laying flat on a certain point in the array, around which were standing eight lengths of Lightning Restraining Wood.

Array patterns had also been engraved onto the lengths of Lightning Restraining Wood, and there were arcs of purple lightning flashing occasionally over their surface.

At the very center of the lightning array was an indentation, within which was embedded a round purple crystal. This was none other than the clam jewel that he had obtained from that giant clam while crossing the Thunderstorm Sea.

At this moment, Han Li was standing at the entrance of his secret chamber with Daoist xie perched on his shoulder.

He made a hand seal with both hands to cast a string of incantation seals into the purple clam bead at the center of the array, and thunderclaps rang out one after another as all of the array patterns on the ground began to glow with dazzling radiance.

Countless arcs of purple lightning emerged from the array before springing up into the air to resemble a nest of wildly dancing lightning snakes.

In the blink of an eye, the entire secret chamber was transformed into a world of purple lightning.

"What do you think of this array, Brother Xie?" Han Li asked.

"You've done very well, Fellow Daoist Han. In particular, that crystal at the center of the array is very remarkable, and it seems to be holding an enormous amount of lightning power," Daoist Xie remarked as it pointed a pincer at the purple clam bead.

Han Li gave Daoist Xie a recount of how he had come into possession of the clam bead, and after hearing the story, Daoist Xie said, "Prior to this, I only had a 30% chance of success, but with this setup, the chance of success has increased to 50%."

After that, he crouched down before springing into the lightning array as a streak of golden light.

Countless arcs of lightning sprang out of all parts of the array before converging toward Daoist Xie, while dazzling golden lightning appeared over its body.

In the blink of an eye, it had been completely enveloped in a ball of golden lightning, following which it descended toward the yellow-robed puppet's chest.

The ball of golden lightning vanished into the puppet's chest in a flash, and the puppet's body shuddered as dazzling yellow light appeared over its skin, while arcs of lightning crackled around its chest.

The purple lightning in the array was drawn to the puppet's chest before fusing as one with it, and the lightning immediately began to spread toward other parts of the puppet's body.

The lightning immediately began to clash against the yellow light on the yellow-robed puppet's body, and explosions rang out occasionally, causing the entire secret chamber to shudder along with the lightning array.

Han Li was standing at the entrance, watching everything unfolding inside the secret chamber with a hint of anticipation in his eyes.

According to Daoist Xie, the fusion process could take several decades or even over a century. The clam bead contained more than enough lightning power to support this process, and Han Li had prepared a sufficient number of Immortal Origin Stones and lightning-attribute top-grade spirit stones as well when setting up the array.

"Hopefully everything goes well," Han Li murmured to himself, then left the secret chamber and closed the door before setting up a restriction.

Before long, he had already sat down with his legs crossed in another secret chamber.

Now that he had set up everything that Daoist Xie needed, it was time for him to consider his own situation.

With all of the Immortal Origin Stones he had accumulated thus far, there should've been enough to support his cultivation for the next few centuries, barring any mishaps.

However, that encounter with Zhong Luan on this trip to the Holy Puppet Sect was one that struck a great deal of wariness into his heart.

Even though he had managed to slay Zhong Luan in battle, it was clear from the black crane's memories that this was far from the end of the matter.

According to what Zhong Luan had said, even if their encounter hadn't taken place in the Holy Puppet Sect, Zhong Luan had been planning to search for him on the Ancient Cloud Continent anyway, so he wasn't necessarily safe just because he was in the Blaze Dragon Dao.

There was no guarantee that the enemy wouldn't pursue him to the Blaze Dragon Dao, and he had to consider what he was going to do if Fang Pan and Zhong Luan's master or some other formidable enemy came after him.

Chapter 309: Progressing to the Late-True Immortal Stage

With that in mind, Han Li swept a hand through the air, and the remaining lengths of Lightning Restraining Wood in his possession appeared on the ground before him, along with some other lightning-attribute spirit materials.

Around a month later.

Han Li was seated in the main hall in the courtyard outside the cave abode, sipping on a cup of spirit tea with a contemplative look in his eyes.

Moments later, Meng Qianqian made her way into the room.

"Elder Li."

"Qianqian, I called you here because I have something important I need you to do for me," Han Li said as he set down his teacup with a serious expression.

Meng Qianqian faltered slightly upon hearing this, then puffed out her chest as she replied, "Please go ahead, Elder Li."

"Don't be so tense, it's not that serious," Han Li said with a smile, then pulled out a storage tool that he handed to Meng Qianqian.

Meng Qianqian accepted the storage tool before injecting her spiritual sense into it, following which she looked up at Han Li with a hint of befuddlement in her eyes.

Han Li said something to her through voice transmission, and a grim look appeared on her face.

"Is that too difficult a task?" Han Li asked.

"Rest assured, Elder Li, I'll get it done even if it costs me my life!" Meng Qianqian assured with a serious expression.

"Good, but do be careful, and don't let anyone else know about this," Han Li instructed.

"Yes, Elder Li," Meng Qianqian replied with a respectful curtsy, then departed from the room, flying away as a streak of crimson light.

Han Li stood at the entrance of his cave abode, watching as the streak of crimson light vanished into the distance before also flying away himself as a streak of azure light.

Only after two months did he return to the Crimson Dawn Peak, and during this time, he had sold most of the materials, spirit medicines, and treasures that he had obtained from the Holy Puppet Sect in batches for Immortal Origin Stones.

He had also purchased a large supply of ingredients required for the pills that he was going to refine, and having completed all of these preparations, he returned to his cave abode, then activated all of the restrictions before making his way into the secret chamber.

On the way there, a thought suddenly occurred to him, and he made his way to his medicine garden instead, specifically to the corner where the primary bean had been planted.

To his surprise, he discovered that the seedling that had sprouted out of the primary bean had become several inches taller than before.

It had taken the primary a very long time to germinate, but ever since then, its rate of growth had become a lot faster.

As the seedling developed, the golden patterns on it had become a lot darker, but as for whether this supposed mutation was positive or negative, that was still yet to be seen.

In any case, after witnessing the Dao Warriors in action back at the Holy Puppet Sect, he was very much looking forward to acquiring his own Dao Warriors.

With that in mind, Han Li pulled out his Heaven Controlling Vial before handing it to the nearby giant ape puppet, then made his way back to his secret chamber.

Up to this point, all of the errands had been taken care of, and he exhaled as he flipped a hand over to produce a silver pill cauldron, which he set down at the center of the secret chamber.

After that, he summoned the Essence Fire Raven with a sweep of his sleeve, which descended near the cauldron as a fiery silver figure.

After devouring and absorbing the black crane's nascent soul, the Essence Fire Raven's aura had clearly become more powerful than before, and its facial features had also become a bit more exuberant and expressive.

It seemed to have been aware of why it had been summoned, and after quickly flying in a circle around the cauldron, its round cheeks bulged, following which it blasted a large plume of silver flames out of its mouth to envelop the underside of the cauldron.

Meanwhile, Han Li had already prepared all of the pill refinement ingredients that he had purchased into batches, and he sat down with his legs crossed.

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Several years later.

The silver flames beneath the cauldron subsided, and the fiery silver figure jumped onto Han Li's shoulder, where it sat down in an obedient manner.

There was a rather weary look on Han Li's face as he cast an incantation seal through the air, and a faint pop rang out as the lid of the silver cauldron flew up, following which a rich medicinal aroma instantly filled the entire secret chamber.

After taking a whiff of the aroma, a pleased look appeared on Han Li's face, and he made a grabbing motion to draw around a dozen longan-sized white pills out of the cauldron. All of the pills were emanating faint wisps of white mist, giving them quite a profound and remarkable appearance.

The white pills fell into a white jade vial that had been prepared earlier, and at this point, there were already over 100 of these vials placed beside Han Li.

"That should be about enough," Han Li murmured to himself, then swept a sleeve through the air to stow the silver cauldron and the Essence Fire Raven away before closing his eyes to meditate.

He was going to prime himself into the best possible condition before going into seclusion.

Over 200 years flew by in the blink of an eye, and the Crimson Dawn Peak had been closed to the outside this entire time.

During this time, the Blaze Dragon Dao welcomed its largest bout of snowfall in the past 500 years, lasting several months.

Not only were all of the northern branches of the entire Bell Toll Mountain Range covered in a blanket of snow, the same applied to the majority of the mountain range's southern branches as well, and that included the Crimson Dawn Peak.

On this day, the snowfall finally subsided to reveal clear, blue skies, and Han Li's servants began to clear away the snow around the cave abode, led by Meng Xiong.

There were very few people on the Crimson Dawn Peak to begin with, and Meng Yungui and the others were yet to return from their outings. In particular, in the absence of Meng Qianqian, it was very quiet, and even the calls of the birds were particularly clear and audible.

After all of the snow in front of the entrance of the cave abode had been cleared away, everyone went to the spirit medicine fields, which were protected by restrictions and arrays, but the snow there still had to be cleared away. Otherwise, the melting snow would result in excessive water that would drown the plants.

All of a sudden, the entire Crimson Dawn Peak abruptly shuddered, and an enormous pillar of golden light erupted straight into the heavens from the cave abode. All of the world's origin qi in a radius of thousands of kilometers rippled violently, forming an enormous cloud that revolved around the Crimson Dawn Peak.

Spiritual light of all types of different colors shone down upon the Crimson Dawn Peak, and the phenomenon only subsided after a long time had passed.

Everyone had stopped what they were doing to observe the phenomenon, and Meng Xiong hurriedly urged, "Alright, let's all get back to work. The sooner we get this done, the sooner we can go back to cultivate. Elder Li has provided us with an exceptional cultivation environment, so let's not squander it."

Everyone immediately returned to work upon hearing this.

They were already accustomed to all of the phenomena taking place on the mountain, and they knew that all of them resulted from Han Li's cultivation, but they still couldn't help but want to stop and watch whenever these phenomena took place.

After all, these phenomena were being triggered by the cultivation of a True Immortal!

Inside the secret chamber of his cave abode, Han Li's entire body was basked in golden light, and there were 24 specks of golden light on his chest and abdomen that were glowing as radiantly as stars in the night sky.

An enormous aura was emanating from his body, and it was as if he had been reborn anew.

He had progressed to the late-True Immortal Stage.

During the past two centuries, he had constantly been consuming earthly pills to enhance his own cultivation, and he had finally managed to open those four remaining immortal acupoints.

This rate of cultivation was naturally far faster than that of the average cultivator, but it was still significantly slower than before.

It had only taken him around a century to open up the previous immortal acupoints, yet it had taken far longer than that just open up these final three acupoints.

As the golden light gradually fused into Han Li's body, the phenomenon taking place within the secret chamber also subsided.

Han Li exhaled as he turned and cast his gaze toward the Mantra Treasured Axis hovering in mid-air behind him.

The Eye of Truth was shut, and at this point, all of the Time Dao Runes on the axis had already fully recovered.

However, there was a hint of disappointment in Han Li's eyes.

Even after his progression to the late-True Immortal Stage, the number of Time Dao Runes on the Mantra Treasured Axis still remained stagnant at 108.

This was clearly not just a matter of bad luck. According to the Mantra Axis Scripture, opening up the final four immortal acupoints should've earned him two more Time Dao Runes.

It was most likely the case that he had manifested too many Time Dao Runes by using the Eye of Truth to absorb the crystals created by the Heaven Controlling Vial, and the Mantra Treasured Axis had already reached its tolerance threshold.

Having said that, Han Li was already prepared for this outcome, so he wasn't overly disappointed.

A faint smile appeared on his face as he sensed the vast immortal spiritual power in his body, and instead of immediately rising to his feet, he continued to remain seated on the ground.

This breakthrough was naturally fantastic news, but there were more important things that he had to attend to right now.

He flipped a hand over to produce the eye of the Primordial Fei Beast, and at the same time, the sound of heavy footsteps rang out from outside as the giant ape puppet strode into the room.

It set down the Heaven Controlling Vial beside him, and there was already a drop of green spirit liquid inside it.

Han Li took a deep breath as he picked up the Heaven Controlling Vial, then consumed the drop of spirit liquid inside without any hesitation.

Once again, he was attempting to glean the laws of time.

His immortal spiritual power began to circulate in his body, while the Mantra Treasured Axis behind him lit up with dazzling golden radiance, and the 108 Time Dao Runes on its surface were also flashing incessantly.

A vast expanse of golden ripples appeared around him to envelop the entire secret chamber, and a burst of indescribably formidable energy fluctuations erupted in all directions.

To Han Li, it felt as if even the flow of air in the surrounding area had slowed down, and he was able to hear everything with exceptional clarity.

It seemed that everything around him had fallen into some type of profound tempo, and as time slowly passed, the golden light radiating from Han Li's body continued to flash, causing the level of brightness in the secret chamber to fluctuate incessantly.

At this point, his body was already drenched in blood, but he paid no heed to that at all, as if it weren't even happening to him.

Chapter 310: Two Flowers

All of a sudden, his eyelids fluttered slightly, and his eyes sprang open, following which two beams of golden light erupted out from within.

He began to make a rapid string of hand seals, bringing his palms together and linking them together before thrusting his joint index and middle fingers upward like a sword.

All 108 of the Time Dao Runes on the Mantra Treasured Axis behind him instantly lit up at once.

At the same time, golden light emerged between the palms of his hands before traveling to his fingertips, and a translucent golden thread that was as thin as a strand of human hair began to slowly extend out from his fingertips.

However, it had only protruded around an inch out from his fingertips before it exploded into specks of golden light with a dull thump.

The golden light in Han Li's eyes also slowly faded, and he looked down at his own bloodstained robes with a wry smile on his face.

He had made some progress compared with last time he had attempted this, but once again, he had ultimately fallen just short of manifesting a time law thread.

It looks like it'll be extremely difficult to glean the laws of time even by directly consuming the spirit liquid. Perhaps only by consuming a dao pill will I have a chance of succeeding in this endeavor.

It had now become apparent to him why dao pills were so sought after in the Immortal Realm.

The difference here was like that between directly consuming a spirit medicine and a pill refined with that spirit medicine as the main ingredient.

A pill would give the consumer the best chance of gleaning the law powers contained within the spirit medicine, and that was naturally far more effective than directly consuming the ingredient itself.

Thankfully, he had accumulated a substantial amount of wealth and was able to easily obtain spirit ingredients that contained the power of time laws. Otherwise, this wouldn't have been a feasible path for him to pursue.

After heaving a faint sigh, he took a pill, and a layer of golden light appeared over his entire body once again.

Around half a month later.

Han Li departed from his secret chamber, then made his way to the spirit medicine garden in his cave abode.

The medicine garden was filled with abundant spiritual qi and was thriving with vitality.

Inside the field, the giant ape puppet was holding an azure wooden bucket in one hand, out of which it was scooping pails of shimmering azure spirit liquid onto the garden.

This spirit liquid had been mixed using the recipe stipulated in the book on planting Dao Warriors given to Han Li by Daoist Hu Yan, but he had been using it to water his other spirit medicines rather than on the primary bean.

Han Li swept his gaze across the various spirit medicines in the garden, and his eyes lit up as his gaze fell upon one corner of the garden.

The seedling that had sprouted out of the primary bean was gone, and in its place was a massive golden plant that was around 10 feet tall.

Its trunk was an earthy yellow color, while its leaves had a golden hue.

The leaves were riddled with countless golden veins that were stacked on top of one another in layers, and these golden veins stretched all the way from the leaves to the branches and the main trunk of the plant.

Hanging below the layers of lush golden leaves were a series of azure bean pods, each of which was around a finger in length, and the bulges visible in the pods clearly indicated that they contained the beans that Han Li was aiming to grow.

Han Li was very elated to see this, and he hurried over to the tree before walking a lap around it like a proud farmer, carefully counting the number of bean pods on the tree as he did so.

In total, he counted 75 pods, and under the assumption that each pod contained seven beans, that would've amounted to a total of over 500 beans, which, barring any mishaps, would've developed into over 500 formidable Dao Warriors.

However, these beans clearly hadn't reached full maturity yet.

According to Daoist Hu Yan's book, once the Dao Warriors reached full maturity, the trunk, branches, and leaves of the tree would gradually begin to wilt, supplying all of their nutrition to the beans.

After that, the bean pods would break open on their own to release the beans inside.

Due to the fact that the beans hadn't yet matured, Han Li couldn't sense any special aura from them, so he didn't know whether the mutation was positive or negative.

However, Han Li wasn't overly concerned. There was a very good chance that the mutation had arisen as the primary bean had been watered using spirit liquid from the Heaven Controlling Vial, and anything that concerned the Heaven Controlling Vial generally wasn't a bad thing.

Only after inspecting the tree for a while longer did Han Li turn to depart, but right as he did so, he spotted out of the corner of his eye that there were two small yellow flowers on top of the tree.

He stopped to look at the flowers for a moment, and a perplexed look appeared on his face. He flipped a hand over to summon the book given to him by Daoist Hu Yan, then flipped it open to a certain page.

A short while later, he stowed the book away again, but the befuddlement on his face remained.

The book says that the flowering period of primary bean flowers is quite long, so they'll generally only bloom after the beans have reached maturity, and there's only supposed to be one of them, so why are there two here? Could this also be a result of the mutation?

If that were the case, then that would naturally be a good thing as the rate at which he could develop Dao Warriors would be significantly increased, but as a safety precaution, he decided that it was best to consult Daoist Hu Yan about this situation.

With that in mind, he turned and made his way elsewhere in the medicine garden.

This area of the medicine garden was filled with various different types of spirit medicines, and there weren't many of them, but they were all giving off their own unique auras.

These spirit medicines were all ingredients stipulated in the dao pill recipe that Han Li had obtained, and due to the fact that he had obtained them at different ages, the degree of growth that they were displaying were all different.

The oldest of these spirit medicines were several dozen blue plants that looked as if they had been carved out of ice. They resembled boneset herbs with glowing and translucent leaves, and he had acquired them from the floating mountain secret area.

At the time, he didn't know what they were, and only later did he discover that they were none other than the Hidden Mist Herb stated in the dao pill recipe.

Due to the fact that these spirit plants had been growing deep within the floating mountain secret area, they had been left completely untouched, and several of them had already exceeded 100,000 years of age, making them fit to serve as dao pill ingredients.

Not far away from the Hidden Mist Herbs, in a small area enshrouded within a small array, were around a dozen seedlings that looked as if they had only just sprouted.

These plants were known as Sandthrough Sunflowers, and they had been brought back by Meng Yungui over 100 years ago.

This spirit medicine appeared to have been growing very slowly, but its root systems underground were thriving, and if they weren't enshrouded within this array, they would've most likely stretched across the entire garden, making it impossible for the other spirit medicines to survive.

Aside from the main ingredients, the supplementary ingredients on the dao pill recipe were also quite difficult to gather. Meng Yungui had been very fortunate to have come across these spirit plants, and on the way back, he had almost been killed by someone aiming to take the spirit plants from him. Thankfully, he was able to survive thanks to the protective treasures bestowed upon him by Han Li.

After receiving a reward from Han Li for his efforts, Meng Yungui cultivated on the Crimson Dawn Peak for over 10 years before resuming his spirit medicine search.

In addition to Meng Yungui, both Meng Qianqian and Sun Buzheng had also returned to the Crimson Dawn Peak once each during the past two centuries, but Han Li had been in seclusion on both of those occasions, so he wasn't able to see them.

Meng Qianqian stayed on the Crimson Dawn Peak a little longer than Sun Buzheng as she wanted to see if Han Li would come out of seclusion, and also because Featheryearn didn't want to part with the Two-headed Griffin.

Neither Sun Buzheng nor Meng Qianqian had been as fortunate as Meng Yungui, and they were only able to find some seedlings or seeds of spirit medicines stipulated in Han Li's earthly pill recipes, but Han Li wasn't disheartened by this.

Up to this point, even he had only managed to secure several of the spirit medicines listed on the dao pill recipe, including that Thistle Spirit Flower, and no one had responded to the spirit medicine procurement missions that he had released in the Transient Guild.

After staying in the spirit medicine garden a while longer, Han Li made his way to another secret chamber.

Standing in front of the stone door, Han Li swept a hand through the air, and a series of runes instantly appeared on the door, following which it slid aside to reveal an opening that was as tall as a grown man.

The secret chamber was filled with purplish-golden light, and bursts of crackling were ringing out incessantly from within.

The lightning array inside was still operating, but the eight lengths of Lightning Restraining Wood situated around the array were looking a little dim, clearly having already been exhausted of much of their lightning power.

At this moment, the yellow-robed immortal puppet was seated with its legs crossed at the center of the array, and arcs of purple lightning were constantly flashing all over its body, particularly its chest.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly as he noticed that the indentation at the center of the lightning array was empty, and the purple crystalline ball that was originally embedded in there was nowhere to be seen.

"Brother Xie," Han Li called out to Daoist Xie through spiritual sense voice transmission, but the yellow-robed puppet displayed no reaction.

After a moment of contemplation, Han Li decided to remain patient and wait.

A long while later, the lightning surging over the yellow-robed puppet's chest began to converge toward the center before quickly disappearing entirely.

At the same time, all of the purple lightning across the entire array also vanished, and the spirit patterns on the lengths of Lightning Restraining Wood gradually faded, while the entire array ceased operating.

A burst of golden light appeared in the puppet's chest, and a palm-sized golden crab slowly emerged from within, then crouched down before springing toward Han Li, who spread a hand open to catch the crab.

"How did it go?" Han Li asked.

Compared with before, Daoist Xie's aura had become far more stable, and there were numerous extremely thin purple veins on its eight legs that could only have been noticed upon close inspection.