

Chapter 431 - Startling the Two Daemons with the Strengthened Abilities

Strongboulder's body rippling with muscles constantly gave off a fierce, powerful bearing. The three years of battle had allowed him to completely unleash his nature, and his strength had grown. His shining eyes were congealed from killing and battle intent as he grinned viciously, revealing his pale-white teeth, as if he had been feeding on humans.

"Everyone, back away!" Ye Liusu spread out her arms like she was protecting her people as she ordered loudly, but it was already too late. The formation was unable to stop the Rock of Slaughter's wondrous power. The eyes of half the night roamers in the village became scarlet red as they lunged at their own clansmen.

Ye Liubo waved her hand, and the bright yellow piece of embroidery Li Qingshan had bestowed to her wrapped up the night roamers, sending them far away from Strongboulder.

"Sir Strongboulder, please contain your power. This is sir Northmoon's territory." Ye Liusu clasped her hands. Strongboulder gave her a greater headache than what any human cultivator could.

"Don't you have ears? I've come exactly for him!" Strongboulder swaggered forward, stopped by the formation.

"Sir Northmoon is currently in seclusion. He may not be able to see you."

"He's bold enough to even defy the Spider Queen's orders?" A man with a rosy face and delicate features in a cloak strolled over from behind Strongboulder. He seemed to move at a leisurely pace, but it only took him a blink of an eye to be right in their faces. As he spoke, he revealed his sharp canines.

"Sir Bloodshadow." Ye Liusu could sense that the situation was bad. She tried to stand her ground. "If it's just for the Spider Queen's orders, why would the two sirs have to come here together and in person?"

"Ye Liusu, your actions have always displeased the Spider Queen. Not only are you avoiding battle by remaining passive, but you've even engaged in trade with humans. If it were not for the bit of merit that bastard Northmoon has earned, we would have come to destroy you a long time ago." Bloodshadow's daemon qi filled the cavern. Just the pressure of the daemon qi made the formation tremble. Over the past three years, who knew how much fresh blood he had drunk. His strength had increased too.

"We haven't been avoiding battle by remaining passive. We're building up strength." Ye Liusu justified herself powerlessly.

"Is this a toy you exchanged from the humans?" Strongboulder knocked the barrier. Suddenly, he flew into a rage and punched the barrier. The entire cavern trembled as stalactites fell down from above. The barrier immediately became riddled with cracks.

"Please calm down, sir Strongboulder!" Ye Liusu lowered the formation in a hurry. The formation could not stop them, and even if it could, would she be bold enough to oppose these two daemons? After three years of administration, she had once believed she had become powerful enough, even finding no issue with Li Qingshan's secluded cultivation, as she would be able to go about her affairs freely.

But only in that instant did she realise her feebleness. Strongboulder and Bloodshadow's combined efforts could destroy everything she had built up over the past three years in a single instant, as easily as how they destroyed human cities.

"We don't care whether you're avoiding battle or building up strength. We only have one message to pass on. The Spider Queen's patience is limited!"

Bloodshadow sneered while Strongboulder smiled viciously. It was time for them to pay back Northmoon for the humiliation he had caused them due to their defeat!

The two daemons rushed over and alarmed all the night roamers. The personal guards under Ye Liusu's lead all rushed over together. They looked at one another, but they did not stop them.

The two daemons arrived in the central cavern that Li Qingshan resided in. Because the night roamers had been afraid to disturb Li Qingshan, only here remained the same as three years ago.

Within the sea of Blue Butterfly flowers, Li Qingshan's mirror clone sat on the stone bed. Milliped curled up nearby and ingested spiritual qi. He had recovered a lot of his strength, becoming much larger than before. When he saw Strongboulder stride over, he lunged out, spitting out a pink gas.

Strongboulder's figure suddenly pulled upwards, turning into a large stone giant and stepping down on Milliped before immediately turning back. He could transform at will. He went up and reached towards Li Qingshan's neck. "Wake up!"

"Master!" Ye Liubo cried out. It crossed a great distance and reached Li Qingshan's ears.

Li Qingshan slowly opened his firmly-shut eyes. His ruby-like eyes glistened. "It's you?"

Bloodshadow said from one side, "Where's your original body? The Spider Queen wants to see you. We want to see you too, to settle an old debt!"

"Lift your foot!" Li Qingshan saw Milliped struggling under Strongboulder's foot, and his gaze suddenly coldened.

"Are you angry? If you are, then hurry up and come. I've already become far too impatient to fight you."

"If you take too long, your servants are all going to die." Bloodshadow waved his hand, and a night roamer guard began to twitch all over. Bright-red blood oozed rapidly out from every single pore of his, flying into Bloodshadow's hand. He extended his tongue and licked it.

Rings of light, like ripples, radiated from Li Qingshan. All the night roamers the light reached felt tranquility blossom inside. The light moved through Strongboulder's arm and reached his body.

Strongboulder suddenly sensed the battle and killing intent that raged within him eternally settle down, which took him by surprise. He took a step back and released Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan's figure flickered in the centre of the ripples, sometimes blurry and sometimes clear. Yet, he also seemed like a reflection in the ripples. Only his daemon qi constantly rose up.

The flower in the mirror, the moon in the water, were just reflections—Watermirror’s Image. The mirror could shatter, and the water could be disturbed, but the flower and moon would remain the same. Since his original body had changed, his reflection altered too.

This was Li Qingshan’s deepened comprehension of this innate ability, achieved after reaching the fourth layer of the spirit turtle and condensing the essence of the spirit turtle.

His mirror clone would not vanish because it had run out of daemon qi anymore. As long as he used this innate ability again, his mirror image would recover its original form, like flattening out the water ripples and allowing the bright moon to be reflected again.

The mirror clone right now seemed like he had just reused the Watermirror’s Image. As his original body strengthened, the daemon qi of his mirror clone strengthened too. And, the original Watermirror Image only possessed thirty percent of his strength, which had become forty percent now.

In that instant, the strength of Li Qingshan’s mirror clone multiplied.

“And I had thought it would be something impressive. Looks like this is all there is to it.” Bloodshadow sneered.

Even with his multiplied daemon qi, a huge difference still existed from these two powerful daemons who had grown stronger.

Bloodshadow curled his hand at Li Qingshan, and Li Qingshan’s blood immediately began to surge, as if it wanted to burst out of his body. He only uttered a single word, “Suppress!”, and the blood immediately settled down.

Bloodshadow’s face twisted viciously, and his canines protruded. He extended his right hand and wrenched it back. He refused to believe that he could not even deal with a clone of Northmoon after three years of cultivation.

Countless light-blue hexagons rose up from Li Qingshan, circling around him in a dazzling array and randomly reflecting everyone before finally coming to a stop. It formed a smooth barrier of light, which completely isolated Li Qingshan from Bloodshadow’s ability to control blood.

This was still the same innate ability he had grasped first, the Spirit Turtle’s Profound Shell. However, with his breakthrough to the fourth layer, especially after obtaining the full cultivation method from his sea of consciousness, his comprehension of it had reached a whole new level.

Most of the spirit turtle’s mystical abilities had to do with its turtle shell. By hiding within its shell, it created a whole world of its own, allowing the world to change and time to flow around it while completely unaffected. No matter how profound the heavenly secrets were or how wondrous the techniques were, was there anything that could bypass a spirit turtle’s shell and affect the spirit turtle itself?

In the instant the spirit turtle opened its eyes, Li Qingshan’s severance from the surroundings had surpassed what Bloodshadow could overcome. As a matter of fact, it was no longer an issue of daemon qi quantity.

Bloodshadow was taken aback. His ability was actually useless.

“So much for fancy tricks! Eat my fist!” Strongboulder recovered his battle intent and murderousness and threw a punch. He was certain the fragile barrier would shatter under his punch. With his fearsome physical prowess, there were no tricks that could be used in a frontal clash like that.

The barrier of the Spirit Turtle’s Profound Shell was as smooth as a mirror. Strongboulder clearly saw himself on the other side of the attack, but he did not worry at all. It was clearly just a reflection. When that thought flashed through his head, his punch landed on the Spirit Turtle’s Profound Shell, colliding perfectly with the punch in the mirror.

Strongboulder was dumbfounded, as he clearly sensed a legitimate force emerge from his reflection, blocking his punch perfectly. Although it was slightly weaker than him, it did nullify most of the force in his punch.

Strongboulder and Bloodshadow were both shocked. The strength and ability they were most confident in were actually useless before Northmoon. Most importantly, standing before them right now was not Northmoon in the flesh, but just a clone.

Just what had he attained through cultivation in the past three years?

“You can’t even deal with my clone, and you want my original body to come? Alright then, just you wait. I will make you pay for what you’ve just done.” Seeing how Bloodshadow and Strongboulder were about to lash out again, Li Qingshan dispersed the Spirit Turtle’s Profound Shell and just sat down on the ground.

Actually, he had already come up with a rough idea of the move he had just used during his three years of secluded cultivation. However, he had only been able to unleash it now. These two innate abilities of the spirit turtle were linked together in the first place.

In particular, the Watermirror’s Image had many aspects worth considering. It definitely was not as simple as a mere clone technique. However, this move required tremendous mental effort, so he could not use it at will. This was why he refused to give them an opportunity to continue fighting after establishing his strength.

Bloodshadow was surprised and unsettled inside. Suddenly, he no longer felt so confident about the cultivation he had developed over the past three years. He dared not dismiss the statement that Li Qingshan had spat out anymore either. He did not exactly regret killing the night roamer guard. He just felt slightly uneasy.

“Alright. I’d like to see just how powerful your original body is!” Strongboulder became even more riled up by that and was convinced he could not waste his strength on a clone. As a result, he just glared at the seated Li Qingshan.

Just Li Qingshan’s clone had managed to keep the two powerful Daemon Generals at bay. Various thoughts flickered through the eyes of all the night roamer princesses. This was the person they had sworn loyalty to. Their loyalty was not sincere, only considering the interests of their clans, but at a time like this, they could not help but succumb to the power he had demonstrated.

“Master!” Ye Liubo cried out happily and lunged over, throwing herself into Li Qingshan’s arms and unleashing a series of kisses.

Ye Liusu let out a sigh of relief. Aside from her relief, she felt slightly at ease too. From what Bloodshadow had just said, she already understood that everything she had created over these three years had already reached the moment of life or death. The Spider Queen only needed to pass a single order, and everything would go up in flames.

Although I won't run away from my responsibilities, this is already beyond what I can bear.

Master, please come back!

Chapter 432 - Even Deeper Underground

In the dark, quiet tunnels, a few night roamer guards patrolled around. With their status, they did not possess the right to take part in the turmoil within the central cavern. Suddenly, a figure rushed past them with a fierce gust of wind.

Strongboulder and Bloodshadow raised their heads. Tremendous daemon qi was rapidly drawing closer. They both smiled. However, his daemon qi had actually grown so much over the three years.

Ye Liusu's face lit up. "He's here."

The wings of wind were not in the shape of wings right now. Instead, they seemed like two spraying whirlwinds, pushing Li Qingshan ahead swiftly. The cavern rapidly rose and fell.

If he flew at such high speeds underground in the past, he probably would have lost control already and ran into a wall head-first, but now, his mental processes were intricate and meticulous, and his control over daemon qi was almost miraculous. He moved faster and faster instead.

In the blink of an eye, the space ahead of him opened up. Ye Liusu, the night roamers, and the two Daemon Generals, Strongboulder and Bloodshadow, all appeared before him. Their expressions varied.

Li Qingshan narrowed his eyes. He did not slow down at all, running right into them like a swooping bird of prey.

Strongboulder suddenly rose up and threw a punch. It expanded to the size of a pillar and pierced the air like a clap of thunder.

Li Qingshan raised his eyebrows and clenched his fist. Bloodshadow arrived beside him in a flash and struck out viciously with his claws.

The simultaneous attacks from the two powerful Daemon Generals did not fluster Li Qingshan at all. He shifted his gaze and looked at Bloodshadow.

Met with the clear, still eyes, Bloodshadow felt like he had been seen through. Before he could even react, he felt his wrist tighten.

As if Li Qingshan had been anticipating this, he casually grabbed Bloodshadow by the wrist and pulled him forward.

Strongboulder's colossal punch landed on Bloodshadow with full force, and blood erupted from his mouth. He seemed like he had delivered himself to Li Qingshan to serve as a meat shield.

With a flap of his wings, Li Qingshan did not slow down at all. He brushed past Strongboulder's huge arm, gripping Strongboulder's head and flying off.

All of this happened in a single instant. Even Ye Liusu felt rather dazzled. In the blink of an eye, he had easily taken away the two powerful enemies that had forced her into a corner.

A great rumble rang out from underground in the distance.

At this moment, Li Qingshan's mirror clone that remained in the cavern spoke, "I'll venture underground to see the Spider Queen right now. Ye Liusu, tell me about the situation over the past three years."

As his thoughts became intricate, he was able to comprehend the beginning and end of each thought of the four hundred thousands that occurred in each flick of a finger. Splitting his focus was no longer an issue. He could now control both his original body and his clone at the same time, and it would not interfere with one another.

With Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo in the lead and the other night roamers behind them, they all said, "Greetings, sir!"

Ye Liusu began to tell him about everything that had occurred during the three years, as well as the trade with the humans.

Li Qingshan listened quietly. He smiled. "You're pretty capable, aren't you?"

"It's all because of the inspiration master's given me," Ye Liusu said. It was exactly because Li Qingshan had begun the trade between human and underground resources that she did this.

"Have the clans been offering up spiritual herbs on time?" Li Qingshan was not particularly fazed by Ye Liusu's actions. Who didn't want to live a better life? Apart from spiritual herbs, he was unable to directly convert other resources into his cultivation right now. If he sold them above ground, it would easily attract suspicion, which was not worth what the resources could be exchanged for.

Seeing how Li Qingshan did not choose to pursue the matter, Ye Liusu let out a sigh of relief inside. She immediately offered up a hundred treasures pouch. Li Qingshan opened it and took a look. His eyes lit up, and he smiled. Ru Xin's got plenty to do now.

Deeper underground, Strongboulder was trapped in Li Qingshan's grip as he threw a punch at Bloodshadow furiously.

"Piss off! This is my battle!"

With a plop, Bloodshadow was forcefully smashed to pieces, turning into droplets of blood. It twisted in the air and turned into a whip of blood, lashing at Strongboulder viciously. Fragments of rock scattered as a deep, white mark was left behind.

It made Strongboulder even more furious. He turned around and charged towards this rival of his. Li Qingshan simply let go of them, continuing to fly towards Cobweb city. Bloodshadow and Strongboulder exchanged glances before lunging at Li Qingshan together.

The three daemons basically constantly ventured deeper in their entanglement. The collisions of the three powerful groups of daemon qi shook up the underground world.

Spider Queen Lolth emerged from Cobweb city and arrived on the high terrace, gazing out with the frown.

Li Qingshan shook his arms, and the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell suddenly expanded, pushing aside Bloodshadow and Strongboulder. With a flap of his wings, he landed on the high terrace, arriving before the Spider Queen. "Ma'am, I've returned."

Strongboulder and Bloodshadow arrived right behind him. Before the Spider Queen, they were afraid to act up.

Spider Queen Lolth studied Li Qingshan first. "Your daeon qi really has grown by quite a lot. If I hadn't sent Strongboulder and Bloodshadow, did you plan on remaining in seclusion?"

"Of course not."

The Spider Queen said coldly, "Do you know what the night roamers under your command have done in the past few years?"

Bloodshadow said, "That's colluding with the enemy. Ma'am, please punish these night roamers and relinquish the authority to rule over the night roamers from Northmoon."

"I just learnt about it. It's just a few transactions. Can you even call that colluding with the enemy?" Li Qingshan understood the Spider Queen's cruelty and brutality very well. She basically detested peace like that. His past efforts were basically nothing to her. Once he displeased her, she would never show any mercy.

"Since you've already emerged, I await your upcoming performance." The Spider Queen looked at Li Qingshan threateningly with her vicious gaze. She turned around and returned to the hall as soon as she said that. Her long dress dragged behind her. "My patience is limited. Do not disappoint me."

"Yes, I understand, I understand," Li Qingshan lowered his head and said softly.

"As long as you understand." In Bloodshadow and Strongboulder's eyes, he had obviously weakened in vigour before the Spider Queen's pressure. From the clash earlier, they had also discovered that Li Qingshan had not become absurdly powerful. His daemon qi was still below theirs. If they actually began fighting, the outcome would not be predetermined. It was clearly just an offhand remark when he said he would make them pay.

However, they failed to notice the flickering light in Li Qingshan's clear eyes between his drooping hair. It was not particularly sharp or murderous, just peaceful and confident. He did not need any of these people on the path he would take. All he needed to do was follow his heart and do whatever he wanted.

At the same time, Li Qingshan's mirror clone said, "Liubo, summon all the matriarchs and have them gather here."

"Yes, master."

"Everyone else is dismissed. Liusu, you stay here." Li Qingshan patted Milliped's head. "You aren't injured, are you?"

Milliped swayed around to indicate that he was fine. Li Qingshan smiled. "As long as you're fine." He thought inside, Don't worry. I'll help you recover your strength very soon. I just need to obtain a daemon core that suits you.

Ye Liusu asked, "May I ask if master has any orders?"

"It's just us, so there's no need to be so polite. Come sit down." Li Qingshan patted the stone platform beside him. Ye Liusu wavered slightly before sitting down gently. She asked apologetically, "Did the Spider Queen reprimand you because of me?"

"How did you know? Whatever, you're not the one responsible for it. You've already done very well." Li Qingshan stared ahead. The conflict of their ideologies definitely did not appear with the night roamers alone. He was not afraid of challenges, even liking battle, but he did not become blinded in the endless slaughter like the tiger demon, losing his target.

"Thank you." Ye Liusu's heart softened. She stared at the handsome, flawless face silently. In that moment, she felt exactly what Ye Liubo constantly said, He's utterly enchanting!

"Liusu, the Spider Queen's already given me orders. The times of peace are going to end. We must enter the battle."

Although Ye Liusu had been expecting this, she still could not help but let out a gentle sigh. Once they lost their neutrality, the trade could not continue, and who knew how many night roamers would lose their lives in all this.

Li Qingshan changed the topic. "Oh right, how's the propagation of your ideology been going?"

"There are many people who agree with me, but they're all regular night roamers. They lack the ability to protect themselves. As for the strong ones, they all snort in contempt. They all think I'm out of my mind." Ye Liusu returned to her senses and felt rather helpless. When she remembered how they would be sucked into the war soon, she became even gloomier.

"Habits developed over all these years won't change so easily." Li Qingshan patted her shoulder to comfort her. Afterwards, he said, "The humans have a saying, where the new cannot come without destroying the old. Perhaps this might be an opportunity."

"An opportunity?"

"An opportunity to remove the differences between the clans and unite all the night roamers."

Growing up underground, Ye Liusu's character was different, but she was still influenced by those around her. She was not unfamiliar with these tactics. Her own mother, Ye Mingzhu, had discussed this aspect with her countless times.

"Even when the weak shout themselves hoarse, no one cares. However, even the whisperings of the strong can leave behind a firm impression." Li Qingshan smiled.

"I understand now." Ye Liusu's gaze became determined.

“As long as you understand.” Li Qingshan smiled. No one liked to serve someone else, or act like a fool to amuse others. Li Qingshan hated it. Of course, with his current strength, it was insufficient for him to confront the Spider Queen. However, he could not let her order him around.

There would be a day when the Spider Queen would discover that all her loyal subordinates were dead, with only a group of treacherous night roamers remaining. When that day arrived, she would have to personally partake if she wanted to continue playing that perverse game of hers.

Were Daemon Commanders unkillable? Li Qingshan refused to believe that.

At the same time, Li Qingshan’s original body ventured even deeper underground. The air grew colder, such that the dripping water turned to ice. He personally witnessed an underground river freeze up.

However, after venturing past a certain depth, the temperature began to rise again, soaring with no sign of stopping and becoming scorching, enough to melt metal. The underground rivers gradually lessened, and fire-red rivers of magma gradually increased, flowing freely.

Within his senses, the auras of living creatures lessened, almost being reduced to none. It had truly become a world of deathly silence.

Li Qingshan stopped and took in a few rapid breaths. He felt a similar discomfort to altitude sickness. He was forced to maintain the Spirit Turtle’s Profound Shell as he ventured forward. Even cultivators would call this place a forbidden zone.

However, he smiled instead, as he could clearly sense the interference from the underground magnetic field gradually growing stronger. He could not even use the simplest techniques he knew. He could only barely use his innate abilities as a daemon, but even they were beginning to be affected.

Li Qingshan took out the sumeru ring. Gritting his teeth, he continued forwards, venturing a little deeper just to be certain.

In the Boundless mountains within Black Rat mountain, a large rat scurried into a cave and reported, “Great king, great king! There’s a human outside.”

The great rat king stroked his thin beard. “Oh? Let’s see who it is!”

Chapter 433 - The Phoenix’s Embryo

Fu Qingjin concealed his aura and made his way through the mountains slowly. The chilly, snowy wind ruffled his green clothes. The snow had turned the mountain into a vast world of silver. He let out a white, misty breath, and the corner of his mouth curled slightly. He was missing some of his laid backness and gloominess, replaced by peace and calmness.

If he could toss aside everything, with just a single friend beside him to travel through the mountains, wouldn’t that be better than all the conflict in the secular world? Everything would be reduced to ruins anyway, so he might as well have nothing in the first place.

Suddenly, he felt daemon qi draw close. A rat emerged from a snowy den and spotted Fu Qingjin, but it did not attack him. Instead, it yelled out as loudly as it could, “The great rat king has arrived! Oof!”

Subsequently, sixteen rats standing on two feet burst out of the snow with a throne-like carriage on their shoulders, trampling over the messenger rat.

A fatty with a thievish, shrewd appearance and a crown on his head sat on the throne. He pointed at Fu Qingjin and yelled, "You human, who are you? Where are you from? Where are you headed? You better cough up the truth."

Even with Fu Qingjin's vast knowledge and experience, he was still taken aback by this sight. He laughed. "I'm Fu Qingjin. I've come to ask the great king about something."

"Please tell me the truth, great king. I may be able to spare your life then."

When he said the second sentence, a while had already passed. In the Green Ruins Illusion, his crown fell to the ground, and the great rat king knelt on the step below. He pleaded for mercy, "Please spare me, great immortal. I'll definitely tell you everything I know."

Fu Qingjin stood on the step with the xiezhi's horn in his hand. "A few years ago, did a cat daemon pass through your territory?"

The great rat king's eyes swiveled around. "I- I think there was, but I also don't think there was."

The xiezhi's horn was unable to distinguish the truth behind something so vague. Fu Qingjin then drew the Green Ruins sword.

After being taught a lesson, the great rat king told him everything that had happened that day. He no longer dared to hide anything.

Fu Qingjin continued to ask, "Did the daemon really possess a pair of horns, scarlet hair, scarlet pupils, the hooves of an ox, and the tail of a tiger?"

"Yes, yes, yes."

Fu Qingjin glanced at the xiezhi's horn, which had not reacted. He let out a long sigh. "I see now. Northmoon, so you've always been involved."

"Great king, great king!"

After who knew how long, the great rat king slowly raised his head under the calls of the carriage-bearing rats. He discovered the surroundings had turned back into the snowbound world, while Fu Qingjin had already vanished. He let out a sigh of relief and collapsed on his bottom. Glancing at his crown, he pounced over and wiped it clean.

A streak of green light descended from above, brushing past right before the great rat king. When he checked his hand again, the crown had already been cut into two. He cried out and fled into the hole. The sixteen carriage-bearing rats followed closely behind. The carriage was simply abandoned there.

A while later, the messenger rat pushed the carriage off itself and scurried into the hole too.

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Li Qingshan's face had been dyed red by the magma. He currently stood within a lake of magma, where the surroundings were completely fire-red. Tough rock no longer existed here. All of it seemed like balls of fire, slowly melting in the lake of magma.

If he ventured any deeper, he would probably reach the mantle. Li Qingshan wiped away the sweat oozing out from his forehead. Let alone regular spiritual artifacts, even hundred treasures pouches that differed from regular spiritual artifacts could not be used here. Only the sumeru ring remained unaffected.

Li Qingshan smiled. Suddenly, he felt like he was a hobbit that had arrived at Mount Doom with the One Ring from the movies. Before he knew it, the word "movies" had already become an extremely foreign term. His past life gradually drifted away. However, everything that happened to him right now was even more magnificent than the movies.

Li Qingshan put on the sumeru ring slowly. Just when he was about to open it, his eyes suddenly narrowed, and he removed the ring, hiding it away. He turned his head and listened and sensed closely.

He sensed the aura of life in the distance. Don't tell me there's actually something living here. However, this aura of life was not from higher up, but from somewhere on the same level as him, or even deeper, deep within the mantle and slowly surging and breathing with the mantle. It was in an extremely serene state.

Li Qingshan was alarmed. Even he could not last very long if he ventured any deeper unless he succeeded with cultivating the Phoenix's Scripture of Nirvāṇa. However, that did not mean he could swim about freely in the mantle.

At that depth, the interference from the underground magnetic field would be even more severe, like destroying order and returning to chaos. He would not even be able to use innate abilities. Moreover, the mantle contained terrifying fire poisons and legendary earth bubbles that were completely unpredictable. The power of an exploding earth bubble was not something a Daemon General could endure.

In short, something that could venture so deep into the mantle would definitely be a tough nut to crack. Li Qingshan sucked in a deep breath and slowly backed away.

"Why have you come here?"

Suddenly, a voice rang out from behind him. Li Qingshan turned around quickly and saw Spider Queen Lolth with her bright-red dress that dragged along the ground standing nearby, casting a questioning gaze towards him.

After confirming that the sumeru ring was hidden away, Li Qingshan bowed. "I've come here to cultivate."

"To cultivate? Aren't you of the water element, yet you've come here to cultivate?" The Spider Queen's questioning voice became shrill. As a matter of fact, a strand of killing intent surged silently, wrapping around Li Qingshan like spider silk.

A droplet of sweat dropped from Li Qingshan's forehead. He thought rapidly. Just how had he set off the Spider Queen? Was it just because of his unexplained appearance here? No, it definitely had something

to do with the aura in the mantle. This was directly below the Spider Queen's territory. Since he could sense the existence of the aura, why couldn't the Spider Queen?

This was probably a great secret of the Spider Queen. By accidentally running into her, he might have already attracted even more suspicion from her, which tempted her to silence him with death.

The spirit turtle's daemon core let out a warning like a siren, telling Li Qingshan just how much danger he was in right now. The Spirit Turtle Suppresses the Seas, Foreboding Fate my ass. Couldn't you give me a warning sooner? However, he understood that this was the mantle and the magnetic field interfering with the spirit turtle's daemon core.

Elsewhere, Li Qingshan possessed some confidence even if he directly fell out with her, but here, he was in a state of absolute disadvantage.

Li Qingshan smiled. "I want to practise both water and fire, which is why I've come here. I hope ma'am Spider Queen doesn't mind."

"Oh?" The Spider Queen made her way over slowly and grabbed Li Qingshan by the wrist before reaching around his waist. "You've made me rather curious." The elemental affinity of daemons were fixed at birth. Normally, they only possessed one element. Li Qingshan's explanation only made her even more doubtful.

The Spider Queen's magnificent face was inches away, and her beautiful body was pressed against his. From Li Qingshan's perspective, he could even see the deep gully between her snow-white peaks.

If he were standing under the shade of a tree by a lake, accompanied by a murmuring beauty, just how pleasant would that be? However, the reality was he was surrounded by black and red rock, standing before a lake of fire, and the vicious Spider Queen seemed to be cursing him.

Li Qingshan was pushed to one side by her and right below was the churning magma. If he did not give her a satisfying answer, she would push him into the lake of magma mercilessly. He would be reduced to nothing.

"If the Spider Queen wishes to see it, I'll demonstrate it." Li Qingshan broke away from the Spider Queen and leapt into the centre of the lake.

"Please satisfy my curiosity, Northmoon." Spider Queen Lolth smiled with crossed arms.

Li Qingshan raised an eyebrow. "No problem."

However, he murmured inside, Phoenix, oh phoenix. Please don't disappoint me.

Ever since he had obtained the Phoenix's Scripture of Nirvāṇa, Li Qingshan had never given up on comprehending it, but it would end in failure every single time. The main reason for this was the existence of the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression.

Even though they both represented peace and tranquility, how could an absolute existence of water allow for a pure existence of fire?

However, as Li Qingshan looked around, his heart skipped a beat. Perhaps he could actually practise the Phoenix's Scripture of Nirvāṇa here.

Sparks rose up and vanished from the lake of fire, like tiny, dancing fire fairies. This place did not allow for any existences of water. The power of the spirit turtle's daemon core had been almost completely suppressed. However, this instead presented an opportunity.

His daemon qi swelled, kicking up waves of fire. Li Qingshan's body rapidly grew, transforming into his original form. He turned into a colossal creature that stood over a hundred feet tall, standing within the lake of magma like a black pillar that upheld the cavern.

Although he would lose some of his agility and flexibility in his original form, this was a daemon's most powerful state.

"This would be the first time I've seen your original form. You really are a descendant. That would be no wonder," the Spider Queen said softly.

Only offspring of daemons above Daemon General were called descendants. They differed from regular beasts the moment they were born. Instead, they possessed great power akin to exotic beasts. However, very few powerful daemons were willing to do that, as they would lose power. In particular, the mother of the offspring would even go through a long period of weakness.

However, this did make the Spider Queen a little less suspicious. At least there was an explanation for his cultivation speed, or he definitely would have been receiving support from elsewhere. The Spider Queen nodded at Li Qingshan's ox horns and tiger tail too. If he were a blend between two species, a blend between two bloodlines, it would make sense that he could practise two elements.

"However, I do recall that you can control a second power aside from water, which is wind!"

"You'll know if you keep watching, ma'am Spider Queen," Li Qingshan said and stopped paying attention to her. He allowed the magma to swallow him. The scalding pain engulfed him as the vicious fire poison invaded his body.

He did not circulate his daemon qi to fend it off. Instead, he withdrew all of his daemon qi into the spirit turtle's daemon core, drawing the fire element into his body. He began to practise the Phoenix's Scripture of Nirvāṇa

Immediately, Li Qingshan's eyes seemed to light up like fire, blazing brightly. At the same time, a sense of nobility and purity rose up from his body. That was the phoenix's dignity, standing aloof from others.

The Spider Queen furrowed her brows slightly and watched on silently. He really did seem to be able to control the fire element.

Although Li Qingshan's body suffered from burning agony, both inside and out, the joy within him had drowned out all of the pain, as sure enough, practising the Phoenix's Scripture of Nirvāṇa was much smoother here. The rampaging fire element gathered together under his control, turning into a blazing ball of fire that constantly revolved.

The ball of fire was not completely spherical. Instead, it was larger on one end and smaller on the other, shaped like a chicken embryo. This was the phoenix's embryo.

Chapter 434 - The Hour of War

The surrounding flames licked against Li Qingshan's body. He was like a piece of black iron that had been thrown into the furnace to be forged into a sword.

His scarlet eyes flickered like flames as his scarlet hair danced like fire.

Half of Li Qingshan's body had been swallowed by the magma. Suddenly, he let out an earth-shattering roar and kicked up a great wave in the lake of magma. The various colours of magma, dark red, scarlet red, bright red, golden red, seemed to be blended together, hissing with white smoke that filled the entire cavern.

Rolling flames surged over, colliding against the dim barrier in front of the Spider Queen before shattering. It made her face flicker. Who knew what she was thinking.

Li Qingshan recovered his humanoid form and spread out his arms, laying back on the lake of magma and bobbing up and down. His burn marks rapidly recovered, and the vicious fire poison settled down. Something that imitated the phoenix's embryo had finally been condensed in his body.

When he raised his hand, the fire gathered in his hand automatically, abiding to his will.

Was this the first layer of the phoenix?

Li Qingshan shook his head. No, something was still missing. This was just a temporary work around against the problem. As long as he was unable to merge fire and water, he would not be able to properly practise the Phoenix's Scripture of Nirvāṇa. However, this was already quite a large step forward. He had basically gained a grasp over the fundamentals.

Just when he was about to prop himself up, a soul sense pierced the magma and his body, reaching his sea of consciousness. Li Qingshan "saw" the turbulent magma and the violent explosions of the earth bubbles. Among all of that was a golden, glistening infant sleeping soundly.

Don't tell me this is the Spider Queen's son?! A thought crossed Li Qingshan's head, and it was so absurd that it was funny. Even the Spider Queen herself could not reside safely in the depths of the mantle.

The infant suddenly snapped open its eyes. In that instant, Li Qingshan felt like he had been seen through. Before he could even closely tell what was going on, a strand of spider silk flew over, wrapped around him, and directly dragged Li Qingshan out of the lake.

"What did you see?" asked the Spider Queen as her face pressed in.

"I didn't see any... thing... An infant. Who is he? Or should I ask, what is it?" Li Qingshan changed his mind halfway. If it were a blessing, then it was a blessing, but if it were a curse, it would be unavoidable. Instead of making the Spider Queen doubt him, he would be better off trying to get to the bottom of this.

If they fell out, then he could toss out the phoenix's embryo he had just condensed and blast her into disarray, giving him the opportunity to slip away.

"So you did see it." The Spider Queen's expression changed. She reached towards Li Qingshan, but she missed.

Li Qingshan appeared a hundred steps away in a flash. "I didn't see him. He was looking at me."

“Then did he say anything to you?” A hint of nervousness appeared on the Spider Queen’s face. She placed her hand on Li Qingshan’s shoulder and tightened her grip.

Li Qingshan’s heart shivered. Daemon Commanders really were something else. “He only looked. He said nothing at all.”

The Spider Queen’s expression varied, sometimes vicious and sometimes peaceful. Li Qingshan was already prepared with the phoenix’s embryo, poised for anything.

In the end, the Spider Queen’s murderousness faded away. From Li Qingshan’s demonstration earlier, she could tell that Li Qingshan had indeed come for cultivation. He had intruded upon this place accidentally. As long as he had not been sent here under someone’s command and was not scheming something, she was reluctant to kill this powerful daemon at a time like this.

“Don’t mention this to anyone. If even part of it leaks out, I’ll...” The Spider Queen turned her head and kissed Li Qingshan’s cheek gently. Her bright-red tongue brushed past Li Qingshan’s face.

A strangely stimulating sensation filled his mind. However, Li Qingshan understood that this was not a display of love, but a threat. Or perhaps, it was all the same to her. Binding them like S&M, raping them, and then killing them was her natural hobby.

“I almost can’t help myself. I’ll go leak this piece of news right now.” Li Qingshan wrapped his arm around the Spider Queen’s waist with a smile. He felt like he was playing with fire.

The Spider Queen laughed aloud. Her laughter was sharp, like a trembling spider’s web. Yet, it was strangely pleasant at the same time.

Li Qingshan dismissed his suspicions. He was afraid to open the sumeru ring here now. As he left, Li Qingshan glanced back at the lake of magma again.

However, just what was that?

Deep within the mantle, the infant closed his eyes again. In that instant, it seemed to see the phoenix, but that was just an illusion. That undying bird had already flown away from this world.

It’s been another millenium. Ink dragon, I can feel it. Your age is coming to an end.

.....

Returning to the depth of Cobweb city, Li Qingshan took his leave with the Spider Queen. Although he never obtained an opportunity to open the sumeru ring, he had gained a grasp over the Phoenix’s Scripture of Nirvāṇa, so at least it had not been a waste.

However, as he ventured further away from the mantle, the spirit turtle’s daemon core immediately unleashed its power completely again. He could not help but withdraw the power of the phoenix embryo, but even then, it still felt foreign. This was not something he could rush, so Li Qingshan set the matter aside, focusing his attention on his clone instead.

A special meeting hall had already been erected in his territory. In the centre was a beautifully-sculpted long table. There were six seats to the left and right. The six matriarchs were all present, seated on both sides. The dangling light illuminated the varying expressions on their faces.

There was a new face among them. This was a replacement that occurred very naturally within the clans of night roamers, and there would never be a need to ask about the fate of the previous matriarch.

Li Qingshan arrived at one end of the table. Ye Liubo pulled out his chair for him, and he sat down slowly. The six matriarchs all stood up together. "Greetings, sir Northmoon. Congratulations on emerging from seclusion."

Li Qingshan brushed them aside. The news of how he had dealt with the provocation from the two powerful Daemon Generals with his clone obviously could not hide from their ears. None of them wanted to disrespect this rising star among the Daemon race.

"Please be seated." Li Qingshan yawned and leaned against one hand. "Since I've already emerged, it's time to move around a little, just in case the Spider Queen feels like I've been neglecting my duties. What suggestions do you have?"

"Bring the map." Ye Mingzhu clapped her hands, and a guard brought over a mental map. She unfurled it on the stone table. "This is a map we've obtained from the humans." Afterwards, she pointed at a speck on the map. "This is a human city. Sir, you can start there and gift it to the Spider Queen."

Bang! Li Qingshan slammed the table and stood up. "Do you think the Spider Queen will be satisfied with a mere city of regular people?"

"Yes." Ye Mingzhu stroked the map and several dozen specks of light lit up. "This is the location of human sects we're aware of. However, they're all protected by formations, and they have mechanical turrets from the school of Mohism. All of them are difficult bones to chew. And, once they're under attack, they will receive reinforcements from other sects very quickly."

Li Qingshan smiled. "That's good news!" He casually pointed at a speck nearby. "We'll go with here. I require you all to partake in this battle."

"Sir, we still have to manage our clans..." "That won't do." "We can send clansmen to assist sir." Apart from Ye Mingzhu, the matriarchs immediately objected. Who was willing to leave their dens and venture above ground? They were not afraid of the power that human cultivators possessed. They were just afraid the elders of their clans would use this opportunity to usurp them.

"If anyone refuses to take part, they're welcome to step down right now." Li Qingshan interrupted them. His eyes shone coldly as the murderousness of the tiger demon surged.

Chapter 435 - Night Raiding with Phantom Roaming

None of the matriarchs dared to object anymore. "Since sir Northmoon has already decided on this, we'll do as sir Northmoon wishes."

Li Qingshan smiled. "Very good. I'll give you two hours to gather your subordinates. Of course, I just need those who have undergone a heavenly tribulation... Quickly. The sun's about to set."

The sky gradually darkened, but Clear River city was still bright lit. Above the Hawkwolf Guard, Wang Pushi stood with his arms behind his back, overlooking the shining city. As the prefectural city under the tight protection of cultivators, Clear River city was the only city that had not been attacked by daemons.

A streak of green light shot over, making a turn and descending from above. Fu Qingjin landed on the roof gently with a person in his hand.

“Who’s this?”

“The person who caused our dispute three years ago. I’m handing him to commander Wang now for punishment. This is a demonstration of my sincerity.” Fu Qingjin tossed the person before Wang Pushi. The disciple of the Vermillion Clothes sect who had undertaken a massacre in the past cried out in fear. “Senior Fu, sir Fu, I’m a disciple of the Daemon Suppression alliance! I’m a disciple of the Daemon Suppression alliance! You can’t do this!”

Wang Pushi stepped on his throat and asked, “What do you want?”

“Cooperation,” Fu Qingjin said. “In the past three years, daemons have been running amok, throwing countless people in danger. The death count is unfathomable. Yet, due to our dispute, we are unable to stand united, impeding each other instead. I think now’s the time for us to settle this dispute, band together, and end this matter with the daemons for good.”

“End this matter? How are you going to end it?” Wang Pushi frowned. What a boast.

“We’ll gather all the cultivators and launch a counterattack underground to slay daemons.” Fu Qingjin waved his hand in high spirits. He was filled with convincing confidence. Regardless of how dispirited and laid back he usually seemed, as long as he wanted to, he seemed to be born with the charm of a ruler.

Wang Pushi sank into his thoughts. “This isn’t something I can decide alone. I need to discuss with the other school leaders.”

“I’m just letting you know for now. Please pass on my message, commander Wang. In five days’ time, I will be inviting all Foundation Establishment cultivators to join the Daemon Suppression alliance in the parlour. I will explain my thoughts to them.”

Fu Qingjin clasped his hands and leapt off the roof, taking his leave.

The first reason for this was for gathering all the suspects who could potentially possess the sumeru ring. Under the pressure of the situation and with the judgement of the xiezhi’s horn, he could make them give themselves away. After the meeting, the first battle would be an attack on Northmoon’s territory to force the truth out of him. That was the second reason.

A net that Fu Qingjin had personally weaved, planned, and prepared wrapped around Li Qingshan, but Li Qingshan was still unaware. Even if he knew, it would be useless. This was not some scheme, but a legitimate strategy.

Not only was Fu Qingjin doing this for the Soaring Dragon Elder, but he also wanted to gather strength and defeat the daemons in one fell swoop. This was the third reason.

.....

The moon rose up from between the branches, illuminating the tranquil, secluded valley. There was a winding string of structures in the valley, standing like a forest. The eaves and arches were primarily vermilion. They were so grand and extravagant that they could not be the handiwork of regular people.

An invisible formation enveloped everything, blocking the entry of all intruders. Among the many buildings, the special structures were still the erect turrets. This was a crystallisation of the school of Mohism's engineering. Li Qingshan had experienced their power first hand in the past. If someone tried to attack the formation, they would have to endure their blasts first.

It was easy to defend and difficult to attack. It had a very tight security. This was the Vermillion Clothes sect.

Only when Li Qingshan saw it in person did he understand what Ye Mingzhu meant by a tough bone to chew. Although the formation before him was not on par with the Duality Formation of Disintegration, it still would not be that easy to breach if he did not possess a Soaring Dragon ship.

Flickering figures stood silently within the forest on the slopes of the valley.

Their leader was obviously Li Qingshan, who stroked his chin in thought.

Behind him, there were many other powerful night roamers apart from his ten personal guards and the six matriarchs. In order to prevent any problems from arising when they were gone, the matriarchs had truly made abundant arrangements. The group they brought was so powerful that even Li Qingshan was stunned. Afterwards, he laughed to himself in thought, Conscripting them by force really was a good idea.

"Do you have any plans on breaching the Vermillion Clothes sect?" Li Qingshan asked through daemon qi. He could not come up with any other idea apart from launching a direct attack, as the formation was present. Unfortunately, the last thing night roamers were adept at were direct attacks. Encircling them and defeating the reinforcements they called would be a good idea, but it would depend on whether the others bit the bait or not.

Ye Liusu instead said, "I have a plan that can allow us to breach the Vermillion Clothes sect without sustaining any losses."

"Oh? Let's hear it."

"In my opinion, the formation isn't exactly flawless. As long as we can unleash an ability as night roamers and use Phantom Roaming, we can pass through the formation and assassinate the master of the Vermillion Clothes sect. By then, these mechanical turrets and even the formation will be ours."

Li Qingshan's eyes lit up. If that really were possible, it would save a great deal of trouble. All he had to do was kill his way through the sects one by one. His losses would be minimised, while his gains would be maximised.

A matriarch expressed her doubts, "But only those who have undergone two heavenly tribulations can use Phantom Roaming."

Once night roamers underwent two heavenly tribulations, they could basically become phantoms. Not only could their bodies pass through all visible and invisible barriers, but their weapons could pierce the protective techniques or arcane artifacts of opponents. They could reach anywhere and breach anything. They would become the most terrifying assassins.

Ye Mingzhu smiled. "That is indeed impossible if we're alone, but with so many people here, we just need to work together and open up a phantom path. We'll still be able to send in a person or two."

Work together? The matriarchs all looked at one another. This was not a concept that existed in their heads. Apart from the Spider Queen, no one could order them to work together, but now, there was Li Qingshan. He smiled. "That's a good idea. Let's begin!"

But who was going in?

Alone and without any support, they would be lambs for the slaughter if the assassination attempt failed. They would be thrown into the most dire of circumstances. Just looking at the erect turrets gave them chills.

Ye Liusu stood forward silently, while Ye Liubo followed behind her with a smile. "Me too."

Under the lead of the six matriarchs, all the powerful night roamers poured their strength together, forming a clump of darkness that was hazy like smoke. Even at a time like this, their power was withdrawn, without the slightest sliver leaking out.

Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo were waiting for that moment of opportunity. The six matriarchs suddenly moved together, tossing the clump of darkness towards the Vermillion Clothes sect below. Sure enough, it passed through the formation silently, like it was paving a path of darkness.

Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo used Night Roaming at the same time, leaping into the path of darkness.

.....

The master of the Vermillion Clothes sect paced around in his room alone, carefully considering everything that had happened recently.

He recalled the resentful gaze of his disciple who had been taken away and used as a bargaining chip by Fu Qingjin. He could not help but sigh slightly. However, he did not feel like he did anything wrong. Preying on the weak had always been the law of this world. It would be your fortune that your sect was willing to protect you. Now that the sect refused to protect you, that would be your fate. There was nothing to resent.

Compared to that, he found more pity in being unable to engage in the trade underground anymore. He began to ponder. From Fu Qingjin's recent movements, he could clearly tell he was making a move. Compared to engaging in trade with those strange otherfolk, cutting them down with his blade and plundering their belongings befitted the philosophy of the Vermillion Clothes sect more.

The moonlight cast a shadow against the wall. The master of the Vermillion Clothes sect suddenly looked back, only to see Ye Liusu gripping a curved dagger and standing silently in the moonlight. "Why have you come here?"

What answered him was a streak of resplendent, silver light.

The master of the Vermillion Clothes sect bellowed out. The blood-red blade on his waist moved like a dragon, dyeing the entire room blood-red in an unstoppable manner. Suddenly, a yellow satin wrapped around his head, and his vision darkened. He heard a strange screech, and his back began to ache. A

dark dagger had stabbed into his back. The blood-red blade lashed out backwards, but Ye Liubo retreated gracefully.

The dagger in Ye Liusu's hand followed a mysterious trajectory, sweeping towards his throat in an untraceable manner.

The master of the Vermillion Clothes sect was overcome by both surprise and anger. He shone with red light as he deflected the two daggers. He stood like a deity in vermilion clothes, grasping a long blade as he stared at Ye Liusu murderously.

"How did you enter here?"

The formation was still operating, and there were no signs that it had been tampered with. Otherwise, he definitely would have sensed it. Everything that occurred tonight was strange. He had to seek help from the Daemon Suppression alliance immediately. Suddenly, he felt a wave of numbness spread out from his back—the dagger was poisoned, laced with terrifyingly potent poison.

Over the past few millennia, the night roamers had directed all of their efforts into alchemy and apothecary, which still bore some results. Even Foundation Establishment cultivators could not ignore their poison. In the blink of an eye, the master of the Vermillion Clothes sect turned green.

Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo revolved around the master of the Vermillion Clothes sect; it was as if they were performing a graceful dance. They turned into two black fairies, merging into the night silently. All that remained was a bright yellow satin drifting about, running through the moonlight.

The master of the Vermillion Clothes sect's eyes narrowed. All he felt was death approaching him. The disciples of the Vermillion Clothes sect who heard the disturbance gathered over from all directions, but it brought him no comfort at all. It only made him feel even colder.

Attack with the turrets? Send a distress signal to the Daemon Suppression alliance? His mind moved rapidly. The bright yellow satin suddenly expanded to ten times its size and loomed over him.

"Shatter!" The blood-red blade in the master of the Vermillion Clothes sect's hand expanded. With a single move, he unleashed bloody attacks in all directions, such that his blade aura swept about like a storm. The moment the disciples arrived outside, they saw the streaks of blood-red light tear the room and courtyard to pieces. A faster disciple had even been sucked into the blade aura, cut to pieces immediately. He was reduced to a pile of flesh, which alarmed the other disciples into backing away hurriedly.

The bright red satin pulsed, pliable, tough, and undamaged. However, it was unable to fall down, hovering in the air like a yellow cloud and shrouding the moon.

The daggers flashed, like the crescent moon, like a falling star. The light they gave off criss-crossed before vanishing in the blink of an eye.

Time dripped away. All there was was a rumble of collapsing structures, and an uproar erupted in the valley.

"Prepare to go on the offence to assist them," Li Qingshan ordered sternly. Although his chances of victory were extremely large, he still had to consider the worst outcome. They were his most important

and most trusted subordinates among the night roamers. He could not allow anything to happen to them.

Ye Mingzhu said, "It's just the master of the Vermillion Clothes sect, a Foundation Establishment cultivator. They definitely won't disappoint you, sir Northmoon."

As she said that, the formation vanished.

Chapter 436 - Ambushing Fu Qingjin

The blade aura dispersed. Within a radius of a few hundred meters, the ground had been cut up and shattered. Not a single blade of grass survived. Only the master of the Vermillion Clothes sect, who wielded a blood-red blade, remained standing like a deity.

A slash had appeared across his neck as blood poured out from his chest, soaking his vermilion clothes. Yet, the colour of the blood was a dark green. The bright yellow satin hovered about, falling out of the air and covering his face filled with reluctance. He collapsed on the ground loudly.

Although a Foundation Establishment cultivator's life force still paled in comparison to a Daemon General's, wounds to the body no longer mattered so much as someone who had become one with nature. Otherwise, Ye Liubo's first strike would have ended his life. However, the poison attacked all aspects. Foundation Establishment cultivators were still incapable of achieving complete independence from their bodies.

The Vermillion Clothes sect could be regarded as a battle-oriented sect, and their sect master's strength ranked towards the top in the Clear River prefecture. In a direct confrontation, even several Ye Liusus would struggle to finish him off in a short amount of time.

However, the concept of assassination had always been about catching the opponent off-guard and killing them despite being weaker. The master of the Vermillion Clothes sect had lowered his guard due to the formation, so he suffered a fatal strike from Ye Liubo. Victory had already been decided the moment he was poisoned.

Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo emerged from Night Roaming and knelt on the ground, breathing heavily. Both of them were covered in several dozen brutal wounds. The master of the Vermillion Clothes sect's final strike had truly been startling. The blade he wielded was anything but ordinary.

"It's otherfolk! Kill them! They've killed the sect master!" "How did they get in here? Why didn't the formation give off any warning?"

As the disciples of the sect cried out, Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo smiled at one another. They made their way over to the corpse of the sect master like no one else was present and began to search through it.

A tenth layer disciple lunged over, swinging his blade. There was a flash from the curved dagger, and he was bisected. Despite being injured, they still were not people who could be threatened by these regular disciples, as they had undergone a heavenly tribulation.

Seeing this, the disciples hesitated and staggered back before scattering off in all directions. Ye Liusu had already found the formation disc, deactivating the formation.

Black figures flew into the Vermillion Clothes sect, tailing behind each disciple like their own shadows. A few cries rang out, but the valley fell silent very soon.

The turrets remained untouched. Ye Liubo held the controlling mechanism and disassembled them one by one, stowing them away in her hundred treasures pouch.

Li Qingshan unfurled his wings, flew along a straight line, and landed on a turret, surveilling the entire valley. All the night roamers returned before him, offering up the hundred treasures pouches they had obtained. None of them dared to keep it for themselves. The hundred treasures pouches of Qi Practitioners was not worth this kind of risk.

Li Qingshan did not hold back, accepting all the hundred treasures pouches. In the end, he received the sect master's hundred treasures pouch from Ye Liusu and smiled. "The two of you hold the greatest merit in this attack. Once this is all over, I will reward you accordingly." He also said to the other night roamers, "I'm just holding onto all the spoils for now. I will reward your clans according to your contributions once we return underground."

Ye Mingzhu said immediately, "Wise be sir Northmoon. We will definitely work as one team and demonstrate our loyalty to you, sir." The other matriarchs all cursed her inside for being a bootlicker, but they were afraid to fall behind, just in case they lost out in the very end when they split the spoils.

"As long as we work together, there's nothing we can't overcome." Ye Liusu was riled up. This was the first time she had felt so relaxed as a Foundation Establishment cultivator, but she also understood she would never feel so relaxed if it were not for Li Qingshan's command.

The other night roamers did not necessarily agree with her, but they did accept everything Ye Liusu had done.

As Ye Liusu advocated for her belief of unity, Ye Liubo snuck over and hugged Li Qingshan around the waist. She handed the blood-red blade from the sect master to him and bit his ear. She spoke with a sickly sweet voice, "This'll be a gift from me, alright?"

"That won't do. Even you're mine. Are your injuries fine?" Li Qingshan lifted up the blood-red blade, and he could not help but praise, "A good blade."

The blood-red blade was extremely sharp, having surpassed the boundary of regular spiritual artifacts already. This was the keepsake of the masters of the Vermillion Clothes sect, having been passed down through the generations. It had been refined countless times.

It was not as flexible as regular arcane artifacts with fancy tricks or abilities, but it only seemed more practical and suited Li Qingshan better. Even when he faced Fu Qingjin's Green Ruins sword, he would not lose out by too much now.

"It's just a few small scratches. I'll be fine with a bit of rest. There won't be any scars. Though, the blade qi is a bit troublesome. All you say is that I'm yours, so why don't you want me?" Ye Liubo sulked.

Li Qingshan lowered his head and kissed her gently on the lips. He pressed his hand against her back and purged the blade qi. He smiled. "Stop flirting around." He raised his hand and said, "Mingzhu, bring the map. Where's the closest sect?"

The moon hung high as stars covered the sky.

Li Qingshan unfurled his wings and flew over the wilderness. Black figures followed behind him silently along the ground. Only a night breeze passed by wherever they were.

Very soon, a chain of mountains appeared on the horizon. Li Qingshan furled his wings and shot off rapidly. That was his next target.

The night roamers became more practised as they went. Towards the end, they could even send in four people through the formations instead of two, and regular sects only possessed a Foundation Establishment cultivator or two. They assassinated them with a crushing advantage, almost undefeatable. The Foundation Establishment cultivators did not even have a chance to send out a distress signal.

They only failed once. The formation of the Rose Clouds sect was relatively special. It was mist that enveloped several dozen kilometers, which could not be breached with Phantom Roaming. As a result, they moved onto their next target.

Just like that, Li Qingshan destroyed four sects consecutively with his group in a single night, killing three Foundation Establishment cultivators. They had a bountiful harvest.

Ye Mingzhu unfurled the map. "Sir, it's quite late now. The next target is here."

"What sect is it?"

"The Bronze Cauldron sect. They're known for forging artifacts, so they should be easy to deal with."

Fu Qingjin sat on a nameless peak, absorbing the spiritual qi of the world. He had already cast out his net. All he had to do was wait for the right moment to reel it in, and he would be able to end this lengthy journey of his. He would be able to take her back to the Sword Collection palace.

Through everything that happened during these three years, witnessing the various tragedies caused by daemons, she must have understood the importance of strength, no longer possessing such naive thoughts anymore. He was reluctant for her to go through such pain, but it was a crucial step to take.

At this moment, the tablet of the Daemon Suppression alliance on his waist suddenly began to flash. Fu Qingjin's eyes narrowed. "It's a distress signal from the Bronze Cauldron sect."

Green light rose up into the air, and Fu Qingjin arrived at Bronze Cauldron mountain on his sword. As he gazed down, even he could not help but be shocked despite his mental fortitude.

The prosperous Bronze Cauldron sect had basically been reduced to ruins, like a huge beast had trampled through it. There was not a single complete structure in sight. All that remained was a large, bronze cauldron standing alone in the ruins.

What had happened? Fu Qingjin arrived before the bronze cauldron. "Sect master Chen, are you inside?"

Sect master Chen's anxious voice rang out from inside, "Be careful, fellow Fu!"

An hour ago, Li Qingshan launched a surprise attack on the Bronze Cauldron sect with the night roamers. Phantom Roaming succeeded once again. However, as they waited for the formations to be taken down from the inside, the mechanical turrets continued firing away, blasting out with streaks of light and forcing back a few night roamer assassins into scattering and hiding.

Li Qingshan rose up and transformed mid-air, landing back down loudly. Streaks of light shot over, and the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell constantly assembled and disassembled, blocking the attacks.

Boom!

With a great boom, shockwaves swept out around the iron roof, ripping apart all the structures within the turrets and sending them flying. As for the disciples of the sect who stood on the ground, they all exploded as pieces of flesh. Bronze Cauldron mountain trembled and became covered in cracks, closed to collapsing.

All the night roamers were dumbstruck by this apocalyptic sight. He had reduced the Bronze Cauldron sect to ruins in the blink of an eye. If Li Qingshan massacred cities, he would be even more effective than Strongboulder and Bloodshadow.

After the shockwave settled, the night roamers responsible for the assassination returned. They raised their heads and reported, "Sir, there's been some issues."

Li Qingshan gazed down. He had noticed the source of the issues a long time ago. Only a single bronze cauldron remained fine within the ruins, as if even his shockwaves could not destroy it so easily.

"He's hiding in there. There's nothing we can do." Just when the night roamers began their assassination, the master of the Bronze Cauldron sect immediately summoned out a cauldron and hid in there.

"Can you use Phantom Roaming?" Li Qingshan patted the bronze cauldron, and it clanged loudly. The cauldron was actually an extremely rare arcane artifact, the sect treasure of Bronze Cauldron mountain. It was extremely tough and sturdy such that even the night roamers were helpless against it.

Ye Mingzhu said, "We should be able to, but entering the opponent's cauldron should put us in an extremely disadvantageous position."

"If that's the case, we'll just wait for him to come out," said Li Qingshan. An arcane artifact cauldron for forging artifacts was extremely rare. Since he had come across it, how could he just leave without it? He was tempted to carry the whole thing back. He refused to believe a mere cauldron could stop him.

Ye Mingzhi said, "About that... The sun's rising soon. He's probably sent out a distress signal already." Although the influence from sunlight had already become extremely miniscule to night roamers at their level, this influence would slowly build up and still cause quite a bit of trouble. In particular, if they wanted to open another phantom path, it would not be that easy anymore.

"Alright then. Retreat!" Li Qingshan immediately changed his mind, turning and leaving decisively. He exchanged glances with Ye Liusu.

The group retreated to below the mountains, and Ye Liusu ordered everyone to lay in ambush there. They also took out all the mechanical cannons they had gathered along the way, carrying out Li Qingshan's original plan of drawing in the reinforcements and defeating them.

The blood-red blade reflected Li Qingshan's face, "Retreat? You're dreaming! I'm still not satisfied yet! Since sneak attacks won't work, we'll just lay in ambush here. If that still doesn't work, we'll just forcefully break through and use our momentum to deal a heavy blow to Fu Qingjin of the Daemon Suppression alliance."

They waited until a streak of green light descended from above. Li Qingshan's eyes suddenly lit up. He never thought he would catch a big fish right from the beginning.

He had the blood-red blade in hand, many subordinates around him, and countless cannons prepared. If he grasped this opportunity, he might be able to kill Fu Qingjin then and there and end their conflict prematurely.

Li Qingshan leapt out from the forest and waved his blade at Fu Qingjin, "Fire!"

Right now was the darkest moment, right before daybreak. In a single instant, countless streaks of light illuminated the night sky, weaving into a net.

Fu Qingjin turned around dumbfoundedly. The streaks of light rushed over along a slightly curved trajectory.

As he cast out his net for Li Qingshan, he never thought he would run into Li Qingshan's net first.

Chapter 437 - Clashing

It was as if the cauldron-shaped Bronze Cauldron mountain erupted with light, like a volcano erupting violently. The ruins were reduced to dust within the light before rushing into the air. All traces of humanity had been erased in that instant, crystallising from the heat.

Li Qingshan cast his gaze through the dust. Fu Qingjin had not managed to escape in time. The Green Ruins sword pointed at the sky, wielded right before him. On one side was his dancing green robes and black hair, while on the other, he had already turned into starry specks of light, scattering and condensing.

In the final moment, he unleashed the Green Ruins Illusion. He was struck by the streaks of light, but he just dispersed into specks of light.

"Continue firing!" Li Qingshan waved his blade and roared. No matter how powerful the Green Ruins sword was, its power could not be endless. He seemed invincible, but that was only because he had not been forced into dire situations. He wanted to test the limit of the Green Ruins sword, so he did not let this heaven-sent opportunity slip by.

Light fell like rain, spraying over the top of Bronze Cauldron mountain. The rumbling reached hundreds of kilometers away as the mountain was sliced away. Fu Qingjin constantly disassembled and reassembled, remaining just as composed as ever.

This lasted for fifteen long minutes. Fu Qingjin frowned as the Green Ruins sword in his hand thrummed gently. He never expected he would actually fall into such an awkward predicament from a moment of carelessness. Northmoon, I've underestimated you.

He bit the tip of his tongue and sprayed a mouthful of essence blood onto the Green Ruins sword. The sword shone brightly with green light, and he merged with it, turning into a green streak that shot into the air.

"Now!" Li Qingshan's eyes lit up. Having been waiting for this the whole time, he suddenly unfurled his wings and swung out with the blood-red blade, emitting a streak of light that forcefully severed the green light.

Fu Qingjin was not angered at all. Instead, he smiled. The Green Ruins sword produced ripples of green light, and the ruined palaces and walls unfurled in the air. Before he knew it, Li Qingshan had fallen into the Green Ruins Illusion once again.

Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo strode through the air, following behind him closely and ready to strike at any time. They swung their weapons at Fu Qingjin, but they missed. They directly passed through the green light, looking back in surprise. The Green Ruins Illusion was like a mirage in the sky, visible but beyond reach.

Fu Qingjin said gloomily, "Even if you have ten thousand people on your side, only you will face me in the end. Are you prepared, Northmoon?"

At this moment, many other Foundation Establishment cultivators who had received the distress signal arrived. They saw the devastated Bronze Cauldron mountain before glancing at the illusion in the air. They had no idea what to do.

Ye Liubo said loudly, "Quick, open a phantom path." Although she had not clashed with Fu Qingjin before, this liaison of the Sword Collection palace had made a name for himself even underground. He had clashed with Strongboulder and Bloodshadow several times, gaining the upper hand every single time. Although he never managed to kill the two daemons, he would force them to return underground every single time with some wounds.

"There's no need." Li Qingshan said indifferently as he stared at Fu Qingjin. The Green Ruins Illusion was different from formations. It was completely under Fu Qingjin's control. Even if she managed to force her way in, she would just be expelled again. "From now onwards, Ye Liusu will be in charge. Kill and injure as many cultivators of the Daemon Suppression alliance as possible."

"As you wish, master." Ye Liusu shot towards the Foundation Establishment cultivators who had come to provide assistance, while the remaining night roamers followed behind her. Mid-air, they had already merged with the darkness, vanishing completely.

The Foundation Establishment cultivators changed drastically in expression. Never had they seen so many night roamers that had all undergone a heavenly tribulation gathered together.

"Mountainous Sword Qi!" A middle-aged cultivator in the robes of a daoist priest drew the sword from his back, conjuring countless blurs of swords that revolved around him like a mountain of swords. If he wanted to face several night roamers, this would be enough to protect himself, as night roamers were

not good with direct confrontations. However, what he faced right now were several dozen of the strongest assassins the night roamers had to offer.

Cling! Clang! Clang! Cling! With a series of collisions, the night roamers flickered like ghosts, and the Mountainous Sword Qi was forced back.

The middle-aged cultivator was shocked. He snatched out a handful of Thunderbolt bombs and scattered them, stopping the night roamers' attacks with a series of explosions. He rode away on his sword in a hurry.

Ye Liubo sneered. She relinquished her sword and pulled out a bow, drawing it to full. A black arrow had already condensed between her fingers. Behind her, over a dozen night roamers did the same. Among the night roamers, archery was something they had to know.

A rain of black arrows pierced the smoke from the explosions, leaving behind black trajectories silently.

The middle-aged cultivator called to the other Foundation Establishment cultivators, "Save me, fellows!"

With the philosophy of "a dead fellow's better than a dead me" in mind, the other Foundation Establishment cultivators took off without even looking back. They were not crazy enough to throw their lives at several dozen night roamers who had gone through heavenly tribulations yet.

The middle-aged cultivator did his best to block a few arrows. The robes on him began to stir. It was actually an extremely rare protective supreme grade spiritual artifact, which helped him block seven or eight arrows. If he faced a single night roamer, he would have basically been undefeatable, but faced with an absolute disadvantage in numbers, the robes did not have time to recover its strength at all. It was pierced by the arrows in a single instant, riddling the middle-aged cultivator with holes. He fell out of the sky.

His "fellows" had not managed to escape so easily either. The six matriarchs all went up to block them. Speed was one of their advantages. They did not have a lot of opportunities where they could kill so many Foundation Establishment cultivators with such ease.

"Are you thinking you can unsettle me like this?" As Fu Qingjin spoke, he used the Green Ruins Illusion to recover the strength he had used up earlier.

"I never planned on unsettling you at all. How is it? You never imagined this, did you?" Li Qingshan laid out his hands. He actually did not launch a preemptive attack. Instead, he began conversing with Fu Qingjin in interest.

He had never been one to blabber. He utterly detested those who wanted to monologue and pose around when they possessed an absolute advantage, only for the tables to turn against them later.

It was the exact opposite, as a matter of fact. After witnessing the speed that Fu Qingjin had unleashed earlier, he understood he had no so-called advantages at all. Now was clearly not the time for him to throw his life on the line for a great battle against Fu Qingjin. If Fu Qingjin wanted to leave, he would not be able to stop him.

At their level of cultivation, one-against-one battles were often all like that. Victory and defeat was easy to determine; life and death was not.

Moreover, winning this held no significance to Li Qingshan at all, which was why he purposefully put on a front to convince Fu Qingjin had a chance to kill him, just to keep him here. His helper was already on the way.

When he saw Fu Qingjin, Li Qingshan understood this was a heaven-sent opportunity to deal a heavy blow to the Daemon Suppression Alliance. His clone began to take vigorous action underground. The helper he was looking for was not Xiao An.

In the underground cavern, Bloodshadow stared at Li Qingshan coldly. "You're bold enough to intrude upon my territory?"

"Fu Qingjin is on Bronze Cauldron mountain, locking in combat with my original body. If you want revenge, then come!" Li Qingshan cut right to the chase. Only Bloodshadow could catch Fu Qingjin with his startling speed and end him for good.

"Is that the truth?" Bloodshadow's expression changed. He resented Li Qingshan no less than Fu Qingjin. Both of them had humiliated him before.

"Whether you believe it or not is up to you." Li Qingshan turned around to leave and Bloodshadow appeared before him in a flash. "Where are you going?"

"I'm obviously off to find Strongboulder, Dragonsnail, oh right, and ma'am Spider Queen. I want to report to her that a good opportunity for a counter attack is here."

Li Qingshan made his way around Bloodshadow and flew off. He did not know any battle tactics or strategies. He just suddenly discovered he had been dealt a good hand, and he wanted to win big.

War was not a game that could be won through scheming alone. Playing his cards right was nowhere near as complicated and profound as novels had described it. Varying factors were everywhere. A single coincidence could change the direction of the entire war.

And, what truly determined the victory was still the strength of the opposing sides. At the very least, the united night roamers right now were stronger than the half-hearted members of the Daemon Suppression alliance.

It only took Fu Qingjin a single thought to think through all this. He had gained an inkling of Li Qingshan's objective too. However, he remained as calm as ever, smiling instead. "I know what you're thinking. However, even if the blood demon and rock demon are here, you still won't be able to kill me."

"Don't mind if I try." Li Qingshan sat down on the mossy steps. "I hope your subordinates are as tough as you. All of your arrogance just comes from a single sword."

Deep underground, Strongboulder smiled viciously. "You want me to assist you?"

"No, I'm advising you to use this opportunity to attack other sects. This is the perfect opportunity." Li Qingshan left as soon as he came. Strongboulder was unable to match Fu Qingjin's speed, and the Rock of Slaughter's power probably would not be particularly effective either. However, he would be perfect for attacking other sects.

Fu Qingjin was right. Absolute confidence in killing him had never existed in the first place. However, he could destroy the Daemon Suppression alliance at the very least.

“Does a wise king not rule without using others? Have you achieved everything just by depending on yourself alone?” Fu Qingjin said slowly. He arrived near the broken walls to Li Qingshan’s right and sat down. He smiled. “A group of Foundation Establishment cultivators aren’t as important as you think they are. Compared to them, I care about you much more. In just a few years, you’ve gone from being a daemon, no, a daemoniac beast to what you are right now. That’s truly astonishing.”

Li Qingshan raised an eyebrow and smiled. “They, however, are very important to me.” Without the battles, without so many spoils, would he still be standing here right now?

“Is it just through the pills that the cat daemon gave you? No, that’s nowhere near enough. You have other fortuitous encounters,” Fu Qingjin said to himself.

“Of course I’m fortunate.” Li Qingshan gazed down carelessly. The Foundation Establishment cultivators were like a herd of elk surrounded by a pack of wolves, gradually giving away. Another died.

“Oh right, do you know who killed the Soaring Dragon Elder?” Fu Qingjin asked suddenly as he clutched the xiezhi’s horn within his sleeve. He had remained here exactly to get to the bottom of this. This was what mattered to the Sword Collection palace. Everything he said before this was just in preparation for this. He was striking while Li Qingshan was unprepared.

The enemy obviously would not tell the truth, but with the xiezhi’s horn, he believed he could find the truth.

Li Qingshan opened his mouth, but he wavered. With a thought, he shut it again before just shutting his eyes. He could not afford to be careless when speaking to this person.

Green light flashed through Fu Qingjin’s eyes. He smiled. “Alright, I’ve already learnt what I want to know. Actually, you’re not particularly good at hiding what you’re thinking. That person’s the source of all your power, right?”

Li Qingshan snapped open his eyes. “What are you holding in your hand?”

Chapter 438 - The Fist and the Sword

Li Qingshan swung his right hand, and the broken wall was reduced to dust loudly. Fu Qingjin turned into specks of green light and circled around Li Qingshan. It condensed into Fu Qingjin’s face, which said, “You think you’re already strong enough, but actually, you’re powerless.”

“Fu Qingjin, you really like to blabber, don’t you? Life and death isn’t decided through words. Why don’t you speak with your sword?” Li Qingshan laughed aloud and swung the blood-red blade wildly, striking every single speck of green light with precision. The specks of green light split into two. Just when they were about to scatter, the blade moved like a shadow and struck them at the same time. The green light then split in half again, and the flashes from the blade split up with it.

The blade was swung violently and furiously, but Li Qingshan’s pupils remained clear and unperturbed, shining slightly with blue light. Time seemed sluggish, passing extremely slowly. The movement and trajectory of every speck of green light became extremely clear.

Clang! There was a clash of metal. The specks of green light condensed into the Green Ruins sword and collided with the blood-red blade, and Fu Qingjin flew backwards, slightly surprised. His face finally lost its sense of ease. "A mental state of intricacy!"

Fu Qingjin's great powers did not originate from the Green Ruins sword alone. He also had access to the tremendous heritage of the Sword Collection palace. He was a disciple chosen from thousands who had undergone elite training and education.

If the Academy of the Hundred Schools and the smaller sects were akin to regular schools, then the Sword Collection palace would be a training class for geniuses. In regular schools, memorising the curriculum and being able to use the knowledge skillfully made a good student, while for the latter, completely understanding the curriculum under a teacher's guidance would only make them qualify as a genius. It was the same realm of cultivation, but their strengths were completely different. Even if he just wielded a regular spiritual artifact sword, regular Foundation Establishment cultivators would still struggle to defeat him.

"A mental state of intricacy? Is that what you call it?"

After reaching the fourth layer of the spirit turtle, Li Qingshan could sense the beginning and end of each thought in utter tranquility, which went through countless profound processes. If he combined it with the spirit turtle's daemon core, he could sense fate with even greater precision. If he used it with the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell, he could reflect attacks right back at his opponents. He had used it with his blade swings earlier, forcing back Fu Qingjin. He had never been able to tell whether it was just talent or something else, but he finally learnt what it was today from Fu Qingjin.

"I must admit that you are indeed an enemy that can threaten me. Against enemies like that, I normally show some respect, but that'll be your misfortune." Fu Qingjin's gaze was as sharp as a sword as he extended the fingers on his left hand like a sword. At the same time, the Green Ruins sword in his right hand slanted backwards.

Li Qingshan swung down. A wave of blood-red blade aura turned violently, exploding with blood-red light and dyeing the Green Ruins Illusion completely red.

"Green Ruins Tribulation, Myriad Swords Bloom!" Fu Qingjin chanted and stabbed out. The green light collided violently with the blade aura, piercing the blade aura with a flash and moving straight towards Li Qingshan's forehead.

Li Qingshan tilted his head to dodge and took a step forward. A Green Ruins sword suddenly shot up from where he had shifted his foot. He twisted his feet and leaned backwards, and a streak of light brushed past his face. Before his foot could even land on the ground, streaks of green light erupted from the earth. Each sword moved faster than the last.

Li Qingshan's feet shifted gracefully, traversing through the streaks of light like a vicious tiger bounding through a jungle. He strode forward at a steady pace while his gaze remained locked on Fu Qingjin the entire time.

The streaks of light grew even thicker, so he casually swung his blade and opened a path in the forest. He sneered loudly. "My misfortune? Then I really am lucky."

Fu Qingjin smiled. "It's only just begun." Forming a sword seal with his hand, he pointed upwards. Green Ruins swords flew into the air one by one and hovered there. They turned around together, pointing towards Li Qingshan and turning into a wave of sword rain. They all thrummed loudly as they fell with a whistle.

Li Qingshan furrowed his brows. He moved rapidly, producing a wheel of blurs with the blood-red blade. The sound of colliding metal rang out constantly.

However, the sword rain seemed to be endless. The countless Green Ruins swords arranged themselves into rings of sword formations around Li Qingshan, flying over from every angle and direction. Even when they were repelled, they would just turn around and fall back into formation.

Fu Qingjin only smiled indifferently. Li Qingshan was gradually swallowed by the Green Ruins swords.

A roar of the tiger demon pierced the clouds, and the sword formation halted. Li Qingshan unfurled his wings of wind and burst out, arriving above Fu Qingjin in a flash and swinging down.

Before his blade had even reached him, Fu Qingjin turned into specks of green light and scattered, merging with every single Green Ruins sword. The countless Green Ruins swords gathered into a long dragon, flickering with green light as it rushed over.

By imbuing the green light into the swords, Li Qingshan would struggle to harm him even with his blade in hand. Meanwhile, the Green Ruins Illusion replenished Fu Qingjin's power endlessly while completely severing Li Qingshan's connection to the spiritual qi of the world. His daemon qi would diminish with every bit he used.

Fu Qingjin had been undefeatable right from the beginning, which was why he had conversed with Li Qingshan at such great ease, like a hunter staring at his prey in his trap. Meanwhile, Li Qingshan was mid-air, so he could not even use his innate ability of the Strength of the Earth. He truly felt trapped.

In the face of imminent danger, Li Qingshan's eyes suddenly became clear. He lowered the blade that he relied on to hold his ground against the Green Ruins sword, as if he had given up on the battle against Fu Qingjin. He threw a straightforward punch without any fancy tricks. It seemed to pause and swell larger with every inch it travelled. It seemed sluggish.

Fu Qingjin laughed inside, Is this his final, crazy attempt to put up a desperate fight by throwing his own flesh at the Green Ruins swords?

The moment the fist and the swords collided, something unexpected happened. The Green Ruins swords shattered one by one. The tips of the swords had not even come into contact with Li Qingshan's fist when they were destroyed by an invisible power. The moment they shattered, even the green light within them was put out speck by speck.

Cracks rapidly expanded. Wherever they passed by, the ruins collapsed, shattering into green light. The rumbling reached fifty kilometers away, even louder than the Tiger Demon's Fierce Roar. He seemed to strike a huge, invisible bell.

The corner of Li Qingshan's lips curled up. He had been holding back the power of his tremors that possessed the greatest destructive power exactly for this opportunity. With his mental state of intricacy, he layered the power of tremors such that he could even take down an entire mountain.

Li Qingshan collapsed the sword dragon in a single breath, destroying the myriad swords in a single instant and forcing out the real Green Ruins sword. Li Qingshan sneered viciously and converted all of his daemon qi into the power of tremors, pouring all of it into the Green Ruins sword.

The Green Ruins sword screeched and flew back into Fu Qingjin's hand. His shabby, faded robes had been reduced to tatters, and he was no longer graceful at all. His face had become sheet-white too, having been heavily injured. In the Green Ruins Illusion, he had originally turned his body into specks of light to avoid damage, but that instead allowed Li Qingshan to unleash the full potential of his destructive powers.

The Green Ruins sword had been damaged too, which directly affected his mind. It made him extremely surprised and furious. He stared at Li Qingshan. "What power is that?"

"Go ask the king of hell!" Li Qingshan lunged over and expanded to over a hundred feet tall, reverting to his original form. His head was as tough as metal as he brandished his sharp fangs and claws, just like a black, demonic tiger roaring out wildly. His tiger tail lifted up the blood-red blade and turned into a blurry, red streak, swinging towards Fu Qingjin's waist. At the same time, his tiger claws lashed out, ready to unleash his power of vibrations at any time. He was covered in weapons that could kill.

"Wretched daemon!" Fu Qingjin barked, and the surrounding ruins twisted into green light. The entire Green Ruins Illusion turned into a sea of sword qi, gushing over and surrounding Li Qingshan.

Chapter 439 - A Letter of Challenge

The battle on the ground had ended a long time ago. The Foundation Establishment cultivators who had come to provide assistance were annihilated, while the other Foundation Establishment cultivators of the Daemon Suppression alliance who had arrived later refused to get any closer after witnessing what had happened. They flew in the sky, watching on from afar.

At this moment, the east began to glow dimly. The night roamers were afraid to scatter from one another now. They just remained below Bronze Cauldron mountain and raised their heads to watch the battle in the Green Ruins illusion.

The world seemed to have become a stage, where other people were all hidden spectators below the stage. Li Qingshan and Fu Qingjin stood in the centre of the stage, drawing everyone's attention. The outcome of their battle was about to determine the situation of the Clear River prefecture, as well as the lives of countless people.

There were also a few spectators who resided in the dark private boxes, quietly hiding themselves and watching on with various different thoughts in mind.

They saw the Green Ruins Illusion turn into a sea of sword qi, invading all openings at all costs and surrounding Li Qingshan completely.

Ye Liubo became extremely nervous. She muttered to herself, "Master is undefeatable." Ye Liusu patted her shoulder. "You're completely right. Believe in him!"

Li Qingshan swung the blade with his tail, producing countless blood-red flashes that clashed and wore away the sword qi. He swung his fists and hooves madly like a demon, throwing them at the empty space and producing a series of cracks. The power of tremors spread out in all directions, destroying the

many layers of sword qi. With a fierce roar, a sound wave spread through the sea of sword qi, clearing the sky and making the dark blue of dawn visible.

However, before he could even appreciate it, he suddenly shuddered. A chilling killing intent attacked him from behind.

Fu Qingjin leapt out from the sea of sword qi and produced green ripples with each step. The Green Ruins sword was like a green bolt of lightning that shot across the night sky, and the sea of sword qi began to move with that, gathering on the sword and allowing the sword to tear through the sky.

Pieces of the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell gathered into a reflective wall, clearly reflecting Fu Qingjin's figure. Fu Qingjin was not as tough or dense as Strongboulder. He immediately sensed that the figure in the mirror possessed a similar aura to him.

Fu Qingjin's eyes coldened. No matter what ability you use, how can you block the Green Ruins sword's edge? "Shatter!"

The tips of the swords connected and ripples appeared on the surface of the mirror. The reflected Fu Qingjin twisted and vanished. Cracks spread across the mirror before shattering loudly.

However, Fu Qingjin was not delighted at all. Instead, his heart sank.

Li Qingshan grinned widely, revealing his mouth full of sharp teeth. A blade aura thirty meters long emerged from the blood-red blade, swinging towards Fu Qingjin. "Die!"

Even with Li Qingshan's intricate control, he still struggled to block the full-powered attack from such a powerful arcane treasure like the Green Ruins sword. However, that was enough. Fu Qingjin's killing strike had been weakened. Both the power and the sword intent was no longer as sharp as before. A clash between the powerful only depended on a single moment.

Clang! With a screech of metal, a sword fell out of the sky.

Li Qingshan failed to hit Fu Qingjin. Instead, he hit the Green Ruins sword. In the final moment, Fu Qingjin had fused with the sword and hid in there, escaping with his life intact. However, he did suffer rather severe injuries.

Li Qingshan held back his temptation to call him shameless. He roared, "Stop him!" Little did he know that in Fu Qingjin's eyes, his innate abilities were just as shameless.

The night roamers responded swiftly. Even without his order, they had already risen up, but the Green Ruins sword was even faster. It turned and twisted through the air, weaving between the night roamers like a bolt of lightning and flying off in the south-east direction.

With just a slight difference in strength, it was very difficult to prevent the strong from fleeing through numbers alone unless it was an assassination or ambush.

Li Qingshan cursed. "Bloodshadow, have you fucking watched enough?!"

There was a cold snort, and Bloodshadow shot out. With his speed, he had arrived a long time ago, but he would much rather watch Li Qingshan be finished off by Fu Qingjin and then take advantage of the

weakened Fu Qingjin. Why would he ever work with Li Qingshan? The opportunity had appeared now, and he refused to let Fu Qingjin escape for nothing too.

With a flash, Bloodshadow stopped the Green Ruins sword. The cloak around him expanded and turned into a blood-red barrier, wrapping around the Green Ruins sword. The Green Ruins sword could pierce everything, but when it came to the red light, it began to falter. It weaved left and right, searching for an opening.

Fu Qingjin had clashed several times with Bloodshadow. He understood exactly how much the barrier of blood could corrupt weapons. If regular spiritual artifacts came into touch with it, they would lose all of their abilities, being reduced to a piece of regular metal. It was more terrifying than any form of damage.

Normally, Fu Qingjin would not have cared. The sword was protected by sword qi and its glow, so at worst, all he had to do was go back and refine it for another few days. However, the Green Ruins sword had been damaged again and again today. Its sword qi and glow had already become extremely dim. If it became covered by this corrupting blood, it really would become powerless.

“Fu Qingjin, to think even you would have such a day!” Bloodshadow sneered sinisterly and drew in the barrier of blood. Fu Qingjin had already become a sitting duck. He was unable to hide, and he was faced with dire circumstances. However, he recovered his composure and flew towards Bloodshadow.

Why would Bloodshadow be afraid of an injured Fu Qingjin? He went up to receive him with a sneer. This was the perfect opportunity for him to kill him and get his revenge.

Li Qingshan reverted to his humanoid form, flapping his wings of wind and lunging over. He definitely would not let Fu Qingjin’s hundred treasures pouch just go to Bloodshadow. At this moment, an omen of warning rose up inside him. He came to a screeching halt and retreated.

Bloodshadow had no idea why he did that. In a single instant, he had already approached Fu Qingjin. Fu Qingjin held a scarlet talisman in his hand. The inscriptions on the talisman suddenly lit up.

Light flooded the surroundings as a scorching, white bolt of lightning thicker than a tree appeared. It twisted around for a few hundred meters and was just like a dragon. In a single moment, Bloodshadow’s sneer turned into fear. By then time he returned to his senses, the lightning dragon had already penetrated his chest.

Fu Qingjin brushed past Bloodshadow. He did not even bother to use an ounce of strength to finish him off.

A very long time seemed to pass before the rumbling arrived. The clap of thunder from nowhere shook up the very earth.

Li Qingshan was taken aback. Not only was it a scarlet talisman, but it was probably of the mid or even high grade. If Fu Qingjin had used that right from the beginning, the outcome of the battle would have been difficult to predict. His joy over the victory vanished, turning into caution. He had still underestimated the Sword Collection palace.

Fu Qingjin broke out, but he did not flee. He hovered in the air, but his face was filled with sighs, and he even seemed slightly annoyed. After witnessing the power of the Lightning Dragon talisman, no one dared to approach him carelessly anymore.

A while later, Fu Qingjin did something no one had expected. He bowed deeply towards Li Qingshan in the distance. "Northmoon, I must apologise to you for how I've underestimated you in the past."

Li Qingshan was taken aback slightly. "Is this begging for mercy?"

Fu Qingjin said, "No, it's a letter of challenge."

"Then unleash your talismans and face me in a grand battle again!" Li Qingshan said boldly and fearlessly as his blood boiled.

Fu Qingjin said, "As a sword practitioner, I don't rely on other objects unless I face imminent death. This is an unwritten rule of the Sword Collection palace."

Li Qingshan crossed his arms and mocked, "Isn't a rule like that useless to you? Stop posing around. Use whatever you have! If you don't have enough, the Sword Collection palace is welcome to deliver some to you."

"I, Fu Qingjin, swear that I will not rely on any other object or any other person. I will use this sword to defeat you." Fu Qingjin raised his sword high into the air as his clothes ruffled. In that instant, all of his dejection, indifference, and laid backness vanished. He had recovered the bearing of a swordsman.

Chapter 440 - A Righteous Strike

Li Qingshan's valiance had been roused. His smile vanished as he said loudly, "Under my orders, no one is allowed to interfere in any of my battles with this person! Fu Qingjin, if I can defeat you once, then I can defeat you twice, three times, until you've been slain." He spread his fingers before closing them into a fist. "I will personally shatter your pride."

Fu Qingjin's eyes flashed. He gazed at Li Qingshan deeply. "You really aren't like a daemon. A pity!" With that, he merged with his sword and shot off.

Li Qingshan watched the green light take off. He did not waste any energy to chase after it either. A golden ray of light lit up in the east, dyeing all the clouds and stretching thousands of kilometers away.

The bright moon remained in the west, hanging high above Li Qingshan. The cultivators in the distance all saw this and murmured, "The moon demon."

Following the terrors of the blood demon and the rock demon, he who had fallen silent for three years made a name for himself through a single battle. With strength even greater than the two former daemons, he earned the name of the moon demon, casting a shadow over the hearts of all cultivators.

The night roamers succumbed to his figure in the sky, lowering their heads. The matriarchs all handed over the hundred treasures pouches obediently.

Ye Liusu went up. "Master, we should..."

Li Qingshan scanned past them and flew down. He landed on the bronze cauldron that tried to slip away before raising his hand. "Mingzhu, the map."

As the red sun rose up in the east, the bright moon gradually faded away. However, so what if it was day? Now, the greatest threat, Fu Qingjin, had been heavily injured, no longer capable of battle. This was a fantastic opportunity to attack the Daemon Suppression alliance.

"Northmoon, you screwed me over!" A spiteful voice rang out from the forest. Bloodshadow's pale-white face was twisted; no, his entire body was twisted, filling in the hole in his chest. Having been directly struck by the destructive lightning dragon, a part of his body had directly vaporised, leaving behind an injury that could not be healed. His three years of sucking blood and cultivation had basically vanished in a single moment.

Li Qingshan mocked him. "So you're still alive. Why don't you check yourself before you think about taking advantage of me? You better piss off, or I'll send you off!"

"Y- you..." Bloodshadow pointed at Li Qingshan as his face became even paler from anger. Not only had he failed to benefit, but he even ended up being heavily injured from taking part this time. He had truly been humiliated.

The wings of wind rose up with a whoosh, and Li Qingshan arrived before Bloodshadow in a single step, cutting him in half with one stroke. With a sweep of his foot, the power of tremors emerged, and the top half of Bloodshadow's body was sent flying, reduced to a mess. "Off you go!"

Li Qingshan returned with his blade on his shoulder. Just when he was about to speak, another omen of warning rose up inside him.

The east suddenly lit up as an aura of righteousness rushed into the clouds. Gazing over, it actually originated from a tiny, skinny old man, covered in wrinkles. His stiff expression radiated with righteousness, shooting over from the east with a sword like the unstoppable rise of the sun.

He was the head scholar of Pine Sough academy, Wen Zhengming. He had been paying attention to the situation of the Clear River prefecture the entire time, especially to Jiang Shancheng's murderer. He had received the news and rushed over the moment Li Qingshan appeared, but due to the rules, he was unable to show himself. Afterwards, he saw how arrogant the wretched daemon behaved and could not help himself any longer.

Wen Zhengming opened his mouth and blasted Li Qingshan's ears like a clap of thunder. "Die, wretched daemon!"

The sharpness from the sword pricked his eyes. Li Qingshan thought of the Soaring Dragon Elder again, and his heart sank. A Golden Core cultivator. He bellowed out, "Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell!"

Hexagonal pieces of faint blue light stacked before Li Qingshan. He was afraid to use the mirror reflection again, and it was not only because of the severe mental exhaustion he had gone through. It was also because with his current power, he probably could not even reflect a hundredth of the attacker's strength. All he could do was use the simplest and most direct method to defend.

If Wen Zhengming changed his move, then Li Qingshan would be able to escape from the sword intent.

However, Wen Zhengming would never pull back his sword once he had swung it. He was straightforward, just like his own character. The Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell shattered layer after layer. This was something that even Fu Qingjin could not achieve.

Li Qingshan's eyes were clear as he forced his mind to settle down. He spread his arms, and his scarlet hair danced. The spirit turtle's daemon core revolved rapidly as he poured all of his daemon qi into the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell. I'm no longer the same Li Qingshan of the past. Even if a Golden Core cultivator wants to kill me, it won't be that easy!

The night roamers all paled in fright, staggering back in retreat. They were unable to face the terrors of Golden Core cultivators. They were afraid to attract his attention. Only Ye Liusu remained where she was.

The bright yellow satin expanded to several meters across and flew towards Wen Zhengming. The moment it came in contact with the righteous aura, it ripped to pieces.

Ye Liubo cried out, turning into a shadow and flying towards Wen Zhengming. She stabbed down viciously with her dagger, and with a bang, she was sent flying, knocking down countless trees.

"Liubo!" Ye Liusu cried out.

Wen Zhengming's righteous aura had been shaken up slightly, and it had shattered three layers of the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell beforehand. It was a spent force.

Li Qingshan's anger was stirred. He withdrew the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell and spat out an oval bead. This was the phoenix's embryo he had condensed in the magma underground.

Boom! It was like another sun had risen up from the ground, yet also like the surging eruption of a volcano.

"The World Flattened with Humanity and the Sword!" Even Wen Zhengming's serious expression changed slightly. He bellowed out slightly, and his sword rose with the wind. His righteous aura surged, and he swung down, splitting through the flames right down towards Li Qingshan's head.

Li Qingshan swung the blood-red blade with a violent roar. He did not retreat, advancing instead to fight with his life on the line. However, the sword swing ended up being deflected, brushing past him and landing on Bronze Cauldron mountain, cutting through the layers of rock and soil. Bronze Cauldron mountain was split in half as the two sides collapsed loudly.

Wen Zhengming lowered his head, and all he spotted was an invisible strand of spider silk wrapped around his sword. He gazed behind Li Qingshan and snorted coldly. "Spider daemon!"

Li Qingshan looked back. Before he knew it, Spider Queen Lolth was already standing behind him. She smiled. "You really haven't disappointed me."

"Save me, senior Wen!" The bronze cauldron flew out from the rock and soil behind Wen Zhengming. A call for help rang out.

The Spider Queen did not even glance at it. With a flick of her finger, the bronze cauldron suddenly fell down out of the sky, falling silent.

This time, Li Qingshan had to hold his breath and stare hard to tell what had happened. The bronze cauldron that had remained undamaged after countless attacks from him had been pierced by a crystalline thread even thinner than a hair. When it returned to the Spider Queen's hand, it had already become a bright-red thread. A Foundation Establishment cultivator had been easily slain by the Spider Queen like she was swatting a fly.

Wen Zhangming was quite far away, so he was unable to react to it. He was filled with anger. "Wretched daemon!"

"Come!" The Spider Queen spread her slender arms. Her scarlet red evening dress exposed her cleavage. She seemed extremely alluring. She seemed like she wanted to hug Wen Zhengming's sword. The smile on her face was gorgeous and venomous, truly quite a sight.

Li Qingshan came to a realisation. Once this battle began, the Clear River prefecture would no longer be a chessboard. With a flash, Ye Liusu had already used the explosion earlier to retreat into the distance with Ye Liubo. Only then did she ease up slightly. Ye Liubo was unconscious, but at least she was still alive.

Wen Zhengming's robes surged as his righteous aura gushed out. They were on the verge of a great battle.

The Spider Queen's smile suddenly stiffened. A voice that Li Qingshan found extremely familiar rang out in the sky. "A'Luo, long time no see again."

In the blink of an eye, a figure landed between the Spider Queen and Wen Zhengming. Her white clothes were even paler than snow, and she seemed to hover there like an immortal. She held a jade fan in her hand; her smile was as graceful as the wind. It was Gu Yanying. The spectators behind the scenes finally could not help themselves but to leap on stage one by one.

Gu Yanying purposefully glanced past Li Qingshan mysteriously. She had wanted to teach this disobedient kid a lesson three years ago, but she became distracted by something else. By the time she remembered it again, he had already begun his secluded cultivation, and that lasted three years. He made a mess the moment he emerged, as if he was trying to make back all the time he had lost.

Gu Yanying moved away from the two powerful human and daemon cultivators. She said to Li Qingshan with a delightful smile, "You actually made head scholar Wen use the Triple Wealth style. That's impressive of you."

"You flatter me." Li Qingshan's thoughts were intricate now, which made him even more confident that Gu Yanying should have noticed his secret. Did she find out now? Or three years ago, when he joined the Academy of the Hundred Schools? Or perhaps she knew right from the beginning.

She had countless opportunities to deal with him, so why didn't she? Was it because they were both human-demon hybrids? Or perhaps she was afraid that brother ox who had slain the Soaring Dragon Elder had been watching over him carefully?

"Gu Yanying, get out of the way!" The Spider Queen gritted her teeth.

“Commander Gu, these daemons have been so arrogant. I uphold the righteous path, so I can’t just turn a blind eye to it. If you’re willing to assist me in purging daemons, then please do so. If you aren’t, then please move aside and don’t get in my way.”

Both of their auras gathered on Gu Yanying, trying to force her to leave.

Gu Yanying gently tapped her forehead with her fan in frustration. She sighed. “It really is difficult for me to satisfy the two of you.” Her eyes swiveled, and the corner of her lips curled up. “Looks like all I can do is listen to my heart.”

Li Qingshan had a feeling she was talking to him, and that she was slightly melancholic. Regardless of which side they chose, whether it be the humans or the daemons, they would never be able to obtain true peace. All they could do was walk their own path, but it would be a path of solitude that no one understood. Both sides would treat them as despicable traitors.

Li Qingshan thought of something. Looking at her graceful demeanor, independent and aloof from the world, her beauty unmatched in the world, his heart fluttered slightly. He could not help but ask himself if his feelings of the past had changed at all.

“I have said that I’d continue taking responsibility over this war as long as no one interferes with it. However, I don’t think the two of you can be convinced with mere words.” Gu Yanying’s smile vanished. With a swish, she unfurled her fan. “If any of you are dissatisfied with me presiding over this matter, then come attack me!”

The Spider Queen snorted gently and curled her finger back, ready to flick it at any time.

Li Qingshan took a step forward and said softly, “Ma’am Spider Queen, we’ve already gained an upper hand in the war.”

The Spider Queen looked back. “You mean?”

“We shouldn’t get too greedy.” Li Qingshan shrugged. If they flipped the chessboard now, he would immediately be faced with an endless pursuit from Wen Zhengming. Instead of that, he would be better off benefitting sufficiently from this chessboard. There would be a day when he could leap out of the chessboard and cut down all of these people who dared to toy with him.

The Spider Queen considered it for a while. She also found it to be quite a waste to destroy the fantastic situation Li Qingshan had created. The great war would happen sooner or later, so there was no need for her to be so eager. She withdrew her daemon qi, turned around, and left.

Gu Yanying said, “Thank you.” but she looked towards Li Qingshan. She turned around and said to Wen Zhengming, “Head scholar Wen, surely we don’t have to fight against each other as humans! You’ve already heard what Fu Qingjin said. Are you really that unconfident in the Sword Collection palace?”