

## **A Record 431**

### Chapter 431: Different Area

All of a sudden, a sharp gleam flashed through Han Li's eyes, and he abruptly did away with his concealment secret technique, instantly exposing himself and Lu Yuqing.

Immediately thereafter, he slung an arm around her waist as arcs of golden lightning began to emerge over his body, then converged above them to form a thick bolt of golden lightning that enveloped both of them and erupted into the air.

Xue Han was quite startled by this, and he hurriedly swiveled around, following which a cold smile appeared on his face.

"I knew you couldn't have gone very far!"

The huge black net above the medicine garden suddenly began to rumble violently while also rapidly becoming around twice as thick as before.

At the same time, a series of black threads shot out of all of the connective points on the net, then sped directly toward the bolt of golden lightning that was rising up into the sky.

The black threads appeared to be moving in a rather languid fashion, but they were astonishingly fast, even more so than the bolt of golden lightning.

The bolt of golden lightning was weaving from side to side to evade the black threads as it approached the black net up above, but it was swarmed by the vast expanse of black threads no more than 100 feet away from the net.

A burst of constrictive law powers erupted out of the black threads, and the bolt of golden lightning instantly faded to reveal Han Li and Lu Yuqing.

The surrounding black threads didn't stop even for a moment as they continued to sweep toward the two, and they were as dense as rain, making them impossible to evade.

Han Li's pupils contracted slightly upon seeing this, but he remained calm and collected as he summoned his Mantra Treasured Axis, which began to revolve rapidly before immediately vanishing back into his body.

Immediately thereafter, a layer of faint golden light emerged over his body, and he transformed into a golden blur as he continued to rush toward the black net overhead.

All of a sudden, he had become extraordinarily fast, allowing him to evade the seemingly unavoidable mass of black threads with ease.

All of this had transpired in the blink of an eye, and before Xue Han had a chance to react, Han Li and Lu Yuqing had already bypassed the storm of black threads and appeared directly underneath the huge black net.

A hint of surprise flashed through Xue Han's eyes upon seeing this, but he wasn't overly alarmed.

Even though Han Li and Lu Yuqing had managed to bypass the storm of black threads, there was no way that they would be able to get through the black net.

Not only was the net imbued with restrictive law powers, it was extremely resilient, which meant that it could trap even a Golden Immortal, let alone a mere True Immortal like Han Li.

With that in mind, Xue Han stowed away the miniature silver pagoda in his hand, then flew up toward Han Li's duo.

Right at this moment, an incredibly powerful Golden Immortal Stage aura surged out of Han Li's body, followed immediately by an eruption of thick and translucent arcs of golden lightning that were far more formidable than the golden lightning from before.

At the same time, a massive crab pincer emerged from Han Li's body with thick arcs of golden lightning flashing around it, and it closed around the huge black net like a giant pair of lightning scissors.

A gash was instantly torn into the net, and it wasn't a very large one, but large enough for two people to pass through.

Xue Han's expression changed drastically upon seeing this.

Han Li immediately flew out of the opening as a faint shadow, then fled into the distance without any hesitation, vanishing out of sight in the blink of an eye.

Right after Han Li got away, Xue Han immediately arrived outside the black net as well, and he cast his gaze toward the direction that Han Li had fled in as he roared in a furious voice, "After him!"

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In a dense forest to the left of the mountain summit.

A streak of golden light descended out of the sky, then faded to reveal Han Li and Lu Yuqing.

"Brother Han, why are you flying away from this place?" Lu Yuqing asked with a slightly panicked expression.

"We're being chased by a Golden Immortal. If I were on my own, perhaps I would be able to outrun him, but I can't guarantee the same if you're with me, and if we flee to the sea, there won't be anywhere that we can take cover, so it'll be very difficult to shake them off," Han Li explained while quickly scouring his surroundings.

Lu Yuqing's expression changed slightly upon hearing this, and she was very thankful that Han Li hadn't abandoned her.

"Having said that, hiding here isn't a permanent solution, either. We have to conceal our auras and hide elsewhere on the island. Do you have an aura concealment spirit treasure on you?" Han Li asked.

"I do, my father gave me one before I came here," Lu Yuqing immediately replied with a nod.

She then flipped a hand over to produce an extremely thin white veil garment that she promptly put on.

A layer of faint white light instantly emerged over the veil garment, and it vanished out of sight, having fused into her clothes in a flash.

At the same time, her aura had also become very subtle and difficult to detect.

Han Li swept his spiritual sense over her momentarily, then gave a pleased nod as he said, "That'll do. Once we open up some distance between them and ourselves, we should be able to remain hidden."

At the same time, he was also using his Transient Guild and an aura concealment secret technique to completely stifle his own aura.

After that, the two of them made their way into the dense forest in the opposite direction from the medicine garden.

Not long after their departure, four figures descended out of the sky, landing where they had been standing not long ago.

"Their auras have vanished here," Layman Bone Flame said with tightly furrowed brows.

"They must be hiding like cowards because they're scared of us!" a burly man with a formidable physique chuckled coldly.

"We have to find them. Otherwise, we'll have to face the wrath of Master Xue Han," another Ubiquitous Pavilion cultivator said with a concerned expression.

"No need to panic, I have something here that should be able to help us track them down," Daoist Clear Bright said with a smile.

He then flipped a hand over to produce a miniature golden cauldron, on the lid of which was engraved a peculiar-looking beast with a remarkably long trunk of a nose.

Its eyes were closed, and its trunk was coiled, giving it a rather adorable appearance.

Daoist Clear Bright then summoned a piece of black incense before tossing it into the miniature cauldron after setting alight. After that, he chanted an incantation before laying a finger onto the head of the strange beast on the cauldron's lid, and the beast's eyelids instantly sprang open to reveal a pair of ruby-like eyes.

It began sniffing around the area before turning its trunk in the direction that Han Li's duo had departed in before releasing a cloud of dense white smoke.

"This spirit cauldron can sniff out the magic power, scent, aura, and many other telltale signs left behind by cultivators in the air. In particular, it's very sensitive to the bodily aroma of women. However, it won't work if too much time has passed, so we have to get after them right away," Daoist Clear Bright said.

The other three Ubiquitous Pavilion cultivators were ecstatic to see this, and they hurriedly set off in the direction that the cloud of smoke was pointing in.

Meanwhile, Han Li and Lu Yuqing had arrived in a dilapidated garden.

All of the pavilions and buildings had already collapsed, and there were layers of slick moss and masses of tangled vines clinging to everything.

The garden wasn't very large, and it had been constructed on the outskirts of the forest, which meant that leaving the garden equated to emerging from the forest.

The exit of the garden was a semi-collapsed circular archway, outside of which was a small winding path that was covered in weeds leading all the way down the mountain.

"Someone's coming after us!" Han Li suddenly said as he stopped in his tracks and turned around.

"How? We've already concealed our auras!" Lu Yuqing exclaimed with a surprised expression.

"We may have concealed our auras, but that doesn't mean that they don't have other ways to track us. If worse comes to worst, we'll have to try and get away..."

Before Han Li finished his sentence, his voice suddenly cut off as a surprised look appeared on his face.

"What is it, Brother Han?" Lu Yuqing asked with a slightly anxious expression.

Han Li offered no response as he hurried over to the semi-collapsed stone archway before carefully examining it.

Lu Yuqing also followed along and began to inspect the archway with tightly furrowed brows, and each of them were using their respective ocular ability.

Moments later, Lu Yuqing withdrew her gaze as she asked in a puzzled manner, "Is there something special about this archway, Brother Han?"

Han Li shook his head in response. "Do you not see anything, either? Looks like it must've been my imagination then. Let's go."

With that, the two of them stepped through the stone archway, but as soon as they did so, the space around them instantly began to warp like a sheet of paper that had suddenly been poked inward, resulting in layers of creases.

Han Li was quite startled to see this, but it was too late for him to backtrack, and he stumbled forward before steadying himself.

Lu Yuqing also tipped forward involuntarily, and she would've fallen on her face had Han Li not reacted sufficiently quickly to catch her.

Upon witnessing the scene that laid out before her, Lu Yuqing immediately exclaimed, "Where are we right now?"

A thin and long mountain range that stretched for hundreds of kilometers had appeared in front of them, and it seemed that the mountain range was connected to the island that they were currently on.

Han Li turned back to discover that the stone archway was still there, but it seemed very out of place in this setting.

"It looks like this archway is the entrance to another area," Han Li mused.

#### Chapter 432: Realm Traversing Plaque

"That's incredible! Neither of us detected any spatial fluctuations before we stepped through the archway!" Lu Yuqing said with an amazed expression.

"I have a feeling that perhaps this is a one-way passageway, and the triggering mechanism is on this side, so it was previously only possible to go from here to the garden. However, it seems like it's since become a two-way passageway, perhaps due to the damage to the archway," Han Li speculated.

Lu Yuqing immediately began to inspect the archway upon hearing this, and sure enough, there were indeed some faint spatial fluctuations emanating from it.

"Now that we're in this hidden space, it should be very difficult for them to find us," Lu Yuqing said.

"Even so, we can't get complacent. After all, they managed to track us down earlier, did they not?"

Lu Yuqing fell silent upon hearing this.

After a brief moment of contemplation, Han Li suddenly swept a sleeve through the air to release a streak of golden light, which transformed into Daoist Xie.

Daoist Xie took a glance at Lu Yuqing, then said to Han Li through voice transmission, "Fellow Daoist Han, while it's true that you're my current owner, haven't you been summoning me a bit too frequently these past few days?"

"My apologies, but we're in a very perilous situation right now, so I have no choice but to call upon you," Han Li replied with a wry smile as he flipped a hand over to produce a storage pouch. "Here are some Immortal Origin Stones in case I need to call upon you for battle. Will that be enough?"

Daoist Xie accepted the storage pouch, then inspected its contents briefly before replying, "That should be enough unless I'm required to use certain special secret techniques."

"Good. In that case, you can go back and rest. The next time I summon you will most likely be in the heat of battle," Han Li said with a nod.

Daoist Xie flew back up Han Li's sleeve as a streak of golden light upon hearing this.

Lu Yuqing was watching in silence, and she was rather curious about Daoist Xie's identity, but knew not to ask unnecessary questions.

"Let's try and figure out what this place is before we do anything else," Han Li said as he inspected the mountain range with his eyes and his spiritual sense.

Moments later, he withdrew his spiritual sense, and his brows furrowed slightly as he said, "This place is rather strange. It seems to be an independent space. Whenever I try to release my spiritual sense beyond the boundaries of the mountain range, it hits an invisible wall."

"Then what should we do now? Should we explore the mountain range?" Lu Yuqing asked.

Han Li pondered the question for a moment, then replied, "If this is an isolated area, then there's definitely going to be more than one entrance and exit, so let's go and search the mountain range. Perhaps we'll be able to find a way out."



Lu Yuqing naturally raised no objections to this, and the two of them immediately set off, flying deep into the mountain range as two streaks of light.

Only while in mid-air did Han Li discover that the mountain range wasn't actually in the shape of a straight line. Instead, it split apart down the middle at some point to produce two different branches.

"Which way should we go, Brother Han?" Lu Yuqing asked as she looked at the crossroads down below.

Han Li released his spiritual sense once again to try and detect something, but the results were rather dissatisfactory.

"I can't tell any difference between the two branches at the moment, so we'll just have to explore them one by one and..."

Before Han Li had a chance to finish his sentence, he suddenly discovered that the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords in his body had become rather restless for no apparent reason, and they were expressing some type of emotion to him through their spiritual connection.

It was a mixture of excitement, surprise, and agitation...

Han Li immediately flipped a hand over to summon one of his Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, and it instantly shot forth toward the right branch of the mountain range.

If Han Li hadn't forced it to a halt through their spiritual connection, the sword would have flown away without him.

"For some reason, my bonded flying sword seems to be attracted to that branch of the mountain range," Han Li said as he caught the flying sword in his grasp.

"That must mean that there's something noteworthy there. We don't know which branch to choose anyway, so why don't we let the sword decide for us?" Lu Yuqing suggested with a smile.

Han Li considered this proposal momentarily, then nodded in response.

Thus, the two of them flew toward the right branch of the mountain range, but upon arriving at the point where the two branches intersected, Han Li suddenly stopped in his tracks, then cast his gaze in the direction of the stone archway as he asked, "Can I have a piece of fabric from your dress, Fellow Daoist Lu?"

Lu Yuqing was rather puzzled by this request, but she duly obliged, lifting the skirt of her dress before tearing off a piece and handing it to Han Li.

After accepting the piece of fabric from her, Han Li summoned a pair of giant ape puppets, then tied the strip of fabric around the finger of one of the puppets.

After that, he injected a wisp of his spiritual sense into the body of the other puppet, then instructed them to fly toward the left branch of the mountain range.

Lu Yuqing's eyes immediately lit up upon seeing this, and she praised, "That's so smart of you, Brother Han! Even if you those people manage to track us up to this point, they'll surely be fooled."

"If we're lucky and they really do end up going the wrong way, regardless of whether they trigger any restrictions or engage my puppets in battle, as long as they make some noise, we'll be alerted to their presence in advance," Han Li said.

Lu Yuqing nodded in response, and at the same time, she couldn't help but wonder exactly what Han Li had to have gone through to make him so vigilant and resourceful.

"Alright, let's go," Han Li said, then flew toward the right branch of the mountain range, and Lu Yuqing hurriedly followed along.

The two of them had only just arrived above that branch of the mountain range when the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Sword in Han Li's hand suddenly began to tremble violently, and it flew down with tremendous force, dragging Han Li downward.

At the same time, a burst of azure light suddenly appeared within Han Li's sleeve, and immediately thereafter, his sleeve abruptly burst open as one azure flying sword emerged after another, all of which were desperately trying to fly down as quickly as they could.

Han Li was quite startled by this turn of events, and he hurriedly closed his sleeve to prevent the rest of the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords from flying out. At the same time, he tried to summon the dozens of flying swords that had already flown away back to himself, but they refused to heed his call, and it was as if they had gone completely out of his control.

Han Li took a deep breath, then flew down after his flying swords, while Lu Yuqing also followed along without much hesitation.

Upon landing on the ground, Han Li was alarmed to discover that his spiritual connection with the Azure Cloudswarm Bamboo Swords that had already flown away had suddenly been severed, so he was unable to sense them at all.

He forcibly suppressed the agitation that was rising up in his heart as he inspected his surroundings, and he found himself standing in an abandoned garden that was overrun with weeds and shrubs.

There seemed to be a small brick path beneath his feet, but it was barely visible at all underneath all of the soil and dead leaves and branches.

Han Li wore a grim expression as he scoured the surroundings with his spiritual sense, but to no avail.

At the same time, all of his remaining flying swords were still desperately trying to fly out of his sleeve.

Han Li took a glance down at his own bulging sleeve, then suddenly let go, releasing the flying sword in his grasp.

The flying sword instantly flew out of his grasp before hurtling deeper into the garden in a flash.

Han Li immediately focused his gaze intently on the flying sword as he set off in pursuit.

The flying sword flew straight to the deepest part of the garden, then plunged itself completely into a black tombstone that was around half the height of a grown man.

The black tombstone had clearly been weathered by the passage of time, and aside from a layer of dark and slick moss on its surface, there wasn't any text inscribed upon it.

Behind the tombstone was a bulging mound that appeared to be no different from an ordinary grave.

Han Li swept his gaze over the black tombstone with his Brightsight Spirit Eyes, and he was immediately greeted by the sight of a burst of spatial ripples that were invisible to the naked eye.

His brows furrowed slightly as he approached the tombstone, then laid a hand down upon it, and a layer of black light instantly surged over the tombstone, then flashed a few times before fading away.

Han Li's brows were tightly furrowed as he pressed down on different parts of the tombstone with the palm of his hand, but it displayed no reaction other than that brief flash of black light.

At this point, Lu Yuqing had also arrived on the scene, and she landed beside Han Li before turning her attention to the tombstone, upon which a hint of recognition flashed through her eyes.

"Do you recognize this thing?" Han Li asked.

"If I'm not mistaken, this should be a Realm Traversing Plaque. We have one in the island master's manor," Lu Yuqing replied.

"Realm Traversing Plaque? What's that?" Han Li asked.

"It's a type of spatial treasure that's similar to a teleportation array, except it only facilitates one-way teleportation," Lu Yuqing explained.

"Do you know of any way to activate this plaque?" Han Li hurriedly asked.

## Chapter 433: The Lost Sword Sect

"I can give it a try," Lu Yuqing replied, then strode forward as she flipped a hand over to summon an octagonal black jade pendant, upon which were engraved some very strange spiral patterns that were layered on top of one another in a rather convoluted fashion.

"This is the key for the Realm Traversing Plaque at our island master's manor. Apparently, it was passed down in our clan from generations past along with the Realm Traversing Plaque, but I don't know if this key will actually work on this plaque as well," Lu Yuqing said as she cast an incantation seal onto the jade pendant.

A streak of azure light flew into the pendant, following which the spiral patterns on its surface instantly began to revolve, and it released a streak of black light onto the Realm Traversing Plaque.

A spiral pattern also appeared on the Realm Traversing Plaque, and it warped and twisted momentarily before transforming into a palm-sized black vortex.

The vortex was constantly fluctuating in size, as if there were two conflicting forces trying to expand and contract it in unison.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this.

Right at this moment, Lu Yuqing suddenly said, "Brother Han, it looks like this key of mine isn't a perfect match with this Realm Traversing Plaque, so I'll need you to inject more immortal spiritual power into it to support me!"

Han Li immediately laid a hand upon Lu Yuqing's jade pendant upon hearing this, and his immense immortal spiritual power surged out of his body before injecting itself into the jade pendant.

The pillar of black light shooting out of the jade pendant instantly became thicker, causing layers upon layers of rippling black light to emerge over the entire plaque.

At the same time, the palm-sized vortex at the center of the plaque seemed to have overcome the mysterious force that was trying to suppress it, and it was steadily expanding.

An elated look appeared in both Lu Yuqing and Han Li's eyes upon seeing this.

The black vortex on the Realm Traversing Plaque began to revolve faster and faster, and a burst of tremendous suction force erupted out of it, instantly pulling in Han Li and Lu Yuqing.

Han Li felt the entire world spin around him, and his vision abruptly faded before quickly returning again.

However, before he had a chance to steady himself and inspect his surroundings, the remaining flying swords erupted into a frenzy once again.

This time, he didn't even get a chance to stop them before all of them burst out of his sleeve, then shot up into the sky like dozens of rising azure dragons, vanishing into the clouds up above in the blink of an eye.

A wry smile appeared on Han Li's face as he took a glance down at his own empty sleeve, then swept his gaze over his surroundings.

Directly in front of him stood an enormous mountain that reached all the way up into the clouds.

The mountain was covered in dense vegetation, and it was thriving with vitality, in stark contrast with the environment from before.

Everything here was completely different from the earlier setting, to the point that Han Li was even beginning to suspect that he had fallen into an illusion.

However, after inspecting the area with his Brightsight Spirit Eyes and his Eye of Truth, he confirmed that this was, in fact, the real world.

Right as he was looking around with a perplexed expression, Lu Yuqing stumbled out of the space beside him.

She was also quite befuddled by what she was seeing, and she couldn't help but ask, "Have already entered the Realm Traversing Plaque, Brother Han?"

"I presume so. This place is a little strange. Right now, all of my bonded flying swords have flown onto that mountain," Han Li replied as he pointed at the mountain summit up ahead.

Han Li was feeling a little agitated from having his spiritual connection with his Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords severed, but now that he had entered the Realm Traversing Plaque, the spiritual connection had been restored, and he was feeling a lot more reassured.

"Those Ubiquitous Pavilion cultivators shouldn't be able to come after us now. If your swords are on that mountain, then let's retrieve them and meet back up with our fellow daoists from the True Flame Sect as soon as possible," Lu Yuqing said.

Han Li nodded in response, then swept a sleeve through the air, releasing a burst of azure light that enveloped both himself and Lu Yuqing before rising up into the sky.

However, he had only risen to an altitude of no more than 1,000 feet when the sky above him suddenly took on a completely different complexion, and a burst of invisible pressure came crashing down without any warning.

Immediately thereafter, the clouds up above descended a little, and a burst of incredibly formidable sword qi surged down from the heavens. Countless streaks of semi-transparent swordlight swooped down from above with unstoppable might, and Lu Yuqing's face instantly turned deathly pale upon seeing this.

Han Li was hovering in mid-air, and specks of blue light emerged over his body as he threw a punch at the vast expanse of swordlight in the sky.

A burst of invisible force erupted out of his fist, hurtling directly upward, and a resounding boom rang out as the entire sky trembled violently, while a string of audible cracks rang out, as if the very space itself had been shattered.

All of the streaks of swordlight were instantly slowed down in their descent, and countless streaks of swordlight were destroyed altogether, exploding into innumerable translucent shards that erupted in all directions to create a huge opening.

Han Li immediately flew toward the opening upon seeing this, but before he had a chance to reach it, the clouds up above descended even further, and a layer of shiny swordlight emerged to fill the hole that Han Li was trying to exploit.

His brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this as he thrust a palm upward, and a burst of black light instantly shot out of his hand, then transformed into his Heavy Water True Axis before hurtling directly upward.

With the infusion of second level heavy water, the Heavy Water True Axis had become incredibly formidable, and the Water Dao Runes on its surface were radiating dazzling black light, making it resemble a black sun.

At the same time, it was revolving rapidly like a giant black millstone, pulverizing all of the streaks of swordlight that were descending upon it.

However, as more layers of swordlight were destroyed, the clouds up above descended further and further. The swordlight in the sky was becoming denser and denser as a result, and the pressure in the air had become so severe that Han Li felt as if the surrounding space had become slightly warped.

At this point, Han Li had arrived at the conclusion that if he were to go all-out and resist the swordlight descending from the heavens without any regard for consequences, then perhaps he would be able to force his way through thanks to his treasures and his Profound Immortal Physique, but doing so while avoiding injury was far from a sure thing.

There were potentially many more perilous situations that he was going to have to face in the Infernal Frost Immortal Manor, so he wasn't willing to take the risk.

Thus, he descended back down to the ground as he said to Lu Yuqing, "The sword qi here is too vast for me to oppose, so we have no choice but to scale the mountain by foot."



"That's fine. At our speed, it shouldn't take us long to get to the top even on foot," Lu Yuqing replied with a nod.

With that, the two of them set off toward the foot of the mountain along the stone path beneath their feet.

After Han Li returned to the ground, the clouds that were bearing down from above slowly returned to their original altitude, and Han Li and Lu Yuqing didn't encounter any further obstructions as they continued their journey on foot.

Upon arriving at the foot of the mountain, the two of them were greeted by the sight of a tall stone archway, upon which was a massive plaque that bore some golden seal text characters.

"Boundless Sword Sect"

The strokes of the characters were strong and forceful, but also full of casual flair. They were as sharp as a sword, yet also wild and unrestrained, unlike the straight edge of a blade.

As soon as Han Li's gaze fell upon the plaque, he was immediately struck by a burst of tremendous sword intent, and he reflexively stumbled back a few steps with a surprised look on his face.

The Boundless Sword Sect had always been shrouded in mystery, and it had suddenly disappeared over a million years ago. Never had Han Li anticipated that he would discover it here.

As these thoughts were running through his mind, he took a glance at Lu Yuqing, only to find that she wasn't displaying any special reaction. Perhaps it was because she was unable to sense the sword intent imbued within the plaque due to her lack of affinity for the way of the sword.

Could there be some kind of sword restraining array that drew in my Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords?

After a brief moment of contemplation, Han Li strode through the stone archway with Lu Yuqing, and they continued their way up the mountain.

The ancient mountain path snaked up the mountain in circles like a spiraling staircase, and as Han Li and Lu Yuqing scaled the mountain, they encountered many mountains that were concealed within the undergrowth.

Upon closer inspection, they discovered that all of them were ordinary buildings that weren't being protected by any arrays or restrictions, and most of them had already become extremely dilapidated with age.

The closer they drew to the mountain summit, the peaceful the surrounding environment became, and there was a forbidding atmosphere in the air, a notion that certainly wasn't helped by the complete lack of birds and beasts in the forest.

As they were passing through a green bamboo forest, Han Li suddenly stopped in his tracks as he spotted a dark green bamboo cabin deep within the forest.

After a brief moment of hesitation, he diverged from the stone path and made his way into the bamboo forest.

Lu Yuqing was rather curious about why Han Li had suddenly changed directions, but she remained silent and trailed along behind him.

Not long after making his way into the forest, he noticed some strange signs. For example, there were many sword marks on the bamboo trees that he was passing by, and the marks were all quite dark, clearly indicating that they had been inflicted many years ago.

Moments later, he stopped in his tracks, then grabbed onto a thick bamboo tree beside him before tightening his grip around it.

The bamboo tree immediately began to creak and groan, but it didn't shatter right away.

Han Li was rather taken aback to see this, and he tightened his grip even further.

Finally, the bamboo tree exploded, sending countless pieces of shrapnel that were as hard as steel flying in all directions.

#### Chapter 434: Sword Resolution

"What kind of bamboo is this? It's so resilient!" Lu Yuqing asked with a surprised expression.

"It should be a type of Purple Essence Bamboo, one of the hardest types of trees in existence," Han Li replied.

He continued onward while speaking, making his way up the steps in front of the bamboo cabin before stepping through the entrance.

The cabin was barely furnished, with only a woven bamboo eight immortals table coupled with four long benches in the outer room, and seven bamboo beds in the inner room.

"These beds are so small and narrow... It feels like they're meant for children," Lu Yuqing mused with slightly furrowed brows.

"It's said that the Boundless Sword Sect was extremely strict in its recruitment of disciples. There was never any large intake of disciples. Instead, existing disciples were sent out to search for children with supreme swordsmanship attitude, and these children were nurtured from a young age. This is most likely some of those disciples stayed in their youth," Han Li speculated.

"I see. I've read some records about this sect by chance in an ancient scripture, and I recall that the sect had extremely few members, all of whom very rarely left the sect, so it was a very mysterious entity, but I don't know any more beyond that," Lu Yuqing said.

"If disciples of this sect wanted to leave as sect disciples, then they had to reach the Golden Immortal Stage first. Otherwise, they would have to stay in the sect until the day they died. During its heyday, there was once a story about the sect having seven Golden Immortals traveling the world together, but not many people know of this story nowadays," Han Li said.

"How do you know about this, Brother Han?" Lu Yuqing asked with a curious expression.

"Technically, I'm a swordsman myself, so I keep an eye out for things like this in my reading. There are many more legends surrounding the Boundless Sword Sect, and the most renowned one pertains to the Boundless Sword Sea in its inner sect," Han Li continued.

"What's that?" Lu Yuqing asked with an intrigued expression.

Han Li began to make his way out of the bamboo cabin as he explained, "It's said that the founder of the Boundless Sword Sect, the Boundless Daoist, had a hobby of collecting swords. Regardless of whether it's a battle of life and death or just a casual spar, he would always take the flying swords of the opponents that he defeated to be kept in the sect's sword pond.

"All of the disciples that he took under his wing adopted the same tradition as well, and whenever they left the sect to explore the world, they would search for swords to bring back to the sect, and over time, the Boundless Sword Pond turned into the Boundless Sword Sea."

After emerging from the bamboo forest, the two of them continued up the winding mountain path, arriving at a stone staircase that extended all the way up into the clouds halfway up the mountain.

To the left of the stone staircase stood a giant black rock, upon which were inscribed the words "Sword Resolution Stone" in antiquated characters.

Han Li strode over to the giant rock, and upon close inspection, he discovered that there were two small lines of white text beneath the words "Sword Resolution Stone".

"True Immortals shall not take flight here, all swords of this world must bow their heads"

Every single character was giving off an indescribable aura of sharpness, as if each and every stroke was comprised of a streak of sword qi. It was clear that the inscription had been made by the same person as the one who had made the "Boundless Sword Sect" inscription on the plaque at the entrance.

"I can understand the first line alluding to how even True Immortals are unable to fly here, but what does the second line mean?" Lu Yuqing murmured to herself.

"The Boundless Sword Sea of the Boundless Sword Sect contains countless swords, and there's no larger collection of swords in this world. That's most likely what it means for all swords to have to bow their heads. However, what I'm struggling to understand is what this Sword Resolution Stone is supposed to be," Han Li mused.

As soon as his voice trailed off, a burst of thunderous rumbling suddenly rang out from the cloud above, and a burst of golden light emerged before spreading in all directions.

Han Li immediately looked to see what was happening overhead, while Lu Yuqing hurriedly asked, "What's happening, Brother Han?"

"Some type of restrictions seems to have been activated above the clouds. My spiritual connection with my bonded flying swords have been severed again," Han Li replied with tightly furrowed brows.

Immediately thereafter, he turned and strode onto the first stone step before launching himself diagonally upward, scaling several hundred steps with just a single leap.

Lu Yuqing immediately followed along in the same fashion, and the closer they drew to the mountain summit, the more humid the air became.

By the time they had reached an altitude of several thousand feet, they found themselves enshrouded in a cloud of misty water vapor.

As they traversed through the sea of mist, their visibility was severely hampered, and their spiritual sense was also significantly restricted.

"Something's not right with this mist... I can't see through it with my spirit eye ability, so be careful," Han Li cautioned as he conjured up a layer of protective spiritual light over his body and accelerated up the staircase.

Lu Yuqing was following along close on his heels with her ocular ability activated, and all of a sudden, she yelled, "Look out, Brother Han!"

As soon as her voice trailed off, two streaks of golden sword light came flying out of the dense mist above Han Li's head before hurtling down with one crossed over the other.

Han Li looked up to find that the two streaks of swordlight had been unleashed by a pair of tall wooden puppets with long and slender limbs.

Instead of retreating in the face of the attack, Han Li lunged forward instead, flying straight under the two streaks of swordlight.

As soon as he steadied himself, he instantly swiveled around, and a layer of azure light surfaced over his palm as he swung it toward the puppets in a chopping motion.

The two puppets remained completely still, but their heads suddenly swiveled around 180 degrees to face Han Li in a rather unsettling fashion.

At the same time, the joints of their sword-wielding hands also swiveled around, and one of the puppets parried Han Li's palm attack with its sword, while the other pierced its sword straight at Han Li's chest.

Han Li hurriedly sprang back in retreat to evade the attack, and he was feeling quite surprised.

The two puppets weren't giving off any aura at all, making it impossible to gauge their power level, but the swords that they were wielding were extremely formidable, as evidenced by the fact that it was able to slice through the azure light around his hand with ease.

Immediately thereafter, several more streaks of swordlight appeared above his head, then intertwined to form a golden sword net that swooped down upon him.

Han Li raised a fist before throwing a punch upward, releasing an azure fist projection, which was instantly sliced apart upon contact with the golden sword net.

Han Li swept a palm through the air once again, and this time, his Heavy Water True Axis flew out of his sleeve before rising upward like a revolving millstone.

The golden sword net appeared to be quite formidable, but upon coming into contact with the black light emanating from the Heavy Water True Axis, it instantly melted away like snow tossed into a fire.

Right at this moment, five more streaks of swordlight flashed through the air, and five additional wooden puppets appeared around Han Li without any warning.

As soon as these five puppets appeared, they were joined by the previous two puppets, which were charging at Han Li from behind with their swords aimed at the back of his chest.

However, before they had a chance to stride, two gusts of fierce azure wind rose up from down below, enveloping the pair of puppets before dragging them downward.

Han Li looked down to find Lu Yuqing wielding an azure feather fan that was radiating dazzling spiritual light, and with each wave, it was generating gusts of azure wind that trapped the wooden puppets inside.

Han Li made a beckoning motion with one hand, then thrust it forward, and the Heavy Water True Axis above his head instantly hurtled directly toward the puppet directly in front of him.

The puppet reacted quite quickly, making a hand seal with one hand while thrusting its longsword downward with the other.

A burst of golden light appeared on the tip of the longsword, and a massive golden sword projection erupted forth, crashing heavily into the Heavy Water True Axis.

An earth-shattering boom rang out, and the golden sword projection was instantly vanquished, while the sword-wielding puppet's body was also inundated and pulverized by the black light surging out of the Heavy Water True Axis.

After absorbing so much second level heavy water, the Heavy Water True Axis had become far more formidable than before.

The other four sword-wielding puppets swiveled their heads around to lock their eyes on Han Li, and at the same time, a peculiar rune on each of their glabella began to radiate golden light as they thrust the tips of their swords toward the heavens.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly as he cast his gaze upward, and a sense of foreboding instantly welled up in his heart.

Sure enough, the faint glimmers of light began to appear above the mist that enshrouded the entire area, and the sky quickly began to rumble as if a thunderstorm were approaching.

"Come to me, Fellow Daoist Lu!" he hurriedly yelled.

Lu Yuqing immediately swept her fan through the air without any hesitation, releasing two fierce gusts of wind that blew the pair of puppets aside, then flew over to Han Li's side in a flash.

She had only just gotten under the Heavy Water True Axis when a burst of deafening rumbling began to ring out overhead, and a vast expanse of golden radiance descended from the heavens.

It was a mass of countless streaks of golden swordlight identical to the ones that Han Li had to contend with while attempting to fly to the mountain summit.

Those streaks of swordlight had only been present to prevent people from taking flight, whereas this golden sword array was purely designed to kill its target, so the swordlight within it was far more formidable than before.

Not only that, but the descending streaks of swordlight were also imbued with faint hints of metal law fluctuations, and that was why Han Li had called Lu Yuqing to his side so urgently.

#### Chapter 435: Sea of Swords

A resounding boom rang out as the vast expanse of golden swordlight passed through the surrounding mist, then came crashing down upon the Heavy Water True Axis like a waterfall.



A string of loud clangs rang out in rapid succession overhead, and Han Li immediately made a hand seal, upon which a vast expanse of black light erupted out of the axis alongside several dozen bursts of heavy water, which intertwined in mid-air to form an enormous heavy water vortex.

Upon falling into the vortex, all of the golden swordlight was shredded into pieces without being able to put up any resistance.

All of a sudden, the Heavy Water True Axis shrank down to the size of a normal shield at Han Li's behest, then flew through the air as a long streak of black light, hurtling directly toward one of the wooden puppets.

The puppet remained still on the spot as it raised its sword to defend itself against the Heavy Water True Axis, and right as the two were about to clash, Han Li suddenly curled a finger upward, upon which the Heavy Water True Axis circled around in mid-air, avoiding the puppet's sword before striking it on the head.

A loud thump rang out as the puppet's head exploded amid an eruption of black light, and its headless body instantly fell away to the side as if it had been sapped of all of its strength.

Meanwhile, the golden longsword in its hand flew toward the mountain summit as a bright streak of light as if it had been summoned.

The other puppets paid no heed to this at all as they continued to come after Han Li and Lu Yuqing with their swords raised.

We can't afford to waste any more time here!

Han Li's brows were tightly furrowed as he made a beckoning motion, and the Heavy Water True Axis instantly flew back to him before hovering above the palm of his hand, where it revolved incessantly.

At the same time, the Mantra Treasured Axis in his body began to revolve in reverse, and he abruptly shot through the air as a blurry shadow.

A string of afterimages suddenly flashed over the stone staircase, then abruptly drew to a halt.

Immediately thereafter, a string of explosions rang out as four of the six remaining puppets fell to the ground, having been decapitated.

Their longswords also flew toward the mountain summit as if they had been sucked away by some type of invisible force.

Meanwhile, Han Li took a moment to steady himself, and his complexion was looking a little pale. His breathing was also a little labored, and his Heavy Water True Axis was gradually slowing down in its revolution.

Simultaneously using the Mantra Treasured Axis and the Heavy Water True Axis was extremely taxing on his immortal spiritual power, and at his current cultivation base, he couldn't keep this up for long.

Lu Yuqing was still locked in battle against a pair of puppets, and she was rather taken aback to see both of them being decapitated in the blink of an eye.

Right at this moment, a burst of thunderous rumbling suddenly rang out from the mountain summit, and the entire mountain began to tremble violently.

Han Li's expression changed slightly as he cast his gaze upward.

"There's no time to waste, Brother Han. Leave me here and go retrieve your flying swords, I'll be able to look after myself," Lu Yuqing suddenly said.

Han Li hesitated momentarily upon hearing this, then nodded in response. "Alright, make sure to be careful."

After that, he sprang up the ladder once again, and it didn't take long before he vanished into the dense mist up above.

In the wake of Han Li's departure, the two remaining puppets immediately tried to give chase, only for Lu Yuqing to appear in front of them in a flash.

At this moment, there was a rather peculiar look on her face, one that she had never adopted before. She appeared a little cold and distant, but also rather confused and disoriented, while a hint of moisture had appeared in her eyes.

With a flick of her wrist, she stowed the azure feather fan away, and it was replaced by a silver longsword that was clearly a treasure of a far inferior caliber to the azure fan.

She looked down at the longsword in her hand as she murmured to herself, "Why does it suddenly feel like using a sword isn't so bad?"

This wasn't said in a joking manner. Instead, she seemed to be genuinely confused, as if she didn't know herself why she suddenly wanted to use the sword.

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After emerging from the area enshrouded within the dense mist, everything in front of Han Li immediately cleared up, and only then did he discover that he was still situated halfway up the mountain. There was still no end in sight to the stone staircase, but as Han Li continued to scale the staircase, he encountered no further obstructions.

Upon reaching the top, Han Li made his way along a bluestone mountain path toward the center of the mountain summit, and he spotted what appeared to be a daoist temple from afar, concealed behind a green bamboo forest.

The daoist temple wasn't very large, and there were all types of designs engraved onto its white walls and black tiled roof, giving it a rather intricate appearance.

Han Li naturally had no time to appreciate the scenery right now, and after verifying that there weren't any restrictions in the daoist temple, he pushed its black gate open before making his way directly inside.

The daoist temple was barely furnished at all. The first two of its three courtyards was comprised of around a dozen halls, most of which were empty, while the rest only had some unidentifiable deity statues inside.

There were also two halls that appeared to be pill refinement chambers with pill cauldrons placed inside, while the shelves on the walls were lined with containers of different sizes.

Han Li had no time to verify whether the contents of the containers could still be used, so he simply stowed everything away with a sweep of his sleeve.

The final courtyard of the daoist temple was quite far away from the first two, and down the center was a wide path paved with white stone slabs.

Han Li made his way down the path before arriving in front of a large hall.

There were seven or eight wooden puppets that were identical to the ones that he had encountered earlier strewn over the ground outside the hall's entrance.

Han Li swept his gaze over his surroundings, and he quickly noticed that the wooden frames of the hall's doors and windows were all engraved with complex runes, clearly indicating that there was a formidable defensive restriction set up here.

However, the restriction had already been severely damaged, and there were wisps of residual sword qi present in many of the important points on the array, indicating that the damage had been inflicted not long ago.

There was a huge black plaque hanging directly above the center of the hall's entrance, upon which was inscribed the words "Ancestral Hall" in flowing golden characters.

Despite the shared name, the ancestral halls of cultivating sects and those of the mortal world were actually very different.

The ancestral halls of the mortal world were generally used to worship the memorial tablets of deceased ancestors. However, cultivators of the Immortal Realm led extremely long lives, so aside from a select few memorial tablets, the ancestral halls of the cultivating sects mostly contained treasures left behind by ancestors and founders.

These treasures weren't necessarily extremely powerful. Instead, most of them were personal treasures that these ancestors and founders liked to keep with them during their cultivation journeys.

These treasures had the closest ties with the sect, and as a result, it gradually turned into a tradition for treasures of this nature to be kept in the ancestral halls.

An ancestral hall was the heart of a sect's lineage, and it was often the center of a sect's fortune. There were many stories of treasures being kept in ancestral halls that became nurtured by the fortune of a sect over time, thereby attaining sentience on their own.

A very fortunate sect disciple could be chosen by one such sentient treasure while engaging in worship at the ancestral hall, and that would often be the beginning of a meteoric rise.

The furnishings in the Boundless Sword Sect's ancestral hall were very simplistic. There were two rows of eternal flame lamps in the hall, the flames in which had, ironically, already burned out. Down the center of the hall between the two rows of lamps were four worship tables standing on platforms of ascending heights.

If we take each tier as one generation, that means that the Boundless Sword Sect's heritage only lasted four generations...

Han Li was initially rather surprised by this observation, but it then quickly made sense to him considering the sect's method of disciple recruitment.

Han Li swept his gaze over the hall to find that aside from worship tables on the second and third tiers, which had several memorial tablets placed on them in a haphazard fashion, the remaining two tables only held some sandalwood platters, all of which were completely empty.

Han Li's gaze lingered momentarily on the worship table on the highest tier to find that there was no memorial tablet for the Boundless Daoist there.

It looks like the Boundless Daoist was still alive when the Boundless Sword Sect fell...

Right as Han Li was inspecting his surroundings, a crisp and pleasant chime suddenly rang out from the rear of the ancestral hall.

The sound wasn't very loud, but it was remarkably penetrative, traveling all the way here, and Han Li was able to hear it clearly even though he hadn't been listening out for it.

He immediately left the ancestral hall, then made his way toward the mountain behind the hall along a small bluestone path.

After walking for a few minutes, Han Li arrived on a downward-sloping hill.

Standing before him was a black rock that was only half the height of a grown man. It was a rather unremarkable structure, and it bore the words "Sword Sea" inscribed in antiquated text.

Han Li stood on the edge of the hill as he cast his gaze downward, and he spotted a glimmer of light in a meadow down below. He took a closer look, and a stunned look instantly appeared on his face.

As it turned out, there were countless flying swords plunged into the vibrant meadow down below. All of the swords had their tips pointing up at the sky, and they were swaying gently like blades of grass in the light breeze, gently tapping against each other to produce the pleasant chiming sound that Han Li had heard earlier.

Among these flying swords were tiny ones that were as thin as sewing needles, enormous ones that were as wide as city gates, squiggly ones that resembled winding snakes, straight ones with parallel edges... Every type of longsword that one could think of could be found here.

They had been in this sword sea for countless years, yet not a single one of them was displaying any signs of damage or rust, and all of them were radiating dazzling spiritual light.

Han Li's gaze roamed over the sea of swords for a moment before his eyes finally settled on a spot in the meadow, where he spotted his 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords arranged in a uniform line, swaying gently alongside all of the other flying swords.

When he tried to summon them back to his side, the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords immediately began to sway in a more urgent and erratic fashion, as if they were trying to heed his call, but were also locked into place by some type of suppressive force.

After a brief moment of contemplation, Han Li raised a hand, and a section of his sleeve flew off on its own, enveloped in a layer of gentle azure light.

The piece of sleeve drifted past the black rock and entered the sword sea, upon which barely visible streaks of light instantly flashed through the air around it.

In the blink of an eye, that sliver of sleeve was shredded into dust in complete silence.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this.

#### Chapter 436: Lost

Right at this moment, a burst of thunderous rumbling suddenly rang out in the sky.

Han Li looked up to find a single white cloud with a golden lining in the air above the sea of swords.

Atop the cloud sat a massive white stone altar that was octagonal in shape with eight giant golden pillars around it, each of which was several hundred feet tall. There were extremely life-like coiling golden dragons engraved onto the pillars, presenting a breathtaking sight to behold.

Han Li was just about to fly up to the cloud for a closer inspection when another burst of rumbling suddenly rang out from the altar, following which a flash of red light shot out of the cloud.

Immediately thereafter, a ball of crimson flames abruptly surged out of the center of the cloud, and the entire cloud instantly took on a bright crimson hue, as if it had been set alight.

At the same time, a sea of crimson flames had also appeared beneath the white stone altar, illuminating the entire sky a bright red color.

With the cloud scattered, Han Li spotted a thin and stocky middle-aged man standing on the floating altar, and it was none other than Xiong Shan.

At this moment, there was a solemn look on his face, and his arms were raised to heavens as he chanted an incantation.

Hovering above his head was a large black metal plate that had a slight bulge in the center that was identical in appearance to the beveled metal scriptures awarded to officials in mortal empires, [1] and upon it was inscribed the words "Uniting All Swords".

As Xiong Shan continued to chant his incantation, the flames beneath the altar began to burn brighter and brighter, and waves of heat that were visible even to the naked eye began to surge through the air, causing the surrounding space to warp and shimmer.

All of the countless flying swords in the meadow were also beginning to sway much more violently, clanging against one another much more forcefully than before.

Han Li was initially a little perplexed upon seeing this, but he then quickly realized what was happening.

The so-called Thousand Edge Spirit Gathering Sword Array that Xiong Shan had painstakingly created back in the Blaze Dragon Dao had most likely been an array that he had learned from the Boundless Sword Sect, and this sea of swords had to have been the true spirit gathering sword array.

The sea of swords served as the foundation, the hovering altar was the cauldron, and the metal scripture filled the role of the catalyst, allowing Xiong Shan to draw upon the spirit of all of the countless flying swords here.



It was truly an extremely ambitious endeavor.

Right at this moment, a thunderous roar rang out from the altar up above, causing the entire area to rumble incessantly.

All of a sudden, the entire mountain had begun trembling, and all of the sword qi in the meadow erupted into the heavens.

From Han Li's perspective, it appeared as if a gust of gentle wind had blown through the sea of swords, and all of the lush grass in the meadow was instantly severed before being shredded into countless pieces by the sword qi in the air.

At the same time, all of the swaying flying swords had become completely still, standing straight like soldiers ready for battle with their tips pointed up at the heavens.

On the altar, Xiong Shan took a deep breath, then suddenly swept a sleeve through the air, releasing a golden flying sword that circled around momentarily in mid-air before hovering beneath the metal scripture.

Xiong Shan then joined the index and middle fingers of his right hand together, and a burst of golden light emerged over his fingertips as he swept them through the air, creating a golden rune that was around 10 feet in size.

The giant rune fell upon the metal scripture in a flash, and the latter immediately let loose an exultant ringing sound.

Immediately thereafter, a series of thin lines began to appear over the entire metal scripture, and they connected together before radiating dazzling golden light.

An incredibly thick pillar of golden light erupted out of the metal scripture straight up into the heavens, then exploded high up in the sky like a firework, forming a dazzling golden light barrier with countless projections surging over its surface.

There was a giant deity clad in golden armor wielding a massive blade capable of splitting mountains. There was a wraith-like masked assassin wielding a sword as thin as sewing needles, plucking out the heart of an enemy general. There was a gorgeous celestial maiden wielding a sword as elegant and free-flowing as her dress. There was a thin elderly man with a long beard directing the vast expanse of sword qi around him...

All types of sword-wielding figures were depicted in these projections, and Han Li was staring at the unfolding scene with his brows tightly furrowed in concentration.

Specks of golden light began to appear in his pupils, and in the next instant, he felt as if he had become completely immersed in what he was witnessing.

He felt as if he had become another figure on the golden light barrier, wielding his 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords to conjure up one sword lotus flower after another.

At the same time, a change suddenly began to take place in the sea of fire beneath the floating altar. The surging flames twisted around to form a massive fiery vortex, while then began to release bursts of formidable suction force.

All of the flying swords in the meadow down below immediately began to tremble and sway, then rose up into the air as if they had been summoned, hurtling toward the fiery vortex as a wave of flying swords.

The sky above the meadow instantly became extremely chaotic as a result, with swordlight of all colors shooting in all directions, slicing the entire space to ribbons. The invisible sword qi in the air was also no longer restricted to the meadow, beginning to spread in all directions instead.

The sound of tearing fabric rang out as Han Li's robes were brushed by some of the spreading sword qi, and a pair of extremely long gashes had been torn into the fabric.

Han Li paid no heed to this as he remained still and looked up at the sky.

In the heavens above, over 1,000 flying swords had surged into the fiery vortex, and they were instantly scorched a bright red color while giving off a miserable wailing sound.

Balls of light of all types of different colors began to fly out of the swords, and those were none other than their sword essence.

The flying swords that were stripped of their sword essence quickly dimmed before being refined into puddles of molten liquid that quickly vanished into the flames.

The capacity of the fiery vortex was limited, only able to take in fewer than 2,000 swords at a time. Han Li's Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords were situated closer to the back, so it was going to take some time before they were drawn into the vortex, but it wasn't going to be a very long time.

On the floating altar, Xiong Shan's brows were tightly furrowed as he murmured to himself, "I'll deal with you once I'm done refining my sword..."

He had already noticed Han Li's arrival, but he had been too busy working the array to do anything about it.

There was a hollow area on the floating platform in front of him, and at this moment, balls of sword essence were emerging from that area before hovering in mid-air.

Xiong Shan was ecstatic to see this, and made a peculiar hand seal with both hands before pointing a finger at the metal scripture.

The golden patterns on the metal scripture instantly flashed before releasing a vast expanse of golden light to envelop the golden longsword down below, forming a golden vortex upon it.

As soon as the vortex took shape, all of the sword essence hovering above the altar was instantly drawn to it before surging into Xiong Shan's bonded flying sword in a frenzy.

The golden longsword began to tremble and ring while radiating halos of golden light.

While the sword essence was being absorbed on the altar, the fiery vortex down below was constantly drawing in more flying swords, and the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords was getting closer and closer to the vortex.

Right at this moment, Han Li abruptly shuddered, and the golden light in his eyes gradually faded, replaced by a layer of blue light.

"What a formidable array!" Han Li exclaimed to himself as a hint of elation appeared on his face.

The scenes depicted on the golden light barrier were very similar in nature to the Myriad Sword Artwork that he had obtained in the past, but this array was clearly far more profound, and it could even be said that the Myriad Sword Scroll was most likely a replica of this array.

While viewing the array, Han Li had actually intentionally opened himself up so that he would become immersed in it. Otherwise, given his current level of spiritual sense, there was no way that he would've completely lost himself just now.

Thanks to the complete immersion that he had opened himself up to, not only had he gained a deeper understanding of all sword arrays, he had also identified the key points in this array and the way that it operated.

On the altar, Xiong Shan's expression changed drastically at the sight of Han Li suddenly snapping back to his senses, and he exclaimed, "Impossible!"

It was no wonder that he was so shocked. Back when he first witnessed this array, he had been completely immersed in it for seven days and seven nights, and it was only through a stroke of luck that he was able to awaken.

He had managed to learn the Thousand Edge Spirit Gathering Sword Array from that experience, but his spiritual sense had been severely damaged, so he had no choice but to leave this area, and only after so many years had passed did he get another opportunity to come here.

Xiong Shan gritted his teeth in fury as he thrust both palms forward, pushing the balls of sword essence with his immortal spiritual power so that they would surge into his bonded flying sword at an even faster rate.

All of the flying swords in the sky twisted together before flowing incessantly into the fiery vortex, and at this point, Han Li's Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords were no more than 1,000 feet away from the fire.

He immediately stomped a foot down onto the ground upon seeing this, and the entire mountain shuddered violently beneath his feet as he launched himself up into the sky.

However, he had only just risen up into the air when a burst of asphyxiating pressure crashed down upon him from all directions, forcing him back down onto the ground.

At the same time, gusts of ferocious wind were sweeping through the air all around him, interspersed with countless streaks of sword qi that tore a series of gashes into his robes.

Han Li let loose a defiant roar as all of his profound acupoints lit up with blue light, and his True Extreme Film emerged over his body to keep all of the sword qi at bay.

The pressure weighing down upon him had slammed his body so heavily back down onto the ground that his legs had sunk deep into the earth.

Han Li looked up into the sky to find that Xiong Shan was standing on the edge of the altar, controlling the metal scripture with one hand while reaching out toward the sea of swords down below with his other hand.

At the same time, he was glowering intently at Han Li with fury and resentment in his eyes.

Only now had he realized that Li Feiyu was the one who had foiled his sword array all those years ago, the so-called "number one sword cultivator of Heavenly South".

1. For an idea of what this looks like, Google Image search "丹书铁券". ?

## Chapter 437: Vendetta

"This is the work of karma! You took my sword essence and spoiled my sword array, but looks what's happened now! Everything is still mine in the end!" Xiong Shan chortled with glee, and his voice rumbled across the sky like thunder.

He had made many enemies in order to gather so many spirit swords for his Thousand Edge Spirit Gathering Sword Array, yet all of his efforts had been for nought thanks to Han Li.

He had been made the laughingstock of the entire Blaze Dragon Dao for years over this matter, so how could he not be ecstatic to exact his vengeance now?

"If you hadn't tried to refine my bonded flying swords, I wouldn't have foiled your sword array. You and I are both from the Blaze Dragon Dao and the Transient Guild, and we've worked together multiple times in the past, so how about we let bygones be bygones, and you let me recover my bonded flying swords?" Han Li proposed.

His voice wasn't very loud, but it was able to pierce through all of the layers of obstruction like a sharp sword to travel into Xiong Shan's ears.

"Shut your mouth! You've treated me like a fool this entire time! While it's true that I gradually came to realize your involvement in foiling my plans, there was no good opportunity to strike, so I continued to bide my time, but now that you've presented yourself to me on a silver platter, I'm going to refine both you and your bonded flying swords into my unmatched immortal sword!" Xiong Shan harrumphed coldly.

"If you're not willing to resolve this matter peacefully, then don't blame me for taking you down by force!" Han Li said in a cold voice.

"What a joke! Your death is imminent, yet you're still spouting nonsense!" Xiong Shan scoffed, but for some reason, he couldn't help but shudder internally in the face of Han Li's threat.

All of a sudden, Han Li let loose a thunderous roar, and his body rapidly swelled to over 1,000 feet tall while tufts of golden fur appeared over his skin as he took on his Giant Mountain Ape form.

He then stomped down viciously onto the ground, launching himself up into the sky in the face of the layers of sword qi above.

As it drew close to the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, the giant golden ape reached out with a thick and muscular arm, and a layer of golden scales appeared over its fur as it lashed out at the stream of swords flowing toward the fiery vortex.

A resounding boom rang out, and the entire stream of swords curved outward amid a chorus of chaotic clangs.

All of a sudden, all of the flying swords that were hurtling toward the fiery vortex were knocked off their original trajectory, and that included the 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords.

Immediately thereafter, the giant golden ape reverted back to its human form, and a pair of translucent wings abruptly appeared on Han Li's back as he twisted around, changing direction in mid-air to fly directly toward his bonded flying swords.

However, before he had a chance to get close, a burst of invisible force erupted out of the entire sword array, gathering all of the flying swords and dragging them back on course to flow into the fiery vortex.

"I'm not letting you get your way a second time!" Xiong Shan declared in a cold voice.

As soon as his voice trailed off, he made a string of hand seals before pointing a finger at the metal scripture that was hovering in the air before him.

A drop of blood essence that was glowing with golden light flew out of his fingertip before falling upon the metal scripture, and the golden patterns on its surface instantly shuddered, following which a burst of faint red mist rose up and surged into the golden light barrier up above.

A resounding boom rang out as the golden light barrier in the sky exploded violently, but all of the projections on it lingered, falling into the sword array like a storm of golden rain.

With each projection that flew into the array, a sword would diverge from the stream of sword before falling into the grasp of the golden projection and flying toward Han Li.

Han Li was just about to try something else to forcibly recover his Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords when he suddenly felt a shadow loom over him. He immediately flapped his Thunderstorm Wings, flying back several dozen feet through the surrounding sword qi with great difficulty.

A giant sword that was as wide as a city gate came crashing down from above, just barely glancing past Han Li as it slashed down with tremendous power.

Han Li immediately raised a fist before giving the broad side of the sword's blade a vicious punch, and a giant azure fist projection instantly erupted upon the massive sword, causing it to tremble violently.

The golden giant that was holding the sword also shuddered violently from the immense force that was transferred through the sword, and it disintegrated into countless specks of golden light.

However, before Han Li had a chance to withdraw his fist, another golden figure wielding an extremely long sword charged directly at him.

Behind this golden figure were countless more, including a gorgeous woman, a burly man clad in a suit of golden armor, an elderly man with a long beard, a small child... Waves upon waves of sword-wielding figures were converging toward him once.

Han Li remained calm and collected as he took a stride forward, and his Mantra Treasured Axis appeared behind him amid a flash of radiant golden light.

All of the projections and flying swords that entered the range of the ripples released by the Mantra Treasured Axis instantly came to a standstill, and Han Li was able to casually make his way past them as if he were taking a stroll in the park.

All of the swords that were pierced toward him had become his stepping stones, allowing him to progress steadily toward the altar.



It had already become clear to him that if he didn't defeat Xiong Shan, then he would continue to use the power of the sword array to prevent him from retrieving his Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords. Once enough time elapsed, the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords would inevitably be destroyed.

Xiong Shan was astonished to see this from the altar, and he looked on in shock as Han Li approached the altar from afar.

However, he then quickly composed himself and gritted his teeth tightly as he made his way back to the center of the array, where he cast a series of incantation seals into the hollow area before him.

Immediately thereafter, he spread a hand open, and five longan-sized golden beads dropped into the hollow area at once to fall into the sea of fire down below.

All of the flames below instantly began to sway violently, as if a fierce gust of wind were blowing through them, and the fire was spread in all directions.

Han Li cast his gaze toward the flames to see five balls of golden light emerge within it, drawing in all of the surrounding fire to form five menacing draconic heads, all of which were turned to face him.

As soon as the draconic heads took shape, a thin jet of fire instantly shot out of each of their nostrils, and their eyes also lit up with radiant golden light, making it appear as if they were actual living creatures.

In the next instant, an animalistic roar rang out from within the sea of fire, and five fiery dragons that were as thick as water vats flew out, twisting around in mid-air before pouncing at Han Li with tremendous power.

Waves of scorching heat erupted forth in all directions, causing the entire space to warp and shimmer, to the point that even the golden ripples released by the Mantra Treasured Axis had begun to warp, thereby significantly shrinking their effective area.

In the face of the oncoming fiery dragons, Han Li raised a hand before sweeping it through the air, and his Heavy Water True Axis flew out of his sleeve, then swelled to the size of a millstone while revolving rapidly as it positioned itself in front of him.

At the same time, the Water Dao Runes on its surface began to glow radiantly as it released bursts of heavy water, which converged to form a huge heavy water vortex that surged toward the five fiery dragons.

The five fiery dragons opened their cavernous mouths, and there was molten lava bubbling inside while releasing plumes of black smoke, making them resemble five volcanoes that were on the verge of eruption.

Immediately thereafter, a burst of thunderous rumbling rang out as vast torrents of lava and fiery rocks came pouring out of the five dragons' mouths down upon the Heavy Water True Axis.

A string of deafening booms rang out as the entire sky was illuminated bright red.

As the ferocious storm of fire crashed down onto the Heavy Water True Axis, enormous black waves were instantly raised, and even though the axis was able to hold its own, it was clearly struggling under the formidable barrage.

Han Li's arms were raised aloft, and his entire body was trembling uncontrollably, indicating that he was clearly also struggling to keep the assault at bay.

All of a sudden, he let loose a thunderous roar, and instead of retreating, he thrust his palms forcefully against his Heavy Water True Axis, which instantly released an enormous wave of black heavy water that swept toward the five fiery dragons in retaliation.

The fiery dragons also swooped down from above, and a clash of tremendous power took place as fire and water intertwined with one another, causing a cloud of white mist to rise up into the sky.

Right at this moment, Han Li suddenly declared, "All-encompassing black wave!"

A burst of earth-shattering instantly rang out in the sky above the floating altar, and a bolt of white lightning flashed past, tearing an enormous black gash into the heavens.

What seemed like an infinite volume of heavy water surged out of the black rift, forming a gargantuan black waterfall that came crashing down from above.

Xiong Shan could only stare up at the heavens with his eyes wide with despair and incredulity.

How was it possible that a True Immortal could be capable of wielding such incredible power?

However, at this point, it was already far too late to try and call a truce.

With that in mind, he could only grit his teeth as he swept his sleeves through the air, releasing one incantation seal after another into the metal scripture.

The golden light radiating from the metal scripture immediately began to flash while releasing a string of golden runes, which fell upon the eight golden pillars around the array.

The golden pillars instantly began to glow radiantly, and the eight golden dragons coiled around the pillars raised their heads as beams of crimson light shot out of their eyes, then converged directly above the altar to form a crimson light barrier that was riddled with draconic patterns, just in time to oppose the vast torrent of heavy water that was crashing down from above.

#### Chapter 438: Sword Battle

A burst of thunderous rumbling rang out incessantly as the crimson light barrier trembled violently, quivering under the weight of the black waterfall.

Situated directly under the enormous torrent of heavy water, Xiong Shan could see the black waterfall crashing down onto the crimson light barrier, and he could also clearly sense the tremendous pressure that was weighing down the light barrier from above.

A series of massive indentations had appeared all over the crimson light barrier in the face of the heavy water torrent's immeasurable weight, and the golden draconic patterns on it were also flashing incessantly, indicating that the light barrier wasn't going to be able to withstand the assault for much longer.

Xiong Shan's brows were tightly furrowed as he took a glance at the metal scripture that was hovering in mid-air, and he made a beckoning motion to draw it back into his grasp.

He then extended his index finger, and a burst of golden light flashed over his fingertip, resulting in a tiny bleeding gash.

Using his finger as a brush and his blood as ink, he began to quickly inscribe a peculiar dark red rune onto the metal scripture.

As soon as the rune took shape, the golden patterns on the metal scripture began to take on a bright red hue, resembling a system of blood vessels and meridians.

Xiong Shan held the metal scripture in both hands as a determined look appeared on his face, and he brought the metal scripture to his own chest like a breastplate.

Red and black light flashed over his chest, and the metal scripture vanished into his body in a flash, fusing as one with him.

The metal scripture was serving as the core of the entire array, and with its disappearance, the array instantly ceased to operate.

The sea of fire beneath the floating altar subsided, gradually reverting back into a scorching fiery cloud, while the crimson light barrier up above also disintegrated into a vast expanse of translucent red light.

All of the golden projections up above also vanished, but the flying swords that had been drawn toward the array didn't descend back down onto the meadow. Instead, they continued to hover in mid-air, remaining locked into place by a burst of invisible force.

The black waterfall in the sky was nothing more than an illusion conjured up by Han Li's Mantra Domain, and it had also faded away, restoring heaven and earth to their original state.

Without the obstruction posed by the golden projections and the fiery dragons, Han Li was able to ascend into the heavens at a rapid speed, and in the blink of an eye, he had already fallen upon the floating altar.

He cast his gaze toward Xiong Shan to find that the latter's entire body had been encased in a suit of black scale armor, and there was also a layer of crimson light around him.

The layer of crimson light was formed by countless wisps of extremely pure sword qi that were so incredibly sharp that even the space around them had been completely shredded, and even the golden ripples released by Han Li's Mantra Treasured Axis were unable to infiltrate them.

"To think that you would use such a precious treasure in such a suboptimal fashion. Don't you think this is a massive waste?" Han Li asked with a forlorn shake of his head.

"It's fine. I'm only using up some of the sword qi within it. As long as I can kill you, it'll all be worth it," Xiong Shan replied as he strode over to the center of the altar, where he grabbed onto the hilt of his golden longsword.

As soon as his hand closed around his longsword, the dark red patterns on his suit of black armor instantly lit up, and the layer of crimson light around his body surged forth to encompass his bonded flying sword as well.

His aura remained at the late-True Immortal Stage, but it had become indescribably sharp, as if he had transformed into a peerlessly sharp immortal sword.

Han Li's pupils contracted slightly upon seeing this, but he remained unfazed.

Instead of immediately lashing out at Han Li, Xiong Shan said in an unhurried manner, "There's something that I've never been able to wrap my head around: how were you able to control my Thousand Edge Spirit Gathering Sword Array back then? Could it be that you're the heir to some side branch of the Boundless Sword Sect?"

"Didn't the Boundless Sword Sect disappear over a million years ago? How could I be a side branch heir of the sect?" Han Li asked with a puzzled expression.

"So you're not a member of the sect... No matter, you've shown yourself to be worthy of facing me," Xiong Shan said as a hint of disappointment flashed through his eyes, following which he launched himself directly at Han Li with his longsword pointed forward.

Han Li immediately drifted up into the air, and even after retreating all the way to the edge of the altar, he still showed no sign of stopping as he continued to fly back in retreat.

A burst of dark red light flashed over Xiong Shan's longsword, and a streak of crimson swordlight erupted out of its tip, instantly covering a distance of over 1,000 feet.

Only upon reaching within several feet of Han Li's chest was the streak of crimson swordlight finally slowed down by the golden ripples released by his Mantra Treasured Axis.

Han Li took advantage of this opportunity to retreat several dozen feet further before stopping again.

The streak of crimson swordlight then slowly disintegrated as he looked on with a hint of lingering fear in his eyes. If he hadn't retreated in a timely fashion just now, that sword strike would've definitely been fast enough to counteract the Mantra Treasured Axis's time-slow effect and pierce straight through his chest.

If only all of the Time Dao Runes were recovered...

As this thought flashed through Han Li's mind, he swooped down toward all of the flying swords that were hovering mid-air.

However, before he was able to reach his Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, he felt a burst of formidable sword qi sweeping toward him from behind, and a chill immediately ran down his spine.

He hurriedly reversed his Mantra Treasured Axis before dodging to the right, thereby allowing him to evade the attack.

A streak of crimson light flew past him in a flash before piercing straight into the vast array of flying swords up ahead, and a string of sharp clangs rang out as several dozen flying swords were shattered by the streak of swordlight.

Finally, Han Li was able to pounce on this opportunity to arrive beside his 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords.

He reached out to grab onto one of them before tugging on it with all his might, only to find that it remained completely unmoved, seemingly locked into place by some type of tremendous force.

Before he had a chance to do anything, Xiong Shan arrived on the scene, then slashed his longsword viciously through the air.

However, Han Li paid no heed to the attack as he continued to hold tightly onto the hilt of his flying sword while injecting a wisp of his spiritual sense into it.

The sword in his grasp abruptly shuddered before letting loose a crisp ringing sound, as if it were elated to have had its spiritual connection with Han Li restored.

At the same time, a longsword that was enveloped in a layer of crimson light swept through the air toward the back of his neck.

The dozen or so active Time Dao Runes on Han Li's Mantra Treasured Axis lit up in unison, and the golden ripples radiating from the axis took on a slightly more substantial form.

However, the oncoming longsword was able to largely ignore the Mantra Treasured Axis's time-slowing effect thanks to the formidable sword qi that it was enshrouded within, and the sword wasn't slowed down to a sufficient degree for Han Li to evade the attack.

In this dire situation, Han Li's Heavy Water True Axis flew onto the scene as a streak of black light, positioning itself in the path of Xiong Shan's sword like a giant black shield.

A sharp clang rang out as Xiong Shan's longsword pierced straight through the black light around the Heavy Water True Axis before striking the axis itself.

The Heavy Water True Axis shuddered violently as a large section of the black light radiating from it was shredded by the sword qi erupting out of Xiong Shan's sword, inflicting a deep sword mark onto its surface.

Han Li could sense the power of that sword strike through his spiritual connection with his Heavy Water True Axis, and he was greatly alarmed.

He immediately pulled out the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Sword that he had grabbed onto, and at the same time, blue light flashed within his eyes as he released 71 wisps of spiritual sense at once, with each one entering one of the remaining 71 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords.

At this point, Xiong Shan had already made his way around the Heavy Water True Axis and was slashing his sword at Han Li from his right.

This time, Han Li didn't take any evasive measures. Instead, he met Xiong Shan directly retaliating with his own Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Sword.

The two swords clashed, and a layer of dark red swordlight erupted out of Xiong Shan's bonded flying sword, immediately following which a burst of golden lightning erupted out of Han Li's Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Sword as well.

The dark red swordlight glanced over Han Li's sword-wielding arm, instantly slicing through his sleeve, but thankfully, his True Extreme Film remained resolute, so he didn't sustain any injuries.

However, the sword qi imbued within the swordlight was extremely penetrative, and it felt as if it were slicing over the bones in his arm, causing him to wince in pain.

He ignored the pain as he made a beckoning motion with his other hand, and the Heavy Water True Axis behind him immediately shrank down to the size of a normal shield before hurtling directly toward Xiong Shan.



The armor on Xiong Shan's arm flashed with black light, scattering the Divine Devilbane Lightning released by the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Sword, following which the blade of the sword made direct contact with the armor itself.

At the same time, the Heavy Water True Axis crashed into Xiong Shan's longsword, and the impact sent him flying back over 100 feet.

Right at this moment, Han Li made a hand seal before pointing a finger forward, and all of the remaining 71 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords flew out in unison alongside the sword in Han Li's grasp, hurtling directly toward Xiong Shan as a wave of azure light.

As the flying swords raced through the air, countless streaks of azure swordlight intertwined and converged in the same spot to form a massive ball of azure light.

As it approached Xiong Shan, a thunderous draconic roar suddenly erupted out of the ball of azure light, ringing out across the entire sky.

Immediately thereafter, the giant ball of light exploded violently, and an azure coiled dragon sprang out from within with tremendous force before swallowing Xiong Shan whole.

At the same time, Han Li reversed his Mantra Treasured Axis while simultaneously summoning his Heavy Water True Axis back to him as he sprang forward in pursuit.

He was flying through the air far faster than the azure dragon sword array, and upon catching up to the head of the dragon, he focused his gaze downward, upon which a hint of surprise flashed through his eyes.

As it turned out, Xiong Shan was standing in the dragon's maw in a relaxed and composed manner, and there were hundreds of streaks of swordlight attempting to pierce into his body, but his suit of black armor was keeping him completely unscathed.

#### Chapter 439: Pushed to the Limits

Han Li gave a cold harrumph upon seeing this, and he sped directly toward the azure coiled dragon, leaving a string of afterimages in his wake.

His Heavy Water True Axis was revolving rapidly over the palm of his hand as it swept toward Xiong Shan, who let loose a thunderous roar as a burst of dark red swordlight erupted out of his suit of black armor, instantly destroying the azure coiled dragon around him.

He then raised an arm and swung his longsword heavily down onto the Heavy Water True Axis, and a sharp clang rang out as the azure dragon sword array reverted back into 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords that were scattered in all directions, while Xiong Shan flew back over 1,000 feet before steadying himself.

"Are you trying to compete with me to see who has more swords?" he scoffed with a mocking sneer.

As soon as his voice trailed off, he tossed the longsword in his hand forward, then made a peculiar hand seal and chanted an incantation before sweeping his sleeves through the air.

All of the dark red patterns on his suit of black armor lit up once again, and an antiquated rune appeared on his breastplate.

As soon as that rune emerged, a vast and primordial aura instantly began to emanate out of Xiong Shan's body.

A sense of foreboding welled up in Han Li's heart upon seeing this, and he hurriedly contacted Daoist Xie with his spiritual sense, telling it to prepare to intervene when necessary.

All of a sudden, the entire sky had become deathly silent, and even the sound of the wind had been stifled.

However, a burst of metallic screeching then suddenly rang out, breaking the silence in a very abrupt and disruptive fashion.

Han Li looked down to find that all of the swords on the meadow down below had begun moving again, and every single sword was enveloped in a layer of dark red swordlight, coming together to form what resembled a giant primordial beast that was only just beginning to awaken.

"Let's see you deal with all these swords at once!" Xiong Shan roared with a furious expression, and all of the swords instantly surged through the air at his behest like a swarm of all-encompassing locusts.

Han Li's expression instantly changed slightly upon seeing this. Such a vast barrage of swords coupled with such formidable swordlight was a combination that was clearly too powerful for either his Mantra Treasured Axis or Heavy Water True Axis to oppose.

With that in mind, the only feasible course of action for him was to run.

His sole objective for coming here was just to recover his Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, and now that he objective had been achieved, there was no point in continuing this battle.

Xiong Shan was most definitely going to become a sworn enemy of his after this encounter, but that was something for him to worry about another time.

After making up his mind, Han Li immediately withdrew all of his treasures before making a hand seal, and a golden lightning array quickly took shape around him.

In order to conjure up the lightning array as quickly as possible, he had directly used his Divine Devilbane Lightning rather than drawing upon the power of the Lightning Bird, but even so, he was still too slow.

A streak of dark red swordlight came slashing down from above, and the golden lightning array had only just taken shape before it was destroyed.

Immediately thereafter, Han Li was instantly inundated by countless flying swords of all types of descriptions.

His expression changed slightly upon seeing this, but he remained calm and composed as a streak of silver light flew out of his sleeve, transforming into a silver bell that rose up into the air above him while swaying incessantly from side to side.

A series of dense silver halos spread through the air in all directions, proliferating outward to encompass an area that was several hundred feet in size.

At the same time, he opened his mouth to release the Seven Bright Star Rings, which connected together with one another in a flash to form an even larger ring above his head.

Radiant starlight erupted out of the Seven Bright Star Rings, forming a starlight barrier with countless star designs flashing on its surface, protecting him alongside the waves of silver ripples.

He had only just managed to summon these two treasures when the torrential wave of swords was already upon him, and in the blink of an eye, he was enveloped by swords from all directions.

The silver bell was chiming incessantly, yet the silver ripples that it was releasing continued to be worn down little by little, reducing the size of the safe area around Han Li.

The starlight barrier released by the Seven Bright Star Rings was also screeching incessantly as one speck of starlight was snuffed out after another.

Han Li's brows were tightly furrowed as he swept both sleeves through the air, and his Heavy Water True Axis and Mantra Treasured Axis emerged on either side of him in unison.

He then made a hand seal before thrusting a palm into his Heavy Water True Axis, and the black light on its surface shuddered while a vast torrent of heavy water erupted out of its Water Dao Runes, forming a black water dragon that surged into the wave of countless swords.

The heavy water dragon was enormous, and it resembled a vast river flowing through the sky, quickly blasting an opening into the vast expanse of swords. Han Li immediately flew toward that opening, while Xiong Shan looked on with a cold sneer on his face.

"What's the point? Your struggles are futile!"

Immediately thereafter, he wiped a hand over his own face, and the palm of his hand was instantly stained red.

There was a price that had to be paid for forcibly drawing upon the power of the metal scripture, and he was already beginning to bleed out of all of his orifices, but in his eyes, it would all be worth it if he could kill Han Li and recover those 72 swords.

All of a sudden, Xiong Shan let loose a thunderous roar, and all of the swords on either side of the opening that Han Li had created instantly converged at his behest, closing in around Han Li like a pair of impregnable walls.

The dark red light on the two walls of swords was becoming denser and denser, and Han Li wasn't even able to fly 1,000 feet before the sword array up ahead had already come together again, and the heavy water dragon was also destroyed under the immense pressure, disintegrating into droplets of heavy water that flowed back into the Heavy Water True Axis.

This was an even more dire situation than before, and his silver bell and Seven Bright Star Rings weren't going to be able to afford him much more protection.

It wasn't going to be long before these two treasures would also crumble under the pressure.

A string of faint cracks rang out from above Han Li's head, and a layer of hairline cracks had already appeared on the starlight barrier above, clearly indicating that it wasn't going to be able to hold itself together for much longer.

Han Li made a beckoning motion upon seeing this, and the starry light barrier faded, while the Seven Bright Star Rings flew back to him.

At the same time, the silver bell also shuddered slightly before circling around in mid-air and flying back to him as well.

In the next instant, purplish-golden light erupted out of his entire body alongside a layer of purplish-golden scales, and two additional sets of heads and arms emerged from his body.

Immediately thereafter, Han Li drew his Heavy Water True Axis back to himself, grabbing onto it with one hand like a shield while also clasping each of his other five hands around an Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Sword.

He was also channeling the Xuanwu bloodline that he hadn't used in a very long time, forming a suit of dark green armor with antiquated runes all over its surface to protect his midsection.

Han Li's physical prowess had always been his forte, and in his current form, his physical constitution was no less resilient than many defensive spirit treasures.

His Mantra Treasured Axis flew back into his body, then immediately began to spin in reverse, and instead of continuing to adopt passive defense, Han Li went on the attack, flying straight into the torrent of swords.

He was moving as fast as lightning, traversing through the sea of swords while leaving a string of blurry afterimages in his wake, and he was constantly swinging his five Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords with tremendous power, releasing formidable bolts of golden lightning with every single swing to scatter the nearby flying swords.

Despite the vast number of swords in the array, it was unable to strike Han Li down.

However, Han Li knew that he wouldn't be able to keep this up for long. Maintaining this form over any extended period of time was simply far too taxing, and the instant that he ran out of immortal spiritual power would be the instant that spelled his demise.

He wasn't flying headfirst into the oncoming torrent of swords as he had lost all sense of rationality and was charging forward out of desperation. Instead, he had done this to buy Daoist Xie some time to recover.

Back when he was conjuring up the lightning teleportation array earlier, he had already tried to call upon Daoist Xie to buy him some time, only to discover that Daoist Xie's puppet body was still recovering from the attack that it had unleashed to vanquish that copper puppet, thereby rendering it unable to help.

Around 15 minutes later, Han Li was clearly beginning to slow down. The suit of azure armor around his body was already riddled with sword marks, and his six arms were also lined with gashes.

Even with his incredibly formidable physical body, it was clear that he was nearing his limits.

"Are you still not ready, Brother Xie?" Han Li yelled internally in an urgent manner.

"I'm going to need a few more minutes," Daoist Xie replied through their spiritual connection.

Han Li's heart sank slightly upon hearing this, but in this situation, all he could do was grit his teeth and persevere.

However, Xiong Shan wasn't willing to drag this out any longer, not because he had seen through Han Li's intentions, but instead because he was also not going to be able to last much longer.

At this point, blood was practically gushing out of his orifices, and he was beginning to feel a little faint from the blood loss.

He shook his head vigorously to clear the foggy sensation in his head, and his facial features became slightly twisted as he roared, "Die!"

As soon as his voice trailed off, he launched himself forward as a streak of crimson light, fusing as one with his bonded flying sword to transform into a giant streak of crimson swordlight that hurtled directly toward Han Li at an astonishing speed.

The streak of crimson swordlight was extraordinarily fast, and all of the swords in its path quickly parted, forming a passageway that led straight to Han Li.

#### Chapter 440: Sword Refinement

Han Li's vision had been obstructed by the vast expanse of swords before him, and by the time he spotted the streak of crimson swordlight, it was already too late for him to take evasive measures.

In this dire situation, he quickly channeled his Spirit Refinement Technique before unleashing his Spirit Stun Thorn. [1]

All of a sudden, Xiong Shan felt a cold harrumph ring out in his mind, and a burst of sharp pain speared through the head, resulting in a split second of disorientation.

The streak of oncoming crimson swordlight abruptly shuddered and drew to a halt around 10 feet away from Han Li, and this minuscule delay was enough to turn the tide of the entire battle!

The Mantra Treasured Axis in Han Li's body spun rapidly in reverse as he flapped his Thunderstorm Wings vigorously while also drawing upon his Azure Luan Bird bloodline, allowing him to reach an astonishing speed as he flew to one side of the streak of crimson swordlight before piercing all five of his swords toward a single spot.

A resounding boom rang out as the streak of crimson swordlight exploded, and violent shockwaves erupted in all directions, causing Han Li to throw up a mouthful of blood as he flew back several thousand feet into the vast torrent of swords behind him.

At the same time, scraps of black metal flew out of the streak of crimson swordlight that had just imploded, and they converged in mid-air to reform the black metal scripture.

A figure then stumbled out of thin air, looking deathly pale, and it was none other than Xiong Shan.

A huge hole had been torn through his chest, and his heart had already been completely destroyed. The dark red patterns on his body appeared to be intact, but in reality, they had already been severed into countless pieces.

There was a deranged look on his face as he used his longsword as a crutch while stumbling toward the metal scripture, but with each step that he took, a chunk of flesh would fall off his body, and by the time he reached the metal scripture, only a bare skeleton of his remained.

Immediately thereafter, the golden longsword in his hand also shattered into countless pieces that flew away in all directions.



A streak of golden light flew out of the top of the skeleton's skull, forming a golden nascent soul with a weary look on its face. The nascent soul turned to look at Han Li, who had only just steadied himself several thousand feet away, and it murmured to itself, "Is this the design of fate..."

As soon as its voice trailed off, the nascent soul also disintegrated into golden light, while Han Li looked on with mixed emotions.

He didn't harbor much enmity toward Xiong Shan, and they had been comrades several times in the past. If it weren't for Xiong Shan's insistence on hunting him down, he would've avoided this battle entirely.

With Xiong Shan's demise, the sword array in the sky instantly fell apart, and all of the flying swords suspended in the air came raining back down into the Boundless Sword Sea.

Han Li flew up into the air before drawing Xiong Shan's storage bracelet into his grasp, then reached out to grab the metal scripture as well before descending onto the floating altar in the sky.

He examined the metal scripture in his hand to discover that it bore the appearance of a piece of shattered chinaware. Its surface was riddled with extremely deep cracks, and it looked as if it could crumble away at any moment.

A hesitant look appeared on Han Li's face as he scrutinized the metal scripture.

Having gleaned the secrets of the golden light barrier from earlier, he had learned how to use this sword refinement array, but he didn't know if the metal scripture could support the sword refinement process in its current terrible condition.

After a brief moment of contemplation, he sat down with his legs crossed and set the metal scripture aside, then swallowed a pill before closing his eyes to meditate.

A short while later, he rose to his feet and picked up the metal scripture again, then cast his gaze toward a certain direction as he murmured to himself, "I have to give it a try. I suppose it could be considered as completing your dying wish in your stead."

With that, he tossed the metal scripture forward, and it immediately lit up as it flew back onto the altar.

After that, Han Li began to chant an incantation while making a rapid string of hand seals, and the cloud beneath the altar was reignited, transforming into a sea of crimson flames once again.

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Meanwhile, elsewhere in the Infernal Frost Immortal Manor.

A green jade flying carriage that was around 100 feet in length was racing through the sky.

At the front of the carriage stood a tall man with a disk treasure held in his hands. A layer of white mist was hovering above the treasure, and there was a speck of red light that was flashing incessantly at its center.

"Could those maggots from the Reincarnation Palace be responsible for this?" the man murmured to himself with a perplexed expression.

There was a pair of golden armored puppets standing behind him with halberds held in their hands, and they displayed no reaction.

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Halfway up the Boundless Sword Sect mountain, Lu Yuqing was standing with her silver longsword clasped behind her as she looked up at the mountain summit.

Her vision was still obstructed by the dense mist up above, and there had been quite a loud commotion ringing out a little earlier, but it had since subsided.

It seemed that whatever was taking place up there had concluded, and peace and quiet were restored.

As for the wooden puppets that she had been battling, they had already been reduced to a pile of wood scraps strewn all over the ground around her.

After a long hesitation, Lu Yuqing finally made up her mind, setting foot onto the stone staircase to make her way up toward the mountain summit.

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On the floating altar, Han Li was sweating profusely as azure light surged all around him.

His 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords were currently suspended above the hollow section at the center of the altar, and they seemed to have been arranged into some type of special formation with arcs of golden lightning surging between them.

Meanwhile, balls of glowing sword essence of different colors were constantly rising up and surging into the swords from the scorching flames down below.

As time passed, fewer and fewer swords remained in the Boundless Sword Sea, while the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords absorbed more and more sword essence, and the collective aura that they were releasing became more and more formidable.

Han Li was observing the process intently with bated breath.

As the final batch of sword essence flowed into the 72 flying swords, a faint crack suddenly rang out up above, and Han Li's heart immediately sank slightly upon hearing this sound.

Immediately thereafter, radiant golden light erupted out of the cracks on the metal scripture, and it looked as if it were about to explode.

With the example set by Xiong Shan earlier, Han Li was well aware of the consequences that would ensue if the metal scripture were to be destroyed, so he hurriedly swept a sleeve through the air, trying to pull the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords away from the altar before getting away.

However, as soon as his immortal spiritual power came into contact with the flying swords, a burst of lightning that was interspersed with tremendous sword qi instantly erupted out of the swords to pulverize his sleeve.

Immediately thereafter, a numb sensation spread through his entire body, rendering him temporarily immobilized.

Right at this moment, a burst of white light suddenly flashed over his storage bracelet, following which a peculiar palm-sized jade badge flew out from within before drifting directly toward the metal scripture.

Han Li was quickly able to identify the jade badge as something that had been given to him by Elder Qi Heng of the Holy Puppet Sect.

During their battle all those years ago, Qi Heng had once unleashed the Seven Deaths Sword Array of the Boundless Sword Sect, and it seemed that this strange jade badge was something from the Boundless Sword Sect as well.

Before Han Li had a chance to ponder this matter any further, the jade badge suddenly began to glow radiantly while becoming completely transparent, and a series of threads of golden light emerged within it to form a string of antiquated characters that read "Boundless Sword Core".

Following the emergence of the golden characters, the white jade badge gradually fused as one with the light radiating from the metal scripture,

All of a sudden, a resounding boom rang out, and a dense dark cloud suddenly appeared out of nowhere above the altar. Azure and purple light was flashing incessantly within the dark cloud amid bursts of rumbling thunderclaps, and golden light abruptly flashed within the eyes of the golden dragons coiled around the eight surrounding pillars, as if they had suddenly sprung to life.

At the same time, they were giving off vast auras, and it seemed that they could fly out of the pillars at any moment.

Immediately thereafter, the eight dragons opened their mouths at once to blast forth streams of crimson flames toward the center of the altar, and the flames converged in mid-air to form a raging sea of fire.

As soon as Han Li's bodily functions returned to him, he immediately flew through the air to situate himself outside the altar.

Immediately thereafter, the sea of flames came surging down from the heavens, inundating the entire altar in the blink of an eye.

At the same time, a resounding thunderclap rang out in the sky, and a waterfall of azure and purple lightning came crashing down, plunging straight into the scorching flames.

It was impossible to see the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords through the lightning and fire, and even Han Li's spiritual sense was unable to make any inroads.

Only now did the sword refinement truly begin.

Han Li wore a complex expression as he sat down in mid-air and observed from afar.

Three days passed by in the blink of an eye, and the mouths of the eight dragons coiled around the pillars surrounding the altars.

The sea of fire that engulfed the altar had expanded even further compared with three days ago, and bolts of azure and purple lightning continued to rain down from the heavens into the scorching flames below.

Han Li was standing near the sea of fire, and it seemed that he had already recovered from the injuries that he had sustained from the prior battle, but there was a slightly anxious look in his eyes.

The sword refinement process had gone on far longer than he had anticipated, and it was completely out of his control, so all he could do was stand and wait. Fortunately, Xue Han and the others hadn't entered this place up to this point.

Inside the daoist temple down below was Lu Yuqing, who had arrived on the mountain summit some time ago.

At this moment, she was casually strolling through the daoist temple, stopping in front of a dilapidated pavilion one moment, then crouching down in front of a moss-covered well the next.

She was constantly inspecting her surroundings with a slightly lost look in her eyes, and it seemed as if she were struggling to recollect something.