

A Record 411

Chapter 411: Familiar

Han Li naturally wasn't going to give the snow lion a chance to recover, and he immediately made a hand seal, upon which arcs of golden lightning erupted out of the flying sword that was embedded into the blue crystal, forming a net of golden lightning that instantly swallowed up the snow lion's entire head.

The flurries of snow that was converging toward the snow lion's head instantly exploded upon contact with the net of golden lightning, unable to reach the snow lion to facilitate its healing.

A resounding boom rang out as the frost core in the snow lion's head was reduced to powder by the eruption of golden lightning, and the snow lion instantly stiffened before collapsing to the ground, disintegrating into a pile of snow that fell away in all directions.

Han Li made a beckoning motion, and the azure flying sword instantly flew back up his sleeve as a streak of light.

"That was amazing, Brother Liu!" Lu Yuqing cheered as she clapped her hands together with glee, then hurriedly made her way over to the snow lion's remains before rummaging through the pile of snow.

Moments later, she stood up with a hint of disappointment on her face and sighed, "Your attack was too powerful, Brother Liu. The frost core was completely destroyed."

"Why do you want its frost core?" Han Li asked.

"The frost cores of these frost beasts contain immense glacial qi, but they're not of the yin-attribute. They're very much sought-after in the Black Wind Sea, and they can be sold for quite a bit of spirit stones in Black Wind City," Lu Yuqing explained.

Han Li merely nodded in response and didn't say anything as he made his way into the valley, then strode toward the cluster of buildings inside.

The mountain path in the valley was rather narrow, and the snow covering it was even thicker than what was outside the valley, easily reaching up to waist height. Hence, Han Li used a levitation technique to float above the snow as he strode into the valley.

Lu Yuqing did the same as she trailed along behind Han Li.

The two of them continued into the valley for a few more minutes without encountering any further frost beasts, and they arrived on a flat and level plaza.

Just like before, the snowstorms in all of the places where there were buildings were a bit less ferocious, and the snow on the ground also wouldn't be as deep.

The cluster of buildings in the valley was quite large, taking up virtually the entire valley, and it would've looked like a small town had it not been for the fact that all of the buildings were extremely grand and majestic.

Many of the pillars and eaves had profound runes inscribed upon them, but almost all of them had been destroyed as well, and the treasures in this place had naturally also already been looted.

It took Han Li and Liu Yuqing close to two hours to examine all of the buildings one by one, and they only discovered some destroyed treasures inside that were completely worthless.

After emerging from the final pavilion, Han Li cast his gaze into the distance to find that there was a translucent icy mountain face at the end of the valley.

At the foot of the mountain face was a cave that was several dozen feet tall, and it was impossible to tell how deep the cave ran.

Han Li and Lu Yuqing exchanged a glance with one another, then made their way to the end of the valley, arriving in front of the cave.

The two of them then peered into the cave to find that it was quite dim inside, but there was a speck of white light several thousand feet away, and that seemed to be where the cave ended.

Blue light flashed within Han Li's eyes as he released his spiritual sense into the cave, and moments later, he shook his head before making his way into the cave.

Lu Yuqing was about to ask if he had detected anything, but with Han Li striding forward in silence, she could only follow along.

Only after entering the cave did Han Li discover that the walls on either side, the roof of the cave, and even the ground beneath his feet were all flat surfaces of hard, blue ice that were as smooth as mirrors.

It was very quiet inside the cave, and only the sound of Han Li and Lu Yuqing's footsteps could be heard ringing out within it.

Han Li wasn't walking very quickly, and he would occasionally stop and inspect his surroundings momentarily before continuing onward.

After this had happened three times, Lu Yuqing was finally unable to suppress her curiosity, and she asked, "Why do you keep stopping, Brother Liu? Have you discovered something?"

Instead of giving a response, Han Li merely shook his head, then continued with what he was doing in silence.

Lu Yuqing could only follow along with a puzzled expression.

Upon reaching the exact middle point of the cave, Han Li stopped once again.

He stood with his eyes closed for a while, then crouched down and pressed a palm against the ground. Blue light was flashing in his eyes, and he fell into deep thought.

Moments later, he said, "I can hear something down there."

Before Lu Yuqing had a chance to reply, Han Li abruptly thrust his palm downward, and a loud crack rang out, following which the ice beneath his palm was shattered, and a series of cracks spread outward in all directions like a system of cobwebs.

Han Li stood back up and took a few steps backward, following which the area that he had just pressed down on caved in to reveal an ovular hole that was around 10 feet in size.

The sound of blowing wind could be heard coming from the hole, and it seemed that there was a huge space in there.

Han Li immediately jumped into the hole, and Lu Yuqing didn't even get a chance to ask him what he had discovered before he was already out of sight.

Hence, she had no choice but to jump down as well.

The two of them fell through the hole one after another, and it was only a short fall before they landed on the ground.

Han Li could feel that the soil beneath his feet was a little damp and loamy, and he looked up to find a sheet of blue ice that was around three feet thick above his head.

Lu Yuqing looked around to find that they were standing in a pitch-black underground passageway, and she asked in a puzzled voice, "What is this place, Brother Liu? It feels a little strange here."

Han Li raised a finger to his lips in a quieting gesture as he said, "Stay quiet for now and come with me."

Lu Yuqing immediately fell silent and trailed long behind Han Li as he made his way down the passageway, which led downward on a gradual slope.

After descending for over 1,000 feet along the passageway, the two of them drew to a halt.

Faint rays of light were shining into the passageway from up ahead, and bursts of dull rumbling could also be heard ringing out in the distance.

The two of them exchanged a glance, then concealed their auras in unison before continuing onward.

Upon arriving at the end of the passageway, they discovered that the rumbling had grown even louder, and it was reverberating throughout the entire passageway.

Han Li strode over to the exit of the passageway to find himself standing atop a sheer cliff, beneath which was an enormous underground karst cave.

He cast his gaze toward the center of the cave to find that there was a battle taking place there between a pair of humanoid figures and several enormous frost beasts.

At the very center of the cave was a large white stone plaza that had been artificially carved out, upon which stood a palace, but it had been destroyed and reduced to rubble.

Han Li noticed that the attire worn by the two figures on the plaza was quite familiar. One of them was a tall and imposing middle-aged man dressed in a black robe with a skull design embroidered onto the collar, and he was clearly a Ghost Wail Sect cultivator.

The other figure was a short and wizened elderly man dressed in a black vest with a black bandana around his head, and he was a Southern Dawn being.

Prior to this, Han Li's attention had been focused entirely on the Golden Immortals of the two factions, so he hadn't paid any heed to the other Ghost Wail Sect and Southern Dawn Race cultivators. As a result, he had no recollection of these two.

Taking a closer look, Han Li discovered that despite the elderly man's small stature, his powers were quite formidable. He was wielding a huge golden halberd that was twice as tall as himself, and it resembled a giant golden fan as he swung it through the air.

He was facing a pair of snow lions that were both dozens of feet tall, and whenever they tried to lash out at the elderly man with their paws, they would be struck by the halberd, which would either inflict huge gashes or sever the paws entirely from their bodies.

As for the middle-aged man from the Ghost Wail Sect, he was completely unarmed and locked in battle against a pair of snow apes. White light was radiating from his fists, and there were specks of blue light shimmering within the white radiance.

With each punch that he threw, a resounding boom would ring out, and whatever part of the snow apes' bodies that came into contact with his fist would instantly explode into powder.

It seemed that the two of them held a decisive upper hand, but in reality, this was far from a favorable situation for them. The frost beasts seemed to be unable to feel any pain, and regardless of how severe their injuries were, they were always able to quickly make a full recovery, regenerating significantly faster than the snow lion that Han Li and Liu Yuqing had faced earlier.

What was most damning of all was that aside from these four frost beasts, there was also a snow dove that looked as if it had been carved out of ice standing atop the wreckage of the destroyed palace, and it was staring intently at the two cultivators.

It was clear that if either of the two of them were to display any signs of weakness or lapses in concentration, then the snow dove would instantly strike with lightning speed.

In contrast with the four other frost beasts, it was able to shoot arrow-like strands of silver ice out of its sharp beak, and the strands of ice were imbued with ice-attribute law powers, so the two cultivators had to be wary even with their True Immortal Stage cultivation bases.

After observing the ongoing battle and the cultivation arts being used by the two cultivators for some time, Han Li's brows furrowed ever-so-slightly, following which a hint of surprise and recognition appeared on his face.

Could it really be them?

Chapter 412: Let's Follow Them

Right Han Li was lost in thought, the snow dove suddenly spread its wings before swooping down from above, gliding past the pair of snow apes in the blink of an eye before lashing out with its talons at the black-robed middle-aged man, who was still slightly off balance after throwing a punch.

The black-robed man was quite startled by this abrupt sneak attack, but he seemed to have quite a vast wealth of battle experience, and seven specks of blue light appeared over his chest and abdomen, immediately following which 11 more specks of blue light emerged over the rest of his body.

A layer of starry white light then surfaced over his entire body, just in time to protect him from the snow dove's talon strike.

The hideous sound of metal grating on metal rang out as the snow dove's talons scraped over the black-robed man's neck and shoulder, causing the layer of white light over his body to shudder, but it was ultimately able to remain intact.

After passing by the black-robed man, the snow dove suddenly twisted around and opened its beak to release a strand of silver ice, which shot forth directly toward the black-robed man's heart like a speeding arrow.

At this point, the black-robed man had already managed to withdraw his fist, and he immediately threw another punch toward the silver arrow as a ball of dazzling white light erupted out of his fist.

A resounding boom rang out as the silver arrow and the white light around the black-robed man's fist exploded in unison. A cloud of glacial qi immediately spread through the air, while a layer of blue ice crystals appeared over the black-robed man's right arm.

Before he had a chance to remove the layer of ice crystals, one of the snow apes that he had been locked in battle against barreled into him from the side, sending him flying through the air.

Another resounding boom rang out as the black-robed man crashed into a stone wall, and his entire body was embedded into it, while a series of cracks spread out over the wall around him in all directions.

However, the black-robed man was quickly able to pull his arm out of the wall, then slammed his fist into the wall to propel his own body forward, and it didn't appear as if he had suffered any injuries.

A displeased look appeared on the black-robed man's face as he yelled at his companion, "Fellow Daoist Xiong Shan, if you continue to insisting on holding back and refrain from displaying your full power, then I think it would be best for us to go our separate ways."

The elderly man was also quite disgruntled, and he countered, "What right do you have to criticize me? If you hadn't insisted on taking this detour, we wouldn't have fallen into this trap. Not only have we not managed to reap any rewards here, we've been forced to engage these frost beasts in this pointless battle."

"I only made a suggestion to come down here, and you raised no objections. There's always an inevitable element of risk when it comes to searching for treasures in a place like the Infernal Frost Immortal Manor. There are only a few frost beasts here, so let's just take care of them and move on instead of wasting any more time here," the black-robed man argued.

"I said that we should focus on our primary objective, but you were determined to come down here, so what could I do but agree?" the elderly man grumbled.

The two cultivators in the cave were none other than Xiong Shan and Patriarch Cold Flame, both of whom Han Li was quite familiar with.

What was rather perplexing to Han Li was that one of them had clearly come here as part of the Ghost Wail Sect, while the other had concealed himself among the Southern Dawn beings, so how had they met up with one another?

Furthermore, not only had they appeared in the same place, judging from their conversation, it appeared that they were working together. Could it be that they had been acquaintances prior to entering the immortal manor.

Patriarch Cold Flame knew that he wasn't going to be able to win this argument, so he conceded, "Fine, I'll admit that I'm at fault on this occasion. If you insist on assigning blame, then once we get to that place and find what we're looking for, you can go first and pick out whichever item you want. For now, let's take care of these frost beasts and get out of here as soon as possible."

Xiong Shan didn't waste any more time with words upon hearing this, and with a flick of his wrist, he stowed the golden halberd away before making a hand seal.

Immediately thereafter, late-True Immortal Stage spiritual power fluctuations began to emanate from his body, and layers upon layers of golden sword projections appeared behind him like the unfurling train of a peacock, radiating dazzling golden light.

All of the golden sword projections then instantly shot forth at his behest, surging toward the pair of snow lion frost beasts before completely inundating them like a turbulent wave.

Loud clangs rang out in rapid succession within the wave of sword projections, and white and golden light flashed incessantly.

By the time all of the sword projections had swept through the air, the bodies of the pair of snow lions had been completely stripped away to reveal their frost cores, which were hovering in mid-air while absorbing the nearby snow and glacial qi.

Xiong Shan lunged forward with his golden longsword held in his grasp, instantly shattering the pair of frost cores with a single slash of his sword to put a complete end to the pair of snow lions.

Meanwhile, the snow dove circled around in mid-air before swooping toward him.

On the other side, all of Patriarch Cold Flame's profound acupoints were glowing with dazzling blue light as he took a stride forward, and starpower converged toward his fist as he threw a vicious punch toward an oncoming snow ape.

The snow ape retaliated with a punch of its own, and the two fists clashed with immense power.

A resounding boom rang out as a burst of tremendous force erupted out of Patriarch Cold Flame's fist, culminating in a formidable shockwave that spread through the air in all directions.

The passageway that Han Li and Lu Yuqing were situated in wasn't very wide, and as the shockwave swept through it, Lu Yuqing involuntarily stumbled.

Thankfully, Han Li was right beside her, and before she had a chance to cry out in surprise, he grabbed onto her sleeve with one hand while clasping his other hand over her mouth. At the same time, a faint light barrier emerged to encompass both of them.

Only after the shockwaves had subsided did Han Li make a quieting gesture before slowly removing his hand from over Lu Yuqing's mouth.

Lu Yuqing pursed her lips tightly as she pressed herself against the stone wall of the passageway, not daring to make another sound.

Meanwhile, Han Li turned his attention back to Patriarch Cold Flame, and a contemplative look had appeared on his face.

In the wake of the clash, the snow ape's arm had already completely exploded, and there was a rapidly revolving blue vortex where its arm used to be, absorbing the nearby glacial qi in order to facilitate regeneration.

Patriarch Cold Flame naturally wasn't going to give it the chance to heal, and after evading an attack from the other snow ape, he sprang up into the air before stomping his foot heavily down onto the snow ape's head.

A layer of white starlight appeared on the underside of his foot, and a resounding boom rang out as the snow ape's head exploded under the tremendous force of his stomp.

A translucent frost core shot out of its head before being caught in Patriarch Cold Flame's grasp, and he quickly flipped his other hand over to produce a purple talisman that he adhered to the frost core, then hurriedly stowed it away into his storage ring.

Immediately thereafter, he sprang up into the air once again, charging toward the other snow ape.

Right at this moment, a sharp screeching sound rang out from up above, and an enormous streak of golden swordlight swept through the air. The snow dove was struck by the streak of golden swordlight, and its body was instantly torn in half down the middle.

The streak of golden swordlight continued onward, and the roof of the cave was unable to withstand its tremendous power as giant rocks the size of millstones came crashing down from above, opening up a massive rift that was several dozen feet wide.

A ray of natural light shone down through the rift in the roof of the cave, and gusts of fierce wind also blew in through the rift.

Xiong Shan stood atop the pile of fallen rocks as he slowly withdrew his longsword while casting his gaze toward Patriarch Cold Flame.

The battle over there had drawn to a conclusion as well. The second snow ape also proved to be no match for Patriarch Cold Flame's tremendous starpower, and its head had exploded into powder with a single punch along with the frost core inside.

"Let me remind you that the circumstances surrounding this emergence of the Infernal Frost Immortal Manor are far more complex than on previous occasions, so we cannot afford to take any further detours from here onward," Xiong Shan said in a cold voice as Patriarch Cold Flame approached him.

"It was only discovered during the previous emergence of the immortal manor that the already explored area of the immortal manor is collectively known as the Light Frost Region. The Light Frost Region is only the outermost section of the Infernal Frost Immortal Manor, and there's no telling what manners of treasures could be found deeper in the immortal manor.

"With that in mind, it's no wonder that the circumstances have become a lot more complicated," Patriarch Cold Flame sighed.

"We've only managed to sneak into the immortal manor on this occasion through the Transient Guild and the Ubiquitous Pavilion. Surely you don't need me to tell you how much of a risk we're taking here," Xiong Shan said with solemn expression.

"Of course I'm aware of that. However, there's no need to be overly concerned. That place is situated in a very secluded area, and all of the other people who discovered it with us back then have already perished, so there's no way anyone would find that place before we get there," Patriarch Cold Flame replied.

Xiong Shan's expression eased slightly upon hearing this, and he said, "In any case, let's get there as soon as possible, and after we've obtained what we want from that place, we can split up and go our separate ways."

"That's precisely my intention as well," Patriarch Cold Flame replied with a nod.

With that, the two of them didn't waste any more time as they rose up into the air, flying through the rift in the roof of the cave to emerge into the wind and snow outside.

"Let's follow them," Han Li said to Lu Yuqing, then flew out of the passageway, while Lu Yuqing hesitated momentarily before following along.

Chapter 413: Rumor

Lu Yuqing's cultivation base was far inferior to that of Han Li, Patriarch Cold Flame, and the others, so she was naturally struggling to keep up.

Han Li noticed this, and he raised a hand to summon his azure flying boat, then gestured for her to fly onboard.

Lu Yuqing offered him her gratitude, then flew onto the spirit boat, as did Han Li.

Immediately thereafter, he began to chant an incantation, then swept a sleeve through the air to release a ball of heavy water, which transformed into a layer of black light that quickly spread over the boat to envelop it in its entirety.

Enshrouded within the black light barrier, all of the spiritual power fluctuations emanating from the spirit boat instantly subsided, and it transformed into an undetectable shadow that wasn't giving off even the slightest aura.

Han Li gave a pleased nod upon seeing this. This was a concealment ability that he had invented by combining his heavy water and the laws of water that he had gleaned, and it seemed that it was quite effective.

As the flying boat continued onward, it didn't take long before it caught up to Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan, but Han Li made sure to stay out of their spiritual sensory range, trailing along behind them from afar.

"Why are we following them, Brother Liu?" Lu Yuqing asked.

She didn't dare to release her spiritual sense earlier for fear of being detected, so she didn't hear the conversation between Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan.

"Judging from their earlier conversation, they seemed to have discovered an interesting place the last time the immortal manor was opened, and they're revisiting that place now. This is our first time in the Infernal Frost Immortal Manor, so we don't know much about it at all, and this isn't one of the areas on your map, so as opposed to stumbling around without any direction, we may as well follow them," Han Li explained.

"It sounds like we're in luck. These two are quite formidable, but they're no match for you, Brother Liu. If they're going after some treasures, then we can just spring up on them at the last second and claim those treasures for ourselves!" Lu Yuqing said with a smile.

Han Li also smiled in response, then began to focus his attention on tracking Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan.

He wasn't concerned about Patriarch Cold Flame, but Xiong Shan possessed quite an advanced cultivation base and was also very cautious and alert, so he didn't dare to take him lightly.

Lu Yuqing could see that Han Li was trying to focus, so she fell silent in order to refrain from disturbing him, then sat down with her legs crossed on the spirit boat to meditate.

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Meanwhile, elsewhere in the immortal manor.

There was a vast ice field that spread as far as the eyes could see in all directions, and aside from some small hills, there was only a lone snow-covered peak at the center of the ice field, extending all the way up into the clouds.

The area was very quiet aside from the sound of the occasional gusts of wind, and right at this moment, a semi-transparent white vortex emerged in front of the lone peak amid a burst of spatial fluctuations.

The vortex then faded to reveal a green jade flying carriage that was around 100 feet in length.

The carriage was long and sleek, and there were intricate engravings on its surface, much like what one would expect to see on a jade scepter. Standing on the carriage was a tall man, and there were also a pair of halberd-wielding puppets clad in golden armor on the carriage.

The man's entire body was enshrouded within a layer of white light, giving him a rather hazy appearance, but one could still just barely make out his facial features.

As soon as he appeared, he swept his gaze over the surrounding area before setting his sights on a certain direction.

"It looks like I'm not too late," the man murmured to himself, following which the flying carriage beneath his feet shot forward as a ball of green light, vanishing into the distant sky shortly thereafter.

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Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan continued in their travels without pause, and three or four days flew by in the blink of an eye.

At this point, the vast ice field down below had been replaced by a mountainous region that was covered in a thick layer of glistening ice and snow, presenting a spectacular sight to behold.

Occasionally, some clusters of palaces could be spotted among the snow-covered mountains, and some were even releasing hints of spiritual power fluctuations, indicating that they contained certain treasures.

However, Patriarch Cold Flame's duo didn't even bother to take a glance at any of these buildings as they continued to fly onward.

Han Li was rather intrigued and wanted to go down to take a look, but he had no opportunity to do so as he had to keep following the duo.

"Looks like they're going someplace very far away. I hope they won't disappoint us," Lu Yuqing sighed.

"Let's just wait and see," Han Li replied with a nod.

A few more days passed by in a flash, but even after flying for so long, they still didn't seem any closer to reaching the end of the Light Frost Region.

Han Li was quite taken aback to see this. He had thought that this was only an immortal manor, yet the Light Frost Region alone seemed to be comparable in size to the Black Wind Sea. With that in mind, the entirety of the immortal manor was most likely just as enormous as a small plane.

Patriarch Cold Flame showed no intention of stopping as they continued to fly onward, and a few more days passed by in the blink of an eye.

The snow-covered mountains below gradually faded away, and a boundless sea emerged up ahead.

The water in the sea was as black as inky and appeared to be extremely viscous, as evidenced by the fact that there weren't many waves sweeping over the surface of the sea despite the fierce wind.

The entire surface of the sea resembled an infinitely vast black mirror, presenting a rather unsettling sight to behold.

Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan flew directly onward without any hesitation, but Han Li stopped at the edge of the black sea with slightly furrowed brows.

Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan had been flying without pause this entire time, and he couldn't help but wonder if they had perhaps already noticed him and Lu Yuqing and were intentionally leading them into a trap.

In this unfamiliar environment that was fraught with peril, he couldn't afford to get complacent.

He cast his gaze toward the black sea up ahead, then turned to Lu Yuqing as he asked, "Do you know anything about this black sea?"

"I'm afraid not, Brother Liu," Lu Yuqing replied with a shake of her head.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon hearing this, and he fell into deep thought.

Lu Yuqing took a glance at her surroundings, then asked, "Should we keep following them, Brother Liu?"

At this point, she was also beginning to grow a little uneasy.

Han Li was silent for a moment, then replied, "It would be a waste to stop here after following them for so long. I want to see this through to the end."

With that, he made a hand seal and spurred the azure flying boat onward.

At this point, Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan had already vanished out of sight, but that wasn't a cause for concern as Han Li could still follow the spiritual power traces that they had left behind.

It didn't take long for Han Li to catch up to the duo, and close to two more days passed by in a flash.

Han Li was standing atop his flying boat with slightly furrowed brows. He didn't know just how vast this black sea was, but after flying for so long, he was certain that they were already quite deep in the area.

They had already been following Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan for close to 10 days. If they had spent that time searching for treasures on their own, they would've been sure to have reaped some spoils, yet they were still empty-handed right now, and they could only hope that the duo that they were following really was leading them to some exceptional treasures. Otherwise, the incurred opportunity cost would be quite significant.

All of a sudden, Han Li leaned forward slightly as if he had spotted something up ahead.

"What is it, Brother Liu?" Lu Yuqing asked.

As soon as her voice trailed off, clouds of white mist suddenly appeared over the sea up ahead.

Specks of white light were visible within the mist, presenting a rather peculiar sight to behold.

Wisps of bone-chilling glacial qi were emanating out of the white mist, significantly lowering the nearby air temperature.

A contemplative look appeared on Lu Yuqing's face upon hearing this.

Meanwhile, Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan stopped in their tracks, and they were ecstatic to see this white mist.

"We finally found it!" Patriarch Cold Flame exclaimed in an excited voice, and his elation was mirrored on Xiong Shan's face as well.

The two of them then inspected their surroundings momentarily to check if they were being followed.

At this point, Han Li's flying boat had also drawn to a halt, and his eyes instantly lit up as he heard the exchange between Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan.

It seemed that they had finally arrived at their destination.

As Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan began to scour their surroundings, Han Li hurriedly backtracked a little with his flying boat.

Thankfully, Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan didn't notice anything amiss, and they quickly continued onward, flying into the mist at a far faster speed than before.

Han Li's azure flying boat also accelerated at his behest, and as soon as it flew into the white mist, it was instantly infiltrated by bursts of glacial qi.

This glacial qi was quite peculiar in that it resembled needles, making it extremely penetrative, able to pierce through the heavy water barrier, and a layer of frost was slowly beginning to appear on the surface of the flying boat.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this, and he swept a sleeve through the air to release a set of several dozen small blue flags that flew to the edges of the flying boat before vanishing into it.

A blue light barrier instantly emerged to envelop the flying boat, keeping the glacial qi at bay.

Right at this moment, Lu Yuqing suddenly sprang to her feet.

Han Li was slightly alarmed, and he immediately asked, "What's wrong?"

"Brother Liu, I just recalled a rumor about the Light Frost Region. It's said that there's a sea of mist in the region that contains extremely formidable glacial qi, and within the sea of mist lies the Light Frost

Palace, the premier treasure trove of the entire region! However, no one has ever been able to find it. Could it be..."

Han Li's eyes immediately lit up upon hearing this.

Thinking back to the excitement that Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan had displayed while discussing their destination, it was very likely that their objective was indeed to reach this Light Frost Palace.

With that in mind, Han Li immediately spurred on his flying boat to accelerate a little further.

The more they advanced through this area, the denser the white mist became until visibility was virtually zero.

However, Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan seemed to be very familiar with this place, and they were traversing through the mist without pause.

After flying for around three hours, the two of them abruptly drew to a halt.

Han Li had been keeping tabs on them this entire time, and he immediately stopped as well, concealing his flying boat in a cloud of white mist as he cast his gaze forward.

His eyes then instantly lit up as he spotted a black island situated in the sea up ahead. It was only a small island that was around 10 to 15 kilometers in size, and it was entirely enshrouded in a layer black light that looked as if it were formed by countless tiny black needles.

The black light was flowing like liquid, and beyond the black light barrier was the faint outline of a majestic palace.

Chapter 414: Exposed

Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan were observing the island down below with excitement in their eyes.

"It looks like no one's found this place yet," Patriarch Cold Flame remarked as he took a glance at his surroundings.

"That's only to be expected. This is an extremely secluded place, and I wouldn't have stumbled upon this island back then if I hadn't been frantically fleeing from that pack of frost beasts," Xiong Shan replied as he stared at the palace within the light barrier with fervent excitement in his eyes.

"You seem very confident, Fellow Daoist Xiong Shan. You must've made some extensive preparations for this trip," Patriarch Cold Flame chuckled.

"I bet you've done the same, Fellow Daoist Cold Flame. You've most likely already completely mastered the Great Universe Origin Arts. I'm assuming you weren't going all-out against those frost beasts from earlier," Xiong Shan harrumphed coldly in response.

"How could my paltry powers possibly compare with yours?" Patriarch Cold Flame chuckled in a modest fashion.

The two of them exchanged a glance, and both of them fell silent as a slightly tense atmosphere began to set in.

"We still haven't entered the Light Frost Palace yet, so there's no need for the two of us to be praising one another like this. Besides, our objectives are different, so there are no conflicts of interest between us. Let's break this restriction as quickly as possible to avoid any unforeseen mishaps," Patriarch Cold Flame proposed.

"That sounds like a good plan," Xiong Shan replied with a smile, then patted the storage pouch strapped to his waist, and a small golden sword instantly emerged, followed immediately by an azure wooden ruler and a small blue flag.

All three treasures were giving off astonishing spiritual qi fluctuations, and they weren't far off from immortal treasures.

At the same time, Patriarch Cold Flame swept a sleeve through the air to release two bursts of light, one red and one yellow, and they were revealed to be a crimson bowl and a small yellow seal, both of which were also top-grade spirit treasures.

As soon as the five spirit treasures were summoned, they immediately flew high up into the sky as five dazzling balls of spiritual light before vanishing out of sight in a flash.

The sky up above shuddered as a vast expanse of radiant five-colored light emerged, encompassing the entire area within a radius of dozens of kilometers down below.

The five spirit treasures were visible deep within the five-colored light, and they had formed a circular array.

All of the world's origin qi in the space encompassed within the five-colored light became completely stagnant, as if it had been frozen in place by some type of invisible force.

Han Li's eyes narrowed slightly as he observed what was unfolding up ahead using his Brightsight Spirit Eyes.

"What are they doing, Brother Liu?" Lu Yuqing asked.

"They're using spirit treasures of the five elements to unleash the Great Five-elemental True Light," Han Li replied.

As the two were conversing with one another, Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan had already begun chanting an incantation, upon which the five-colored light swirled momentarily before quickly transforming into a five-colored pillar of light that shone down upon the black light barrier.

The black light barrier instantly brightened, and countless threads of thin black light emerged one after another like streaks of black sword qi, then converged to form a black sword dragon that pounced at the pillar of five-colored light.

The two clashed, and the black sword dragon was able to keep the pillar of light at bay while tearing at it viciously with its claws, fangs, and tail.

Streaks of formidable black sword qi were erupting out of the sword dragon's claws and mouth, but the pillar of five-colored light remained stable and completely unmoved despite the sword dragon's best efforts.

Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan continued to chant their incantation while making hand seals, and five-colored spiritual light was rapidly revolving within the pillar of light, forming a series of five-colored balls.

Each ball was the size of a millstone, and all of them were semi-transparent. They were quite spectacular to behold, but also struck the beholder with a sense of awe and foreboding.

The five-colored spiritual light at the forefront of the pillar of light flashed momentarily, following which all of the balls of five-colored light shot forth, crashing into the black sword dragon's body.

The five-colored balls of light then exploded into a vast expanse of light that completely inundated the black sword, tearing it apart with ease amid an anguished howl.

Lu Yuqing's eyes widened with incredulity upon seeing this, while Han Li's expression remained unchanged, and it seemed that this was the anticipated outcome for him.

After vanquishing the sword dragon, the five-colored balls of light continued onward without pause to strike the black light barrier down below, which instantly began to warp and twist violently.

In the end, the black light barrier was only able to withstand the assault for a few seconds before it was torn apart and disintegrated into countless specks of black spiritual light.

However, an azure light barrier then emerged, and it seemed to be no less formidable than the black light barrier.

Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan didn't seem surprised at all to see this, and the five-colored pillar of light continued to descend while releasing more five-colored balls of light that surged toward the azure light barrier.

The five-colored light barrier brightened considerably while releasing gusts of fierce azure wind, and a string of earth-shattering booms rang out as the gusts of wind clashed against the balls of five-colored light.

Ultimately, the azure light barrier wasn't able to fare much better than its black counterpart, and it only lasted a few minutes before it was also torn apart, following which a white light barrier emerged.

Han Li raised an eyebrow upon seeing this.

The restrictions outside the palace were more complex than he had imagined, and they were all quite formidable, so even for him, it would've taken a great deal of time and effort to bypass them.

However, judging from the expressions of Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan, they were clearly already aware of this and had prepared countermeasures.

The two of them continued to make more hand seals, and the five-colored pillar of light shone brighter and brighter as more balls of five-colored light emerged before raining down upon the white light barrier.

Several hours passed by in the blink of an eye, and rumbling booms were ringing out incessantly on the island, while spiritual lights of different colors flashed erratically.

The five-colored pillar of light had become thicker than before, and it was releasing countless balls of five-colored light that were raining down upon a gray light barrier.

The gray restriction was releasing extremely dense gray light that formed a dark gray cloud, and all of the balls of five-colored light that fell upon it exploded violently on contact.

The gray cloud didn't appear to be remarkable in any way, but it proved to be extremely resilient, able to keep the barrage of five-colored balls of light at bay, albeit with great difficulty.

At this point, Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan were both looking rather weary.

During this time, they had already broken through over 10 different restrictions, of which each successive one was more formidable than the previous one, and the balls of five-colored light weren't making inroads anywhere near as quickly as before.

However, the barrages of attacks were still effective, and the gray cloud was slowly being stripped away bit by bit.

Close to an hour later, the gray cloud was finally completely eradicated, thereby revealing the gray restriction down below.

Both Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan instantly seized this opportunity, renewing their efforts to send close to 100 balls of five-colored light erupting out of the pillar of light at once.

Instead of crashing down right away, the balls of light converged to form an enormous ball of light the size of a house.

Furthermore, this ball of light was no longer semi-transparent. Instead, it had a virtually substantial form and was giving off astonishing spiritual power fluctuations.

The giant ball of light circled around in the air before crashing heavily down onto the gray restriction and exploding violently.

A five-colored sun that was over 1,000 feet in diameter appeared in the sky, and shockwaves that were visible even to the naked eye erupted forth in all directions, causing the surrounding space to tremble violently.

The gray light barrier was severely warped before exploding, and Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan heaved a collective sigh of relief upon seeing this.

Han Li was observing the proceedings from afar, and he was also quite pleased to see the restriction being broken.

The gray light barrier disintegrated into countless specks of gray light that quickly dissipated, only to be replaced by another starry light barrier.

There were countless starry specks of light on the light barrier, and they were moving in a profound rhythm, as if they really were stars in the night sky.

"There's still more? How many restrictions are there?" Lu Yuqing exclaimed upon seeing this.

"Don't worry, this should be the last one. Those two sure have been made to work hard," Han Li replied with a faint smile.

Right at this moment, his expression suddenly changed slightly as a burst of dazzling starlight emerged to encompass his entire body, and the source of the starlight was the storage pouch strapped to his waist.

The starlight was extremely bright, and it immediately burst through his concealment ability.

Lu Yuqing was greatly startled by this unforeseen turn of events, and she had to clap a hand over her own mouth to prevent herself from yelling out loud.

The starry light barrier in the distance also began to glow brightly, and the specks of starlight moving over its surface suddenly accelerated by severalfold, forming a series of profound constellations.

It seemed that the starry light barrier was resonating with the starlight radiating from Han Li's body.

Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan were also caught completely off guard, and they immediately swung around with bewildered expressions.

Han Li immediately tried to search for the source of the starlight in his storage pouch, only for a ball of dazzling starlight to fly out from within on its own, containing a gray stone slab.

Chapter 415: Abrupt Battle

Han Li faltered slightly upon seeing this.

This was the very same stone slab that contained the first half of the Great Universe Origin Arts that he had obtained from Patriarch Cold Flame.

At this moment, all of the runes etched upon the stone slab were glowing with radiant starlight, and as soon as it appeared it immediately began flying toward the starry light barrier in the distance as if it were being summoned by something.

The stone slab was quite valuable to Han Li, and this was clearly an abnormal turn of events, so Han Li certainly wasn't going to just let it fly away, and he immediately reached out to grab it.

The starlight radiating from the stone slab began to sway and struggle as it attempted to force its way out of Han Li's grasp, and it was doing so with such tremendous force that even Han Li's arm was trembling incessantly.

If an average late-True Immortal cultivation had been in his place, there was a very good chance that the stone slab would've already flown out of their grasp.

With his attention diverted, there was a momentary lapse in his concealment secret technique, and as a result, he and Lu Yuqing were exposed.

"Who's there?"

Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan immediately stopped what they were doing as they spotted Han Li's duo, and as a result, the pillar of five-colored light in the sky faded into nothingness.

Lu Yuqing reflexively took a couple of steps backward at the sight of the hostile looks on the faces of Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan, and she turned to Han Li with a concerned expression.

Han Li's brows were slightly furrowed, and he did away with his concealment secret technique altogether.

Xiong Shan took a glance at Han Li's duo, then said, "If I recall correctly, the two of you entered the immortal manor with the True Flame Sect. Why are you sneaking around and following us in secret?"

"That stone slab... You're Fellow Daoist Han!" Patriarch Cold Flame exclaimed at the sight of the gray stone slab that Han Li was holding.

"Long time no see, Fellow Daoist Cold Flame," Han Li said with a faint smile.

At the same time, he made a hand seal with his free hand, and countless azure runes instantly surged out of the hand that was locked around the stone slab, forming a seal around it.

The light radiating from the stone slab instantly diminished significantly, and its struggles also ceased.

Han Li then flipped a hand over to produce several talismans, which he adhered to the stone slab in an unhurried fashion, and only then did the starlight on the stone slab completely vanish, following which he was able to stow it away.

"Fellow Daoist Han? Do you know this person, Fellow Daoist Cold Flame?" Xiong Shan asked as he turned to Patriarch Cold Flame with a suspicious expression.

"Please don't misunderstand, Fellow Daoist. I've met him on several past occasions, but I definitely wasn't expecting to run into him here," Patriarch Cold Flame hurriedly explained.

Lu Yuqing's brows furrowed slightly upon hearing this.

"Even if he is an acquaintance of yours, isn't it far too rude of him to have followed us in secret all the way up to this point?" Xiong Shan asked in a cold voice.

"I just so happened to see the two of you traveling together, and it seemed that you were going somewhere, so I decided to follow you out of curiosity. I certainly wasn't expecting to be led to the Light Frost Palace. Given how massive this palace is, surely you two won't mind if the two of us enter it with you," Han Li said with a smile.

At the same time, he casually made a hand seal, and the azure flying boat beneath his feet instantly shrank down significantly before flying up his sleeve.

He then swept a sleeve through the air to release a burst of azure light, which swept up himself and Lu Yuqing before carrying both of them to a spot not far away from Xiong Shan's duo.

Patriarch Cold Flame's expression changed slightly upon hearing this, and he turned to Xiong Shan.

Back at the Holy Puppet Sect, he had already established that he was no match for Han Li, and he didn't want to engage Han Li in a direct battle unless there were no other alternatives.

Xiong Shan's expression darkened slightly, and a cold gleam flashed through his eyes as he said, "If you want to enter the Light Frost Palace, then you'll have to show me if you have what it takes!"

As soon as his voice trailed off, his robes billowed outward as golden light erupted out of his body, and thick streaks of golden sword qi emerged, resembling the branches of a flowering tree as they swept directly toward Han Li with astonishing might.

Initially, each streak of sword qi was only around a foot in length, but they swelled to close to 100 feet mid-flight, and they had converged to form a golden sword lotus flower that was descending directly upon Han Li.

Even before the sword lotus flower arrived, a burst of formidable sword intent had already completely enshrouded Han Li and Lu Yuqing.

Han Li felt a burst of sharp pain over his entire body, and the flashing golden light radiating from the sword lotus flower struck him with some type of illusion, as if he could already see himself being torn to shreds by the streaks of sword qi.

He immediately drew upon his own vast spiritual sense as an instinctive reaction, and the illusion was instantly dispelled.

In contrast, there was a horrified look on Lu Yuqing's face, and her eyes were dazed and hollow, as if she had been plunged into the depths of despair by Xiong Shan's immense sword intent.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this, and he positioned himself in front of Lu Yuqing as 18 specks of starlight emerged over his body. As a result, he instantly grew a little taller, then threw a punch directly upward.

A burst of tremendous force was released from his fist, causing the surrounding space to warp and twist, and ripples that were visible even to the naked eye could be seen sweeping through the air.

The golden sword lotus flower's downward momentum was instantly halted, following which it shattered and disintegrated into countless specks of golden light.

The tremendous sword intent in the air also faded with the sword lotus flower's destruction, and Lu Yuqing shuddered before gasping for air, but at the very least, she had returned to her senses.

She had been completely immobilized by the sword intent just now, but she was still able to see what had just unfolded, and a complex look appeared in her eyes as she cast her gaze toward Han Li, who was standing up ahead with his back facing her.

The fearsome power released by Han Li's punch was only stopped momentarily by the golden sword lotus flower before continuing to sweep toward Xiong Shan with astonishing might.

Xiong Shan instantly felt the space around him constrict, and it was as if he had suddenly been trapped within a wall of iron and steel.

"You're also using the Great Universe Origin Arts!" Xiong Shan exclaimed as he made a hand seal with one hand, and his golden longsword instantly appeared in his grasp.

With his longsword summoned, his aura began to rapidly swell and take on a peerlessly sharp quality.

Immediately thereafter, he let loose a thunderous roar before slashing his longsword through the air with a flick of his wrist, and several huge streaks of golden sword qi swept through the air around him to free him from the constricting space.

He then began to chant an incantation, and his golden longsword flew out of his grasp before transforming into a giant golden sword that was several thousand feet in size, giving off formidable metal-attribute law fluctuations.

The giant golden sword slashed through the air before crashing into the force generated by Han Li's punch with an earth-shattering boom, and neither side seemed to be able to get the better of the other, with sword qi and fist intent erupting in all directions, causing the surrounding space to tremble violently.

Right at this moment, an undetectable smirk appeared on Xiong Shan's face, and a giant golden flag abruptly appeared behind Han Li amid a burst of spatial fluctuations.

The flag was radiating golden light with countless runes flashing on its surface, and it was also giving off bursts of metal law fluctuations.

As soon as the golden flag appeared, it instantly released countless thin golden threads that shot rapidly toward Han Li's defenseless back.

Lu Yuqing's expression changed drastically upon seeing this, but the golden threads were too fast for her to react to.

Right as the two of them were about to be completely inundated by the wave of golden threads, a burst of starlight suddenly flashed over Han Li's body, and the Seven Bright Star Rings flew out, arranging themselves into the formation of the Big Dipper as they situated themselves behind Han Li and Lu Yuqing.

Radiant starlight erupted out of the Seven Bright Star Rings, instantly forming a thick wall of light.

A string of dull thuds rang out in rapid succession as countless tiny holes were pierced into the surface of the wall of light, but it was ultimately able to keep all of the golden threads at bay, much to Xiong Shan's alarm and dismay.

Right at this moment, another resounding boom rang out as Xiong Shan's giant golden sword was sent flying back through the air, while the tremendous force unleashed by Han Li's punch also faded away.

All of this had transpired in the blink of an eye, and Han Li remained standing on the spot in a calm and composed fashion, while Xiong Shan stumbled back a couple of steps before steadying himself.

He then made a hand seal, and the giant golden sword shrank down to half its original size before circling around in the air above his head.

Han Li paid no heed to the giant sword as he glowered intently at Han Li and the Seven Bright Star Rings behind him.

The Seven Bright Star Rings had appeared at the perfect time, and it was as if Han Li were a clairvoyant that had predicted the emergence of the giant golden flag.

"I've been here this entire time, so did you think that I wouldn't notice when you summoned that golden flag in secret before concealing it while the two of you were breaking the restrictions here?" Han Li asked with a faint smile.

Xiong Shan's expression darkened even further upon hearing this, and he made a hand seal, upon which the giant golden flag vanished from the spot before appearing behind him the next instant.

"I wonder if you had summoned that golden flag as a precautionary measure to deal with unforeseen danger, or if you were planning to use it on someone else," Han Li said with a faint smile as he took a meaningful glance at Patriarch Cold Flame.

A furious look immediately appeared on Patriarch Cold Flame's face upon hearing this, and he flew over 1,000 feet away from Xiong Shan in the blink of an eye.

Chapter 416: Joining Forces

"Don't fall for his attempt to drive a wedge between us, Fellow Daoist Cold Flame! I had no other intention than to take some precautionary measures in case enemies arrived on the scene while we were busy breaking these restrictions, and it seems that my efforts were very much necessary," Xiong Shan said.

Patriarch Cold Flame's expression eased slightly upon hearing this, but he was still looking rather hesitant about who to believe.

"Is that so? In that case, why did you summon the flag in secret without telling Fellow Daoist Cold Flame?" Han Li asked with a faint smile.

"That... was indeed an oversight on my part," Xiong Shan conceded in a slightly awkward manner.

He hadn't actually summoned the flag for the purpose of attacking Patriarch Cold Flame. Instead, it was just a hidden trump card that he could call upon to seize the initiative in the case of any mishaps. Of course, he was prepared to use it against Patriarch Cold Flame if necessary, but given the circumstances, things weren't so easy to explain.

"You're not to blame, Fellow Daoist Xiong. I was simply too gullible and susceptible to the words of others," Patriarch Cold Flame said in an indifferent voice.

Xiong Shan knew that he was at fault here, so he didn't dwell on the subject any longer.

"I would consider you to be an acquaintance of mine, Fellow Daoist Cold Flame. There are bound to be many precious treasures in this Light Frost Palace, it's sure to be a very dangerous place as well, so why don't we join forces and explore it together? You're aware of my powers, and I'm sure you know that I can be of great assistance to you," Han Li said.

Patriarch Cold Flame's brows furrowed slightly upon hearing this, and he offered no response.

"Rest assured, Fellow Daoist Cold Flame, I simply want to repay you for bestowing the Great Universe Origin Arts upon me. I'm no saint, but at the same time, I wouldn't stoop as low as to plot against my own allies," Han Li said as he took a subtle glance at Xiong Shan, in response to which Xiong Shan gave a cold harrumph.

Patriarch Cold Flame weighed up his options for a moment, then smiled as he said, "Alright, in that case, I'll be in your care, Fellow Daoist Han."

"Likewise, Fellow Daoist Cold Flame. Shall we break this final restriction first?" Han Li proposed with a smile.

"What is the meaning of this?" Xiong Shan interjected with a dark look on his face.

"Please don't misunderstand, Fellow Daoist Xiong. It's not like there's any vendetta between us, it's just that you attacked me without allowing me a chance to explain myself, and that resulted in a misunderstanding. In my opinion, let's leave this matter behind us. At the moment, all of us have a shared objective, so we should work together to break this restriction. Time is of the essence, after all," Han Li said as he turned to Xiong Shan.

Xiong Shan was silent for a moment, then smiled as he replied, "I agree, Fellow Daoist Han. Please forgive me for my earlier rash actions, Fellow Daoist Cold Flame. If we do find any treasures in the palace, you can have the first pick."

"There's no need to apologize, Fellow Daoist Xiong Shan. Now that Fellow Daoist Han and this fellow daoist have joined us, our chances of success will naturally be greater than before. By the way, may I know your name, fellow daoist?" Patriarch Cold Flame asked as he turned to Lu Yuqing.

Xiong Shan also turned his attention to Lu Yuqing upon hearing this.

"You're far too kind, Senior. I wouldn't dare to regard myself as an equal to the two of you with my paltry cultivation base. I'm only accompanying Brother Han to broaden my horizons, and I would be

more than satisfied if you could spare me a few treasures that aren't up to your standards," Lu Yuqing hurriedly replied.

It was clear that Han Li had presented himself under a different identity to Patriarch Cold Flame, so she had immediately made an adjustment and begun referring to Han Li as Brother Han instead of Brother Liu.

Both Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan's expressions eased slightly upon hearing this.

"The more time we waste here, the higher the likelihood that something could go wrong, so let's begin right away. Keep doing what you were doing before, and I'll also lend you my assistance to break this restriction," Han Li said.

Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan both nodded in response, and the latter swept a sleeve through the air to stow away his golden longsword and golden flag, then flew to the same position as before to resume his efforts.

Patriarch Cold Flame also sprang into action, and the five spirit treasures in the air lit up once again as the pillar of five-colored light re-emerged.

A layer of dazzling starlight emerged from the starry light barrier, and there were countless stars surging over its surface, presenting a profound sight to behold.

Balls of five-colored light flew out of the pillar of light before striking the starry light barrier, and a string of resounding booms rang out as the starry light barrier trembled incessantly.

Meanwhile, Han Li stowed his Seven Bright Star Rings away, then channeled his Great Universe Origin Arts with all his might, and radiant starlight instantly appeared over his arms.

Immediately thereafter, he lashed out at the starlight restriction down below with ferocious might, unleashing a barrage of fist projections that rained down upon the starry light barrier.

Lu Yuqing was also doing what she could to help, summoning an azure feather fan that she swept through the air to send countless azure blades of wind hurtling toward the starry light barrier.

Their combined efforts were extremely formidable, and the starry light barrier was unable to withstand the assault, quickly being stripped down to only a thin layer.

However, right at this moment, the sky above the island suddenly began to rumble, and the white mist up above began to swirl, forming an enormous vortex.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly as he looked up into the sky, while Xiong Shan yelled,

"The restriction is trying to draw upon starpower from the heavens to replenish itself! If we can't destroy it now, it won't be long until it makes a full recovery, so it's now or never!" Xiong Shan yelled.

"That's right, we can't allow it to recover!" Patriarch Cold Flame chimed in.

The two of them made a rapid series of hand seals, and the pillar of five-colored light brightened considerably as countless balls of five-colored light shot out from within, then converged to form another enormous ball of light in the blink of an eye before descending toward the starry light barrier.

Han Li also responded to the call, taking on his Giant Mountain Ape form amid a flash of golden light.

At the same time, 18 specks of starlight appeared on his chest and abdomen to complement the golden light radiating from the rest of his body.

The Giant Mountain Ape pounded its own chest with its fists, then let loose a thunderous roar before swinging its fist viciously through the air.

An enormous golden fist projection instantly appeared with streaks of starlight revolving around it, and the fist projection fell upon the starry light barrier.

Lu Yuqing also renewed her efforts as her azure feather fan began to radiate dazzling azure light, and it released an azure wind dragon that swooped down with ferocious might.

Several earth-shattering booms rang out in succession, and a series of cracks finally began to spread over the starry light barrier.

With one final resounding boom, the starry light barrier exploded into a vast expanse of starlight, but instead of dissipating, all of the starlight rapidly converged to form an enormous vortex that was releasing indescribably formidable suction power.

Han Li and the others didn't have any time to react before they were sucked into the vortex, and Han Li was instantly overcome by a rush of dizziness as the entire world transformed into an indistinguishable blur.

Upon recovering his vision, he found himself standing on a spacious stone platform. Patriarch Cold Flame and the others were also nearby, but their eyes were tightly shut, seemingly still yet to regain consciousness.

The stone platform was quite antiquated in appearance. It had a dark azure hue and was over 1,000 feet in size.

Beneath Han Li and the others was a teleportation array that was still operating and radiating bursts of white light.

Han Li was still feeling a little dizzy, and he shook his head vigorously to clear away the dizziness before inspecting his surroundings.

At this moment, he was situated in a blue space with a sun up above. There were white clouds drifting through the sky and a light breeze blowing through the air, in stark contrast with the misty and forbidding black sea from before.

This must be the real Light Frost Palace.

Around half a kilometer ahead of the stone platform was a mountain with a summit that was concealed within the clouds, indicating that it had to have been at least 40,000 to 50,000 feet tall.

The mountain was extremely steep and entirely silver in color.

There was a ball of faint purple light situated on the mountain summit, and Han Li could see the outlines of a purple palace within the ball of light.

A steep staircase extended straight from the purple palace to the foot of the mountain, and the staircase was a sparkling purple color, presenting a spectacular sight to behold, as if it were a staircase to heaven.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this.

For some reason, this environment struck him with a sense of familiarity.

He inspected his surroundings once again while trying to recall when he had seen this place before, but to no avail, so he could only set aside that train of thought for now as he prepared to leave the teleportation array.

However, as soon as he attempted to leave the array, a burst of tremendous force surged out of it, locking his body into place and rendering him immobilized.

He immediately cast his gaze toward the white light around him, and a contemplative look flashed through his eyes.

Before long, Patriarch Cold Flame, Xiong Shan, and Lu Yuqing also regained their consciousness one after another, and Lu Yuqing began to look around with an awestruck expression.

In contrast, Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan completely ignored their surroundings as they turned to stare at the purple palace on the mountain summit with a fervent look in their eyes.

However, neither of them moved.

"So this is the Light Frost Palace... It really is a spectacular place," Lu Yuqing praised as she tried to take a step forward, only to find herself also locked into place, just like Han Li.

"The teleportation array is still operating. We'll only be able to get out once it completely ceases operation," Patriarch Cold Flame explained.

Lu Yuqing turned to him with a grateful nod upon hearing this, while Han Li also took a glance at him in silence.

He had intentionally driven a wedge between Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan in order to recruit the former to his side, and he had done this because Patriarch Cold Flame had already entered this place once.

Having explored many secret areas in the past, Han Li knew how much an asset having an experienced guide could be.

Chapter 417: Pursuers

The teleportation array beneath Han Li and the others continued to operate, but it was getting slower and slower, and the white light that it was releasing was also rapidly fading.

In the meantime, the four of them remained silent and didn't make any further attempts to move. They took this time to inspect their surroundings, but of course, the majority of their attention was focused on that silver mountain.

The longing in Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan's eyes was becoming more and more intense, while Han Li remained expressionless, and Lu Yuqing's eyes were constantly darting around, occasionally stealing glances at Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan.

A short while later, the operation of the teleportation array finally completely ceased, and all of the white light also faded, allowing Han Li and the others to emerge from the array.

"Let's go."

Upon stepping out of the array, Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan made their way down from the stone platform, then rushed toward the long staircase at the foot of the silver mountain, but they refrained from taking flight.

"Let's follow them," Han Li said to Lu Yuqing, then quickly strode down from the stone platform as well.

Not long after the four of them left the teleportation array, the stone platform behind them abruptly shuddered, immediately following which the teleportation array began to radiate dazzling white light once again.

Han Li and the others were all quite startled by this turn of events, and they immediately stopped in their tracks before turning around, right as a group of six or seven figures appeared within the teleportation array.

These people were none other than the black-robed Ghost Wail Sect cultivators, and they were led by their sect master, Chen Pi.

"Xue Han!" Patriarch Cold Flame exclaimed at the sight of Ghost Wail Sect Master.

A hint of befuddlement flashed through Han Li's eyes upon hearing this.

The Ghost Wail Sect Master had clearly been introduced as Chen Pi earlier, while Xue Han was the name of one of the Ubiquitous Pavilion's Golden Immortal Stage elders and one of the two Golden Immortals who had attacked the Holy Puppet Sect.

Having just appeared in the teleportation array, Xue Han's expression was a little dazed, but he then immediately returned to his senses.

He took a glance at his surroundings, and his gaze settled momentarily on Han Li and Lu Yuqing before immediately shifting to Xiong Shan and Patriarch Cold Flame.

Meanwhile, Xiong Shan and Patriarch Cold Flame exchanged a bewildered glance with one another.

It didn't take long before Xue Han spotted the purple palace on the mountain summit, and an ecstatic look instantly appeared on his face as he cackled, "I knew it!"

A fearful look flashed through Patriarch Cold Flame's eye as he asked, "Xue Han, why are you here?"

"You thought you managed to shake us off, didn't you? I knew you had an ulterior motive for entering the immortal manor, so I intentionally let you leave, but we've been following you this entire time! Having said that, I didn't think you would lead us to the Light Frost Palace," Xue Han chortled.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon hearing this.

It was rather disturbing to him that he had completely failed to detect the Ghost Wail Sect cultivators on the way here.

However, given Xue Han's Golden Immortal Stage cultivation base, if he had some special concealment techniques up his sleeve, then it was certainly possible for them to have remained undetected by Han Li this entire time.

Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan's expressions had darkened significantly at this point.

They had thought that they had been quite sneaky and cautious, but this entire time, they had been followed by two groups of people and remained completely oblivious.

The two of them exchanged a glance, then turned in unison to rush toward the staircase as quickly as they could.

Han Li and Lu Yuqing exchanged a glance, then immediately followed along.

Xue Han remained completely unconcerned upon seeing this, and he chuckled coldly, "You think you can get away! In your dreams!"

There was no way that a group of four True Immortals would be able to escape from a seasoned Golden Immortal like himself, particularly in what was clearly a sealed space with no way out.

With that in mind, he proceeded to pursue Han Li and the others, only to also find himself being held in place by a burst of tremendous force, rendering him immobilized despite his Golden Immortal Stage cultivation base.

He immediately let loose a low roar as he struggled with all his might, but to his surprise, his efforts proved to be futile.

At this point, the other Ghost Wail Sect cultivators were also beginning to regain their consciousness one after another, only to find that they were also unable to move.

Han Li and the others seized this opportunity to rush to the foot of the silver staircase as quickly as they could, following which Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan immediately led the way up the staircase.

Han Li's eyes narrowed slightly as he noticed that the two of them had slowed down significantly upon stepping onto the staircase, and he cautiously set foot onto the first step.

A layer of faint yellow light surfaced over the step beneath his foot, and a burst of tremendous force instantly descended upon him.

Lu Yuqing also stepped onto the staircase, following which her body immediately swayed slightly as an alarmed look appeared on her face.

Her brows furrowed slightly as a layer of azure light appeared over her body, then transformed into a crane projection that spread its wings in an attempt to take flight, but no matter how frantically the azure crane projection flapped its wings, the suction force acting upon Lu Yuqing from the step beneath her foot wasn't diminished in the slightest.

"The gravitational restriction on this staircase can't be countered through the use of immortal spiritual power or any spirit treasures, so you can only rely on your own physical prowess," Patriarch Cold Flame explained. "Given the urgency of the situation, I'm afraid I'll have to go on ahead. Good luck."

Han Li's expression remained unchanged upon hearing this, while Lu Yuqing's complexion paled slightly in response.

Meanwhile, Patriarch Cold Flame continued to quickly scale the staircase. Having also cultivated the Great Universe Origin Arts, he had attained immense physical prowess, and at this point, he had already scaled 30 to 40 steps.

Xiong Shan's physical prowess was lacking compared with Patriarch Cold Flame, but he was clearly also prepared, and he was able to keep up with Patriarch Cold Flame just fine.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly as he turned to take a glance at the Ghost Wail Sect cultivators, who were still trapped in the teleportation array.

The white light radiating from the array was rapidly fading, and it wouldn't be long until they were freed.

"Hurry!" he urged as he began to quickly scale the staircase.

Lu Yuqing swept a sleeve through the air to dispel the azure light around her, then took a deep breath as she also began to climb the staircase.

The gravitational restriction on the staircase was indeed quite formidable, but as an early-True Immortal cultivator, her physical constitution was nothing to be scoffed at, so she was also climbing up the steps at a decent pace.

An agitated look appeared on Xue Han's face as he watched Han Li and the others scaling the staircase.

At this point, he had already realized further struggles would only be futile, so he had resigned himself to waiting.

Finally, the white light radiating from the teleportation array completely faded, and he instantly instructed, "After them!"

Immediately thereafter, he flew toward Han Li and others as quickly as he could, followed by the other Ghost Wail Sect cultivators, but as soon as they flew out of the stone platform, they abruptly began to plummet toward the ground like dead weights.

They slammed into the ground one after another amid a string of resounding booms, smashing several huge craters into the ground in the process.

They hurriedly clambered to their feet, and even though they weren't injured, they had been reduced to a rather disheveled state. A few of them had landed head-first and were a little dazed as a result.

Xue Han was furious at the embarrassment that he had been subjected to, and none of the other Ghost Wail Sect cultivators dared to say anything at the sight of his enraged expression.

"So what if there's a flight restriction here? I'll hunt you all down regardless, and once I do, I'm going to make you regret ever going against me!" Xue Han spat through gritted teeth.

Immediately thereafter, he charged toward the staircase as quickly as he could, followed closely by the other Ghost Wail Sect cultivators.

Before long, all of them arrived at the foot of the silver staircase before immediately embarking on the climb.

As soon as he set foot on the first step, Xue Han's brows instantly furrowed slightly, and he took a deep breath as he cautioned, "There's quite a formidable restriction here, so be on your guard!"

All of the other Ghost Wail Sect cultivators hurriedly gave affirmative responses, while Xue Han took a glance at Han Li and the others before setting off in pursuit of them.

He was able to scale the staircase at a remarkable speed, quickly opening up quite a large gap between himself and the rest of the Ghost Wail Sect cultivators, and it seemed that the gravitational restriction here wasn't affecting him much at all.

At this point, Han Li and the others had already scaled 400 to 500 steps, and Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan were still leading the way from the forefront, with Han Li and Lu Yuqing progressing up the staircase together a short distance behind them.

Upon noticing what was happening down below, a grim look appeared on Patriarch Cold Flame's face, and a layer of faint starlight appeared over his body as he abruptly accelerated.

Xiong Shan's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this, and a layer of golden light emerged over his body as he also sped up in an urgent fashion.

Meanwhile, Lu Yuqing was already sweating profusely, and with each step that she took, her body would shudder slightly.

With each successive step, the gravitational restriction would become slightly more formidable, and at this point, the gravitational force was already three to four times stronger than it had been on the first step.

Lu Yuqing turned to glance at Han Li, and she was surprised to find that he didn't appear to be struggling at all.

However, there was a rather peculiar dazed look in his eyes, as if his thoughts were somewhere else entirely.

"Brother Liu," Lu Yuqing called out to him through voice transmission.

Han Li immediately snapped back to his senses, then turned to her as he asked, "What is it?"

Lu Yuqing forced a smile onto her own face as she said, "The restriction here is too strong for me to continue. Go ahead without me, Brother Liu. "

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon hearing this, and he turned to find Xue Han rapidly scaling the staircase, doing so with such ease that he wasn't even pausing from one step to the next.

At this point, it wasn't going to take long before he caught up to them.

Meanwhile, Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan were only accelerating further, and they had already left Han Li and Lu Yuqing far behind.

Chapter 418: Arduous Climb

"Don't worry about me, Brother Liu. These people have no vendetta against me, and I'm just a nobody anyway, so I'm sure they won't do anything to me," Lu Yuqing said.

Han Li hesitated momentarily, then suddenly strode over to Lu Yuqing's side before picking her up in his arms.

Lu Yuqing was swept off her feet before she even had a chance to react, and the force weighing down on her was instantly lifted, while the gravitational force acting upon Han Li was doubled.

However, this was still well within his tolerance capacity, and he began to quickly bound up the staircase.

"Brother Liu..."

"I agreed to bring you with me, so I have to do everything in my power to keep you safe," Han Li said in an indifferent voice.

A complex look appeared in Lu Yuqing's eyes as she lowered her head.

Both Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan had noticed what Han Li was doing, and they were quite taken aback by his actions.

"Looks like you've found yourself quite a womanizer of an ally, Fellow Daoist Cold Flame. I must say, I do admire his courage," Xiong Shan jeered with a mocking look in his eyes.

Patriarch Cold Flame's brows furrowed slightly upon hearing this. Even with his physical prowess and extensive preparation, he didn't dare to take this gravitational restriction lightly at all, and he certainly wasn't optimistic about Han Li's chances of scaling the staircase while carrying an extra burden.

With that in mind, a cold look flashed through his eyes as he turned his gaze away from Han Li.

Meanwhile, Han Li was accelerating further and further, to the point that his speed was comparable with Xue Han's, and as a result, the gap between them was steadily maintained.

Xue Han's expression darkened slightly upon seeing this, while Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan were both quite surprised,

Never had they anticipated that Han Li would only be getting faster in this situation. In fact, he was beginning to slowly catch up to them.

Both of them immediately renewed their efforts, accelerating further themselves, and before long, over an hour had already passed by.

At this point, all of them had already crossed the halfway mark of the staircase, and Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan were still leading the way, but Han Li was only fewer than 30 steps behind them, while Xue Han was around 100 steps behind Han Li.

As for the other Ghost Wail Sect cultivators, they had already been left so far behind that they were nothing more than tiny black dots in the distance.

At this point, the gravity on the staircase had already reached an extremely formidable level, and everyone had slowed down significantly.

Patriarch Cold Flame's entire body was enshrouded in a layer of bright starlight that resembled a veil, giving him a mysterious and powerful appearance.

He was still leading the way from the front, and he was climbing up the steps at a roughly consistent speed.

Meanwhile, Xiong Shan's skin had also taken on a golden hue in addition to the radiant golden light emanating from his body, and he resembled a golden statue that was giving off a tremendous aura of physical prowess.

He was a few steps behind Patriarch Cold Flame, but he was progressing just as smoothly.

Patriarch Cold Flame was rather taken aback to see this. He could tell that Xiong Shan was using a very formidable body refinement secret technique.

Xiong Shan hadn't mastered this ability the last time they were here, so he had most likely attained this ability since the last emergence of the immortal manor specifically for this purpose.

Having said that, this was no surprise as he had also made extensive preparations over the years.

Patriarch Cold Flame cast his gaze even further down the staircase to find that a layer of starlight had also appeared over Han Li's body, and even though he was carrying Lu Yuqing, he wasn't showing any signs of strain at all as he continued to scale the staircase in a calm and measured fashion.

As for Lu Yuqing, she had fallen completely still, and her eyes were tightly shut, as if she had fallen asleep.

Patriarch Cold Flame was astonished to see this, and he was only just beginning to realize that Han Li's physical prowess was far more formidable than he had imagined.

Han Li seemed to have detected Patriarch Cold Flame's gaze, and as he looked up, their eyes met.

Patriarch Cold Flame gave Han Li a rather forced smile, then hurriedly averted his gaze.

Han Li's expression remained indifferent as he also averted his gaze from Patriarch Cold Flame and turned his attention to the top of the silver staircase.

By his estimates, there were roughly 10,000 steps on this staircase, and he still had over 3,000 steps left until he reached the top.

He had only used a small portion of his physical powers at this point, so if the rate of increase of gravitational force remained consistent, then he anticipated that he would be able to reach the top of the staircase just fine.

However...

Han Li turned around to find that Xue Han wasn't falling behind at all.

His physical prowess was rather average, so he held no special advantage when it came to scaling this staircase, but ultimately, he was still a Golden Immortal. At this rate, perhaps he wouldn't be able to catch up to Han Li and the others, but he would most likely also be able to reach the top of the staircase, and once that happened, he would undoubtedly immediately lash out at them.

While Han Li didn't fear him, a battle against a Golden Immortal was naturally something that he wanted to avoid.

With that in mind, the starlight emanating from his body grew even brighter as he accelerated even further.

Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan were both astonished to see this, and they could only accelerate themselves in order to maintain their lead.

However, it didn't take long at all before Han Li was directly behind them, and at this rate, he would even overtake them soon.

Patriarch Cold Flame's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this. Even though he had agreed to forge an alliance with Han Li, the Light Frost Palace was just up ahead, and he certainly wasn't going to allow Han Li to get there before him.

Hence, he let loose a low roar, and the starlight radiating from his body also became significantly brighter, while his True Extreme Film also emerged over his skin.

At the same time, his body swelled drastically in size, with his limbs in particular becoming significantly thicker, and he was able to speed up once again.

Xiong Shan naturally wasn't willing to be left behind, and he began to chant an incantation as his skin took on a darker hue and a metallic gleam, giving him an even stronger resemblance to a golden statue.

Furthermore, his stature was also dramatically enhanced, and with that came a significant increase in speed.

With Han Li's trio picking up the pace in unison, Xue Han was instantly left behind, much to his alarm and fury.

His cultivation base far surpassed those of Han Li's trio, but his physical prowess wasn't remarkable in the slightest, and he hadn't prepared for this in advance, so he was already going all-out just to maintain this speed.

An urgent look appeared in his eyes as he watched Han Li's trio getting further and further away from him.

He swept a sleeve through the air to release a streak of white light, which contained a white talisman, upon which was inscribed an image of what appeared to be a giant humanoid deity.

He slapped the talisman against himself, and it instantly vanished into his body, upon which a burst of dazzling white light appeared around him.

At the same time, a series of white spirit veins quickly spread over his body, and his physical prowess was significantly enhanced, thereby allowing him to remain in the race to the top.

Han Li raised an eyebrow upon seeing this, and he identified the white talisman to be the Giant Strength Spirit Talisman, a powerful immortal talisman that could enhance one's physical prowess.

However, he wasn't all that concerned by this. After all, a talisman like this was inevitably going to wear off soon.

Around 15 minutes passed by, and at this point, everyone was only around 1,000 steps from reaching the top of the staircase.

At this point, even though Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan had sped up, Han Li was still able to catch up to them, but he didn't overtake them, and the three of them were scaling the staircase alongside one another.

As for Xue Han, he was clearly beginning to struggle. The white spirit veins on his body had become quite dim, and a faint sheen of sweat had appeared on his forehead, while his breathing had also become rather labored.

Earlier, he had only been lagging behind by about 100 steps, but that gap had since widened to somewhere between 200 to 300 steps.

Furthermore, his pace was becoming stagnant, while Han Li's trio continued to make rapid progress, and the gap between them was only continuing to widen.

Ultimately, his talisman was unable to bridge the enormous disparity in physical prowess.

An uncertain look appeared on Xue Han's face as he looked up at Han Li's trio.

At this rate, they were going to reach the top far ahead of him.

With that in mind, he flipped a hand over to summon a palm-sized black jade box, which was giving off a warm and comforting aura, clearly indicating that the box had been crafted from some type of extremely precious material.

There were several talismans plastered to the box, all of which were shimmering with spiritual light, indicating that whatever was in the box was being kept tightly under wraps.

Xue Han opened his mouth to release a burst of black light that enveloped the jade box, and all of the talismans on the box immediately flew off their own, following which the spiritual light emanating from them completely faded, indicating that they were disposable talismans.

Xue Han paid no heed to those spent talismans as he carefully opened the jade box to reveal a black pill inside that was roughly the size of a pigeon egg.

The pill was giving off a burst of black light, within which a demon beast projection could be seen.

The beast resembled a dragon with a lone horn on its head and a pair of wings on its back.

Tremendous energy fluctuations intermingled with a hint of law power fluctuations were emanating from the black pill, and a hint of reluctance flashed through Xue Han's eyes, but he ultimately swallowed the pill, nonetheless.

Even though Han Li's trio was far ahead of Xue Han, the black pill gave off such formidable energy fluctuations that their attention was instantly drawn to him, and a stunned look appeared on Xiong Shan's face as he exclaimed, "That's... a Profound Beast Essence Pill!"

"What kind of pill is that, Fellow Daoist Xiong?" Patriarch Cold Flame immediately asked.

Chapter 419: Battle Prohibition

Han Li's pupils contracted slightly upon hearing this exchange.

Thanks to the Heaven Controlling Vial, his cultivation advancement had relied heavily on pill consumption since his return to the Immortal Realm. Hence, whenever he got the opportunity, he would read through all types of books related to pill refinement. This was particularly true back when he was still in the Blaze Dragon Dao, and during his readings, he had learned about the Profound Beast Essence Pill.

The pill was refined using the placentas or eggs of certain powerful beasts as the primary ingredients. These demon beasts often possessed incredibly powerful physical bodies, and taking this pill would infuse the power of the demon beast's bloodline into the body of the consumer. Not only would this drastically enhance their physical prowess, the consumer also had a chance of attaining that demon beast's innate abilities.

If the primary ingredients were acquired from immortal beasts that had innate mastery over certain law powers, then there was a chance that the resulting Profound Beast Essence Pill would also be imbued with the same law powers, thereby serving the same purpose as a dao pill.

However, not only was the pill no less difficult to refine than a dao pill, the supplementary ingredients were also very difficult to find, thereby making them exceedingly rare. This one was clearly imbued with law powers, so it was even more remarkable than the average Profound Beast Essence Pill.

Xiong Shan briefly explained the effects of the Profound Beast Essence Pill to Han Li and Patriarch Cold Flame through voice transmission, and the latter's expression instantly changed drastically upon hearing this.

All of a sudden, a burst of radiant black light erupted out of Xue Han's body, and his slightly pale complexion instantly returned to normal, then turned as red as blood.

At the same time, a string of cracks and pops were ringing out from within his body as thick veins began to bulge all over the exposed parts of his body.

His entire body then began to expand rapidly, reaching twice its original size in the blink of an eye, and a layer of thick black scales that was giving off a metallic sheen appeared over his skin, while sharp black claws emerged from the tips of his fingers.

All of a sudden, he had transformed into a half-human, half-draconic creature.

Not only that, but the muscles on his forehead and his back were squirming violently, as if something were about to emerge from those spots.

However, right at this moment, the black light surging over his body subsided, and his squirming muscles also fell still.

As the black faded, Xue Han's new form was revealed in its full glory.

A stunned look flashed through Han Li's eyes upon seeing this. The effects of the Profound Beast Essence Pill were comparable to that of his true spirit transformations.

Attaining those transformations had been an extremely grueling task for Han Li, yet for Xue Han, he was able to achieve the same effect just through taking a pill.

Han Li looked at Xue Han for a moment longer, then withdrew his gaze and continued to scale the staircase, and Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan hurriedly followed along.

Xue Han gently exhaled, and a sharp gust of wind shot out of his mouth, striking the stone step in front of him with an audible sound.

He then looked down at his own body before heaving a faint sigh.

Having taken the Profound Beast Essence Pill on such short notice, it hadn't been very efficacious at all, and most of the pill's power had been squandered, but this was already enough.

Xue Han took a step forward, climbing up two steps at a time as he recommenced his pursuit of Han Li's trio.

Han Li and the others didn't turn around to see what was happening behind them, but they could detect Xue Han's rapid approach with their spiritual sense, and they hurriedly picked up the pace themselves.

However, in this new form, Xue Han's speed far exceeded theirs, and it didn't take long before the gap between them was shortened to only just over 100 steps.

At this rate, he would be able to catch up to them in no more than 15 minutes.

Xiong Shan's expression darkened slightly as he chanted an incantation, and his body swelled even further in size amid a flash of golden light.

At the same time, all of the hair on his head quickly vanished, and a golden monk robe also appeared over his body.

In the blink of an eye, he had transformed into a golden Arhat.

Following this transformation, Xiong Shan was also able to scale two steps at a time, and he was climbing the staircase at a comparable speed to Xue Han.

A hint of surprise flashed through Han Li's eyes upon seeing this, and he also began to channel his Great Universe Origin Arts with all his might.

A string of cracks and pops rang out within his body, while 18 specks of starlight appeared on his chest and abdomen, and a burst of tremendous power erupted out of his body, causing the surrounding space to tremble and quiver.

Han Li continued to only take one step at a time, but he wasn't lagging behind Xiong Shan at all.

As a result, Patriarch Cold Flame was instantly overtaken by the two of them, and an urgent look appeared in his eyes as he also began to channel his Great Universe Origin Arts with all his might, and 18 specks of starlight appeared on his chest and abdomen as well, but even though they were using the same body refinement art, it was clear that Han Li's physical prowess far surpassed Patriarch Cold Flame's.

Hence, even though Patriarch Cold Flame was also able to accelerate by a large margin, he was still a little slower than Han Li, Xiong Shan, and Xue Han.

As a result, Xue Han was beginning to catch up, and in his urgency to get away, Patriarch Cold Flame flipped a hand over to summon four or five talismans of different colors, all of which he plastered onto his own body in quick succession.

The talismans instantly fused into body, and the starlight around him grew brighter as he sped up once again, allowing him to just barely keep up with Han Li and Xiong Shan.

At this point, they were fewer than 200 steps from the top.

The steps here had become even steeper, while the gravitational force was increasing at a far faster rate than before, thereby forcing everyone to slow down.

Han Li and Xiong Shan were still able to make steady progress, despite being forced to decelerate, but the same couldn't be said for Patriarch Cold Flame.

The starlight radiating from his body had dimmed significantly, and he was also getting short of breath, indicating that he wasn't going to be able to keep this up for much longer.

Having said that, Xue Han was also in a similar situation. Large sections of the black scales over his skin had already receded, and his face was looking a little pale, while his footsteps were also becoming rather unsteady.

A look of fury and frustration appeared on Xue Han's face.

The bloodline power in the Profound Beast Essence Pill still hadn't completely fused with his body, and he wasn't going to be able to maintain this form for much longer.

All of a sudden, more of the black scales on his body faded, and he was forced to stop in his tracks.

Patriarch Cold Flame was ecstatic to see this, and he paused momentarily to catch his breath while also summoning a blue pill that was giving off tremendous starpower.

He immediately swallowed the pill without any hesitation, then channeled his Great Universe Origin Arts to digest it, and the starlight emanating from his body instantly became significantly brighter, following which he continued to scale the staircase.

A cold gleam flashed through Xue Han's eyes, and he abruptly raised both hands before flicking his fingers through the air in rapid succession.

10 thin black threads instantly shot out of his fingertip before vanishing in a flash.

In the next instant, the 10 black threads appeared behind Patriarch Cold Flame without any warning, then hurtled directly toward his back at an alarming speed.

However, right at this moment, a layer of bright yellow light appeared over the silver staircase, and a burst of tremendous gravitational force began to act upon the black threads.

Seven of the black threads were instantly diverted away from their original trajectories, but the remaining three were still hurtling directly toward Patriarch Cold Flame.

Patriarch Cold Flame's expression changed drastically upon sensing this, and he let loose an alarmed cry as he dodged to the side.

However, despite his best efforts, he was unable to evade the three black threads, which tore through the protective spiritual light around him before piercing into his body, then exploded violently.

Three massive holes were instantly blown into his body, and blood was gushing out profusely.

He let loose an agonized wail as he fell to his knees, and both Han Li and Xiong Shan immediately turned around upon hearing this.

As for Xue Han, he was looking rather surprised, seemingly taken aback by how easily his sneak attack had landed.

However, before he had a chance to do anything else, a resounding boom suddenly rang out directly above him, and a thick bolt of reddish-purple lightning appeared out of thin air before striking him with tremendous power.

His entire body was instantly inundated by radiant lightning, and a blood-curdling howl rang out before being abruptly cut off.

Xue Han's body was torn to shreds within the lightning, and his nascent soul sprang out of his destroyed remains, only to be instantly destroyed by the lightning as well.

All of this had happened extremely abruptly, and Han Li was completely rooted to the spot in astonishment, but naturally also quite relieved that Xue Han had been eliminated.

"What a fool!" Xiong Shan chuckled coldly, then paid no further heed to what was happening behind him as he continued to scale the staircase.

It was clear that there was some type of battle prohibition restriction on the staircase.

Instead of following Xiong Shan, Han Li remained on the spot as he cast his gaze toward Patriarch Cold Flame, who had just suffered extremely severe injuries, but was also quite relieved to see the demise of Xue Han.

He pulled out a crimson pill in a shaky manner before swallowing it, and a layer of bright crimson light instantly appeared over his body. The three holes in his body quickly healed, following which he struggled to his feet.

However, Han Li could tell that Patriarch Cold Flame's internal injuries were still far from healed, and it was most likely going to take some time before he could continue to scale the staircase.

Thankfully, the other Ghost Wail Sect cultivators were still very far behind, and that should give Patriarch Cold Flame enough time to recover.

With that in mind, Han Li was just about to continue up the staircase when his expression abruptly stiffened.

Chapter 420: Reaching the Top

As the bolt of reddish-purple lightning faded, Xue Han's severely ravaged remains were revealed.

However, what had been revealed was not a body. Instead, it was a dark red wooden puppet with mysterious patterns engraved upon all of its parts.

Standing not far away from the wooden puppet was none other than Xue Han, and his face was looking a little pale, but aside from that, he was completely unharmed.

Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan's expressions instantly changed drastically upon hearing this.

That's a substitution puppet!

Xue Han summoned a pill that he promptly swallowed, and his pale complexion quickly recovered.

"I didn't anticipate there to be a restriction like this, but no matter. There are plenty of ways to kill someone without directly attacking them," he chuckled coldly, then began to slowly ascend the staircase once again.

Patriarch Cold Flame shuddered as he hurriedly tried to get away, but he had only just raised a foot when an unnatural flush appeared over his face, and he threw up a mouthful of blood before falling feebly to the ground once again.

A look of despair appeared in his eyes, and in an act of desperation, he turned to Han Li as he implored through voice transmission, "Save me, Fellow Daoist Han!"

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this, and he remained unmoved.

It was already quite a struggle for him to carry Lu Yuqing, and if he were to accept another burden, then there was no way that he would be able to reach the top of the staircase.

The final glimmer of hope in Patriarch Cold Flame's faded at the sight of Han Li's expression, but in the next instant, a thought seemed to have suddenly occurred to him.

"Fellow Daoist Han, do you want the second half of the Great Universe Origin Arts?" he asked in an urgent manner through voice transmission.

Han Li's expression changed slightly upon hearing this, and suppressed his own excitement as he asked, "Do you have it?"

"No, but if you save me, I can take you to it," Patriarch Cold Flame replied.

Han Li raised an eyebrow upon hearing this. "Are you saying that the second half of the cultivation is in this Light Frost Palace?"

"That's right. The stone slab that contains the first half of the Great Universe Origin Arts was actually something that I obtained after unintentionally triggering a restriction in the Light Frost Palace, and the main reason I came here this time is to secure the second half. That place is extremely secretive, so there's no way you'll be able to find it without me," Patriarch Cold Flame replied.

Han Li didn't offer an immediate response, and a contemplative look appeared on his face as he pondered the validity of Patriarch Cold Flame's claims.

Judging from the conversation between Patriarch Cold Flame and Xiong Shan from earlier, both of them seemed to have reaped significant rewards the last time they visited the Light Frost Palace, and Patriarch Cold Flame had once told him that he had obtained the Great Universe Origin Arts from a secret area, so it wasn't all that far-fetched to imagine that this was the secret area he had been referring to.

Furthermore, the stone slab that contained the first half of the cultivation had resonated with the starry light barrier earlier, indicating that there was definitely some connection between this place and the cultivation art.

With that in mind, Patriarch Cold Flame's claims were very likely to be true.

At this point, Xue Han had already scaled around a dozen steps, and he wasn't far away from Patriarch Cold Flame.

A panicked look appeared on Patriarch Cold Flame's face upon seeing this, and he hurriedly continued, "Are you suspecting that I'm lying to save myself? I'm willing to swear a vow on my life! If I'm lying to you, then let me be racked with inner demons and suffer the most painful death imaginable!"

Han Li finally made up his mind upon hearing this. "Alright, I'll believe you this time."

"Wait here for me," Han Li said as he set Lu Yuqing down onto the stone step, then began to make his way toward Patriarch Cold Flame.

Lu Yuqing immediately nodded in response and did as she was told, standing still on the stone step.

Descending the staircase was far easier than scaling it, and Han Li was able to reach Patriarch Cold Flame in the blink of an eye before picking him and immediately returning the same way that he had come from.

Xue Han was furious to see this, but Han Li and Patriarch Cold Flame were still out of reach, and he didn't dare to unleash any further attacks, so he could only watch as the two of them sped away from him.

Meanwhile, a hint of derision flashed through Xiong Shan's eyes as he witnessed Han Li's actions.

Perhaps he could carry one person to the top, but in his eyes, carrying two people was no different from committing suicide for a mere True Immortal.

It didn't take long before Han Li reached the same step as before, and from there, he picked up Lu Yuqing as well.

With the burden of two people on his shoulders, his body instantly swayed slightly in an unsteady manner, much to the alarm of Patriarch Cold Flame and Lu Yuqing.

Han Li took a deep breath, then began to chant an incantation as a layer of dazzling purplish-golden light appeared over his body.

Immediately thereafter, several true spirit projections emerged before vanishing into his body, and he instantly swelled to several times his original size, while a layer of purplish-golden scales emerged over his skin.

At the same time, two additional sets of heads and arms appeared over his body.

With these six arms, he picked up Patriarch Cold Flame and Lu Yuqing, then began to scale the staircase once again, and compared with before, he hadn't slowed down in the slightest.

An incredulous look appeared on Xue Han's face seeing this, and his expression was mirrored by Xiong Shan, who took an astonished glance at Han Li before withdrawing his gaze and continuing his ascent.

"Your physical prowess is extraordinary, Fellow Daoist Han! I am truly in awe!" Patriarch Cold Flame praised as a hint of elation flashed through his eyes.

"There's no need to flatter me, Fellow Daoist Cold Flame," Han Li replied in an indifferent voice. "Also, I have a question for you."

A slightly awkward look appeared on Patriarch Cold Flame's face, and he prompted, "Go ahead, Fellow Daoist Han."

"Earlier, you referred to the person behind us as Xue Han. We were both there at the battle of the Holy Puppet Sect, could it be that this is the same Xue Han from back then?" Han Li asked through voice transmission.

Patriarch Cold Flame's expression changed slightly upon hearing this, and he was silent for a moment before nodding in confirmation.

A hint of befuddlement flashed through Han Li's eyes upon hearing this. "In that case, are all of those other Ghost Wail Sect cultivators also adopting fake identities?"

"Fellow Daoist Han, for your own sake, it's best for you to know as little about this matter as possible," Patriarch Cold Flame replied in a meaningful voice.

"You're right, I was curious," Han Li replied with a smile, then asked no further questions.

Meanwhile, Han Li had already scaled quite a few more steps, and he was only 30 to 40 steps from reaching the top.

Xue Han had been left far behind, while Xiong Shan continued to make steady progress and was about to reach the endpoint.

Han Li was observing the steps up ahead with a solemn look on his face.

These remaining steps were going to be the most difficult ones to conquer, and he didn't dare to take them lightly at all.

Purplish-golden light continued to surge over his body as he steadily progressed up the staircase, and after scaling around a dozen more steps, he finally slowed down, having to take a short break with each step that he scaled.

The same was also happening to Xiong Shan.

The gravity here was astonishingly overbearing, to the point that even the air was buzzing audibly.

Han Li was looking slightly weary, and the purplish-golden light emanating from his body was also flashing incessantly.

Lu Yuqing and Patriarch Cold Flame couldn't help but feel concerned upon seeing this.

"Fellow Daoist Han, how about you put one of us down and take the other to the top, then come back and repeat the process?" Patriarch Cold Flame suggested.

"That would waste too much time. Rest assured, this is still not too much for me to bear," Han Li replied, and as he did so, he scaled another step.

Xiong Shan's eyelids twitched slightly as he observed Han Li out of the corner of his eye, and he also took another step.

Han Li's body was trembling slightly, and he took a deep breath as he braced himself before taking another step.

The summit was already within reach, and the sooner he could reach the top, the sooner he would be able to commence his treasure hunt.

With that in mind, both he and Xiong Shan were making one final all-out effort.

The gravitational force on the final dozen or so steps was so formidable that it took the two of them a full 15 minutes to reach the top, and in the instant Han Li stepped onto the summit, the gravity instantly returned to normal, leaving him feeling as light as a feather.

As a result, he inadvertently sprang up over 100 feet before landing on the ground again.

Even though he had scaled the staircase as quickly as he could, he had been forced to withstand three times the normal gravity due to the two people that he was carrying, so Xiong Shan was able to reach the top before him.

He heaved a long sigh of relief, then turned back to find that Xue Han was still 50 to 60 steps away, glowering up at him with a furious expression.

Han Li withdrew his gaze before setting down Patriarch Cold Flame and Lu Yuqing, then reverted back to his normal form as he cast his gaze forward.

Directly up ahead was a purple gate that was several hundred feet tall, on either side of which was a pillar with a golden dragon wound around it, and each of the golden dragons had a golden dragon bead clasped in its mouth.

There was no writing on the plaque above the gate, only an artwork of an ice that was quite rough around the edges, but also somehow extremely life-like.

On either side of the gate was a tall purple wall that stretched into the distance as far as the eyes could see.

Han Li took a glance at the purple gate and the walls on either side of it to find that they were completely ordinary construction that weren't giving off any spiritual power fluctuations, and the dragon beads clasped in the mouths of the two golden dragons were also just ordinary ornaments.

The only thing that caught Han Li's attention was the artwork of the vast ice field, which resembled the ice field that they had flown through on the way here.