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Chapter 241: Fire Celestial Lotus

The moment the cold laugh and bloodthirst started from the grey-robed elder, several white-robed men darted out from behind him. With a quick flick of their hands, several black spears swung and created multiple spear images that were hurled towards Mu Chen.

The cyan longsword flashed and a pitch-black Spiritual Energy burst outwards from Mu Chen's body. The sword flickered with black flames and blocked all of the spear images that rained down on him.

Claang! Claaang!

The sword collided with the spears and burned them away with its black flames. These white-robed individuals weren't as strong as the four from before — they should be somewhere in the Heavenly Fusion Stage Middle Phase. However, their actions were extremely well coordinated. Even a Heavenly Fusion Stage Late Phase might get killed in a fight against them.

Mu Chen looked up at the grey-robed elder, who was staring back at him with the eyes of a venomous snake. This Heavenly Transform Stage Initial Phase old bat was the one Mu Chen truly feared. Such power was quite overbearing with his current cultivation. This old man would be a great threat, if he decided to move against him.

Mu Chen had no backup, at present, and it was unlikely that he'd be able to carve an escape route out, like last time. His situation was especially un-reassuring.

Several others nearby had noticed the confrontation between Mu Chen and the members of White Dragon City. However, they only afforded a cursory glance, before they took the initiative to leave the area. It was clear that they didn't want to get themselves involved.

"I must find an opportunity to escape." Mu Chen frowned. They should be within the vicinity of the Sovereign Spirit Treasury, so, if he started a fight with Bai Dong right now, there would be too many unstable factors. He couldn't tell if there were going to be more reinforcements from White Dragon City. On top of that, he had to stay wary of the others, who were eyeing him like tigers watching their prey.

"Trying to escape?"

Mu Chen flicked his eyes towards the grey-robed elder, who darkly smiled back at him. Then, something flashed in the elder's eyes. He clenched his dried-up fists as a powerful Spiritual Energy surged into an arc of light and formed into a long spear. The Spiritual Energy of the arc throbbed and gave it an astonishing might.

"The old fellow is about to act!"

Mu Chen's face couldn't help to changed as he retreated.

The grey-robed elder stepped forward with a cold smile on his face. Then, his image turned fuzzy for a moment, as if it was formed from wisps of smoke. Within a few steps, he'd closed the empty space between himself and Mu Chen.

Mu Chen cheerlessly pushed his Shadowspirit Step as far as it could go; however, the old man still managed to catch up. Whatever Spiritual Art this old man practiced, it clearly surpassed the Shadowspirit Step.

“Black Dragon Spear!”

The dark spear in the elder’s hand vibrated and exploded with a brilliant light as it lunged forward. The majestic Spiritual Energy moved like a black dragon and swiped at Mu Chen. A sharp bloodthirst whipped past him.

Mu Chen didn’t dare to pause as the shocking gale blew past him. Instead, he raised his hand and the Nine-layered Pagoda materialised and swelled in size, becoming a pagoda-shield between them.

Baaaang!

The long spear smashed into the Nine-layered Pagoda, causing it to tremble with a metallic clash. The force of the impact flowed towards Mu Chen and made his blood and qi surge.

“Hmm?”

The grey-robed elder made a sound of surprise. Not even a Heavenly Fusion Stage Late Phase should be able to withstand that attack; however, this youth had managed it with the help of this strange black pagoda.

“Seal this entire area. I want to see how long he can last.” That grey-robed elder coldly ordered. His eyes focused as he took another step forward. His majestic Spiritual Energy circulated as he released his Heavenly Transform Stage power in an explosive burst of strength. The black spear in his hands stabbed out with an air-ripping speed, causing waves on the surface of the magma lake.

Mu Chen mobilised his Shadowspirit Step to dodge the grey elder’s increasingly ferocious attacks. Once again, he sent the Nine-layered Pagoda out to withstood the attacks.

But if this goes on, he’d be thoroughly suppressed.

“Elder Qiu, remember not to kill him. I don’t want him dying so easily!” Bai Dong stood outside their range, savagely glaring at the disadvantaged Mu Chen.

“Rest assured, Young City Lord. I won’t let him escape.” the grey-robed elder darkly smiled as a chill revealed itself in his eyes. His attacks intensified even further.

Mu Chen made a jolty retreat, with a gloomy expression on his face. The old man’s overbearing posture had provoked his anger.

Mu Chen felt pressured by the old man’s Heavenly Transform Stage Initial Phase strength, but he also knew that he would have to suffer the consequences of going all out.

“Hey, old fart, if you want to play, then I’ll play with you!”

There was a murkiness in Mu Chen’s eyes as he started forming seals with both hands. The seals quickly came into being with a surge of frighteningly powerful Spiritual Energy ripples.

“Hmm?” The grey-robed elder sensed the Spiritual Energy ripples and focused on them. So, this brat really does have some tricks up his sleeve. No wonder he managed to kill the four Demonic Dragon Guards.

The moment before Mu Chen executed his Four Gods Constellation Scripture, he stole a glance at the boiling magma. A trace of shock suddenly flashed through his previously cold eyes.

Even though Mu Chen’s attention had been split, the speed at which he formed his seals didn’t slow for even a moment.

“Brat, you’re reckless to split your attention while fighting me!”

The grey-robed elder had noticed the diversion of Mu Chen’s attention and he turned into a strand of fuzzy smoke that reappeared above Mu Chen with lightning speed. Waves of Spiritual Energy moved through the black spear as it cut downwards.

At the same time, the Nine-layered Pagoda appeared above Mu Chen and rapidly expanded.

Claaaang!

The elder’s fierce attack drove into the pagoda, which turned dull and quickly shrank, before it crashed into Mu Chen.

Mu Chen suffered from heavy blow and tumbled backwards into the magma with a “pfff!”

The waves of magma lapped upwards as Mu Chen disappeared beneath them.

The grey-robed elder stood in the sky, watching the magma lake in surprise. Could that brat really have died just like that?

Bai Dong quickly flew over to him with a wary expression. He clenched his fist and said, “That brat won’t die so easily. Fish him out! I’ll grind his bones to dust!”

The grey-robed elder shook his head and replied, “Young City Lord, this lake is filled with flame miasma. Even if one can withstand the magma itself with their Spiritual Energy, they will still be corroded away by the flame miasma. That brat fell in; his death is certain.

Bai Dong’s face twisted with refusal. He hated Mu Chen down to his bones and still had plans for ruthlessly torturing him. He didn’t expect Mu Chen to simply die like that.

“We’ll stand guard here. If he does survive, he’s certain not to stay in there for long. The moment he reappears, we’ll capture him.” The grey-robed elder replied as he swept an eye over the magma lake.

Bai Dong nodded and gritted his teeth. “Little trash, you better not die so quickly!”

They took separate positions in the air as they probed the surface of the lake with their senses. However, they were ultimately left bewildered and empty-handed after guarding the area for a full ten minutes, without a sign of Mu Chen.

“That brat definitely died in there,” the grey-robed elder solemnly declared. There was no way he could’ve survived after so long. Not to mention that the brat was still a Heavenly Fusion Stage Initial Phase.

Bai Dong whipped his sleeves around.

“Young City Lord, let us reconvene with the City Lord. Obtaining the treasures left behind by the White Dragon Sovereign is still of utmost importance,” the elder said.

Bai Dong could only nod his head as he glanced at the magma lake’s one last time, before reluctantly leaving.

Bai Dong left, clearly not knowing that Mu Chen — who he thought to be dead — was still hiding out in the depths of the magma lake. His body was shrouded in black flames. With the Nine Netherflame guarding him, the magma was no threat at all; the so-called flame miasma couldn’t get through its guard.

Mu Chen swam around in the scarlet magma, constantly keeping an eye out for dangers. The Nine Netherbird had reported that it’d discovered peculiar ripples coming from deeper down.

It was highly possible that those ripples were coming from the Fire Celestial Lotus!

That’s why Mu Chen had seized the opportunity to escape the grey-robed elder by diving into the magma lake. This way, he could spend his time searching for the Fire Celestial Lotus, instead.

“That old fart. The next time we meet, I’ll give you a taste of my moves.” Mu Chen coldly snorted to himself. If there hadn’t been other things holding him back, how could he have let himself be suppressed like that? If Mu Chen had gone all out, then that old fart would either be dead, or have had a layer of his hide scraped off. However, the exchange would’ve been exhausting on Mu Chen’s part.

Mu Chen didn’t slow his search as these thoughts circulated through his heart. The deeper he dived into the magma lake, the stronger the heat became. The temperature at this depth was even starting to penetrate the defenses of the Nine Netherflame.

If this went on, then Mu Chen wouldn’t be able to continue, with or without the Nine Netherflame’s protection.

“Two hundred meters down, on your right.” The Nine Netherbird’s voice suddenly sounded.

Mu Chen acknowledged the voice with a change of expression and immediately headed towards the direction the Nine Netherbird had indicated. In a few moments later, he looked up ahead with an expression of excitement on his face.

The scarlet magma was boiling harder over here. In the center of it all floated a rainbow-coloured lotus. Not even the magma could approach the brilliant rainbow colors that glowed from it.

A strange fragrance spread through the area and seemed to disperse the heat that had built up in Mu Chen’s body.

Mu Chen studied the rainbow lotus that was deep in the magma with an expression of exhilaration. This was the Fire Celestial Lotus that he’d been searching for!

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Chapter 242: Refining the Lotus Seed

It really is the Fire Celestial Lotus.

Mu Chen's eyes were blazing as he stared at the rainbow-coloured lotus submerged in the magma lake. Joy had settled within him as his plan bore fruit, as expected. The Fire Spiritual Energy around here was so strong that it could support many Fire Spirit Lotuses at once, so there simply had to be one that'd managed to evolve. The only difference in his plans was that the treasure hadn't been floating on the surface; instead, it'd been hidden deep in the magma.

The magma was boiling so hot that it could melt metal. Even Heavenly Transform Stage experts wouldn't dare to dive into it. If the Nine Netherflames hadn't been protecting Mu Chen's body, then he wouldn't have been able to obtain the Fire Celestial Lotus, even if he knew where it'd been hidden. The only thing he could've done was sigh and leave with depressed spirits.

Mu Chen licked his lips as he continued his pace towards the Fire Celestial Lotus.

But, the moment before Mu Chen reached the Fire Celestial Lotus, he sensed a sudden ripple through the magma. A scarlet light pierced through the lake and was headed towards him at a startling speed.

Mu Chen was temporarily caught off guard by the sudden attack, but he still managed to shroud his body within the Nine-layered Pagoda with a wave of his hand.

Claaaang!

The scarlet light collided with the Nine-layered Pagoda, causing it to shake violently. The dark light flickered, then rapidly faded away, before re-entering Mu Chen's body.

"Pffffff."

Mu Chen's face turned pale as the Nine-Layered Pagoda dulled and returned to him as he spat out a mouthful of blood. His eyes glazed over in shock as he barely managed to turn his head towards the right.

A scarlet snake slithered through the magma. It was covered in scarlet scales and had flaming horns. Other than that, it didn't look to be all that powerful. The only thing that was unique about it was the fact that its horns were burning with dark-gold flames and flowed with fiery-red magma.

In fact, this scarlet snake was actually far smaller than the Flame-Eating Pythons that Mu Chen had seen from the surface. However, the strength that flowed from this one was far greater. Mu Chen felt much more power emanating from it than from even that grey-clothed elder.

Is this the King Flame-Eating Python?! Mu Chen felt a jolt in his heart and tasted something bitter on his tongue as he looked upon the smaller scarlet serpent. How could he have forgotten that? The Fire Celestial Lotus was such a rare treasure — how could it not have a guardian Spiritual Beast? The ordinary Fire Spirit Lotuses floating above him were already enough to attract all those regular Flame-Eaters; so, of course, the higher grade Fire Celestial Lotus would have something guarding it.

Based on the way this particular Flame-Eater was acting, Mu Chen guessed that it was as strong as a Heavenly Transform Stage Middle Phase expert. He also had to take into account the fact that they were currently inside the magma. Forget about Mu Chen, even Su Xuan wouldn't be able to win in this situation.

“Hissss. Hiss.”

The King Flame-Eater savagely stared down at Mu Chen with its triangularly arranged pupils. Given that it was so powerful, of course it'd developed a decent amount of intelligence over time. It looked at Mu Chen with the mocking expression of a cat watching a mouse. It knew its own strength — it also knew that this little human would certainly become food in its mouth, sooner or later.

Mu Chen didn't even twitch as he looked at the Fire Celestial Lotus right before his eyes, then back at the King Flame-Eater that was still eyeing him like a predator watching its prey. He decisively grounded his teeth and retreated.

At his current level, there was no way Mu Chen could deal with that King Flame-Eater. If he loitered around there any longer, he'd definitely lose his life.

Shhhhu!

The moment Mu Chen moved, something primal flashed through the eyes of the King Flame-Eater. With a twitch of its tail, a frightening Spiritual Energy swept out. Mu Chen sensed the magma around him bear down even harder than before, slowing him down, little by little, until he came to a full stop.

The King Flame-Eater could actually control the magma with such precision.

Cold sweat beaded on Mu Chen's forehead as the Nine Netherflame continued to protect his body from within. He slowly raised his eyes to see the King Flame-Eater tearing through the magma towards him like a scarlet ray of light.

“Damn it!”

Mu Chen's expression changed and his Spiritual Energy surged as he prepared to meet the threat.

But right before Mu Chen could act, something jolted him from within his body. A clear and resonant cry sounded from him.

“Liiii!”

The pride, honor, and power carried in that cry were as clear as day.

The King Flame-Eater immediately braked on its charge as the cunning pupils were overwhelmed with shock and despair. It looked as if it'd seen something truly terrifying.

Rustle!

The King Flame-Eater twisted its body, turned, and fled.

Boom!

As it turned to flee, a surge of black flames poured from Mu Chen's body and took the shape of a dark bird. The bird's eyes were stone-cold as they stared at the retreating figure of the King Flame-Eater. When it opened its beak, a stream of black flames poured out and raced through the magma, enveloping the King Flame-Eater.

“Chiii! Chii!”

The King Flame-Eater desperately struggled against the attack as it wailed mournfully.

The dark bird blazed and ignored the cries of the serpent. Then, it opened its beak again and inhaled. The black flame-shrouded snake writhed as it turned into a streak of dark light and was devoured.

Mu Chen watched with a dumbfounded expression. Then, he looked towards the slender black bird. Nine Netherbird?

The bird that burned with black flames casually turned to Mu Chen. That expression. Who else could it be, if not the Nine Netherbird?

“So, you can leave my body now?” Mu Chen said with a little shock. It looked like the Nine Nether Bird had regained quite a bit of strength.

“This is only a form created with Spiritual Energy.”

The Nine Netherbird’s voice resounded deep inside Mu Chen’s heart. Then, it stretched its wings and looked at Mu Chen. “I don’t want to die just because I associated with you.”

Mu Chen shrugged and smiled. Thanks to the Bloodline Bond between them, if he’d died from the King Flame-Eater, then the Nine Netherbird would’ve also died with him.

The Spiritual Energy image of the Nine Netherbird suddenly flapped its wings and a black flame spurted towards Mu Chen, “It looks like something that the King Flame-Eater ate hasn’t been fully digested.”

As Mu Chen observed the lump of black flames with wide eyes, the flames dispersed and revealed a palm-sized medal that looked like it’d been forged in silver. The surface of the silver medal flickered with a strange aura and had been engraved with the image of a soaring white dragon.

What’s this? Mu Chen was astonished. He examined the medal and its carving of the dragon, but didn’t sense anything off about it. He frowned as he muttered to himself and stowed it away.

Based on the design of the white dragon, this should’ve been something left behind by the White Dragon Sovereign. But why was it inside the King Flame-Eater?

Mu Chen had no idea how to use the silver medal, so he stowed it away and looked back towards the Fire Celestial Lotus. This time, he swam over without meeting any obstacles and gingerly landed on the petals of the rainbow-coloured lotus.

At the center of the lotus surged a strand of pure Fire Spiritual Energy. And inside this strand floated a rainbow-coloured lotus seed the size of an infant’s fist.

Over time, this rainbow-coloured lotus seed had slowly turned glossy as it gathered the Fire Spiritual Energy in the area. Even now, it constantly emanated an extremely pure fire-attributed Spiritual Energy.

“You can have the Fire Celestial Lotus seed. Once you eat it, give the rest of the flower to me.” The Nine Netherbird swept an eye over the Fire Celestial Lotus and a look of satisfaction filled its eyes. Treasures like these — brimming with rich Fire Spiritual Energy — were exactly what it needed the most.

Mu Chen had no objections to the Nine Netherbird’s request. The lotus seed was where the purest Spiritual Energy had gathered. The flower itself was also quite extraordinary, but the Spiritual Energy

there was much more wild. Mu Chen would have to spend much more time and energy absorbing the flower — luxuries that he couldn't afford at the moment. He might as well hand it over to the Nine Netherbird.

“Refine it quickly. The Fire Celestial Lotus can counter the flame miasma. On top of that, cultivating with it here will greatly benefit the way you absorb the Spiritual Energy inside the lotus seed. You must take the opportunity, before my Spiritual Energy body disperses. I can still guard you, for now, but you must not waste time.” The black flames surged around the Nine Nether bird, then died down as it rapidly shrank to fit in a palm and landed on the lotus flower.

Mu Chen nodded and didn't delay. He took two steps forward and plucked the multicolored lotus-shaped seed floating between the petals.

Onom. Onom.

The moment Mu Chen touched the lotus seed, the Fire Spiritual Energy around him began to churn chaotically. Several surges swept towards Mu Chen, but were absorbed as he circulated the Great Pagoda Art.

Mu Chen quickly unfolded his palm to see the glowing seed. A burning sensation was spreading through his palm, although it was pleasantly warm. When Mu Chen first dived into the magma lake, some of the flame miasma had managed to penetrate the Nine Nether Flame's defenses and invaded his body. It had now been dispelled.

“Good stuff.”

Mu Chen exclaimed in admiration as he sat down on top of the lotus flower and pacified the ripples of Spiritual Energy within his body. He placed one palm on top of the seed and one below, then pulled; the suction from his palms caused the seed to explode with a dazzlingly scarlet light that was as intense as the burning sun.

An extremely pure scarlet Spiritual Energy rushed out from the lotus seed and bathed Mu Chen in a scarlet light. It poured into Mu Chen through his mouth, nose, and even his pores.

Mu Chen's skin turned scarlet red and the Spiritual Energy within his body boiled vigorously and blazed with astonishing energy!

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Chapter 243: Breakthrough

The wind screeched over the magma lake as human figures scurried back and forth over its surface. Even though the raid earlier had depleted the area of most of its Fire Spirit Lotuses, there were still quite a few left over; after all, this magma lake was extremely vast. A lot of people had stayed in this area to scrape up some of those leftovers.

A white-robed figure sat on one of the huge stone platforms floating in the lake. His eyes were cold and focused as he stared into the scarlet magma, searching for any suspicious movements.

He was a Demonic Dragon Guard that Bai Dong had left behind before they'd moved on. That Bai Dong understood Mu Chen quite well — even after watching him fall into the magma lake, Bai Dong didn't

want to give him a chance, so he'd left one expert behind to monitor the situation for him. If the guard noticed any sign that Mu Chen was still alive, then he'd immediately send them a message.

However, the grey-robed elder disapproved of Bai Dong's actions. The magma lake was extremely formidable; even the elder, himself, wouldn't be able to last more than five minutes. On top of that, they'd stayed in the area for more than ten minutes before they left. That was more than enough time for Mu Chen to have been burnt to ashes.

The Demonic Dragon Guard who'd been left behind was thinking the same thoughts; however, he couldn't disobey Bai Dong. Therefore, he impatiently stayed at his post with a terrible mood.

"A Heavenly Fusion Stage Initial Phase brat wants to live after falling in? How is that possible?"

The Demonic Dragon Guard smiled at no one in particular as he absent-mindedly looked around the boiling magma lake. Suddenly, his mouth dropped open as astonishment flooded his eyes.

The other experts who'd been digging the area for Fire Spirit Lotuses also watched the surface of the magma lake with expressions of disbelief.

A whirlpool had formed down there. And all of the Flame-Eaters were fleeing.

Bang!

A tall pillar of magma shot out from the vortex. A human form flew out from the liquid and moved to hover in midair.

The black flames slowly burned away to reveal a slender and handsome youth. Many of the spectators widened their eyes at his familiar features.

"It's that youth who got beaten into the magma lake by those people from White Dragon City!"

"How is he still alive?"

"How is that possible?"

Cries of surprise burst from those who saw Mu Chen's entrance and their faces turned pale as if they'd seen a ghost. At first, they'd felt sympathy for Mu Chen when they saw him fall into the magma lake. But who would've thought that he'd still be alive?

Mu Chen, however, didn't bother with the astonished faces. Instead, he looked down and looked at his slender hands, then clenched them. An unconcealable excitement permeated his majestic Spiritual Energy.

Thanks to the pure Fire Spiritual Energy within the Fire Celestial Lotus, Mu Chen's ability had been greatly strengthened and he'd even entered the Heavenly Fusion Stage Middle Phase. He could also sense that his Nine Netherflame had grown even stronger.

The greatest boost from the refined Fire Seed had been to his Nine Netherflame, instead of his Spiritual Energy.

Mu Chen showed a satisfied smile before he looked around. Bai Dong and his crew were already gone. It made sense; they didn't have the time to wait around for him.

“The next time we meet, I’ll make sure you’re not so comfortable.” A chill flashed through Mu Chen’s black pupils. He waved his sleeve and was prepared to leave, but his eyes were suddenly drawn to a stone platform a short distance away. His expression changed. On that stone platform stood a white-robed elder, staring at him in shock.

“They actually left a guard behind?”

Mu Chen’s expression turned dark when he saw the white-robed expert.

The white-robed Demonic Dragon Guard mirrored Mu Chen’s change of expression. His heart jumped. Then, without the slightest hesitation, he turned around and left. As a Heavenly Fusion Stage Middle Phase, he definitely wasn’t Mu Chen’s opponent. He had to find Bai Dong and tell him that Mu Chen was still alive.

Rustle!

But just as the guard started to fly away, a screeching wind made him turn his eyes over his shoulder. What he saw scared him so badly that his soul almost left his body. In that instant, Mu Chen had appeared right behind him.

“Since you stayed behind, then you should stay here forever,” Mu Chen said with his cold but casual tone. The ice-cold bloodlust was clear to the ears of the Demonic Dragon Guard.

“Shhhhu!”

The guard’s face changed dramatically. With a clutch of his fingers, a long dark spear materialised in his hand and thrust forward with a trembling ferocity.

A pair of slender hands wrapped in dark flames also shot forward like twin bolts of lightning. They slid over the black spear and reached around the Demonic Dragon Guard.

Bang!

The guard’s clothes immediately turned to ashes as a death-black palm print appeared on his back. He coughed up red blood as the despotic flames overtook his body and roasted him down to his meridians.

“Arrrghh!”

The Demonic Dragon Guards shrieked miserably as he burned.

Mu Chen seized over the black spear with an apathetic expression. Then he swung it down on the Demonic Dragon Guard, much like one would swing a club. A violent gale rushed away from the pair as Mu Chen mercilessly pounded his opponent into the magma lake.

“Arrrghh!”

The Demonic Dragon Guard shrieked again as he landed in the magma, but was quickly cut off as the boiling liquid engulfed him with a green cloud of smoke. He’d already been reduced to ashes.

With a flick of his finger, Mu Chen tossed the black spear after him. Once that was done, he dusted off his hands. Then he turned around and left, the whole time wearing the same calm expression.

The other experts in the area watched Mu Chen's shrinking back with expressions of fear as they realised that their heads were damp with cold sweat. Who would've thought that such a youngster could be so ferocious when provoked?

That young man was a fierce one. Bai Dong was going to have quite the headache for provoking him.

The experts shook their heads and sighed inwardly before they recovered and returned to their tasks of harvesting the leftover Fire Spirit Lotuses.

Roughly ten minutes later, Mu Chen had left the magma lake behind him. Ahead of him was the huge palace. People were rushing towards it in large numbers like hungry wolves and tigers — everyone was searching for the treasures that might appear.

This area was far more chaotic than the magma lake. Even the slightest would engulf a large number of victims, even if they had no idea what that even was.

Mu Chen swept his eyes over the scene and quickly lost interest. This was clearly still within the outer limits of the Spirit Treasury, so there was no way any treasures would appear all the way out here. Bai Dong and the rest probably hadn't wasted any time here, either.

Mu Chen thought about it a little, then decided to move ahead. With a quick flash, he bolted straight towards the palace. Once in awhile, some untactful idiot would get in his way. When that happened, all Mu Chen had to do was casually send out a palm and send them flying backwards with blood trailing from their mouths. He didn't bother with being polite. When everyone else saw what he was capable of, they grew too wary to act and simply allowed him to pass.

Mu Chen passed through the entryway and entered a long and narrow corridor, which occasionally branched off into a few ancient stone chambers. Mu Chen allowed others to hurry into those rooms ahead of him. Sometimes there'd be bursts of joy — sounded like they'd found some valuable treasures — but those sounds were usually followed by the clashing of weapons.

Mu Chen didn't let his attention stray in the slightest. He identified a single route and headed towards the depths of the palace. He'd already wasted too much time under the magma lake, so now he had to rush.

First, he had to rejoin with Su Xuan and the others. After all, they'd come here as a party. In this place that crawled with hungry wolves, only companions could be trusted.

"I hope nothing happened to them."

Mu Chen frowned and quickened his pace. He didn't have to worry about Su Xuan, with her strength. Li Qing and Guo Xiong were also strong enough to protect themselves. But then there was Su Ling'er, the weakest. If she'd been left alone, she'd definitely take hits due to her fiery temper.

Even though Su Ling'er was a little unreasonable at times, she was still a good person. Mu Chen didn't want anything bad to happen to her.

By the time Mu Chen was done with those thoughts, he'd already sped through several thousand-meter long corridors — and it'd only taken him a little over ten minutes. He'd already passed through a few stone chambers, main halls, and other types of rooms where some sort of Spiritual Aura rippled.

However, he only glanced once into those rooms before he flew on. The things inside them weren't worth his time.

"I should've travelled the perimeter by now."

The more Mu Chen flew, the fewer halls and stone chambers he could sense. However, his sense of the scale only grew larger. Compared to the previous places he'd visited, this palace was much more intricate and majestic.

Mu Chen passed through another corridor and almost entered another stone chamber. The stone gate to the chamber had already been smashed and a few humanoid figures stood in the room with ripples of wild Spiritual Energy pouring from their bodies.

Mu Chen glanced into the ransacked chamber and hesitated. Finally, he decided not to press forward for the time being.

But just as Mu Chen was about to turn around, a burst of laughter drifted out of the stone chamber.

"Haha. Beauty, you should obediently hand that item over. Even though you've offended us, the great Lion Tiger Regiment, we can still forget about punishment — that is, if you're obedient. Otherwise, don't blame us once your smooth skin falls into our hands."

"Dream on!"

An icy-cold voice spat back at the laughter. A voice filled with anger and deep hatred.

"Is that so? Then don't blame us. Brothers, capture this ice beauty for me!" They laughed again.

Mu Chen halted his steps outside the stone chamber and narrowed his eyes. He'd heard that voice before — that must be Senior Sister Li Qing.

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Chapter 244: Draconic Spirit Bracelets

The stone hall was spacious and majestic; but due to the corrosion of time, it'd collapsed a little. Several huge stone pillars laid around the main hall in crumpled heaps. It gave off the feeling of an ancient ruin.

Several human figures were spread around the ruin-like hall. Only at the center of the room was there a small gathering of about a dozen or so people. There was an air of oppression about the hall, though the others in the room didn't dare to show their opinions about it. They were well-aware of the Lion Tiger Regiment — it was one of the top adventurer parties in the area. Furthermore, both leaders were present, so no one dared to test their luck.

A 2-foot-tall stone statue stood at the end of the hall. The statue's feet were mottled and it glared with wide eyes as it emitted a violent aura. It was so detailed that it looked as if it was actually alive.

Two nicks were carved into the rams of the stone statue.

Under the state was a beautiful, sexy, yet ice-cold girl. She wore a frigid expression that was filled with anger.

“Little beauty, if you don’t hand it over, then don’t blame us for not knowing how to be tender.” A roguish smile passed through the Lion Tiger Regiment. The leader drooled as he passed his eyes over the ice beauty’s tender and full features and he felt a demonic fire ignite in his heart. Her figure was too good.

The ice queen standing before the Lion Tiger Regiment was Li Qing, of course. “Don’t go too far. You guys already snatched away one my Spiritual Artifacts, and you’re still not satisfied?” she growled through her teeth with an ice-cold expression.

She wanted to kill all the despicable men in front of her, but she knew that she was only a Quasi-Heavenly Transform Stage; the leaders of this Lion Tiger Regiment were on the same level. On top of that, they had two Quasi-Heavenly Transform Stage experts. And they had numbers. The subordinates glared at her like tigers watching their prey. She definitely wouldn’t be the one to benefit from a fight.

That middle-aged man of the Lion Tiger Regiment stepped forward and raised his arm. A dark red bracelet appeared on his wrist. It was shaped like a scarlet red dragon — the head and tail linked together to form a circular bracelet. A powerful Spiritual Energy rippled from it and one could hear the faint roars of a dragon.

The glow from the Draconic Spirit Bracelet nearly engulfed the body of the middle-aged man.

All eyes in the stone hall were fixed on the Draconic Spirit Bracelet. Expressions of greed flashed over their faces. When the odd signs of an emerging treasure first showed in the stone hall, Li Qing had been the first to notice. Something strange was happening to the statue’s wrists, so she’d reduced the areas on those wrists to dust.

As the clay fell away, everyone saw the spiritual light bloom from the gashes. The statue was wearing a pair of dragon-shaped bracelets that flickered with spiritual light. The roars of dragons echoed through the hall.

Those definitely weren’t ordinary Spiritual Artifacts. Guesses were that the Draconic Spirit Bracelets were a High Rank Spiritual Artifact.

High Rank Spiritual Artifact.

Those four words were enough to make many eyes turn red. A High Rank Spiritual Artifact could easily auction for millions of Spirit Coins back in White Dragon City. And now, the High Rank Spiritual Artifacts — the Draconic Spirit Bracelets — had appeared. Of course, it caused no small commotion.

Everyone stood paralysed in wonder, but Li Qing was the first to break from the trance. She acted first and seized one of the Draconic Spirit Bracelets without hinderance.

But the moment she snatched up the Draconic Spirit Bracelets, the two leaders of the Lion Tiger Regiment also saw their chance. The two of them joined hands and forced Li Qing to retreat. They’d also stolen one of the Draconic Spirit Bracelets.

However, those two hadn’t been satisfied with that; they could tell that the two Spiritual Artifacts were a set, which meant that their true might could only be unleashed when used together. That’s why they refused to let the other Draconic Spirit Bracelet fall into Li Qing’s hands.

The middle-aged man gently caressed his Draconic Spirit Bracelet and smiled at Li Qing. “Hand over the other Draconic Spirit Bracelet. We promise not to hurt you.”

This man was one of the Lion Tiger Regiment’s two leaders — Cheng Hu. He was well-known in the White Dragon Hillock.

Li Qing grounded her teeth and her charming eyes seemed to erupt with flames. These people from the Lion Tiger Regiment were being too much.

“If you want to steal the Draconic Spirit Bracelet from my hands, you’re welcome to try!” Li Qing’s voice was icy-cold. She wore only one bracelet shaped like a fire-dragon on her jade-like wrist. A wild Spiritual Energy influenced the natural Spiritual Energy caused it to shake.

“Haha. Do you think you can confront our Lion Tiger Regiment all alone?” Cheng Hu coldly smiled. He wasn’t bothered by whether or not the bystanders would gossip about them of taking advantage with numbers. As far as he could see, there was only benefits to be had from this situation. What would he care about gossip?

“Big Brother, we’ll act together and capture her. We’ll see how long she can act tough!” The other leader of the Lion Tiger Regiment, Cheng Shi, coldly proposed. He was the one who Mu Chen had fought before.

If the Draconic Spirit Bracelets had only been Middle Rank Spiritual Artifacts, then perhaps they wouldn’t have cared so much. Such a Spiritual Artifact might be tempting, but it wouldn’t be something that they absolutely had to get their hands on. But this was a different story with a High Rank Spiritual Artifact.

Even though there was only one difference between ranks, the power difference was like that between heaven and earth. If they obtained that High Rank Spiritual Artifact, they wouldn’t even need to fear a Heavenly Transform Stage Initial Phase expert. They could even use their connections to suppress their opponent.

In the White Dragon Hillock, the decently-strong forces all possessed Middle Rank Spiritual Artifacts. But none other than the three major forces the amount of forces that possessed High Rank Spiritual Artifact wouldn’t exceed the fingers on one hand.

Above the High Rank Spiritual Artifacts were Peerless Rank Spiritual Artifacts. However, artifacts of that level were objects that exceeded their imaginations. It’s said that Spiritual Artifacts of that level possessed their own intelligence. Profound and boundless with the power to move mountains and split seas. Forget about the White Dragon Hillock, there weren’t even that many forces on the entire Northern Heavens Continent that possessed Peerless Rank Spiritual Artifacts.

Cheng Hu nodded as he stared at Li Qing with a dark and cold expression.

Everyone else in the stone hall inwardly smacked their lips. So the two leaders were going to gang up against Li Qing. The Lion Tiger Regiment was dishonorable, indeed.

Li Qing now wore a different expression, as well; however, the rage in her eyes hadn’t diminished. She tightly clutched her Draconic Spirit Bracelet. She’d already decided that she wouldn’t let them steal her half of the treasure so easily, even if that meant risking both parties to be injured.

“Move!”

The two brothers didn't give a second thought about the shushing from the crowd around them. With a shout, they rushed Li Qing together. Two powerful Spiritual Energies rippled out. The members of the crowd of less strength urgently fell back from the powerful Spiritual Energy pressure.

Li Qing grounded her teeth at the attack. She was prepared to use the Draconic Spirit Bracelet, even though she still wasn't very familiar with it.

But, before she could act, a familiar voice mockingly called from somewhere else in the stone hall. “The Lion Tiger Regiment should be a pretty well-known force in the White Dragon Hillock, right? So why are their actions so shady?”

“Who?!”

Cheng Hu and Cheng Shi halted their rush and directed their gaze to the mocking voice. Their eyes quickly found it near the broken gate. The slender and handsome youth — staring at them with a sneer — standing in front of it.

“It's that kid!”

Cheng Hu and Cheng Shi's faces changed as they immediately tried to peer into the corridor behind Mu Chen. When they realised that they couldn't see Su Xuan, they breathed out sighs of relief. As long as that girl — who seemed so gentle yet made them feel such pressure — wasn't present, then they had nothing to fear.

“Mu Chen!”

The rage in Li Qing's beautiful eyes was replaced with a look of delight. But that was quickly replaced by an expression of worry when she, too, realised that Mu Chen was alone.

She knew that Mu Chen was a book not to be judged by its cover, but the members of the Lion Tiger Regiment weren't the usual enemies they dealt with.

“Brat, I advise you to scam while you still can. You should try not to invite disaster upon yourself.” Cheng Hu slowly said as he stared at Mu Chen with a dark expression.

Mu Chen only smiled, tapped his foot, and shot across the stone hall, landing next to Li Qing. He couldn't care less about the dark looks coming from Cheng Hu and his experts. He looked at Li Qing with a clam smile and asked, “Senior Sister Li Qing, are you alright?”

A grateful look flashed through her beautiful eyes as she lightly shook her head. “We'll wait for the opportunity and make a break for it. We'll wait until we can join up with Su Xuan and the others. Then, they won't dare to act like this anymore.”

Mu Chen nodded and replied, “Yes, we definitely have to leave. But first, we're going to take your things back.”

He turned around to look at Cheng Hu's group, then extended his hand with a smile. “Trash of the Lion Tiger Regiment, hand it over and scam.”

All of the faces in the stone hall changed to brilliantly peculiar expressions. Did that brat purposely show up to cause trouble? Did he really think that the Lion Tiger Regiment was still going to let him off?

The bystanders looked back at the two brothers and confirmed that their expressions had, indeed, darkened. Sharp bloodlust showed in their eyes.

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Chapter 245: Twin Dragon Suppression

“Brat, you’re asking for death!”

The two brothers stared Mu Chen down with ruthless and dark eyes. They didn’t expect this youth to be so insolent, especially since he’d appeared alone. To think he actually dared to be so untactful.

“Boss, kill that brat!” someone from the Lion Tiger Regiment called out. Did this stinking brat really think that their fame was nothing but empty bragging?

Cheng Shi and Cheng Hu exchanged glances. Then, the former nodded and slowly started walking forward as surges of powerful Spiritual Energy pressure poured out of him. His tone was dull as he said, “Brat, your courage is commendable, but I’ll let you know this: everyone who’s been in your situation has met a miserable end.”

He drew his fingers together and a long black sword materialised in his fist. A bloodthirsty aura emanated from it — it was clearly a powerful Spiritual Artifact.

It looked like Cheng Shi planned to take matters into his own hands.

The expression in Li Qing’s charming eyes turned cold and she prepared to take a step forward. However, she was blocked by Mu Chen.

“Let me handle it.”

Mu Chen smiled at Li Qing. At first, Li Qing had been rather worried about their situation; but for some reason, that worry had been lifted away by Mu Chen’s smile. After interacting with him for these past few days, she’d come to understand him a little. He wouldn’t be rash and act on ideas that he was uncertain about.

He’d been provoking the other party since the moment he showed up. He wasn’t stupid, he just didn’t fear the other party.

He wasn’t afraid, which meant that he didn’t plan to leave any face for the other party.

“Be cautious, I’ll watch Cheng Hu for you.” Li Qing said in a low voice.

Mu Chen nodded as he slowly moved forward. Spiritual lights flickered in his hand and a cyan longsword appeared.

“One-on-one? What courage you have.”

Cheng Shi grinned angrily when he saw Mu Chen move forward alone. This brat was really too arrogant. A mere Heavenly Fusion Stage strength actually dared to talk back to him — to he, who had Quasi-Heavenly Transform Stage strength. This brat really wanted to die!

All other eyes in the stone hall watched with amazed expressions. They had no idea where this youth was getting his confidence from. To think he dared to do such a stupid thing.

“Well, since you decided to come, then you should pay the price for your own words.”

Who knows how many lives have stained Cheng Shi’s hands over the years? Of course, he wasn’t going to be lenient towards Mu Chen just because he was young. A cruel look flashed through Cheng Shi’s eyes. A powerful Spiritual Energy rushed out and he took another step forward. His Spiritual Energy surged until it resembled a lion’s roar that echoed and shook the stone hall.

“Brat, die!”

He flashed and reappeared in the air right in front of Mu Chen’s eyes. His eyes were dark as he swung the large blade in his hands downwards. There was no fanciness in that attack, just the surge of Spiritual Energy in his body. The swing sent out waves of blade energy several dozen feet long and cracked the ground when they struck.

Cheng Shi’s actions didn’t have the slightest hint mercy in them. They only fully demonstrated his viciousness.

“Haaaaaa.”

Mu Chen took in a deep breath and his dark pupils turned icy-cold. He firmly gripped his longsword and circulated his Spiritual Energy, which coursed strongly through his meridians before rushing out from his body. Black flames ascended along with his spiritual energy and nearly shrouded his entire body. The temperature rose in the stone hall.

Rustle!

Mu Chen growled as he thrust his longsword. Black flames engulfed his longsword as it cut forward and met Cheng Hu’s blade.

Bang!

Blade light and sword light clashed and rang with an echoing clang. The force of the impact swept out and sliced the nearby stone pillars with cuts as smooth as the surface of a mirror. The people nearby retreated for fear that they’d be caught in the crossfire.

Rumble!

One stone pillar collapsed after another in cloudy heaps of dust and rubble. Everyone turned back to the battle to see two figures standing in midair over a huge pile of destroyed stone. The two were glaring at each other with ferocious expressions, much like two predators competing for prey.

“Brat, you actually managed to take an attack from our second leader?” The members of the Lion Tiger Regiment watched with faces full of shock. They knew that even a Heavenly Fusion Stage Late Phase should’ve been heavily wounded by that attack. But, this young man had completely blocked it with just a sword.

“No wonder he was so arrogant. So, it seems he actually does have some ability. But, in the end, it doesn’t matter what kind of methods he has up his sleeves. Now that he’s enraged our second leader, there’s no way he’s escaping death.” someone coldly said with a smile.

Cheng Hu narrowed his eyes at the youth, who was standing in midair and knitting his brows back at him. This youth’s Spiritual Energy felt a little odd. Even though it wasn’t as powerful as Cheng Shi’s, those black flames were extremely destructive. When they crossed blades just now, most of Cheng Shi’s blade light had been corroded away by those black flames.

Li Qing sighed a breath of relief when she saw that Mu Chen hadn’t been beaten back. Her jade-like hands clutched the Draconic Spirit Bracelet. The moment Cheng Hu decided to join the fight, she’d move to obstruct them.

Everyone’s attention was focused on the battle between Mu Chen and Cheng Shi, so no one had noticed anything as the stone pillars had crumbled. The stone statue at the end of the hall was glowing with a barely visible light.

“So, you have some abilities, after all.”

Cheng Shi tightly clutched his long blade with a dark expression. At first, he’d planned to beat this Heavenly Fusion Stage kid down; but, contrary to his expectations, this brat’s Spiritual Energy was so abnormal that it was no longer possible. That strange Spiritual Energy and those black flames could even ignite and evaporate his blade light.

Mu Chen gripped his longsword as he exhaled. In reality, he was also surprised that he’d withstood Cheng Shi’s attack without giving any ground. It seemed like his recent breakthrough to the Heavenly Fusion Stage Middle Phase had boosted his strength more than he’d originally thought. Although, of course, he still knew that the Nine Netherflame had been strengthened the most. The Nine Netherflame inside his Spiritual Energy was never this powerful before he’d refined that Fire Celestial Lotus.

“A Quasi-Heavenly Transform Stage still isn’t qualified to act so cocky in front of me.”

Mu Chen smiled, though the smile never reached his eyes. Now that he’d finally entered the Sovereign Spirit Treasury, of course he wasn’t going to give all his time to Cheng Shi. He had to end this quickly.

As Mu Chen reached that conclusion, he extended his hand. The dark light in his palm flared as the Nine-layered Pagoda appeared.

A sharp gale whipped up as the the Nine-layered Pagoda appeared and instantly grew into a massive tower a hundred feet tall. The black flames surged over the pagoda’s structure and an intense Spiritual Energy rippled out.

“Roar!”

The first floor of the pagoda glowed with a golden light — a light that began moving across the walls of the pagoda. A massive golden dragon lifted out of the walls and reared its head to roar at the sky. The stone hall trembled.

Cheng Shi’s eyes widened with fear. There was definitely something off about this kid. He couldn’t underestimate him.

He tightened his fingers around his long blade and began circulating his Spiritual Energy without reserve. A majestic Spiritual Energy swept out like a tidal wave, enveloping the entire hall with its pressure.

Mu Chen's expression was still indifferent as he watched the golden dragon spiral around the Nine-layered Pagoda. However, he wasn't done with his attack yet; he brought his hands together and formed a strange sign.

Onom!

The moment Mu Chen formed his sign, the Nine-layered Pagoda began buzzing as it floated in midair. The golden light started to spread from the first floor to the second.

When the golden light completed its reach for the second floor, another golden dragon appeared. It, too, roared and left the pagoda to spiral around the Nine-layered Pagoda.

The two golden dragons roared as they circled the pagoda and the natural Spiritual Aura surged violently in response. It was a shock to many eyes.

Joy bubbled up in Mu Chen's eyes at the appearance of the second golden dragon. There were nine layers to the Nine-layered Pagoda and each held a golden dragon. Before today, he'd only been able to control the dragon of the first layer — but now, he could finally summon the second one.

Mu Chen's expression burned as he studied his Nine-layered Pagoda. The Great Pagoda Art that his mother had left him wasn't an ordinary art, of course. The profound intent hidden within it would slowly reveal itself as he grew stronger. He wondered how powerful this Great Pagoda Art would be once he cultivated it to its end?

He could just see the spectacular sight of nine dragons soaring from the pagoda. He looked forward to it.

"Now, let's offer you to the pagoda!"

Mu Chen coldly smiled at Cheng Shi, who still wore a stunned expression from the appearance of the Nine-layered Pagoda. Mu Chen's he willed it to happen with his intent, without the slightest hesitation. An earth-shattering shadow and two golden dragons mercilessly bearing down on Cheng Shi. Then, he willed it to happen with his intent, without the slightest hesitation.

"Nine-layered Pagoda, Twin Dragon Suppression!"

Bang!

The stone floor collapsed and a wild energy fluctuated. The bystanders with inferior strength coughed up blood as they retreated from the vibrations. The stone pillars exploded into fine shards.

"Slash of the Heavenly Tiger!"

The dumbstruck Cheng Shi finally recovered and reacted to the pagoda. He circulated his Spiritual Energy and burst forward with a snarl and a slash of his blade.

Boom!

Waves of Spiritual Energy rolled away from his body and took the form of a glowing lion. Blades of light sprouted from the lion's body as it moved towards the pagoda like the slash of a sword.

Bang!

As the amazed spectators watched, the blade's lion of light collided with the pagoda's twin dragons. A shocking Spiritual Energy swept out.

Bang!

The entire stone hall had been leveled. Dust filled the air as the light lion continued its course and was destroyed by the pagoda with a loud noise. Cheng Shi's face changed again.

“Woooooshhh!”

The pagoda's dragons weren't weakened at all by crushing the lion; instead, they smashed into Cheng Shi at the speed of lightning.

“Pffft!”

Cheng Shi suffered the full force of the impact and fell back with a pale face. Long tracks appeared under his feet as the pagoda drove him into the base of a pillar. He coughed up mouthfuls of blood.

Li Qing's rosy lips fell open at the instant outcome — just a moment ago, Cheng Shi had been standing there without a scratch on his face. Her charming eyes turned to the slender figure still hovering in midair. Mu Chen was actually this powerful?

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Chapter 246: Exchange

Mu Chen softly landed in the stone hall. Everyone wore a shocked expression as they watched Cheng Shi still coughing up blood in his sorry state. His expression was extremely different than it'd been before. This outcome had clearly been outside of his expectations.

Cheng Shi, a Quasi-Heavenly Transform Stage expert, had been defeated by a single move from a Heavenly Fusion Stage youth?

“How is that possible?!”

The members of the Lion Tiger Regiment cried with hoarse voices. The arrogant and belittling expressions had melted away from their faces and were replaced with fear as they looked upon the youth.

Mu Chen stood in the air, watching Cheng Shi, who was still hemorrhaging. A chill flashed through his eyes. Without warning, he burst forward towards Cheng Shi.

It was clear that he planned to kick the enemy while he was down.

“You dare?!”

Chen Hu snarled when he noticed Mu Chen's relentless pursuit. The Draconic Spirit Bracelet on his wrist flared with spiritual light and the roars of dragons. The bracelet itself transformed into a fiery-red flood dragon and burst towards Mu Chen with a raging Spiritual Energy.

A look of concern flashed through Mu Chen's eyes. This Draconic Spirit Bracelet was so powerful that it made his skin crawl. So, there was this much distance between a High Rank Spiritual Artifact and a Middle Rank one?

"Hmph!"

When Cheng Hu acted, he'd forgotten about Li Qing, who was still keeping an eye on them. She coldly snorted and raised her Draconic Spirit Bracelet, as well. Hers, likewise, turned into a massive dragon shrouded in surging scarlet pulses, which quickly moved to block the other scarlet dragon.

Boom! Boom!

The scarlet dragon and scarlet flood-dragon collided in midair as waves of wild Spiritual Energy rippled out. The very air itself was compressing and exploding under the force of their battle, further wrecking the ruined stone hall.

Mu Chen raised his head towards the dragons' fight with a dignified look on his face. Recently, he'd been straying away from Spiritual Artifacts — he'd come to believe that they weren't that powerful, after all. But, now that he'd witnessed the power of a genuine High Rank Spiritual Artifact, he realised just how much a Spiritual Artifact could increase one's strength in battle.

If Cheng Shi had possessed another High Rank Spiritual Artifact, then Mu Chen definitely wouldn't have defeated him so easily. In fact, they might've been caught in a long, drawn-out fight just because of a Spiritual Artifact. Then, all Cheng Shi had to do was use his greater Spiritual Energy to wear Mu Chen away.

The expression in Mu Chen's eyes flickered. Seems like he can't underestimate the effect of a Spiritual Artifact. If possible, he'd like to have a Spiritual Artifact to protect himself. Otherwise, if he ever encountered someone who possessed a High Rank Spiritual Artifact, he'd be forced on the defensive.

The thought didn't delay Mu Chen's charge towards the pale-faced Cheng Shi at all.

"Stop him!" Cheng Hu realised that Mu Chen didn't plan on letting his brother go, so he issued an enraged order. But, he was currently caught up with Li Qing, so he couldn't afford to divert his attention any further.

"Yes!"

Dozens of Lion Tiger Regiment experts responded as they rushed towards Mu Chen.

"Get lost!"

Mu Chen's expression turned cold as he gripped his cyan longsword even harder. The black flames surged and entirely shrouded the blade as he thrust it forward. The sword light and black flames swept as one towards the members of the Lion Tiger Regiment with an earth-shattering force.

So, among those members were even Heavenly Fusion Stage experts. But still, it was impossible for them to take down Mu Chen. A dark-burning sword light arced towards them, instantly slicing through their defenses, and sent them flying backwards, while trailing blood.

Mu Chen was as fierce as a wolf or tiger as he smashed through them and reappeared in front of the pale-faced and fear-filled Cheng Shi.

“What do you want?!” Cheng Shi snarled, even he couldn’t hide the fear in his eyes. This youth was only a Heavenly Fusion Stage. How could he be so ferocious?

Mu Chen lightly smiled at him as he stepped forward. His palm trembled as the dark-burning sword light halted right before Cheng Shi’s exposed throat. Cheng Shi froze as he felt the sharp and blazing energy lap at his skin.

“Hey.” Mu Chen grabbed Cheng Shi as he stared over at the dim Cheng Hu with a smile. “I wonder how much you value your brother’s puny life?”

“Kid, if you hurt him, there’ll be an irreconcilable blood feud between yourself and my Lion Tiger Regiment. None of us will rest until you’re dead or we’ve been eradicated.” Cheng Hu threatened. He clenched his fists as rage filled his eyes.

“Cut the nonsense.” Mu Chen smiled while shaking his head. Then, his eyes turned cold. “Hand over the Draconic Spirit Bracelet in exchange for your brother’s life.”

“You...!” Cheng Hu flew into a fury as he held Mu Chen’s eyes. He looked as if he wanted to swallow Mu Chen whole.

However, Mu Chen only returned a cold smile as he brought the longsword and its black flames closer to Cheng Shi’s throat. A thin line of blood trickled down and was burned away by the black flames.

Cheng Shi’s face turned even paler. He was too terrified to even breathe due to the heat at his throat.

Cheng Hu trembled as he fixed his eyes on Mu Chen. The other members of the Lion Tiger Regiment took note of the situation and didn’t dare approach.

The other spectators in the ruined stone hall clicked their tongues when they saw Mu Chen take Cheng Shi hostage. Truly, a ferocious individual. They never expected the two leaders of the Lion Tiger Regiment to fall into Mu Chen’s hands.

Li Qing also put away her Draconic Spirit Bracelet as she flew to Mu Chen’s side. Her beautiful eyes stared at Cheng Hu, whose body trembled from anger and tension.

Mu Chen coldly smiled at the expressions that ran through Cheng Hu’s face. “It looks like you think that your brother’s life is worthless compared to the Draconic Spirit Bracelet.”

Cheng Shi trembled by the ruthless intention in that sentence. The members of the Lion Tiger Regiment also looked at Cheng Hu. If he didn’t make the exchange, then many of them might end up with cold hearts.

Cheng Hu only glared at Mu Chen with deep loathing. This kid was still young, but his heart was extremely ruthless. If he didn’t exchange the Draconic Spirit Bracelet for his brother, then he might lose the hearts of the Lion Tiger Regiment.

“Alright. I’ll give you the Draconic Spirit Bracelet! But, you must release him first!” Cheng Hu bit his teeth as those words were stifled out from the gap between his teeth.

“You’re in no position to make those demands.” Mu Chen smiled. “Hand over the Draconic Spirit Bracelet.”

Cheng Hu’s eyes turned bloodshot as he glared at Mu Chen, before he finally made his decision. He reached out and made a motion as if to pull something out of thin air. The huge scarlet flood-dragon quickly shrank down and returned to its bracelet form before landing in Cheng Hu’s palm.

Rustle.

Cheng Hu clutched the bracelet with a look of heartache in his eyes. But, ultimately, he still tossed it towards Mu Chen.

Mu Chen flicked his wrist out and pulled the Draconic Spirit Bracelet into his hand. An intense Spiritual Energy coursed from his palm, through the rest of his body. In that instant, even Mu Chen couldn’t control it and cried out in admiration. Truly a High Rank Spiritual Artifact. It was many times stronger than a Middle Rank one.

“Here.”

Mu Chen passed it to Li Qing.

Li Qing gave him a surprised look — she didn’t expect Mu Chen to simply hand it to her. After all, he was the one who’d fought hard for it. Back in the Northern Heavens Spiritual Academy’s Spiritual Value Hall, something like this would be worth millions of Spiritual Value Points. That wasn’t a small amount.

Li Qing looked as if she was struggling for a moment, then shook her head. “It’s your spoil of battle. I can’t take it.” She knew that the Draconic Spirit Bracelets together formed a single Spiritual Artifact, but that one still belonged to Mu Chen.

Mu Chen smiled, shook his head, and tossed it to her anyways.

Li Qing panicked when she saw Mu Chen toss it so casually and quickly dove to catch it with her jade-like hands. Anger flared in her chest as she demanded, “What are you doing?!”

She was a beautiful woman, even though she was usually a little too cold. Mu Chen was temporarily stunned by her upset expression. However, he quickly recovered and smiled. “Senior Sister Li Qing, you’re rather beautiful when you smile.”

Li Qing’s face turned red as she snorted and put the Draconic Spirit Bracelet on her wrist. Her face returned back to its usual icy-cold form.

“I’ll consider this a favor I owe you. When we return home from the mission, I’ll give you the 1,500,000 Spiritual Value Points that I’m supposed to get.”

Mu Chen smiled, “No need.”

“I don’t like owing favors. If you don’t want the points, then you should take this Draconic Spirit Bracelet back,” Li Qing pressed.

Mu Chen smiled and shrugged. Senior Sister Li Qing could be quite cute when she was being stubborn. Pity, given how cold she normally was.

Cheng Hu's eyes nearly sprouted flames as he watched Mu Chen flirt with Li Qing. "Are you still not going to let my brother go?!"

"Alright."

In one swift move, Mu Chen hauled Cheng Shi to his feet and printed a palm on his back. The force of the palm sent Cheng Shi flying out in an even sorer state than he'd been before. His pale face turned even paler, if that was possible.

Cheng Hu caught his flying brother and immediately examined his pale face. His expression changed. "What did you do to him?"

"I put something inside his body. Don't worry, he won't die. He just won't be able to circulate his Spiritual Energy for half an hour."

Mu Chen smiled and shrugged a very insincere apology. "Sorry, you guys have greater numbers. I was also worried that you might attack us after I let him go. Please forgive me."

Cheng Hu stared at Mu Chen with dark eyes, then flashed him a bit of a ferocious smile. "Little piece of shit! Did you really think we'd let you walk away like this?"

That caught Mu Chen's attention.

A rumbling of footsteps sounded from outside the stone hall and everyone watched as a cluster of people rushed in like a tsunami. Some of them were members of the Lion Tiger Regiment, though many others wore an entirely different uniform — all the members of this second group wore the same crest sewn onto their breast.

"It's the Nine Blade Troop!"

"The Lion Tiger Regiment and Nine Blade Troop are allies. That kid is doomed. Sigh. It's as the saying goes: 'The older piece of ginger always bites harder than the younger piece.' The Lion Tiger Regiment must have sent someone out for reinforcements."

Mu Chen knitted his brows at the whispering as he watched two individuals separate themselves from the rest of the Nine Blade Troop — clearly the leaders and Quasi-Heavenly Transform Stage experts.

The two newcomers glanced around the stone hall and laughed. "Haha. Brother Cheng Hu, I rushed over immediately after I received your message."

Cheng Hu cupped his hands. "I'll have to thank you two brothers." Then he looked at Mu Chen with a fierce expression and laughed. "Little piece of shit. Let's see if you can still dance?"

Mu Chen's expression turned cold as his black flames slowly spread over his body.

Li Qing clutched the Draconic Spirit Bracelets even harder and prepared to exert all her strength.

Ka cha.

The atmosphere in the stone hall could only be described as a state of pure hostility.

Suddenly, a strange sound rang throughout the room. Everyone frowned as they turned their eyes towards the source at the end of the stone hall.

Their faces changed.

Mu Chen and Li Qing had also turned around and their pupils shrank at the sight before them. The mottled stone statue was bursting with lights in the form of a complex array. A surge of frightening Spiritual Energy rippled from the ancient stone statue.

The stone statue slowly opened its eyes and looked upon them with its stone-dead eyes.

[The Great Ruler](#)

Chapter 247: Stone Guardian

Onom!

A brilliant light rippled in strings over the mottled surface of the ancient stone statue. It looked as if a complicated and cryptic Spiritual Array had been engraved on its surface.

Everyone in the stone hall was startled by the changes before them, and it took them a moment to recover from the bursts of astonishment that were evident in their eyes.

The stone statue had come to life?

Mu Chen watched the ancient stone statue with a grave expression. The stone statue itself finally opened its eyes; however, there was no emotion in those pits, even though a spiritual light flickered.

The statue slowly lowered its head and looked around the crowded stone hall. An empty and emotionless voice echoed through the hall. "Death to those who agitate the Dragon Tomb!"

As the statue spoke, it reached out to take the end of one of the many toppled stone pillars and swung it with a terrifying and mountain-moving force.

Bang! Bang!

Those who stood directly in the pillar's path were instantly ground into paste. Others who couldn't dodge in time were sent smashing into the walls, while spewing mouthfuls of fresh blood.

The statue's sudden explosion of energy shocked many experts and sent them retreating with wary expressions. This thing was basically a killing god.

Mu Chen was also shocked by the statue and he rapidly circulated his Spiritual Energy in response. There was something off about the situation, but right now, they had to focus on evacuating from the chaos caused by the stone statue.

Mu Chen turned to Li Qing and said, "Prepare to retreat."

Li Qing lightly nodded.

The newly awakened stone statue had already started its ruthless massacre of the stone hall's occupants. It marched forward, using the stone pillar in its hands like weapon. Everyone struck by the weapon was left either dead or crippled.

The Lion Tiger Regiment and Nine Blade Troop had the greatest numbers; therefore, they also suffered the greatest losses. Scores of people were turned into meat pulp with each swing of the stone pillar.

“Brother Cheng Hu, what’s going on with that stone statue?” The Nine Blade Troop’s leaders urgently asked with matching expressions. They’d only rushed here because they’d heard that there was a High Rank Spiritual Artifact. However, they hadn’t even caught a glimpse of this High Rank Spiritual Artifact before they encountered this rampaging stone guardian.

Cheng Hu sullenly pointed at Mu Chen and Li Qing. “The High Rank Spiritual Artifact has fallen into their hands. We can’t let them escape.” Their reinforcements had arrived after great difficulty, only to see such unexpected changes to the situation. They were unwilling to withdraw.

“First, we’ll have everyone withdraw. Then, the three of us can fight together!”

The Nine Blade Troop’s leaders hesitated. The stone guardian’s rampage could get troublesome if they stayed too long.

Cheng Hu ground his teeth. “That bastard nearly killed my brother and even dared to use him to threaten me. If you capture them, I can give up on the High Rank Spiritual Artifact. Just hand that bastard to me!”

The Nine Blade leaders lit up and laughed. “Alright. Since Brother Cheng Hu asked us, we’ll capture that brat.”

Cheng Hu cursed inwardly, but only waved his hand in acceptance. The members of their parties began retreating while Cheng Hu and the Nine Blade Troop’s two leaders flew forward, towards Mu Chen and Li Qing.

Li Qing was the first to sense the three experts bearing malicious intent. The stone hall was already in a state of chaos as the stone guardian continued its massacre and sent everyone fleeing in sorry states. However, not only was Cheng Hu not fleeing with them, he was running towards them. It seemed that his hatred for Mu Chen was uncontrollable.

“Hmph.”

Li Qing wasn’t frightened by their attacks in the slightest. With a tightening of her fingers, the Draconic Spirit Bracelets on her wrists burst with brilliant lights. Two colossal dragons — one scarlet and one flood dragon — roared and charged with astonishing power, engulfing the three enemies and destroying any remaining pillars in their path.

Now that the Draconic Spirit Bracelets had been united, it was clear that the power behind them was several times greater. The sheer strength of the artifact even surprised Mu Chen. It was truly worthy of the title of “High Rank Spiritual Artifact”.

“Damn it!”

Cheng Hu’s face changed when he saw the scarlet dragons rushing towards him with their baleful auras. The three figures stopped and released their Spiritual Energy without reservation. The three majestic energies whistled out from their bodies and collided with the dragons.

Bang!

Violent waves of Spiritual Energy swept out. Several unlucky experts retreated while coughing up blood.

The twin dragons roared low and deep as they stopped Cheng Hu and the other two.

A look of excitement flashed across Li Qing's face as she observed the might of the Draconic Spirit Bracelets. With this artifact, she might even be able to hold her own against a Heavenly Transform Stage Initial Phase expert. Again, this High Rank Spiritual Artifact was befitting of its title.

Mu Chen couldn't help clucking his tongue either. Even he might not win against Li Qing while she had those bracelets — if he didn't pull any powerful tricks.

But now that the Draconic Spirit Bracelet belonged to Li Qing, Mu Chen no longer coveted it. Either way, Mu Chen refused to believe that there was only one High Rank Spiritual Artifact left behind in this Sovereign Spirit Treasury.

Boom!

Just as Mu Chen was sighing at its power, his mind suddenly jumped at the explosion. He shifted his gaze towards the stone guardian and noticed that it had suddenly halted its steps. It shifted its empty gaze and stopped on Li Qing, who was still controlling the Draconic Spirit Bracelets.

The Draconic Spirit Bracelets had been taken from this stone guardian, and it was clear that it could sense the familiar ripples. Even though it didn't possess any intelligence, those ripples were enough to attract it.

Boom!

The Stone Guardian hugged the huge stone pillar and suddenly strode forward, charging in Mu Chen's direction. It lifted its stone arms and brought the pillar down on Li Qing so quickly that an ear-piercing sonic boom echoed in the chamber.

The shadow of the pillar descended and Mu Chen's face changed. He didn't think twice as he pulled Li Qing into his arms and tapped his feet on the ground to retreat.

Bang!

The stone pillar smashed into the spot where they'd just been standing and cracks spiderwebbed from the ground. Mu Chen's scalp tingled. Even he'd be heavily injured if he took that one full-on.

This stone guardian definitely wasn't weak. Probably only a real Heavenly Transform Stage expert would be able to confront it.

"Release me."

A cold voice sounded in Mu Chen's ear and interrupted his thoughts. He looked down at the sexy ice queen in his arms and saw that those icy-cold eyes were filled with humiliation and anger.

"Those were pressing circumstances. Pressing circumstances." Mu Chen dryly explained with a chuckle, but still set her down. Li Qing seemed to have something against those of the opposite sex. But there was no way Mu Chen could've bothered over such small details earlier.

Li Qing also knew that Mu Chen hadn't tried to take advantage of her on purpose, so she didn't hang on to it. She only gave him a warning glare before she turned her attention back towards the stone guardian. When its attack had landed a miss, it'd lifted the stone pillar again to slam it down on Cheng Hu and other two who were closer.

The three of them didn't dare to take the attack and rapidly retreated. They sorrily and only narrowly dodged the guardian's attack.

"Let's leave now." Mu Chen said to Li Qing. Suddenly, he furrowed his brows and a silver medal appeared in his hand. The medal had been engraved with the image of a white dragon — the one that he'd taken from the body of the King Flame-Eater back in the magma lake. For some reason, the medal was currently heating up.

"What's going on?"

Mu Chen was temporarily confused by the changes he sensed in the silver medal. However, he only furrowed his brows and tucked it back into his sleeves. This was no time to ponder over it.

He didn't notice that when he brought out the silver medal, the stone statue had frozen for a brief moment before it'd turned around. He only saw it running towards him, rumbling as it moved.

"Quick, run!"

Mu Chen's expression changed as he called out to Li Qing and retreated. In just a few moments, he was already out of the ruined stone hall and moving faster with Li Qing beside him.

However, the stone guardian didn't seem like it intended to give up, even as they moved further away. Its bloodthirsty aura surged.

Cheng Hu and the other two sighed in relief when they saw that the stone guardian had given up on them.

The two leaders of the Nine Blade Troop gasped for breath. The two of them had nearly been ground into fresh meat, and weren't anxious to try again. "Brother Cheng Hu, that Stone Guardian was too powerful. It'd be hard for us to destroy it and won't be easy for us to escape from it. I think we should let it go. That stone statue has its eye on that brat for some reason, so he's already as good as dead."

Cheng Hu hesitated as well, before he nodded helplessly. "Then we'll let him go. We'll reorganise our experts and head deeper into the palace. I believe there should be better treasures in there. As long as we are allies, I believe that we can even contend with the three major forces."

"Alright!"

The two leaders of the Nine Blade Troop immediately agreed. They left the ruined stone hall as a group to gather their men, then immediately headed towards the depths of the spirit treasury.

In another location, Mu Chen's face was ugly as he knew that the stone guardian had targeted them. It didn't matter where they ran to, the stone guardian was always close behind.

"Mu Chen, what's going on?" Li Qing's face changed as well, why was the stone guardian targeting them?

Mu Chen thought for a bit, then said, "It looks like it's coming after me. Let's separate."

"Alright. I'll be right behind you." Li Qing nodded and quickly turned towards another direction.

The stone statue simply ignored Li Qing and her Draconic Spirit Bracelets in favor of chasing after Mu Chen.

"Damn it."

Mu Chen angrily cursed. This thing really was after him. But why? He'd never fought with it, and he didn't have the Draconic Spirit Bracelets.

"What's going on?"

Mu Chen furrowed his brows as ideas flickered through his mind. A moment later, those thoughts clicked into place and he clenched his fist. The silver medal with the white dragon appeared back in his hand.

A light flashed through his eyes as he looked at the heated silver medal. He seemed to have understood something.

So this silver medal was the thing attracting the stone guardian?

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Chapter 248: Black Basin

Rumble!

The ground trembled as the ancient stone statue charged onward with heavy steps. Any obstacles in its path were instantly crushed as it left a trail of pandemonium in its wake.

Those who happened upon the scene quickly withdrew from it. No one dared to get in the statue's path, so they simply allowed the strange duo to speed on their way.

A pitch-black Spiritual Energy blazed out from within Mu Chen's body and shrouded him. He kept his pace as something flickered in his eyes and the silver medal in his hand grew even warmer.

With a few tests, Mu Chen had confirmed that the ancient stone statue was, indeed, after him. And it was definitely because of this silver medal.

"What exactly is this silver medal?" Mu Chen wondered. This object had been so well-hidden that it'd been inside the body of the King Flame-Eating Python. If Mu Chen hadn't found the Fire Celestial Lotus by sheer luck, and if the Nine Netherbird to devour the King Flame-Eater, then there was no way he would've discovered this medal.

There was no way it could be something ordinary, since it'd been hidden so securely. Furthermore, the white dragon design on its surface told him that it was likely left behind by the White Dragon Sovereign.

"I can't keep running like this."

Mu Chen went silent. He still wanted to enter the depths of the Sovereign Spirit Treasury to fight for other treasures, but there was no way to do that with this stone statue chasing after him. First, he had to get rid of this problem.

Mu Chen tightly gripped the silver medal as he ground his teeth. It looked like he had to try it.

As he thought that, any hesitation in his heart ceased to exist. He flashed away and ascended to a higher platform, then turned to face the ancient stone statue that was still approaching with its baleful aura.

Boom! Boom!

Cracks appeared on the ground wherever the stone statue chose to lay its feet. The sheer pressure of its approach even compressed the air until it exploded.

The stone-fisted statue grew larger in Mu Chen's field of view. Mu Chen took in a deep breath, then raised the silver medal. He stopped caring whether his idea would work as he poured his Spiritual Energy into it.

The silver medal stayed the same as Mu Chen poured his Spiritual Energy into it, and the stone statue was just as ferocious as before. If it hit Mu Chen, then he'd suffer grave injuries.

"It's not working?"

Cold sweat dripped from Mu Chen's forehead as his heart pumped rapidly, but he still didn't remove his hands from the medal. With a twist of his mind, he poured all of his Spiritual Energy into the silver medal.

Bang!

The stone statue vaulted off the ground and sailed upwards, its heavy shadow bearing down on Mu Chen, and firmly landed on the platform.

Mu Chen tensed and turned away, preparing to run.

Onom!

But before Mu Chen could make his escape, the silver medal finally trembled. The white dragon on its surface seemed to come to life as it roared low and deep. A white light poured forth from the plate and shined upon the body of the ancient stone statue.

Mu Chen was temporarily paralysed by the sudden white light. However, the bloodthirsty stone statue suddenly shrank back. In the time it took for a few breaths, the statue had shrunk down to the size of a palm and flew towards Mu Chen.

Mu Chen reached out and caught it.

"This..." Mu Chen studied the stone statue in his palm with a look of amazement. It was so small and mottled. A faint pattern of light glowed on its surface. But this small thing had been chasing him all over the place just a moment ago.

Mu Chen turned to the silver medal in his other hand with an equal look of amazement. It seemed that this stone guardian was something akin to a Spiritual Artifact, but could only be controlled through the silver medal in his hand.

“This medal really is something.” Mu Chen smacked his lips as he tucked the medal away. He kept the tiny statue in his hand and played around with it — with a move of his intent, he poured a surge of Spiritual Energy into it.

Onom.

The stone statue exploded with dazzling light and expanded. In a few breaths, it turned back into the ten-foot tall stone statue.

But this time, the statue didn’t launch any attacks at him; on the contrary it stood next to him, quietly and at attention, like the most loyal guard.

Excitement appeared in Mu Chen’s eyes as he observed the stone statue — he could sense that right now, he possessed some amount of control over it.

Bang!

Following Mu Chen’s intent, the stone statue threw a punch at the stone pillar next to it, thoroughly crushing it. That violent strength even made Mu Chen’s eyelids twitch. Based on his estimations, even a Heavenly Transform Stage Initial Phase expert would have to dodge its sharp attacks.

It was a pure fighting machine.

“Formidable!” Mu Chen exclaimed in admiration. Another treasure worthy of the Sovereign Spirit Treasury.

This statue must have withstood several hundreds of years worth of weathering, but it still possessed such strength. The name of Sovereign was not in vain.

Even though he hadn’t obtained a High Rank Spiritual Artifact, this stone guardian was still an extremely satisfactory harvest. If Mu Chen ever encountered Bai Dong again, he wouldn’t need to act so afraid.

Shhhhhuuu!

Sounds of sonic booms resounded from afar. With a wave of his hand, Mu Chen ordered the guardian to return to its smaller form. The statue landed on his palm and he stowed it away inside his Mustard Seed Bracelet.

Li Qing reappeared a short distance away and quickly joined him. She breathed out a sigh of relief when she saw that Mu Chen was fine and well. Her charming eyes looked around as she asked, “Where’s the stone guardian?”

“It’s settled.” Mu Chen smiled.

Li Qing was shocked and confused. Mu Chen had “settled” that terrifying stone guardian? Just how much strength was this guy hiding away?

She gave Mu Chen a strange look, but didn't press him for details. After all, everyone had their own secrets. She had no specific reason to ask that much from him.

"Well then, we should join up with Su Xuan and the others. They're likely deeper inside the Sovereign Spirit Treasury," Li Qing suggested. Right now, there were many forces heading deeper into the Spirit Treasury. If they didn't hurry, they might end up missing a few opportunities.

Mu Chen nodded. He was deeply interested in the Sovereign Spirit Treasury, especially since they'd found such powerful treasures — the Fire Celestial Lotus, the Draconic Spirit Bracelets, and the Stone Guardian — outside of that area. He wondered what astounding treasures would be hidden within the treasury's depths.

If he ever got his hands on those hidden treasures, then his fighting strength would definitely surge. He wouldn't need to fear anyone, even a true Heavenly Transform Stage.

The two of them made no more delays. They identified their path and pushed their speeds to the limit as they flew into the bowels of the Sovereign Spirit Treasury.

Along the way, they still heard the sounds of clashing weapons echoing from the main hall; however, neither of them paused. Roughly half an hour later, they noticed that the quantity of stone halls and the number of branching paths had decreased. As they continued, the landscape before them suddenly opened up into that of a vast desert.

Faint lights streaked overhead, like bolts of lightning as they sped deeper into the desert.

Mu Chen and Li Qing exchanged glances and moved as one, following those lights. A few minutes later, they slowed down.

They were arriving at the heart of the desert, marked by a huge black basin. Many figures stood at the basin's rim.

A powerful Spiritual Energy emanated from this place — even the natural Spiritual Energy of this area rippled in response.

Many experts were gathered here.

Even Mu Chen was surprised by the sheer number of experts gathered here. These guys moved quick.

The two of them also landed by the basin, then edged closer to the rim. They realised that down inside the depression of the earth were several black stone pillars that soared to the skies.

Each pillar was nearly a thousand feet tall and decorated with formerly picturesque images that'd been blurred due to the passage of time. Together, these pillars filled the entire basin.

The basin surged with an indescribable aura and, for some reason, their auras trembled in reply. It was like meeting one's superior.

Even the natural Spiritual Energy had quieted under the pressure of the basin's aura, as if it was incapable of fighting back.

This was a Sovereign's prestige.

Everyone's expression had turned solemn. This aura was simply far too powerful for them to handle, even though it was only a remnant of what it once was. If a genuine Sovereign ever appeared, no one present would have the guts or mind to react.

This was an absolute suppression.

Perhaps in the eyes of a Sovereign, everyone here would be nothing more than ants.

Mu Chen inhaled and clenched his fists as he felt the remnant Sovereign aura permeate the heavens and earth. Dense flames poured from his pupils.

Sovereign.

What a powerful term that was.

One day, when he manages to ascend to that level, he'll stand next to Luo Li and shield her from the wind.

Then, he'd search for his mother, as he'd promised his father. The next time he returned to the Northern Spiritual Realm, he won't be alone.

He was still a far cry from that goal, but he believed that he'd reach it one fine day!

A vicious and ferocious gaze locked onto Mu Chen and Li Qing the moment they landed at the edge of the basin.

Mu Chen sensed it and turned towards the source. His eyes narrowed immediately. There were several dozen people over there, all wearing white robes. At the front of that group stood Bai Dong and the grey-robed elder.

Mu Chen lightly smiled back at Bai Dong's vicious glare. Indeed, they meet again.

Bai Dong's expression turned even more sinister at Mu Chen's smile, before it finally turned cruel.

Bai Dong took a single step forward as he stared at Mu Chen as if he were a ghost. His bloodthirsty voice filled the air around him.

"So, you're still alive, you little piece of shit. But that's fine. I thought you died too easily, anyways. This time, I'll catch you and chop off all your limbs!"

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Chapter 249 The Power of the Stone Statue

Bai Dong's voice was filled with bloodlust and malice as it filled the air around him and attracted the attention of many. When they saw that Bai Dong's rage was directed towards one particular young man, they were startled, then their expressions turned to pity. This young man dared to provoke White Dragon City's Young Master? Did he not know that Bai Dong always took revenge on any grievances he has suffered?

But their sympathy was nothing more than sympathy; no one came to Mu Chen's aid. White Dragon City was one of the three most powerful forces within a thousand miles of the White Dragon Hillock. Only the Heavenly Dipper Sword Faction and the Earthen Way Sect could stand up to them; all others were

somewhere below in strength. There hadn't been enough time for the news about the White Dragon Sovereign's Spirit Treasury to spread, and as a result, any forces larger than these three hadn't had enough time to arrive.

It'd be unwise to provoke them here.

Mu Chen smiled at Bai Dong's savage expression. "Your face looks unbalanced with that one ear hanging. Should I help you fix that?"

Bai Dong was so pissed that his eyes turned red. All these years in the White Dragon Hillock and he'd never suffered anything like this. This was one of the greatest humiliations he'd ever suffered. He definitely had to avenge this blood debt.

"Elder Qiu, catch him!" Bai Dong said through his teeth. "This time, don't let him die so easily. Since the heavens have seen fit to put him before me once again, then I want to torment him. To let him know that living is a painful thing!"

The grey-robed Elder Qiu nodded and watched Mu Chen with an expression of dark amazement. He felt disbelief. How did this kid escape from the magma lake? Could he possess some sort of Spiritual Artifact that allowed him to hide in those boiling depths?

Elder Qiu shook his head. It didn't matter anymore. Since this brat was still alive, then all that mattered was that he had to defeat him again.

He fixed his eyes on Mu Chen and slowly took a step out from their neat ranks. A majestic Spiritual Energy swept out and revealed his strength as a Heavenly Transform Stage Initial Phase.

"Heavenly Transform Stage Initial Phase..."

Li Qing's face changed as she watched the grey-robed elder. She didn't know what'd happened between Mu Chen and these guys, but she knew that she'd never abandon Mu Chen.

"Mu Chen, I'll deal with him. If I use the Draconic Spirit Bracelet, I won't be any weaker than him." Li Qing said through her teeth. Since they still haven't met up with Su Xuan and the others, she had to be the one to move.

Mu Chen shook his head. "Senior Sister Li Qing, if you act, then those white robes back there will act too... Plus, they're probably the ones who ambushed us in the forest. They're from the Demonic Dragon Palace."

"What?!"

Li Qing's face abruptly changed as astonishment filled her charming eyes. The White Dragon City was actually a subordinate to the Demonic Dragon Palace?

"Let me deal with that old man. Right now, experts are gathering here like clouds, so White Dragon City, won't show their true strength so easily. I'll string them along until Senior Sister Su Xuan arrives. Then, we can confidently face them," Mu Chen explained.

“But you...” Li Qing was alarmed as she tried to stop him. However, she paused as she thought about all of the hidden cards that Mu Chen had up his sleeve — he had so many that even she couldn’t see the end of them. If Mu Chen wanted to act, then he probably had a way to protect himself.

“Alright, then. You be careful.” Li Qing said as she nodded.

Mu Chen nodded back and stepped forward, though his eyes were pinned on the grey-robed elder with a chill in his eyes. That old fart had thrown him into the magma lake earlier. If the Nine Netherflames hadn’t protected Mu Chen, he wouldn’t have escaped from that. Now that they were facing each other again, Mu Chen wasn’t going to make it as easy.

“Little brat, it looks like your life isn’t as small as I thought.”

The grey-robed elder looked down on Mu Chen, clenched his fist and a black spear appeared with a flash. The elder was a straightforward man. He cut the small talk as his Spiritual Energy surged, affecting the Spiritual Aura around them, then thrust the spear forward.

Shuuuuu!

The Spiritual Aura surged and it seemed as if the spear had torn the very air apart. The image of a spear, tens of feet in length, flashed like lightning towards Mu Chen.

Many of the spectators trembled in fear at the sheer strength behind that attack. This old man was ruthless; he was so cautious, even though he was only facing a Heavenly Fusion Stage youth.

Mu Chen coldly smiled and took a large leap forward. His five fingers curled into a fist. With a low snarl, he punched.

Boom!

A pitch-black Spiritual Energy swept out from Mu Chen’s fist like a tidal wave. Six Limitless Death Seals formed in an instant and the natural Spiritual Aura roiled violently.

Shuuuu!

The Six Limitless Death Seals appeared, joined head-to-tail, and flew out. In a flash, they heavily collided with the sharp spear light.

Boom!

A violent Spiritual Energy swept outwards. A black light streaked out like a comet and cut through the spear light like a hot knife through butter, then continued towards the grey-robed elder.

A commotion broke out among the spectators. They thought that Mu Chen should’ve been holed up on the defense against this genuine Heavenly Transform Stage expert. But who could’ve imagined that it was the other way around? Not only was Mu Chen not guarding, but he was actually exerting such frightening attacks.

Of course, these people could tell how powerful Mu Chen’s attack was. The light seal was clearly a rather powerful Spiritual Art; otherwise, he wouldn’t have broken the grey-robed elder’s attack so easily.

“Hmph.”

The elder watched the black streak soar towards him and sensed the overbearing ripples it contained. He focused his eyes and coldly snorted from his mouth as his claw tore down.

“Heaven Tearing Demonic Dragon Claw!”

Roar!

Surges of black Spiritual Energy, similar to a gigantic dragon’s claw, tore towards Mu Chen’s attack. There was a chill to it, as if it could even shred mountains into pieces.

Shuuuuu!

The black dragon claw tore through the sky and met the black light. A surge of violent Spiritual Energy emanated out as the light was broken apart.

Even though the claw had destroyed the streak, it’d suffered many cracks and ultimately crumbled into pieces.

The grey-robed elder burst forward like a wisp of green smoke and appeared before Mu Chen in an instant. The spear in his hand pierced the air between them as he aimed for Mu Chen’s throat.

Mu Chen’s eyes were cold as he tapped the air with his finger. The Nine-layered Pagoda appeared in a flash and obstructed the spear like a shield.

Dang!

A metallic clash rang out with a violent Spiritual Energy. Mu Chen retreated ten steps and the Nine-layered Pagoda was sent flying.

Onom.

However, as the Nine-layered Pagoda fell back, it circulated its black light and expanded even further until it was a hundred feet tall. Then, it turned around and bore down on the grey-robed elder.

“Get lost!”

The grey elder barked as he brandished his black spear and formed a series of spear images, similar to soaring black dragons. However, the Nine-layered Pagoda withstood those attacks, though it’d been forced back a little more.

“Dammit!”

The grey-robed elder sent out another spear, this time battering the Nine-layered pagoda upwards by a thousand meters. A cold light flashed across his eyes and his image blurred for a moment.

“Demon Soaring Step!”

Shhhhhuu!

His form pierced through the skies like a demonic dragon. In the next instant, he reappeared over Mu Chen's head, even as countless pairs of eyes watched him. His expression was grave as he swiped another claw at Mu Chen.

Roar!

A torrential Spiritual Energy surged from that claw and was aimed down towards Mu Chen's head. It looked like Mu Chen would be torn apart, if he was hit by that attack!

Li Qing cried out in alarm as she clutched the Draconic Spiritual Bracelet on her wrists. "Mu Chen!" The bracelets glowed with a blinding spiritual light. It was clear she intended to move.

"Brat, die!" The grey-robed elder barked as he continued his vicious attacks.

Mu Chen raised his head and looked at the elder's fierce attacks. However, instead of panicking, his black pupils were painted with a chill.

The grey-robed elder sensed that chill and suddenly felt uneasy.

"It's not that easy for you to kill me!"

Mu Chen smiled at the grey-robed elder as he curled his fingers. An old stone statue appeared and started glowing and expanding. A mottled fist heavily collided with the black dragon claw with a punch that carried mountain-shattering strength.

Dong!

The sky trembled when the two clashed, and surges of violent energy swept out.

Bang!

Everyone saw the grey-robed elder go into shock as his body was violently jolted and he spat out a mouthful of blood. He flew back a few thousand meters and was in a sorry state.

"Huaaa!"

The entire area near the black basin exploded with cries of shock. The elder turned his eyes towards Mu Chen. He didn't know how it'd happened, but a ten-foot-tall stone statue had suddenly materialised in front of Mu Chen. The statue's body flickered with a light as it maintained its stance with its fist in front — clearly the fist that'd sent Elder Qiu flying backwards.

"It's that stone statue?!" Even Li Qing felt shocked. But now she understood. So Mu Chen had actually subdued the stone statue. She didn't know what methods he'd pulled to achieve that, but it's no wonder why he didn't fear the grey-robed elder. So he had such confidence.

Rustle!

Mu Chen watched the grey elder sail backwards. Then he tapped his foot on the stone statue's shoulder and flew down like a large roc. His cold eyes were fixed on Bai Dong.

This guy was simply too vicious — even Mu Chen was pissed at him, and that’s saying something. He’d finally decided to deal with Bai Dong now, while he had the chance. Since there was already an irreconcilable blood debt between them, Mu Chen was no longer worried about grudges.

“You!”

When Bai Dong saw Mu Chen flying towards him, his face finally changed.

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Chapter 250: Forced Out

Rustle!

Mu Chen held his indifferent expression as he appeared before Bai Dong in a flash. His fingers twitched and a cyan longsword appeared. Without a moment’s hesitation, the blade became shrouded with Spiritual Energy that burned black and aimed towards Bai Dong’s throat.

Bai Dong’s facial expression changed at Mu Chen’s sudden action; but fortunately for him, he wasn’t weak. Even though he hadn’t reached the Heavenly Transform Stage yet, he was a Heavenly Fusion Stage Late Phase and had the strength to back it up. He snarled with fury and punched as his Spiritual Energy soared.

“Sky Crumbling Demonic Dragon Fist!”

His Spiritual Energy surged as his fist travelled forward like a massive black demonic dragon uncoiling its body. The force of the movement seemed as if it could turn the sky to dust. It was clear that Bai Dong’s Spiritual Energy wasn’t an ordinary one.

The chill in Mu Chen’s eyes grew even colder as he switched from blade to fist. Six Limitless Death Seals formed in an instant, causing the natural Spiritual Energy around them to roil violently. Like six rays of dark of light, they streaked through the air and met Bai Dong’s Demonic Dragon Fist in a hard collision.

Boom!

The sound of the collision thundered as the violent spiritual ripples spread out. For a moment, Bai Dong’s face had turned ghostly pale, but then a dark red flush smeared across his face. He coughed up a mouthful of blood as he flew backwards.

Mu Chen’s six Limitless Death Seals at full force could even withstand an attack from the grey-robed elder — a Heavenly Transform Stage Initial Phase. Bai Dong wanted to defeat it with his Heavenly Fusion Late Phase cultivation? Simply a fantasy.

“You said want to kill me? I’m afraid you’re not capable of that!”

Mu Chen coldly smiled with a sharp edge to it. In a flash, he’d burst forward and appeared before Bai Dong again, and the cyan longsword in his hands ruthlessly stabbed towards the latter’s throat.

Cries of surprise rose from everyone watching the scene from around the rim of the black basin. How could this youth be so ruthless? He even dared to kill Bai Dong? Didn’t he fear the wrath of White Dragon City?

The grey-robed elder's face took on a drastically different expression. "You dare!?"

But there was too much distance between them. He couldn't assist in time.

Mu Chen ignored him as he looked down on Bai Dong, who was watching the sword bear down on him with a face full of shock.

This was a guy who'd always fulfilled his grudges. It'd be better for Mu Chen to eliminate him early and avoid any future twists and turns.

Shuuuu!

Mu Chen's sword edge was sharp; he'd reached Bai Dong in only an instant. However, just before he could land the killing blow, an exquisitely fine light burst from within the group white-robed White Dragon City experts.

Ding!

A violent gale tore through the sky and clashed against Mu Chen's blade with astonishing swiftness. Mu Chen's blade trembled under the gale's strength and he even retreated two steps.

"Who?!"

He swept his eyes over the white robes with an annoyed and dangerous chill in his eyes. Suddenly, his eyes pinpointed the source and he laughed loudly. "So it's the City Lord of White Dragon City! Since you're here, why don't you show yourself? Why run and hide? Were you trying to take advantage of our distraction and steal the Sovereign Spirit Treasury?"

His voice, wrapped in Spiritual Energy, resounded throughout the heavens and earth. The booming quality of it shocked many of those present at the site and they widened their eyes in disbelief. Especially those from the Earthen Way Set and Heavenly Dipper Sword Faction. The City Lord had personally shown up?

The grey-robed elder's expression changed at Mu Chen's challenge. Was this kid trying to provoke Bai Dong?

Numerous pairs of eyes scrutinised the crowd of white robes, and under their watchful gazes, a single figure stepped forward. He removed his white robe to reveal the face of a middle-aged man — it really was the City Lord of White Dragon City, Bai Xuan!

Bai Xuan lightly smiled. "What a deep scheming youth."

His eyes were filled with a cold light as he stared back at Mu Chen. He'd originally intended to hide himself — he never expected to be forced out by a kid like this.

Mu Chen glared back. "It looks like your White Dragon City is determined to obtain this Sovereign Spirit Treasury."

Mu Chen could sense a tyrannical Spiritual Energy rippling from this man. He must be a Heavenly Transform Stage Middle Phase at the very least — no doubt extremely powerful.

Bai Xuan smiled as if it was a given. "Of course, we must do our best to win such fantastic treasures." He shook his head. "Since you've forced me to show myself, I must show you my appreciation."

The moment his words landed, the glint in Bai Xuan's eyes turned sharp and an astonishingly powerful surge of Spiritual Energy burst like a gale from his body. He stepped forward, his movements were like that of a ghost, and headed straight for Mu Chen.

Mu Chen's expression changed as he retreated.

"Can you even escape?"

Bai Xuan coldly smiled. In a flash, he'd caught up to Mu Chen and threw out a palm. The Spiritual Energy surged like a tidal wave, stretching continuously in a multitude of directions. There was a never-ending chorus of explosions.

Mu Chen backed off, too cautious to go head-to-head against such power. With a will of his intent, the Stone Guardian appeared before him, stepped forward, and pounded its fist down on Bai Xuan.

Dong!

Mu Chen could feel the reverberations from the collisions as the Stone Guardian was sent sailing backwards.

Mu Chen's expression turned grave at that. Bai Xuan was truly powerful — no wonder he was the City Lord of White Dragon City. The Stone Guardian was forced to retreat after taking only one of his fists.

"Something that weak won't be able to protect your puny little life." Bai Xuan explained with an expressionless face as he pressed forward again. His fingers formed a claw as he swiped downwards.

"Heaven Tearing Demonic Dragon Claw!"

Boom!

The five fingers raked through the sky, as if tearing the space down with it. Bai Xuan's "Heaven Tearing Demonic Dragon Claw" was far more powerful than the grey-robed elder's.

Mu Chen's cold expression concentrated on Bai Xuan's ferocious attacks as he put his hands together in preparations to circulate his Spiritual Art. But before he could execute it, a torrent of spiritual light poured from behind him, shrouding his body in a sort of Spiritual Energy barrier.

Boom!

The razor-sharp claw slashed at the barrier with violent bursts of Spiritual Energy, but couldn't tear it down.

"Who?!" Bai Xuan's gaze turned cold.

A sweet and gentle voice drifted from somewhere near the end of the crowd. "City Lord of White Dragon City, you are someone who has great renown. Yet you dared to act so ruthlessly against a mere youth. Are you not afraid that others may say it is unbecoming of your station?"

Everyone turned their heads towards the voice to see three figures swiftly flying towards them — led by a charming and sweet-looking young woman in a white dress.

“Su Xuan,” Li Qing couldn’t suppress the joy she felt upon seeing them. Su Xuan had finally caught up with them.

Bai Xuan’s indifferent expression was temporarily replaced with a sharp one as he looked over Su Xuan. He could sense that her Spiritual Energy wasn’t any inferior than his. It seemed that this girl was the Rank 3 of the Heavenly Ranking in the Northern Heavens Spiritual Academy, Su Xuan.

The students nurtured by the Northern Heavens Spiritual Academy were powerful indeed. They were so young, yet they could rival the best disciples of the Demonic Dragon Palace.

“The Northern Heavens Spiritual Academy really does have its methods.” Bai Xuan applauded as he lightly smiled at Su Xuan.

She returned the smile with the words, “We thank White Dragon City for your praises.” She raised a jade-like hand to disperse the protective barrier around Mu Chen and allowed him to join her.

“You’re always causing trouble. It’s barely been half a day, yet you’ve already started a fight with White Dragon City.” Su Ling’er scolded as she glared her doe eyes at Mu Chen.

“They’re the ones who ambushed us last night.” Mu Chen said slowly. “They’re from the Demonic Dragon Palace.”

“What?!”

Su Ling’er and Guo Xiong looked startled. Even Su Xuan slightly narrowed her eyes. White Dragon City wasn’t known for having a long history, but they’d already ruled this area for over a decade. None of these young students had expected it to be just another chess piece for the Demonic Dragon Palace. It seemed this organisation was truly deep and unfathomable. No wonder the Northern Heavens Spiritual Academy even held some fear and restraint towards them.

Even from a distance, Bai Xuan noticed the astonished expressions on their faces. It looked like they’d just come to some realisation. He couldn’t help the odd smile that crept over his face as he gave them one last meaningful glance before ducking back into the throng of White Dragon City experts. Now that Su Xuan had appeared, it wouldn’t be easy to kill Mu Chen. Furthermore, there was a more pressing matter that required his attention.

As long as they obtained that item, it would be easy to kill those brats.

The unaffiliated experts around the basin warily eyed Bai Xuan as he rejoined his people — especially the Heavenly Dipper Sword Faction and the Earthen Way Sect. They exchanged glances amongst themselves and finally seemed to settle on some unspoken agreement. It was clear that they intended to combine their strengths to deal with the strongest White Dragon City.

Bai Xuan’s sharp attention hadn’t lost that fact; however, he only afforded them a cold smile and seemingly wasn’t bothered by them.

“City Lord, it looks like that brat dragged us out into the spotlight,” The grey-robed elder reported with a grim expression.

Bai Xuan smiled nonchalantly. “They’re nothing more than annoying locusts. What are they capable of, anyways? Did they think that my White Dragon City was only capable of that much?”

By this point, Bai Dong had caught up as well, although he was still throwing vicious glances in Mu Chen’s direction. “Father, what do we need from this place?”

Bai Xuan knit his brows as he frowned. “I’ve received orders to obtain the most precious object from the White Dragon Sovereign’s Spirit Treasury. As for the specifics, even I’m not sure.”

“The most precious object?” the grey-robed elder echoed as he turned his eyes towards the bottom of the black basin. “Then, it should be here, because this is the place where the White Dragon Sovereign died!”

Bai Dong seemed doubtful. “However, it doesn’t look like there’s a Spirit Treasury here.”

His father studied the basin for a moment, then slowly replied, “That’s because the seal here is still intact. It looks like we only need to wait for the sun and moon to come together. When the natural Spiritual Energy turns chaotic, the seal will weaken. Then, all we need to do is destroy it and the the Spirit Treasury will appear.”

“Right now...all we have to do is wait.”

He finished his words and closed his eyes with a silent finality.

Bai Xuan wasn’t the only one who knew about that — that much was clear. Experts from other forces could also sense the abnormalities around the black basin, and chose to wait instead of act blindly.

The wait stretched for nearly half a day before the sky and land turned dark and the natural Spiritual Aura between the heavens and earth began to fluctuate.

Just as the Spiritual Aura between the heavens and earth fell into disorder, Mu Chen’s eyes caught something. Down in the black basin, the thousand-foot-tall mysterious black stone pillars started to faintly glow.

“The Spirit Treasury appearing!”

Mu Chen’s heart trembled and his eyes blazed with passion.