

GREAT SAGE 471

### Chapter 471 - Bloodlight Escape

Li Qingshan could not help but think of something very absurd. An enemy is teaching me the sword?

However, he would never let any opportunities of strengthening himself slip by. He completely memorised the sword style that Fu Qingjin displayed earlier. Before great grievances, small favours were not enough to make him waver.

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Spring went and summer came. The weather was hot and humid. The thick, dark clouds piled on the sky, awaiting a storm.

The crows cawed noisily as they circled around in the air, refusing to land. They were like specks of black sesame scattered across the sky.

If someone managed to take note of the trajectories of all these crows, they might have been able to detect some kind of pattern after an hour of observation.

A streak of blood-red light stuck close to the ground. The gales of wind it kicked up rushed past a few crows and ripped them to pieces. Black feathers scattered in the sky.

However, these pitch-black feathers vanished before they even reached the ground.

"He's here," Li Qingshan whispered into a jade tablet for communication. He stood on a tall mountain in an extremely distant place, gazing at the black shadow that protruded from the horizon.

A city stood there, but now, it was a trap.

He did not make his way over. With his cultivation at early Foundation Establishment, he had no right to participate in the ambush this time. Of course, this was also a form of protection.

The sky was so dark that it seemed like dusk. Bloodshadow had already arrived at the city gates. Suddenly, he sensed a hint of uneasiness, as if something was brewing, just like the clouds in the sky.

But at the same time, the fragrant smell of fresh, enticing blood attracted his attention.

There was a rumble of thunder, which made his heart lurch. It made him think of the divine lightning the slovenly daoist priest had summoned. Then he sneered at himself. If it were just that ox-nosed daoist, he could escape safely if he ran into him another ten or a hundred times.

Even regular wild beasts could sense the arrival of death. At his cultivation, his senses had become even sharper. He did not sense any life-threatening danger, so he strode into the city without worrying.

A crow perching on the city gates let out a strange caw before taking off.

"Your predictions sure are divine. Looks like there's no need for you to do anything this time." Li Qingshan smiled brilliantly and looked back.

Xiao An sat on a grey rock under a large pine tree, staring at an insect on the branches in a daze as her seaweed-like hair flowed freely. She was as serene as an orchid. Hearing Li Qingshan's words, she shook her head gently.

"He won't die here."

"What? Didn't you predict that Bloodshadow would come here?" Li Qingshan was very surprised. They had already rigged the entire city with traps. Even if the moon demon barged in there for some reason, he would be done for.

"I only said he would come. I never said he would die." Xiao An smiled beautifully. Only then did she seem like a young girl. "It's the exact opposite. I made sure he would never die here."

Some of the childishness vanished from her voice, replaced by a sense of clarity. It was extremely pleasant, like it possessed a wondrous power that could comfort the souls of people.

"Is it really that accurate?" Li Qingshan blinked his eyes. He felt very amazed even though he had no idea how all of this worked.

"It really is that accurate." Xiao An copied Li Qingshan and blinked her eyes too. "But it won't be this accurate everytime, because he's entangled in many ties of karma, and he has very deep karma with me."

"What karma?"

Rumble! Several bolts of lightning rained down from the sky together, like a huge dragon diving down.

"It has begun!" Li Qingshan turned around quickly and gazed at the lonely city on the horizon.

"You again!"

Bloodshadow was reduced to a miserable state by the consecutive bolts of lightning as he stared at Zhou Tong before him in surprise and fury. Why did this damned ox-nose always know where he would appear?

"It's not just me this time! Wretched daemon, prepare to die!" Zhou Tong sneered as if the outcome was already set in stone. He relished with delight.

That kid Xiao An's divination sure is accurate!

Bloodshadow behaved as cautiously as he normally did. Without saying anything more, he flapped his cloak and took off into the air. He moved faster than the lightning, running head-first into a barrier of light.

In each direction outside of the city, eight Foundation Establishment cultivators planted down eight formation banners, immediately trapping Bloodshadow in the formation as they rushed into the city together.

How could they be so certain that I'd appear? Oh no, I'm in danger this time! Bloodshadow became pale-white.

Not only had Xiao An predicted a location, but she had even predicted an extremely precise time as well, which was why they were able to gather the strongest group of cultivators the Clear River prefecture had to offer. They had to make sure Bloodshadow would die.

It was not just Zhou Tong. The other cultivators all relished with delight too. Practitioners of divination were definitely precious in this day and age, and with her accuracy, it basically made her something akin to a rare treasure. All of them praised her inside.

The time is actually completely right, down to the very second.

She truly is a genius. With her divination, defeat will be certain for the daemons!

Even the Cloud Elder who had been displeased with Xiao An's avoidance of the war thought, We have to protect this child. We can't let the daemons get close to her.

With their various thoughts, the nine powerful cultivators did not utter a single word, cutting right to the chase. They unleashed their strongest moves at the same time to kill Bloodshadow.

The rain fell like buckets, while the sky was as dark as night. Six streaks of light tore through the air. They were actually six arcane artifacts.

Various trapping and restricting techniques were unleashed at the same time. Strands of golden light turned into chains, jangling about and sealing up the space everywhere. Thick trees rose up from the ground, extending their branches and blotting out the sky.

All of this had been planned beforehand. Their teamwork was perfect. However, with Bloodshadow's speed, he was fast enough to escape before these techniques managed to wrap around him.

A handsome, pale cultivator in white robes among the nine cultivators opened his mouth and spat out a single word towards Bloodshadow, "Freeze!"

He was not loud, but it reached everyone's ears clearly. Even from fifty kilometers away, Li Qingshan could vaguely make out his words.

"This is the school of Names' Freezing curse. Bloodshadow really won't be able to escape this time." Li Qingshan smiled.

The hundred schools all had their own wondrous arts. The school of Names focused on concepts and words, using language to express a hint of the truths of the world. They inherited the curses and jinxes of ancient cultivators and were known to imbue powers with every word they spoke. They could injure without the opponent even knowing.

Among the thousands of curses, the most famous one was probably the Freezing curse. It was more convenient than any technique for trapping the opponent.

In that instant, Bloodshadow became immobilised. All he could do was watch helplessly as the chains condensed from Geng Metal spiritual qi wrapped around him firmly, and the trees formed a huge cage. Seven or eight spiritual artifacts and arcane artifacts hurtled over together, grinding him into mince meat.

"The blood demon is still not dead! Don't stop!" Liu Zhangqing called out.

Metal, wood, water, fire, and earth—various powerful techniques of all five elements landed on Bloodshadow.

In particular, the slovenly daoist priest Zhou Tong raised the Lightning Slaughter wooden sword towards the sky. Thunder boomed without end as a thick, flashing bolt of lightning pierced the sky, lingering for a very long time.

The leader of the school of Names' Freezing curse was unleashed again and again, disrupting each of Bloodshadow's attempts at escaping.

The crows that Li Qingshan had conjured from his power of belief scattered into the distance and watched from above, allowing him to take in this sight from various different angles. He was secretly shocked.

An encirclement like this is just too terrifying. Let alone escaping, you won't even have the opportunity to fight back. As soon as you tear through a technique, seven or eight more would have struck you already. If it were me, I'd probably barely manage to put up the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell, and all I'd be able to do is just watch as my daemon qi was expended. No matter how much daemon qi I have, no matter how quickly it recovers, I still won't be able to withstand something like that.

Though, setting up a trap like this is anything but easy. Both daemons and cultivators are extremely sensitive to life-threatening dangers. If it were not for the fact that they had grasped his movements, Bloodshadow should have been able to come and go as he pleases even if he faces the nine of them, moving about freely. The divination is still the part that is more terrifying. No, I have the spirit turtle's daemon core, so I should have quite the talent in this aspect. I need to learn from Xiao An in the future.

Li Qingshan turned around and asked, "Oh right, what did you mean by karma earlier? Bloodshadow is clearly done for now, so why did you say he wouldn't die here?"

"It's waiting for me." Xiao An leapt off the rock and flew off into the distance.

"Where are you going?"

"Off to kill Bloodshadow." Xiao An smiled.

"But Bloodshadow is not in that direction."

Just when Li Qingshan was about to chase after her, he thought about it and stopped himself. Since Xiao An made him wait here, she definitely had her reason.

He was not worried about Xiao An's safety. After reaching the first layer of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty, probably only the Spider Queen could pose life-threatening danger to her, as well as that "guy" hidden deep below the magma. There was no need for him to worry too much.

However, as he watched her figure disappear into the horizon, he experienced a strange sense of melancholy, like "My child has grown up and is independent now". He really could not go without his strength increasing anymore. At least, he could not pale in comparison to Xiao An.

He also had to surpass the pressure that Fu Qingjin and Dragonsnail could cause him.

“Blood demon, today is the day you die.” Seeing how the blood demon was close to death, Zhou Tong let out a great laughter.

The leader of the school of Names had already uttered “Freeze” eleven times, having reached his limit. He also eased up at this moment.

Bloodshadow, who had been reduced to a blood-red piece of meat, suddenly began to separate and twist. A sinister face appeared there.

Innate ability, Bloodlight Escape!

With a bang, the chunk of flesh exploded. Violent energy pushed away all the arcane artifacts and techniques. Only a blood-red daemon core revolved about as it took off as a red flash with a swish.

“Stop him!” Liu Zhangqing said in a hurry.

Even if he had not said that, Zhou Tong still would have extended his finger over. A serpentine bolt of lightning shot over.

However, when the blood-red light ran into the formation, it actually passed through directly and sailed across the sky. The lightning slammed against the barrier heavily.

Everyone in the city was left dumbfounded. How had Bloodshadow managed to escape given the current circumstances?

“The blood demon is just a daemon core now. He might be dead already,” Liu Zhangqing said bitterly.

Everyone wanted to believe that, but none of them could believe that! In that instant, the blood demon had clearly abandoned his body and taken off.

Was Bloodshadow dead?

Of course not!

Only after flying five hundred kilometers away did Bloodshadow stop and land. His flesh and blood immediately began to grow, turning into a blood-red bat in the blink of an eye, flapping its wings. A little later, he regained a human form. He seemed perfectly fine, apart from the fact that his face was pale-white, without a shred of blood.

#### **Chapter 472 - Incinerating Bloodshadow with Samādhī, the Bamboo-Jade Lot of the Cloud Bookcase**

“He actually managed to escape.”

Li Qingshan murmured, and the direction that the blood-red light fled in just happened to be the direction Xiao An had travelled off to. As he thought about the twisted expressions of Zhou Tong and the others right now, he could not help but smile.

“Don’t worry, my Xiao An will help you deal with this great enemy. I can’t accept those True Spirit pills for nothing.”

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Having undergone a heavenly tribulation and become a Daemon General, Bloodshadow obviously possessed two innate abilities. The first one was a sound wave with an extremely large range of attack.

The second innate ability was the Bloodlight Escape. He could cross five hundred kilometers in a single instant, which was a hundred times more powerful than Li Qingshan's Escape talisman. Even Golden Core cultivators would struggle to hunt him down.

However, whenever he used it, he would have to abandon all of his flesh and blood, which took a great toll on him. As a result, he would never use it unless he faced life-threatening danger.

As for his ability to control blood and the powerful vitality that allowed him to stay alive even when he was reduced to mince meat, they were the same as Strongboulder's abilities as a Rock of Slaughter. It was a talent they were born with, not an innate ability.

This was also the reason why daemons with special bloodlines were stronger than regular daemons.

The torrential rain doused Bloodshadow. His face was pale-white, as if he did not even have the power to block the rain with his daemon qi. He leaned against a tree in exhaustion. His face was filled with resentment as he ground his teeth, thinking about revenge.

Suddenly, his face lit up. He sensed a vigorous cluster of vitality. This was the exact supplement he needed right now.

Bloodshadow made his way over to the other side of the tree. A young girl just happened to be sitting there, staring at a sparrow on the tree branch with her head raised. She seemed to be sheltering from the rain. Hearing the noise, she lowered her head and took a look. Her clear eyes reflected Bloodshadow's figure perfectly. She was completely calm.

"A Foundation Establishment cultivator!"

Bloodshadow shivered inside, having sensed the spiritual qi within the girl. He had already become extremely shaken up. Afraid it was another trap, he wanted to retreat.

The girl did not move at all. The flowing blood under her jade-like skin gave off an intoxicating fragrance. Bloodshadow had never smelled something so tempting before.

The thunder continued to boom. The tree basically held up the surrounding region as the thunderstorm outside formed curtains of rain.

"How dare you come so close to me. This is just your bad luck. I'll drain your blood first so that I can recover some daemon qi."

Bloodshadow gradually settled down and sneered. With his speed, a distance of a few meters was basically no distance at all. He opened his pale hand and extended it towards the girl's heart.

All of the blood in the girl surged and rampaged. With a bang, it erupted from her body.

Bloodshadow gulped down the blood. He immediately felt refreshed. The taste was just far too delicious.

However, to his surprise, the girl did not resist or put up a struggle. She did not even show any pain or fear. She just continued to stare at him calmly, which made him, the blood demon who had killed countless beings, feel strangely uneasy.

He felt like a frog that had caught a snake's attention. Under the threat of his natural predator, his body stiffened, unable to move.

"What are you looking at!?" Bloodshadow was agitated. He struck with lightning speed, sending his fingers into her clear eyes.

When his fingers were just an inch away from her eyes, Bloodshadow suddenly froze.

W- What's going on? Why can't I move anymore?

The frog had yet to notice, but the lethal venom had been injected a long time ago.

Every inch of Bloodshadow's body that had merged with the blood suddenly burst into flames. It began to burn vigorously.

With a boom, the Samādhi Flames of White Bone oozed out from every single pore on Bloodshadow, setting him alight and turning him into a torch.

The fire swayed and happily set Bloodshadow's blood, flesh, and bones alight while freezing his soul. All he could do was watch as he burned.

The great vitality he depended on to make a name for himself, the great vitality he took pride in, had now become the perfect fuel for the flames.

In that instant, deep fear filled Bloodshadow's eyes. "You're not human..."

The fear vanished as his eyes were burned away. His voice halted as his tongue turned into fire.

With a swish, the blood-red daemon core shot off into the distance.

"You're the one who's inhuman."

TL: An insult in Chinese is to label someone as not a human. It's basically calling them inhuman, used for cases of inhumane cruelty or savageness. Xiao An is basically retorting Bloodshadow's (true) statement that she's not human.

Xiao An's clear eyes turned, and she grabbed the daemon core. The daemon core trembled and struggled violently in her hands.

Her right hand gripped it firmly, immobilising the blood-red daemon core. Suddenly, it began to shine with dazzling, red light. It had already given up on escaping. Bloodshadow wanted to blow up his daemon core and drag her down with him.

She brought her left hand over the daemon core, forcefully drawing out a half-transparent, mist-like soul. It vaguely resembled Bloodshadow.

The red light dispersed, and the daemon core rested silently in her hand.

Three words naturally appeared in her mind—Blood Sea Banner.

A while later, a bolt of lightning shot over from afar. Zhou Tong did not place his hopes on catching up to Bloodshadow. The reason why he pursued was just to do everything he was capable of.

“Hmm?”

Zhou Tong sensed Xiao An’s aura from extremely far away. He descended from above on the Lightning Slaughter.

“Have you seen Bloodshadow?”

“He’s already dead.” Xiao An told the truth.

“You killed him?” Zhou Tong was overcome with both joy and surprise.

“Yep.”

“Did you predict he would escape here?” Zhou Tong was at a slight loss as for how to react. If that were the case, didn’t it mean Xiao An had predicted they would fail to make Bloodshadow remain behind?

“Yep.”

“Then why did you-” Zhou Tong forcefully stopped talking half-way. There had been a whole group of them who surrounded Bloodshadow, yet he still managed to escape. How could he still bring himself to question this girl?

“Senior Zhou, the heavenly secrets must not be divulged!” Li Qingshan made his way over from afar with a wide grin. He rubbed Xiao An’s head heavily. “Well done!”

At this moment, several other streaks of light shot over. Liu Zhangqing’s group had arrived too. After learning the end result, they could not help but look at one another. Apart from joy, there was astonishment on their faces too.

She had reached Foundation Establishment at a tender age of thirteen or fourteen, deploying the troops and hiding her killing intent. She killed the blood demon the moment she struck.

These mid and late Foundation Establishment cultivators seemed to have become her subordinates, yet they were unable to speak a single word of complaint. Instead, they had to thank her. Were there any schools or sects that did not have disciples that died to the blood demon?

She could no longer be described with just “genius”. As they looked at Xiao An who snuggled by Li Qingshan’s side with a rare smile, all of them felt speechless. At the same time, they gained a deeper understanding for the mental depth and terror of practitioners of divination.

What was terrifying was not the practitioner themselves, but the fate they could control.

However, no one doubted whether Xiao An had the ability to kill Bloodshadow or not. When Bloodshadow fled, all of them could tell he was heavily injured. All of them dismissed their doubts when taking the terrifying talent Xiao An had demonstrated into account.

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The Parlour of Clouds and Rain was adorned with decorations, filled with a long-lost, boisterous atmosphere. They celebrated the death of the blood demon, as well as the efforts that Zhou Tong and everyone else had put in.

However, the main focus of the banquet was obviously Xiao An.

Qiu Haitang activated the mechanism and opened the walls in the centre of the parlour so that the Qi Practitioners could witness the “heroes”. It added some liveliness to the atmosphere.

Just as Qiu Haitang had expected, both upstairs and downstairs immediately fell silent the moment Xiao An appeared before everyone. Both men and women were amazed, with many male cultivators falling in love at first sight.

Qiu Haitang shook her head gently. “This is the power of the Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty.”

When everyone’s gazes were drawn away by Xiao An, Li Qingshan instead sensed a gaze of disdain cast his way. Turning around, he discovered it to be Ru Xin, who stood nearby.

Because Ru Xin was a doctor, her primary mission was not to purge daemons, but to heal injured cultivators and refine medicine. As a result, she never got the opportunity to see Li Qingshan as of late.

“I never thought you would be someone like that!” Ru Xin communicated. Her gaze moved around between Li Qingshan and Xiao An, filled with shame, as if she was embarrassed to have a friend like this.

“You can piss off!” Li Qingshan smiled and replied viciously.

Ru Xin felt her mind buzz. Li Qingshan possessed the Tiger Demon’s Fierce Roar, so he was much more powerful with mental communication. It made her frown and rub her forehead.

“It’s just a joke, so do you have to be so serious? Have I actually hit the mark and pissed you off from embarrassment? It’s not like I look down on you. I’ll just call you even worse than a beast at most.”

“You’ll call me even worse than a beast, and you’ll still look up to me? Oh, I forgot. You’re even worse than a beast too. You’re half-human, half-fish!”

“Oi, Li Qingshan, you’ve gone too far with that! Though, have you finally admitted you’re even worse than a beast?”

“Who has admitted that? I’ll go overboard because I want to. What are you going to do about it?”

“You better be careful, just in case I divulge you are connected to the Soaring Dragon Elder’s death. You’ll be cut down the moment you step out the door.”

“Then I’ll have to silence this person, no, fish, with death.”

“It’s merfolk, not fish!”

“Once you return to the Chain mountains, I’ll give you a great gift.”

“Don’t change the topic. What gift?”

As the two of them secretly squabbled, the celebratory banquet officially began.

Xiao An just sat there emotionlessly. She did not eat or drink, completely ignoring all the praises and gazes of admiration. Instead, Li Qingshan emptied all the cups of alcohol the moment they were poured on her side, talking and laughing with ease.

Liu Zhangqing said, "Everyone, may I have your attention! Now, I shall be representing the academy in bestowing this arcane artifact to Xiao An. This was offered up by fellow Ma, the heirloom treasure of the leader of the school of Yin-yang."

As he spoke, he took out a lot from his sleeve. It was jade-like yet also bamboo-like lot less than a foot long, verdant green and transparent. He passed it to Xiao An.

"So this is an arcane artifact. It doesn't seem particularly special?"

"Isn't that the Bamboo-Jade Lot of the Cloud Bookcase that school leader Ma never parts with? He's actually managed to bring himself to take it out."

Among the discussions, Ma Buyi stood up too. "Xiao An, this Bamboo-Jade Lot of the Cloud Bookcase is rumored to have been created with the Cloud Bookcase of the Seven Lots. The two complement each other. Originally, there were seven lots, as well as a lot pot. Although only a single lot has been passed to me now, it's still an arcane artifact. I hope you can make good use of it. I believe it will definitely shine resplendently in your hands!" Then he glanced at the Bamboo-Jade Lot of the Cloud Bookcase again. His eyes were filled with reluctance.

The Bamboo-Jade Lot of the Cloud Bookcase was not just an arcane artifact, but an extremely rare arcane artifact for divination.

No matter how much Ma Buyi admired Xiao An, he would have never given this away for nothing. He had only done this after a lengthy persuasion from Liu Zhangqing and everyone else. In the end, they had basically purchased this from him with the resources of the academy before bestowing it on Xiao An.

Their objective was obviously for Xiao An to play an even greater role in the war. And, if it were not for the pressure from the war, Ma Buyi would have never sold it.

The soul sense on the Bamboo-Jade Lot of the Cloud Bookcase had already been removed by Ma Buyi. It was ownerless. As soon as Xiao An accepted it, she felt her spiritual qi and mind become closely connected with it.

### **Chapter 473 - A Clear Conscience Brings Peace of Mind, the Mind is Perturbed by Ru Xin's Charm**

Divination was not omnipotent. It was not like what everyone imagined it to be either. It was not omniscient.

The information gathered by the Hawkwolf Guard played a vital role in allowing Xiao An to predict Bloodshadow's movements and his death. Bloodshadow killed too much, leaving behind too many ties of karma.

He was like a tiny fish swimming through the river, leaving behind clear ripples in the water.

She did not analyse the information using logic. Instead, she grasped the threads of fate that regular cultivators were unable to see, which was why she managed to predict Bloodshadow's movements so accurately.

If she were to predict Dragonsnail's movements instead, then she would be left at quite a loss as for where to start. Even if she just tried blindly, it would never be so accurate.

From a certain perspective, it was exactly because Bloodshadow was fated to die in her hands that led to this deep tie of karma, which allowed her to do this. In other words, if she were unable to predict so much, she would not have been able to kill Bloodshadow.

The components of karma, cause and effect, were intertwined. As a matter of fact, they were two sides of the same coin, which formed a mysterious, almost unpredictable predestination. It was much more profound than any techniques the world had to offer.

Xiao An had only scratched the surface so far. She was nowhere close to understanding it thoroughly. However, the Bamboo-Jade Lot of the Cloud Bookcase would bring great assistance to her divination. At the very least, it could allow her to dive a little deeper into the river of fate.

"I must thank you all for your great generosity in Xiao An's place!" Li Qingshan raised his cup up high and downed it all.

Apart from the Bamboo-Jade Lot of the Cloud Bookcase that went to Xiao An, Li Qingshan received some rewards too. Without saying, his contribution in the Hawkwolf Guard had increased drastically yet again.

A resplendent smile stretched over his face as he downed alcohol jar after jar, like he was drinking water. It led to a series of cheering and applause.

Xiao An looked at Li Qingshan, and the corner of her lips curled up silently. Although she appeared to be quite inhuman sometimes, no one could rival her in terms of intelligence. She just never cared about what others thought and felt. But for him, she had an extremely detailed understanding. She understood what bothered him mentally.

Ru Xin gazed over from afar and also found him rather different today. It was as if he had returned to a few years ago when she had met him for the first time.

Today, Li Qingshan felt extremely satisfied inside, and it was not only because of all the benefits he had received.

In the past, he had witnessed the atrocities of war. He personally believed he was responsible for part of this. This responsibility might not have been particularly big. Just like what Fu Qingjin had said, war was unavoidable. They were just pieces on the chess board.

However, he would never use this as an excuse to shirk away from his responsibilities. As a man, even if he made a mistake, he would accept and bear the burden. If he constantly tried to cover it up, even distancing himself from his own cover-ups, then it would only twist his conscience. He would just be a hypocrite.

The right or wrong in this had nothing to do with what other people thought. Everyone had a set of scales in their hearts. Perfection, unparalleled kindness, and justice had never been what he pursued. All he wanted was to maintain a clear conscience.

In the past, after he had gained power, he did not seek revenge against his elder brother and sister-in-law who had abused him for all those years. He did not use it to vent his pent-up fury. Instead, he tossed behind a bag of silver, exactly because of these two words.

After killing the rock demon and the blood demon, he personally believed he had settled a few ties of karma, having upheld his responsibility. It was like a heavy burden had been lifted from his shoulders. He was filled with indescribable relief and delight.

Of course, no one had the right to judge him on this outcome, to say “Li Qingshan, you’ve completely been overthinking” or “Your sins are much deeper than that. Killing two daemons is nowhere near enough to redeem yourself”.

If he felt it was enough, then it was enough. Although he had once sworn he would finish off both sides of the war and end the war for good, but through this period of understanding, he felt this was no longer his responsibility. It even exceeded his abilities to a certain degree, so he just cast this directly to the back of his mind.

While he did not completely agree with Fu Qingjin’s chessboard metaphor, he did find it somewhat reasonable. Right now, the war was restricted to the Clear River prefecture, where he could still play a role. Once it spread even further, what could he do with his current cultivation?

Forget it! If he wanted to fight, then he could fight to his heart’s content! And, once he became tired of the issues from balancing both sides, he would be better off making use of this opportunity to swoop in and benefit from the demise of others so that he could increase his cultivation quickly. Only then could he protect those important to him. Only then could he reach beyond the Nine Heavens sooner.

As a transmigrator, he did not really conform to the concept of “upholding his word no matter what”. The circumstances constantly changed. He would never allow a single word to tie him down, even if it originated from his own mouth.

He had clearly taken a step forward, possessing much greater knowledge now, yet he had to stick with the conclusions he had drawn from his past understandings. That was no different from purposefully making things difficult for himself.

“They’re retreating! They’re retreating!”

A young cultivator rushed into the Parlour of Clouds and Rain excitedly and called out loudly.

“What’s going on? Take your time!” Liu Zhangqing said sternly.

“Sir prefect, we have received news from various directions that all the daemons have retreated back underground. It’s all because of sir’s great leadership that allowed us to kill the blood demon and weaken the daemons’ momentum.” As the young cultivator spoke, he did not forget to suck up to Liu Zhangqing.

The news of the blood demon falling in battle reached Dragonsnail's ears very quickly. He immediately made a decision to withdraw all their forces.

Among the four great Daemon Generals under the Spider Queen's command, Northmoon was locked up in secluded cultivation, so only he remained. There was not a lot he could do alone. Continuing to persist had already become pointless. It would only lead to even greater losses.

Daemons had lengthy lifespans, but they cultivated slowly too. Every daemon they lost would take a century to make up for.

However, the wartime chaos from the past few years had drastically reduced the population of the Clear River prefecture too. It was equivalent to destroying most of the foundation of the cultivation society of the prefecture. It would take them a century to recover too.

Cheers erupted in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain. They all tossed aside their cultivated composure.

Over the past few years of battle, who knew how many seniors and juniors they had lost. Who knew how many times they had faced life-threatening danger. They were finally witnessing the light of victory. Who could still control their emotions at a time like this?

"Don't celebrate too soon, everyone. We still need to continue with our efforts. Only then can we completely smash the Daemon race's ambitions." Liu Zhangqing cleared his throat twice before finally suppressing the excitement inside.

Cheng Kaishan said, "Fellow Fu, both the rock demon and blood demon have already fallen in battle. Now, as long as you can kill the moon demon too, we'll win this war."

"I'll do my best," Fu Qingjin said nonchalantly.

Kill me? Then why don't you try it!

Tipsy, Li Qingshan smiled and thought to himself.

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The celebratory banquet became an even grander celebratory banquet. It lasted deep into the night before disbanding.

Li Qingshan and Xiao An returned to their dwelling in the Chain mountains. Ru Xin also accompanied them.

Now that the fighting had come to an end, there was no need for her to constantly refine pills to save people. She could take a break now. She wanted to go back and rest up. She was still thinking about the "great gift" Li Qingshan had promised her, so along the way, she gave into her curiosity.

"Where's my great gift?"

"We'll talk about it once we get back." Li Qingshan smiled mysteriously.

Returning to the chain mountains, Li Qingshan sent Xiao An back to the dwelling first before returning to Ru Xin's dwelling with her.

Li Qingshan cut right to the chase, directly pulling out all the spiritual herbs in his hundred treasures pouch and piling them up on the stone table.

Most of them were spiritual herbs that the six clans of night roamers had offered up during his three years of secluded cultivation. There were also a few that came from killing and robbing cultivators of the Daemon Suppression alliance, which also amounted to quite the sum. He had held onto them for all this time, leaving them in his hundred treasures pouch, as Ru Xin had neither the time or effort to deal with them.

“Is this the great gift you were speaking of?” Ru Xin said in surprise. The amount of spiritual herbs Li Qingshan had taken out last time had already surprised her, but comparing it to this time, she realised she had still underestimated it.

Never had she seen so many spiritual herbs in her life. Just the amount alone had completely surpassed what Li Qingshan had taken out in the past, and they were nowhere close in terms of value too.

One a thousand-year spiritual herb could match a whole pile of regular, cultivated spiritual herbs. Yet, there were a hundred stalks of thousand-year spiritual herbs at the very least before her, piled up like vegetables. How could she not be shocked?

“Same as before. You’ll gather the other spiritual herbs, and once you refine them, you can have thirty percent.”

“That won’t do. I’ve refined too many pills lately. Now, I feel sick just from seeing spiritual herbs. Just thinking about alchemy gives me a headache,” Ru Xin rubbed her forehead and said in fake distress.

That was to hide the quivering emotions in her eyes. If she converted all of them into spiritual stones, there would probably be enough to fill her entire dwelling. Most importantly, the origins of these spiritual herbs were enough to expose many things, which only confirmed her suspicions.

She had never considered receiving trust on a level like this.

“Hmph, you’re getting such a good deal already, yet you’re still not satisfied. If you don’t want to do it, then I’ll go find someone else.” That was what Li Qingshan said, but he had no intentions of leaving.

“Why don’t you get that old father-in-law Han of yours to help you out? With the Han family’s influence, finding a few suitable alchemists won’t be difficult at all. You’ll save the thirty percent you’ll have to share with me too.”

“You’re the one I trust, alright? Are you happy now? Stop it. Are you going to refine it or not?”

This kind of trust could not be built up overnight, but at a time like this, Li Qingshan felt like he could trust her with many things, which even included a few important secrets.

Ru Xin found that soothing. For some reason, she chuckled to herself. In other words, even Han Qiongzhi doesn’t know these secrets about him! Wait, why am I comparing myself to her?

“So be it. Since you’re already pleading with me like this, I’ll refine it. Though, you probably haven’t even counted your spiritual herbs, right? Even if a stalk or ten go missing, you wouldn’t know!” Ru Xin accepted all the spiritual herbs and blinked her eyes with a smile.

“Who said? If even a stalk goes missing, I’ll be questioning you.” Slightly taken aback, Li Qingshan refused to back down.

In reality, she was completely right. He had indeed not counted it. If Ru Xin wanted to steal his spiritual herbs, there was no need to go to such great lengths at all. She could just directly claim a few cauldrons of pills were destroyed during the refining process, or she could under-report the sum of pills. There were plenty of methods for her to embezzle him.

“Just by you?” Ru Xin said in disdain.

“Do you want to try it?” Li Qingshan shot a glance at her.

“Come at me then!” Ru Xin shot a glance back at him with contempt, but she suddenly felt rather uneasy. Li Qingshan’s expression changed slightly before she knew it.

They were a man and a woman in a room alone, staring at one another.

Suddenly, Li Qingshan felt rather tempted. Perhaps it was the alcohol at work, or perhaps it was because the burden had suddenly been lifted from his mind. Through his tipsiness, Ru Xin’s gentle face and wonderful, graceful figure possessed an indescribable charm. She was enchanting.

He was tempted to get a little closer to her, to sniff the medicinal fragrance on her and see exactly what she was thinking under her cynical mask.

#### **Chapter 474 - Spiritual Stone Mines**

“Have you stared enough?” Ru Xin did not reveal her awkwardness and uneasiness. She casually raised her hand and swept aside her hair with her little finger in a leisurely manner. Her fair, graceful face formed clear curves under the ceiling lights, which made her seem extremely beautiful.

Her gaze drifted away, perhaps provoking him or turning him down.

“I’ve grown sick a long time ago.”

Li Qingshan retorted immediately, only to remember he should have responded with something sickly sweet like “I can never get enough”. This was an almost automatic defensive response he had developed from spending time with her.

“You, oh you!” Ru Xin smiled and shook her head gently. Who knew whether it was disappointment or relief.

“You might be rather good-looking, but it’s nowhere near enough to seduce me!”

Li Qingshan smiled too, recovering his composure. He did not wish to see their relationship destroyed because of what he felt on a whim.

“Right back at you! If you’re sick of it, then piss off. Don’t get in my way of refining pills.” Ru Xin stood up to see him off.

“But I haven’t even finished my tea.”

“It’s finished.” Ru Xin picked it up and emptied it before shooping Li Qingshan out the door.

When Li Qingshan left, he wanted to say something, but all he saw was the door being slammed in his face. As he gazed at the stone door, he felt rather reluctant to just let this end like this.

Ru Xin stared at the stone door too as light rippled through her eyes. It seemed frigid, yet also passionate.

The two of them simply stared at one another with the heavy, stone door there, unable to see one another. However, their gazes did not shift at all.

Li Qingshan suddenly smiled, turning around and leaving on a cloud. He crossed his arms leisurely. He just dismissed it as becoming slightly muddle-headed for once during his long journey of cultivation. It was fine if he was reluctant. There was still plenty of time ahead.

Ru Xin let out a gentle sigh and sneered. "Coward." Suddenly, she began to rub her head in distress. "With all these spiritual herbs, how long do I have to refine them for!?"

She was not completely joking with what she had said earlier. Recently, she had become rather tired of refining pills, but with so many benefits laid out before her, she would put up with it no matter how tired she was.

The night deepened. The rain eased up slightly, but it continued to patter endlessly, drenching the earth and mountains.

With the arrival of spring came the season of rain.

It also rained a thousand kilometers south-west.

There was a great, ruptured mountain. The mountain was teeming with spiritual qi, which indicated the presence of a spiritual stone vein. Within the rupture, scattered pieces of spiritual stones shone gently.

On the foot of the mountain was a mine. Ye Liusu appeared there like a shadow. Her simple, black armour was extremely revealing. Her slender legs in boots moved even more gently than a cat as she made her way through the rain.

Her brows were slightly furrowed on her delicate face, as if she was considering something. Her dark blue skin did not affect her beauty at all, adding a mysterious sense of charm instead.

"Sister, the daemons are retreating. What should we do? Dammit, to think they didn't contact us!" Ye Liubo followed closely behind. Her appearance was only slightly lacklustre compared to Ye Liusu, but with her curves, she possessed a romantic charm that even Ye Liusu failed to match.

"Yep."

Leading the army of night roamers, Ye Liusu attacked the various spiritual stone mines scattered throughout the land. Some mines were heavily guarded, protected by powerful cultivators, but compared to their army, they were nothing. Although they had suffered quite a lot of casualties, only a single night roamer who had undergone the first heavenly tribulation died in battle. The resistance that they faced was rather weak.

The biggest problem did not actually come from the daemons or the humans, but from themselves.



Although Li Qingshan had given Ye Liusu the task of commanding them, the various forms of strike, both open and secret, immediately began to spread through the ranks without his presence. The powerful night roamer who fell in battle died to extremely strange circumstances.

From a certain perspective, these battles no longer had anything to do with their interests. Instead, it was a form of instinct. They would harm one another as soon as the opportunity presented itself, even if it offered no benefits. It was no different from, "You're too perfect in this area, so I couldn't help myself but to kick you. It's been quite some time since kicking someone has been so satisfying".

This was the aspect that troubled Ye Liusu the most. Sometimes, she would even think in anger, Are night roamers like them really worth all my effort? However, a thought like that would vanish in a flash. It was not enough to influence an idealist like her.

Through the various trials, she developed a leader's bearing, and her supporters gradually increased. They all found Ye Liusu extremely admirable.

Ever since the Daemon Suppression alliance and the Academy of the Hundred Schools forged an alliance in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain, they placed most of their focus on attacking the daemons that ran amok on the surface. After all, spiritual stone veins were important, but they could always steal them back if they lost them. It was not like they could be uprooted and taken away. At most, they would just lose out on some spiritual stones.

On the other hand, death was permanent. If the Clear River prefecture had actually been decimated, not only would the academy be unable to recruit any suitable disciples, the various sects would be no different. Humans had short lifespans, and the lifespans of cultivators were not particularly long either. Going a few generations without accepting any new disciples was definitely enough to end a sect's legacy and lead it to its demise.

Although none of them cared about the lives of regular people after becoming cultivators, all of them understood the foundation of the cultivation community lay among these regular people who produced generations after generations.

As a result, these attacks from the night roamers essentially went unimpeded. Instead, they were more than willing to use these mines to keep the night roamer army busy and reduce the pressure they faced on the battlefield. As long as they defeated the daemons, did they have to worry about losing these mines for good?

Ye Liusu gazed at the night rain and said after quite a while of thought, "Let's retreat too. We can't stay behind and serve as the vanguard for them."

"But we only managed to claim these mines after so much effort."

"We'll give up on them all," Ye Liusu said resolutely.

The battle had been on the safer side, but they had not exactly reaped a bountiful harvest either. Although they had obtained large quantities of spiritual stone ore, the spiritual stone veins underground had always been much more plentiful than the ones on the surface. Mining underground was much safer too.

Moreover, night roamers were nowhere near as knowledgeable as humans when it came to using spiritual stones.

That was because spiritual stones could not be directly used the moment they were mined. They had to be further refined, purified and concentrated to obtain the type of spiritual stones regularly used for battle and cultivation. Otherwise, the spiritual qi would be extremely impure, making it very difficult to use.

Night roamers obviously did not possess the technique to refine them, so they were not particularly enthusiastic about something like mining. Obtaining all this ore was rather useless.

Of course, there were spiritual stone mines with very high levels of purity, but they were claimed by various Daemon Generals. Let alone venturing into their territory for mining, even if they managed to sever the spiritual stone vein from below, that was enough to lead to war!

Ye Liubo smiled. "Fair enough. These sh\*tty rocks don't seem to be of any proper use anyway. I'll go call everyone right now. I just happen to be missing master too. The rain is so pretty!"

There will be a day when we can shower under the rain as we please, Ye Liusu thought to herself.

Cultivators observed the army of night roamers from extremely far away through techniques. They saw them abandon the mines and leave in a winding mass. The cultivators immediately returned to the mines and reestablished the formations, commencing with the excavation again.

"Sir prefect, the night roamers have retreated too. We've retaken all the spiritual stone mines already, except rebuilding what we had will lead to some difficulties."

In Clear River city, Liu Zhangqing listened to the report of a subordinate and stroked his long beard in thought. After the battle ended, the first thing he asked about was the situation of the spiritual stone mines. Spiritual stone mines to cultivators were like gold mines to regular people. They were extremely important. Normally, a single spiritual stone mine was enough to spark a great conflict between two sects.

The night roamers were very dissatisfied with their spoils this time, but it did cause quite a loss to the human cultivators. Apart from the spiritual stones themselves, the defensive formations and mechanisms and the puppets for mining had all been destroyed. It would take them quite the effort to establish everything again.

"How long will it take before we recover our previous functionality?"

"Over a month at the very least."

"We've already lost most of the month."

Liu Zhangqing let out a sigh. The three years of war had already depleted many of the resources they had accumulated over the years. Once they lost their supply of spiritual stones, many powerful mechanisms and puppets would be rendered useless and many formations would not be available for use. Cultivators would not be able to draw out the spiritual qi within spiritual stones to recover either. The consequences would be unthinkable.

"Please invite the leader of the school of Miscellany, Gou Dai, over!"

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As soon as Li Qingshan returned to the dwelling and spoke a little with Xiao An, he felt a series of disturbances from around him. With a thought, the exquisite patterns carefully carved by the night roamer craftsmen filled his eyes.

A few blue butterflies fluttered about, illuminating a small range. Beside him, Milliped had already woken up from his sleep. Who knew where he had wandered off to.

The original dwelling had also been sealed up by a carefully sculpted stone door. Behind the door were many obscure auras that silently drew closer.

“Sir Northmoon!” “Master.”

The stone door opened, and the night roamers returned from above ground. They immediately reported back to him, passing through the Blue Butterfly flowers like shadows and arriving before the stone bed, performing a bow together.

Unable to help herself, Ye Liubo immediately became tempted to throw herself into his arms, but looking at the surroundings, she managed to hold herself back. She stood behind Ye Liusu obediently.

The social hierarchy was clearly divided in the underground world. If she acted fearlessly just because she had her master’s trust and damaged his bearing, it would be bad. She did not want him to dislike her. Just as she thought of that, she suddenly saw Li Qingshan waving his hand at her with a smile. “Liubo, come over here!”

Ye Liubo could no longer care anymore, diving into his arms. The matriarchs all witnessed this and could not help but blame their own daughters. They had also served Northmoon for so long, so why hadn’t they received the same level of favour from him?

“Oh, you’re back. How are the spoils of the battle?”

Li Qingshan asked despite already knowing the answer. The night roamers had not become too involved with this battle, so he was not too worried about Ye Liubo’s safety. However, seeing her standing before him safely still brought him great joy.

As for his so-called dignity or bearing or whatever that was, he did not care at all. People of power naturally possessed a dignified bearing, while the weak only knew how to pose around in a futile manner.

Before Ye Liusu could reply, he lowered his head and ran his hand down Ye Liubo’s back gently. He asked in concern, “You weren’t injured, were you?”

“Please check for yourself later, master.”

Ye Liubo clung onto his waist firmly. As she listened to his metallic voice ask those words of concern, her heart almost melted. She nodded forcefully. When the somewhat sharp tips of his fingers ran across her skin, she could not help but moan in delight inside.

**Chapter 475 - Sooner or Later, There Will be Revenge**

“We attacked many spiritual stone mines and killed a few Qi Practitioners, but most of it is just some unrefined ore. Fortunately, we didn’t suffer particularly heavy losses,” Ye Liusu reported.

“Ore? How much?” Li Qingshan’s interest was piqued. There was not a single cultivator who could find fault in possessing too many spiritual stones. Although it was just ore, it would still be a sizeable sum once he found someone appropriate to refine it.

“Our Spider Shadow clan is willing to offer all the ore to sir Northmoon.”

Ye Mingzhu was observative. Through Li Qingshan’s actions and responses, she could tell that Li Qingshan was interested in these ores, so she immediately stepped forward and offered up a hundred treasures pouch.

Li Qingshan accepted the hundred treasures pouch and took a look. The ore inside twinkled like stars. Based on a rough estimation, the amount should be enough to refine several tens of thousand regular inferior spiritual stones, so he accepted it happily.

“The Spider Shadow clan should be praised for their loyalty. Though, I have said that I won’t be taking any spoils from this battle, so I’ll give you a few spiritual artifacts as a reward instead!”

“Thank you for your reward, sir Northmoon.” Ye Mingzhu smiled and accepted his reward without holding back.

The other matriarchs immediately became tempted too. These spiritual stones truly did not hold much value to them. A few spiritual artifacts would be much more practical, and they could express their loyalty too. It was a deal that came at no cost to them.

Before long, Li Qingshan obtained a few extra hundred treasures pouches. If the ore was all refined into spiritual stones, there would be three or four hundred thousand at the very least. In exchange, he had only offered up a few useless mid and high grade spiritual artifacts.

While he could find Ru Xin for refining pills, he had no suitable choice for forging artifacts. Then Li Qingshan began thinking about the Bronze Cauldron of the Four Cardinal Directions in his possession. Once he returned to the academy, he had to properly understand exactly what was required to refine spiritual stones.

They waited until all the night roamers had scattered, with just Ye Liubo remaining in Li Qingshan’s arms.

Li Qingshan’s feelings for her were originally the same feelings as a master had for their pet, but it was somewhat different today. The deep gully right in front of her drew in his gaze. She curled up on him seductively, basically demanding him to take her. Lust suddenly rose up in him, and a certain part of his body began to respond uncontrollably.

“I have no idea whether I’m injured or not, so please inspect me closely, master.” Ye Liubo sensed this response and smiled complacently, clinging on to him even more firmly. Her full chest pressed against his abdomen, leaving completely no space between them.

“Then let me take a close look.” Li Qingshan smiled. Whenever he controlled his mirror clone, he would always be especially casual. The drunkenness of his original body was reflected on his clone too.

Gradually, his hands were not restricted to her exposed skin anymore. Whenever they ran into the obstructing armour, he would directly take them off, caressing every inch of her skin. Ye Liubo's eyes were filled with delight as she leaned against him, heaving and moaning gently without control. Her gaze gradually misted up.

Before long, only a pair of slender shoes remained on her body. The blue patterns on her seductive body shone magnificently, allowing Li Qingshan to admire her however he liked. This was not the first time he had seen Ye Liubo naked, but she seemed particularly tempting right now. It made him gulp as he remembered it had already been three years since he had last tasted flesh.

Li Qingshan suddenly stopped and whispered into Ye Liubo's ear, "The only thing that a master can do to his pet is to spoil her."

"Then please spoil me good, master!" Ye Liubo suddenly straightened herself up, and her chest jiggled. Her provoking gaze was furious, dissatisfied with a hint of pleading. She pouted. "Ever since I met master, it has been so many years since I last had a man. You have no idea how tantalising it is being alone."

"Don't you have many 'concubines'?" Li Qingshan was rather puzzled by this. He knew night roamers did not really have a concept of maintaining their chaste, nor would he bind her to the conventions of humans. Of course, this was because he did not treat her as his lover.

"I've gotten rid of them a long time ago. I only want to give birth to your children, master," Ye Liubo said so seriously that she seemed like Ye Liusu when she mentioned her dream of the night roamers returning to the surface.

Because night roamers were matriarchal, female night roamers often had many "concubines". They only knew who their mother was, not their father. Rearing descendants and becoming a mother was still regarded as a rather sacred matter among the race. After all, those with the greatest authority in a clan were known as "matriarchs".

Yes, she was no longer interested in just a night of joy. Instead, she wanted to use this body to continue each other's bloodlines.

"To think you could actually put up with something like that!" Li Qingshan had no idea about how to respond. Then just what would we produce? A third human, a third daemon, and a third night roamer?

"Everything I have belongs to master—my heart, my body, and in the future, my children." Ye Liusu grabbed Li Qingshan's hand and placed it on her perky chest, allowing him to feel her beating heart before sliding it to her abdomen.

Li Qingshan was extremely moved by this. Alright fine, he admitted that his heart was not the only place that had been moved.

With how everything had unfolded, what else could he say?

Sorry, Qiongzhi. A certain person will be breaking the shackles of conventions and the boundaries of society to experience a friendship beyond a normal friendship with his pet.

Li Qingshan made up his mind. He was just about to do something that would make him stoop to a level even lower than a beast.

The stone door opened loudly, and Ye Liusu walked in. As if she had seen nothing at all, she said, "Ma'am Spider Queen orders you to visit Cobweb city immediately."

Li Qingshan was thick-skinned, but even with that, he was unable to maintain this posture with a naked woman under the gaze of another lady. Moreover, the Spider Queen was not someone he could brush aside either.

He gently placed Ye Liubo on the side and made his way off the stone bed. He tidied his ruffled clothes and shook off his lust with that.

"Master!" Ye Liubo said with hidden bitterness. She could not help but shoot a glance towards Ye Liusu. She had endured for all these years for this opportunity. Just when success was in sight, all her efforts were reduced to nothing. How could she simply accept this?

"This is something I've promised to you." Li Qingshan glanced back and winked before breaking out in laughter helplessly. He found it all extremely interesting.

Making a child? I still haven't tried that before. Should I try it with Qiongzhi? I wonder whether she'll be willing or not. Though, while the various sensations are the same with a mirror clone, is that still possible?

He did not feel like Ye Liusu had interrupted anything. What's mine will always be mine. Am I supposed to be afraid there won't be an opportunity in the future?

Li Qingshan flapped his wings and left behind a fierce gale and a great laugh, ruffling the heavy curtains.

"Liusu, did you hear that? Did you hear that? Master is promising me this!" Ye Liubo was left dazed for a while before ravishing with joy.

"Hear what? Promise what? You better dress yourself first!"

"Making a child!"

"Congratulations on no longer having to deal with it with your hand." Ye Liusu was surprised before commenting with a smile.

"Hmph, it's all your fault, or I would have succeeded already!"

Only with Ye Liusu's comment did Ye Liubo remember she was in the heat from the encounter earlier. There was already a moist patch between her legs.

"Do you want me to leave so you can do something about that first?" Ye Liusu smiled.

"There's no need. Patience, patience. There is no enjoyment without patience." Ye Liubo sucked in a deep breath. Since master had already promised her, this would definitely happen.

It was like how normal people handled going to a buffet. They would starve themselves for a few meals first, planning to crawl in and crawl out on their knees.

TL: I've adapted this analogy slightly by changing the cultural cues, but it still might not make sense. By crawling in and crawling out of the buffet, the analogy is basically implying that you've starved yourself so much before the meal that you have to crawl in on your knees, and during the meal, you've stuffed yourself with so much food that you can't walk properly, so you need to crawl out on your knees.

Ye Liusu said, "Creating an offspring between a daemon and a night roamer probably won't be that easy."

"Then we'll go at it a few extra times until we succeed. What, do you also want to partake, sister?" Ye Liubo snickered like her scheme had just succeeded. It would be for the best if she took part, but if she did not, it did not matter either.

"I have no interest." Ye Liusu gazed at Ye Liubo as she waited happily, and her feelings became rather mixed. She was already closing in on her goal. What about herself?

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"Northmoon, do you know that Bloodshadow is dead?"

Li Qingshan arrived in Cobweb city, and sure enough, Spider Queen Lolth was waiting for him on the high terrace. However, only Dragonsnail out of the three powerful Daemon Generals by her side remained.

"I've just heard about it. How did he die?" Li Qingshan was slightly surprised as he asked casually. He did not feign any sadness.

"He was ambushed by humans." The Spider Queen's face was rather ugly. If Dragonsnail was her brains, then Bloodshadow and Strongboulder would be her left and right hands. Now that they had both been severed, even she felt extremely unhappy despite her vicious nature.

"Losses are unavoidable in war, so please don't take it to heart, ma'am Spider Queen. Even without them, the Daemon race won't be defeated." Li Qingshan played along as he felt extremely satisfied inside.

"You sure have had it comfortable! And, those night roamers never openly clashed with the humans. It's all because of what you taught them! You're actively avoiding the battle!" The Spider Queen's voice coldened as she stared at Li Qingshan with her venomous gaze.

"I've been in secluded cultivation, preparing for my battle with Fu Qingjin. You had agreed to that, ma'am Spider Queen. I was also the one who ordered the night roamers to attack the spiritual stone mines, but that is to sever the humans' supply of spiritual stones. At the very least, these spiritual stone mines are much more important than cities of regular people, and their defences are tight too. We have directly clashed with human cultivators, so how can you say that we've been actively avoiding the battle?"

Li Qingshan reasoned with her perfectly, which made the Spider Queen even more displeased. She suddenly swung her hand towards Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan felt a blur before him and unleashed the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell instinctively, blocking the Spider Queen's slender, fair hand. In a single instant, it caved in and became covered in cracks.

Bang!

Li Qingshan was sent flying, slamming heavily against the wall. The entire cave shook.

“I’m teaching you a lesson, so how dare you talk back? How dare you resist!?” The Spider Queen’s icy-cold voice reached Li Qingshan’s ears, which made his understanding of a certain fact even clearer. If the powerful wanted to be unreasonable, it would be futile even if the weak had a silken tongue.

The Spider Queen was like a vicious, capricious little girl. She cherished the toys that brought her joy to a certain degree, but if they could not bring her joy, she would toss them aside or even rip them apart forcefully and amuse herself through that.

“This is my punishment. Don’t get any other ideas. I have always favoured you too much and given you too much freedom. You are only permitted to win in your battle against Fu Qingjin. You are forbidden from losing. Do you understand?” In consideration of the fact that Li Qingshan was still of some use, the Spider Queen did not continue, only warning him coldly.

“I understand.” Li Qingshan remained calm, even smiling. He was no longer the child from the country, still wet behind his ears. There was no need for him to grind his teeth or become wrapped up in anger and resentment.

He would take note of grievances that he was supposed to take note of. Sooner or later, he would have them settled.

#### **Chapter 476 - The Fourth Layer of the Ox Demon, to Never Admit Defeat**

Li Qingshan’s mental state was not particularly affected, but with the battle on the horizon, he temporarily cast his lust aside to focus on a period of proper cultivation. He left Ye Liubo grumbling.

However, Li Qingshan still made some preparations. He ordered the night roamers to speed up their herb gathering process and offer them all up.

The war had continued for many years now. Many of the territories underground had been emptied out. The zones originally forbidden to the night roamers were now available. Daemons were even more ignorant about the usage of spiritual herbs than night roamers. All they knew was protecting spiritual herbs that could be directly consumed, so they should have left behind even more spiritual herbs in comparison to the night roamers.

In order to speed up the process, Li Qingshan handed all the random spiritual artifacts and talismans in his hundred treasures pouch to Ye Liubo. As long as they offered up spiritual herbs of relatively good quality, she was free to award these items to others.

The Spider Queen was not easy to appease. Just in case she turned against him some time, he would take all the benefits he had collected from her and take off. The world was vast. Whether human or daemon, where couldn’t he go? Why did he have to put up with her?

Li Qingshan had only consumed a small portion of the pills Ru Xin had refined so far. Most of it still remained in his hundred treasures pouch, as he never got the opportunity to convert them into his cultivation.



In Qing Xiao's Home, Li Qingshan took out all the pills in his hundred treasures pouch. All of them were of decent quality.

The spiritual herbs that the night roamers had offered up were of relatively higher quality. They might not have been millennia old, but they were centuries old. As a result, most of the pills refined were of very good quality, enough for him to use. However, there was also a small fraction that had already become rather useless to him. It was a pity to discard them, but there was no point for him to consume them either.

As his cultivation progressed, he could circulate the spiritual qi of the world faster and faster. Even his own body gradually developed a spiritual nature. Just the spiritual qi in a drop of his blood was probably more abundant than most pills. It had obviously become useless to consume any more of these pills.

Once he reached a certain point, probably even pills refined from millennium-old spiritual herbs would become useless. As a result, his territory underground was no longer as important as when he first obtained it. Once he squeezed out a little more value from it, there was no need for him to be bound by it and be ordered around by the Spider Queen.

Li Qingshan smiled towards Xiao An, took in a deep breath, and abruptly grew in size. He towered over thirty meters in the blink of an eye. Three meters was roughly the height of a storey, so in other words, Li Qingshan was over a dozen storeys tall right now. Although he was still a bit smaller than godzilla, it was enough for him to impersonate a small monster.

His pitch-black body made him seem like a demon god as his scarlet hair poured down like a waterfall. His eyes shone brightly, like they were burning with fire. They radiated with a primitive, beatial, and demonic nature

When he carved out Qing Xiao's dwelling, he did not go after anything else. The only thing he had in mind was size, and it was precisely to deal with the current situation. The mountain they had chosen stood several hundred meters tall. Together, Li Qingshan and Xiao An had basically hollowed out the entire centre.

From the ground to the ceiling, there was roughly six hundred meters. If Li Qingshan had not crushed the walls to the point where they were as tough as steel with his abilities, the mountain would have caved in on itself from its weight a long time ago.

As a result, even when standing straight, Li Qingshan did not feel cramped. He studied his body and opened his great, toothy mouth, letting out a chuckle. The tiger's tail swayed freely behind him, leaving behind a series of blurs.

From a certain perspective, he was even more satisfied with his original form than his humanoid form. His humanoid form was very handsome, but compared to his original form, it was clearly nowhere near as imposing or bold.

He could not help but admit that the black ox had an eye for things, choosing Li Qingshan. If it were not for his strange tastes as a transgressor, probably this form alone would be beyond what regular people could accept, let alone feeling good about it.

Li Qingshan extended his hand and made a scooping gesture, making all the pills on the ground fly into his hand. He shoved them into his great mouth and gulped it all down without even chewing.

If other cultivators witnessed this, their jaws definitely would have dropped from pure astonishment. They would think he was sick of living and was trying to commit suicide.

These pills were not all the same. Just the conflicting medicinal effects were enough to claim his life, and their intense efficacy could directly blow up a person.

Sure enough, after swallowing these pills, Li Qingshan's belly immediately began to swell, growing larger and larger like a balloon. He seemed like he was ten months pregnant. The ear-piercing sound of stretching metal filled the dwelling.

A hint of caution appeared on Li Qingshan's face. He bellowed out, "The Spirit Turtle Suppresses the Seas!"

The spirit turtle's daemon core shone resplendently, forcefully suppressing the chaotic effects from the pills.

However, even with that, it seemed to struggle to keep it suppressed. His daemon qi erupted from his body, lifting up his scarlet hair. If it were not for the Eight Gates Formation of Golden Locks that kept the rolling daemon qi locked it, daemon qi could probably even be spotted from very far away.

The daemon core could only suppress, not absorb. The effects of the pills merged with Li Qingshan's limbs, bones, and organs strand by strand. They ached slightly as countless capillaries ruptured, only to repair themselves immediately.

In the blink of an eye, who knew how many times this destruction and reconstruction had occurred already.

Li Qingshan only had a single objective with this, which was to break through to the fourth layer of the ox demon.

Finally, Li Qingshan's belly stopped swelling. Supporting his stomach, he sat down and rubbed his great belly.

"To think I had said I wanted to make a child with someone else. I seem like I bear a child right now! Xiao An, don't I look like the laughing buddha?"

Xiao An leapt up gracefully and landed on his belly. Looking at how ominous he seemed, she covered her mouth as she laughed. "Not one bit."

"Then what do I look like?"

"You look like Li Qingshan."

"That's right, I look like Li Qingshan. What am I impersonating others for?"

Li Qingshan let out a great roar of laughter. In this world, she was probably the only one unaffected by his appearance, bloodline, cultivation, and other external features. No matter what he became, he was still only Li Qingshan in her eyes.

As for Xiao An, whether she was a ghost, a white skeleton, or a great beauty with the Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty, she did not change either in his heart.

Xiao An settled down on one side and took out Bloodshadow's daemon core that reeked of blood. She sniffed it gently, and the heavy, sanguine smell left her extremely satisfied. It was the perfect material for refining the Blood Sea Banner.

After a moment of consideration, she stowed the blood daemon core away again and took out the Skull Prayer Beads. The level after eighteen prayer beads was twenty-one. She was only off by three.

Time passed quickly. In the blink of an eye, almost a month had gone by.

Li Qingshan's belly had completely turned back to normal. His iron hooves were planted deeply into the ground as he grabbed the ground firmly with his claws. His spine arched like a mountain as he butted his horns upwards forcefully.

Standing upright between heaven and earth with an indomitable spirit!

Although his vigour was still nowhere close, his bearing was extremely similar to what he had seen in the past from the ox demon's figure in his sea of consciousness.

There were no unnecessary movements. He no longer swung his arms and feet around. He even stopped using the Ox Demon Stamps its Hooves, the Ox Demon Forges its Hide, and the Ox Demon Butts its Horns. He simply stood there without moving, just like a statue.

However, a sense of power filled the absolute stillness, like a great bow that had been fully drawn. His muscles were stretched and expanded to the limit, even tougher than rock or steel.

But under the cold, hard skin, his blood surged and his soul burned, without resting for even the slightest moment.

His scarlet pupils flickered with red light. Although the upper half of his body still remained mostly humanoid, no one standing there would connect him with the word "human".

The effect of the pills he had swallowed in one gulp had completely kicked in, but this time, the Ox Demon Transformation that had always been the easiest to practise became especially difficult.

"It's still not enough. Something is still missing! Pills? No! What is it?"

Li Qingshan was dripping with sweat as two white clouds of scorching steam sprayed out from his nostrils. The medicinal effects began to wear off.

The Ox Demon, with its Great Strength, Sinks in the Mud!

The ominous mantra appeared in Li Qingshan's heart again. He deeply comprehended a sense of sombreness like a hero at the end of their path, a form of helplessness like great strength that could not be used.

However, there seemed to be something else among all this. The ox demon's figure appeared in his sea of consciousness once more.

He stared at the figure for a long time and suddenly developed a sense of doubt.

Why? It clearly knew it was stuck deep within the mud, so why did it still struggle? Wouldn't it sink even deeper the more it struggled? It had already tried everything it could, and since it did not work, why not stop and take a break? Why did it continue to torture itself painfully?

In the past, the Hegemon King of Chu lost the Battle of Gaixia. As he listened to the lamenting songs of Chu all around, he said, "My strength plucked up the hills, My might shadowed the world; But the times were against me, And Zhui runs no more; When Zhui runs no more, What then can I do? Ah, Yu, my Yu, What will your fate be?" Afterwards, although he managed to break out of the encirclement of the Han army, fleeing to the banks of Wu river, he sighed to himself. "I have no face to return and see the elders of Jiangdong." before slitting his own throat. He became the classic example of a hero at the end of his path, leaving behind a heroic lament passed down and sung throughout the ages.

Note: This basically refers to the downfall of the Hegemon King of Chu, Xiang Yu, right before the founding of the Han dynasty.

Li Qingshan had learnt this poem from the textbooks of his past life, but there had been a similar example. Thousands of years later, there was another marshal who had been surrounded by the enemy army who also left behind a seven-word poem, printed in his textbook. It remained as a clear memory to Li Qingshan.

So what if I lose my head today? Pioneering has never been easy, riddled with battles. Off I go to the underworld to call upon my fallen comrade in arms, ten thousand we stand to slay the king of hell!

Note: This is a poem by a Chinese communist army commander, Chen Yi, when he was surrounded by the enemy and thought he was done for in 1936.

The heroic bearing of facing death unflinchingly even surpassed the Hegemon King of Chu who blamed everything but himself and refused to return to Jiangdong.

As these thoughts flashed through his head, only an instant had passed in reality.

"I understand!"

The red light in Li Qingshan's eyes suddenly flashed, like firelight. Afterwards, when he looked at the ox demon's figure, he saw something different.

He saw the ox demon enduring and persisting with its extraordinary endurance. Even if it was all to no avail, even if fate had predestined it and destiny could not be changed, it would never give up, fighting to the end.

It could be destroyed, but it would never be defeated!

The flickering light in Li Qingshan's eyes gradually settled down, and the streams of air from his nostrils eased up as if he could remain like that for a century, for a millennium.

Suddenly, the same forceful and vigorous bearing as the ox demon's figure began to radiate from his body!

He had reached the fourth layer of the Ox Demon Transformation!

Li Qingshan's body gradually turned back to normal. Unlike the past, he did not ravish with joy, nor was he in a hurry to test how much his strength had increased by.

During the cultivation process, the black ox's will seemed to merge with his body through this Ox Demon Transformation. It was a form of inheritance. No matter how many profound transformations the Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine had, the Ox Demon Transformation would always be the greatest.

### **Chapter 477 - The Day of the Battle**

Li Qingshan's large, tall body was riddled in clearly-divided muscles. He gained a sense of heaviness, standing like a mountain.

His bright, black pupils seemed extremely peaceful. It was different from the state of emotionlessness and desirelessness when he practised the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression. Instead, it was a form of firmness that reached as deeply as his bones.

Endless power radiated from his body, connected with the boundless earth. They were indivisible.

In the past, whenever he broke through with the Ox Demon Transformation, he would always carefully test his new strength. He did this to enjoy the increase in his strength, as well as to maintain control over his increased strength.

But this time, he did not feel any joy from the drastic increase in his strength. Instead, he discovered a boundary, such that just simple actions like moving his arms and legs were riddled with obstacles. He was unable to unleash the strength to his heart's content.

However, his strength clearly increased, and not just by a bit. Who knew how many times greater it was compared to before.

His strength in the past was basically enough to rival the strength-type Daemon General with a special bloodline, Strongboulder.

Yet right now, he could completely overwhelm Strongboulder with only a single hand, or directly crush Strongboulder's almost-indestructible body. This aspect alone had completely exceeded the level of a Daemon General.

The Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine was an unparalleled ability created by the black ox. It seemed extremely ordinary at the beginning. When he was at the first layer of the Ox Demon Transformation, all he could do was harass a few figures of the jianghu. He could not even defeat a few stronger Qi Practitioners.

But as time went on, the changes brought on by each layer was world-shaking. His strength swelled upwards by compounding on itself. The difficulty of cultivation did rapidly increase, but the efficiency of his cultivation increased too. He could not help but think about the classical story of the wheat and the chessboard.

A clever vassal had invented the game chess for a bored king. The king was extremely interested, asking him what he wanted as a reward. As a result, he mentioned a "simple" request, asking the king to

reward him with some wheat. He asked the king to place a single wheat kernel on the first square, two wheat kernels on the second, four on the third, and so on.

The king agreed to it happily. In the very beginning, the request seemed extremely simple, taking up very few wheat kernels, but before he had even filled half the board, the king discovered that even if he took all the wheat available to the kingdom, he would not be able to fulfill this “simple” request.

The Ox Demon Transformation might have only had nine layers, but the strength definitely did not just multiply each time. If he truly compounded it a ninth time, then even he would not be able to imagine just what level his strength would reach.

Moving entire mountains to fill whole seas, plucking stars and grabbing the moon from the night sky would probably all become the norm. He remembered what brother ox had once said, “I can directly give you the power to sweep through this world.” Only when he thought of it now did he realise just how modest brother ox had been.

He had a feeling that even if the person chasing after him that day was not the Soaring Dragon Elder, but some figure who stood at the very peak of the nine provinces, they probably still would not have been able to cause brother ox much trouble. But relatively speaking, the person who managed to force brother ox into such a state would clearly be even more terrifying.

The reason why I feel my strength is bound is because I know my strength is nowhere near enough!

Li Qingshan clenched his hand gently. He felt despair. A suffocatingly tremendous pressure weighed down on him.

He never felt despair in the past, as he had never dared to face this goal properly. He had just maintained a mindset of making each step count. It would be for the best if he could reach his goal, but if he could not, then there was nothing he could do.

It was just like how a child said, “I want to be a scientist”, or “I want to be an astronaut.” It was as easy and simple as that.

Once the child became a teenager, an adult, gaining even greater power and even greater intelligence, they would realise the distance between their dream and themselves. They would feel despair. Of course, this would not cause too many problems, as most people would choose to give up in the next moment and switch to a more realistic goal.

However, those who wanted to persist would be forced to endure despairing torture.

Li Qingshan smiled slightly. If I don’t sink into this kind of despair, how am I supposed to demonstrate the ox demon’s spirit of never admitting defeat?

Before he knew it, Li Qingshan had crossed this mental journey that could not be put into words, carrying a “mountain” on his shoulders.

To the other side of the cavern, Xiao An remained in a meditative state. She sat with her legs crossed and her hands in seals. Twenty prayer beads revolved above her head. As long as she forged one more, the Skull Prayer Beads would evolve again and reach a whole new realm.

However, the forging process of the last prayer bead was extremely difficult. It was much more difficult than refining the twenty other prayer beads.

Li Qingshan did not disturb her. Calculating the time, there were still a few more days before the fifth of the fifth month, the day of the battle.

I hope I can break through to the fourth layer of the tiger demon. Li Qingshan remembered something and took out the Rock of Slaughter from his hundred treasures pouch.

Strongboulder's soul had been drawn out by Xiao An, so his body had reverted to its original form, the Rock of Slaughter. The daemon core remained in the rock too.

At first glance, the Rock of Slaughter did not seem particularly special, but it was so tough that even the arcane artifact blood-red blade could only leave behind a mark. If Li Qingshan used the power of his tremors, perhaps it would have been effective, but he was afraid of destroying the daemon core inside. If he accidentally set it off and it blew up, it would be bad.

Coupled with the fact that Li Qingshan could not use an earth element daemon core, he just left it in his hundred treasures pouch and did not think too much about it. He just wanted to wait until he made some progress with artifact forging to see if he could create a weapon with it.

But at this moment, Li Qingshan came up with a new idea. He exhaled gently and extended his hand over, grabbing the Rock of Slaughter firmly.

A great power gradually seeped out, passing into his fingers. He actually dug his fingers into the Rock of Slaughter bit by bit before using some more force and breaking off two pieces.

He checked it, and sure enough, it was merely regular rock, which made him doubt whether this thing could be forged into an artifact or not. It was just regular rock, so why was it so tough?

Li Qingshan's hands flew into a flurry and fragments and powder flew into the air. Before long, he had ripped apart the huge Rock of Slaughter, finding a grey daemon core inside. It possessed extremely powerful earth element energy, which the spirit turtle's daemon core would struggle to digest.

However, the power that Li Qingshan wanted to make use of was something else.

A powerful killing intent radiated from the daemon core, enough to drive cultivators crazy. Just as Li Qingshan had expected, the daemon core did not only contain all of Strongboulder's power. It was also the nucleus to the Rock of Slaughter.

Li Qingshan casually tossed the daemon core into his mouth and swallowed it with a gulp. Immediately, killing intent rushed through his head. His eyes immediately turned blood-red.

He no longer suppressed it with the spirit turtle. Instead, he comprehended the killing intent closely.

In his sea of consciousness, the tiger demon appeared, leaping up and unleashing a vicious roar at the sky. It unfurled its wings and sped around, brandishing its claws and teeth, wanting to kill and fight to its heart's content. However, there were no enemies in the empty sea of consciousness.

Li Qingshan's body bent over. His claws protruded, and his teeth lengthened. His breathing became hurried as his heart beat faster and faster!

He was tempted to rush out of the dwelling immediately and find someone, human or daemon. All he wanted was a massacre, to slaughter everything in sight.

I mustn't! Li Qingshan suddenly pressed against his chest, as if he wanted to force this killing intent back inside.

At this moment, he suddenly thought of Yu Zijian. In Jiaping city, she did not rely on anything at all, yet she managed to resist the power of the Rock of Slaughter.

“Even a Qi Practitioner girl could do that, yet I can't?”

Actually, as a woman, Yu Zijian was naturally kind-hearted. She had been stunned by the horrific sight before her, which made her think of the past, filling her with sorrow.

On the other hand, Li Qingshan possessed the boldness and valiance of a man, and there was a bloodthirsty and battle-hungry aspect to him too. Not only was he unable to use anything else to distract himself right now, but he instead poured all of his attention into the killing intent, so it was a hundred times more difficult.

The fifth day of the fifth month arrived quickly.

The endless Boundless mountains seemed like the rising and falling seas. The perilous peaks formed the colossal waves.

The surroundings were pitch-black. Rain poured down, swept about by the rain, sometimes falling northward, sometimes perpendicular to that, or even sometimes flying up towards the sky. It seemed like a thunderstorm above the sea.

Fu Qingjin stood alone on one of the waves, completely drenched by the rain. However, he did not waste even a shred of strength to block the rain. Instead, he seemed like he was enjoying it, allowing the rain to fall on his face while listening to the whistling wind by the cliffs.

Suddenly, a smile appeared on his handsome face. He tightened his grasp around the Green Ruins sword on his waist.

A scarlet figure spun and pierced through the cloud layer in a hurry. A ray of golden light abruptly appeared in the darkness, illuminating Fu Qingjin's face.

Li Qingshan slowed down in the light. The wings of wind behind him folded up slightly as he descended gradually.

The sunlight dyed the droplets of rain, turning them into thousands of golden specks that danced around him. With his flawless appearance and calm expression, he seemed more like a god, not a diabolical daemon.

“You've changed.”

Fu Qingjin was slightly surprised. As a true swordsman, he had already committed everything about his opponent to heart. He had even undergone countless simulations in his head.



It was possible to say that he could confidently claim he was one of the few people who understood Northmoon the most in the world.

But meeting him again, he discovered everything he had been anticipating had been overturned and shattered.

He did not just see a change in strength from Li Qingshan. His entire vigour was completely different, which made him feel like he was facing a new opponent.

Aren't daemons supposed to cultivate extremely slowly? Northmoon, how did you achieve this?

"Have I?" Li Qingshan answered calmly. Strongboulder's daemon core was still in his belly, affecting him in the same way as before.

In only a few days, he had undergone pain and struggle that regular people could never even imagine, yet he still failed to break through to the fourth layer of the tiger demon. Sure enough, cultivation was becoming more and more difficult.

The ever-growling tiger demon became even more excited now, urging him to a battle to the death with Fu Qingjin.

At this moment, Li Qingshan actually hoped Fu Qingjin was a little stronger, strong enough to force him into dire straits. Only a true battle to the death could stimulate the tiger demon's bloodthirstiness and craziness, allowing him to use this opportunity to break through to the fourth layer.

Suddenly, he discovered that he no longer placed so much importance on this battle that he originally cared so much about. Even his grievances with Fu Qingjin had become negligible. All he saw before him was a chance to become even stronger, a stepping stone leading to beyond the Nine Heavens.

"However, defeat is certain for you today," Fu Qingjin said firmly.

PS: A bow and thank you to Antenna Baby (Machine Baby) for becoming a new Alliance Head. A thank you to Shangguan Dizzy (Shangguan Giddy) for becoming a new Sect Master. Thank you for your powerful support, which fills me with fighting will. With seven Alliance Heads assembled, we're not far from summoning the holy dragon. May the two of you enjoy eternal happiness and the same longevity as heaven itself.

### **Chapter 478 - A Battle Under the Clear Sky**

"That's good to know!" Li Qingshan laughed aloud.

In the past, he would never accept Fu Qingjin posing around, wanting to teach him a proper lesson. But right now, he saw the absolute confidence of a swordsman, who was also filled with a certain will.

This was a good opponent!

"But I'd like to say the same thing to you. Your defeat is certain with this battle!"

Fu Qingjin smiled. "In the past, I only treated you as a measly daemon with good luck, but I must admit that the current you indeed threatens me a little. If I get the chance, I will kill you."

"I'd hope you can escape from my hands with your life intact instead."

“Oh? Why?”

“Killing a disciple of the Sword Collection palace with a renowned sword is a very troublesome matter,” Li Qingshan said in an unconcerned manner.

“In other words, you’re going to be holding back?” Fu Qingjin’s face sank as his lips curled into a cold sneer.

“That’ll depend on what you’re capable of. Once my killing intent is roused, even I won’t be able to control myself. If you can escape, then fate is on your side. If you can’t, then I’ll have to deal with some troubles.”

Li Qingshan stood with his arms crossed and smiling, gazing at Fu Qingjin from above as if Fu Qingjin had already been defeated and he was considering at leisure whether he should finish him off or not.

Fu Qingjin discovered he had already lost the upper hand in this verbal clash, so he no longer said anything. The Green Ruins sword thrummed as he drew it from its sheath, declaring an end to this conversation.

Li Qingshan drew his blood-red blade. With a casual swing, the blade aura cut through all the rain in the air.

The clouds ebbed and surged, filling the hole that Li Qingshan had created very quickly. The golden light vanished, and the surroundings sank back into darkness.

Faint, green light rose up from Fu Qingjin’s body and wrapped around him, isolating him from the fierce wind and rain. His green robes and hair began to float.

He was like a torch within the endlessly dark night, burning on the cliff and becoming brighter and brighter.

Li Qingshan’s daemon qi rushed into the sky. His scarlet hair danced around like fire. His blood-red pupils locked onto Fu Qingjin and murderousness surged around him like wind.

He raised the blood-red blade high into the sky before suddenly pausing. He smiled. “You sure have brought a lot of helpers!”

Within the dark clouds, a brilliant bolt of lightning twisted and turned rapidly. In the blink of an eye, the bolt of lightning had pierced the clouds, but it moved much slower than regular lightning. At a closer glance, it was Zhou Tong riding over on his Lightning Slaughter wooden sword.

The Divine Heaven Method of Lightning Wielding circulated to its limit within him. Zhou Tong was slightly pleased. Weather like this was perfect for unleashing the power of lightning.

Lightning Slaughter flew into his hand. He raised it high up, pointing it at the sky as he began chanting.

“As the Lord commands, may the Lord of Thunder and Mother of Lightning cast the divine lightning to slay the daemons!”

Light poured through the dark clouds. Countless bolts of lightning weaved into an electric net, turning into a colossal bolt of lightning that fell right towards Li Qingshan. The surroundings were dyed white.

Suddenly, Fu Qingjin fished out a scarlet talisman from his sleeve. It turned into a long, slender, golden sword and shot out, catching Li Qingshan in the middle of a pincer attack.

Further away in the sky, specks of light twinkled like stars. There were many Foundation Establishment cultivators. They were slower than Zhou Tong, but they all hurried over as quickly as they could.

Li Qingshan raised an eyebrow, but he did not move. Over a dozen meters above his head, the golden sword and the lightning collided.

“Fellow Fu, what are you doing?” Zhou Tong said in surprise and anger.

“This is our battle,” Fu Qingjin said indifferently.

“You idiot! Why would you still bother with fighting alone against a daemon? Take a look for yourself!” Zhou Tong pointed at the distant mountains. Black figures flashed past the mountains as daemon qi erupted from the underground caverns, rapidly drawing closer.

Li Qingshan and Fu Qingjin’s battle definitely did not only impact their lives and sense of honour. It also impacted the direction of the entire war.

If Li Qingshan fell in battle, then only Dragonsnail would be left, which would not be enough to prop up the situation. The night roamers would lose their leader and fall into disunity again. If Fu Qingjin died, then no one would be able to continue leading those sects. The Daemon Suppression alliance of the Clear River prefecture would collapse, and their alliance with the academy would not be able to continue either.

Even without these consequences, Fu Qingjin and Li Qingshan’s individual strength alone was enough to tamper with the scales of victory. As a result, neither side dared to be careless. They all brought their full strength.

The battle between the two of them had evolved into a decisive battle between humans and daemons.

Daemon Generals, powerful night roamers, and Foundation Establishment cultivators all converged towards the two of them. They were like countless sparks, about to collide together.

A great battle was on the verge of breaking out!

Suddenly, swathes of sunlight fell from the sky. The sun shrouded by the thick, dark clouds emerged, radiating with endless light and warmth.

Tornadoes ripped apart the thick clouds. Everyone could not help but raise their heads. A figure in white clothes even paler than snow stood under the azure skies.

“Commander Gu!” Liu Zhangqing, Wang Pushi, and the others all cried out in surprise.

“Gu Yanying!” In Cobweb city, Spider Queen Lolth currently watched this unfold through a mirror. Her face coldened.

Gu Yanying held a jade fan. With a gentle swing, fierce gales sucked up the dark clouds, making them recede into the distance. A while later, she had carved out a region of clear sky that stretched a hundred kilometers across. She pulled back with her fan and pointed down.

“No one is allowed to interfere with their battle. Whether you’re human or daemon, as long as you set foot in the sunlight, you will be executed without mercy. Zhou Tong, what’re you staring at me for? What do you think? Dragonsnail, do you really think I can’t see you just because you’re hiding underground?”

“Fine then! I’ll leave!” Zhou Tong snorted and rode off on his sword. Only when he reached fifty kilometers away and entered the shade of the clouds did he stop. He was utterly furious, but he was unable to vent it. The other Foundation Establishment cultivators immediately retreated too. None of them could bring themselves to object.

Without saying anything at all, Dragonsnail lead all the Daemon Generals back to the depths underground.

Originally, there was no need for the night roamers to come under Li Qingshan’s suggestion. However, the Spider Queen’s orders could not be defied. Now that they saw Gu Yanying’s powers, it made them even more afraid to resist. They all backed far away.

So she’s Gu Yanying. If I had that kind of power, would I still have to worry about being incapable of leading the night roamers to prosperity? Ye Liusu stared at the white figure on the horizon.

Gu Yanying stood on the battlefield under the clear sky that she had personally carved out and nodded towards Li Qingshan and Fu Qingjin. “You can continue. It’s a battle between commanders now.” She smiled. “You don’t have to worry. I’m just an arbiter. No matter who gets killed, I won’t interfere.”

“Then thank you for assistance, commander Gu.” Fu Qingjin clashed his hands.

“Northmoon, is there anything else you want to say?”

Gu Yanying’s gaze landed on Li Qingshan again. She felt like he would leave her surprised every time she saw him. Never had she seen someone grow so quickly. Others might have had various speculations over the deaths of the blood demon and the rock demon, but she knew it was all connected to him.

Apart from that, she also felt some attachment to him, as if she was seeing her past self.

During the three years of secluded cultivation, just how many struggles and hardships have you gone through? Have you ever made a choice between humanity and the Daemon race? Though, at the end of the day, you won’t be able to make a choice, nor do you have to make a choice. To people like us, the only side we can ever be loyal to is ourselves. We won’t ever be accepted by either side. This is also true freedom.

As Gu Yanying stared at Li Qingshan, Li Qingshan stared right back at her. As the dream lover who had once made him fall in love at first sight, she was just as beautiful as when he first saw her. Her splendour had not dimmed at all, not even by the slightest. His past longing for her had now become some understanding. He understood why she could be as unrestrained as the wind, which made her even more enchanting.

What else do I want to say?

Li Qingshan thought of something. He raised his arm, pointed it straight at her, and smiled. “I’ve fallen in love with you at first sight!”

His voice filled the entire sky, such that even the thunder in the distance became soft. For a moment, there was only silence.

The cultivators were all stunned. When they returned to their senses, they all reacted in various ways and began discussing among themselves.

“Has he lost his mind? He’s a daemon for heaven’s sake!” “Though, commander Gu also seems to be...” “He’s a toad lusting after a swan’s flesh. He’s only a measly Daemon General. If he pisses off commander Gu, she’ll have him slaughtered right here and now.”

“Northmoon... he sure is much bolder than me.” Hua Chengzan murmured, left at quite a loss as for how to react. However, he also could not help but develop some admiration towards Northmoon. Only daemons could be so direct!

Fu Qingjin finally became stunned. The great battle was on the verge of beginning, yet he decided to profess his love towards the arbiter. Moreover, the person he was professing his love to was the renowned daughter of the Hawk God. Northmoon, looks like I’ve still underestimated your conceitedness.

“Master!” Ye Liubo pouted unhappily. This woman’s chest is nowhere near as large as mine, nor are her buttocks anywhere close enough to feast your eyes upon. You can tell with a single glance that she’s no good for birthing and raising children!

The Spider Queen’s face sank. A Daemon General under her command was expressing good will towards her arch nemesis, which made her even more displeased with Li Qingshan.

Of course, not a lot of people could guess where he had actually fallen in love with her at first sight.

“Is that all?” Gu Yanying widened her eyes, making them round like a pair of hawk eyes.

“That’s all!”

Li Qingshan smiled resplendently. He was no longer the young, wandering gallant of the past, nor was he the infatuated type like Hua Chengzan. He merely said what he wanted to say and did what he wanted to do. As for what Gu Yanying would think or do, it was no longer that important. As long as I’m satisfied, who cares what the outcome is?

“First of all, you have to survive! And, even if you say something like that, I’m not going to favour you.”

Gu Yanying began smiling as well, shaking her head slightly and making her black hair drift through the air. If men were all so straightforward, then being loved by others would not be something troublesome anymore.

As she said that, Gu Yanying directly took off into the horizon. In the blink of an eye, she vanished from view.

Li Qingshan gazed into the horizon. The surrounding landscape suddenly began to change. Dilapidated palace walls and broken towers rose up. He no longer stood on thin air, but cracked, granite bricks covered in moss.

A desolate, dilapidated aura filled the surroundings. It was impossible to distinguish the real from the fake, and his connection with the spiritual qi of the world was suddenly severed. He had fallen into the Green Ruins Illusion once again.

“Just how many times do you plan on using the same move on me?” Li Qingshan turned around and said to Fu Qingjin nearby.

“As long as it’s effective, I’ll use it as many times as I want.” Fu Qingjin walked over slowly with his sword.

Liu Zhangqing, who watched on from a distance, let out a deep sigh. “The Green Ruins sword is simply too powerful. As long as the Green Ruins sword is present, fellow Fu possesses a geographical advantage no matter who he faces. He stands in an undefeatable position.”

Even a powerful Daemon General like Strongboulder could only use his malice to create a hole and escape when he faced the Green Ruins Illusion. It was impossible to defeat Fu Qingjin inside there.

However, Li Qingshan did not seem to have come here today to run away!

As Li Qingshan laughed aloud, he took a step forward and threw a punch at the air.

In that instant, countless cracks pervaded the surroundings, covering the entire Green Ruins Illusion like spider webs. The dilapidated walls shattered like scenery on a canvas, all of it turning into fragments.

Fu Qingjin’s expression changed. He raised his sword to parry. The power of tremors was startlingly great. He was sent flying through the air full of fragments.

The Green Ruins Illusion shattered in a single punch.

### **Chapter 479 - Severing the Sword**

Fu Qingjin was filled with disbelief. He did sense Li Qingshan’s changes, but never did he imagine he would actually become so powerful in such a short amount of time.

All the human cultivators were dumbfounded. During the few years Fu Qingjin had dominated in the Clear River prefecture, everyone had learnt about the Green Ruins Illusion’s power. Even the rock demon and blood demon could only flee when they encountered it.

None of them imagined it would simply shatter with a casual punch like this!

Having broken through to the fourth layer of the ox demon, Li Qingshan’s strength had not merely multiplied. His innate abilities of the ox demon had strengthened too. With the two combined, the power of a single punch from him was more than ten times greater than before.

They were basically equal in the past. Now that he had become ten times stronger, even Fu Qingjin, a genius disciple of the Sword Collection palace and a successor of one of the Ten Renowned Swords, would find it a little too much to bear with.

Whether it’s humans or daemons, the rate at which their strength increases slows down as their cultivation progresses, but he’s the opposite. With each break through, his strength increases by a startling amount. It’s unbelievable. Gu Yanying sighed inside.

“So this is your so-called certain victory. It’s far too disappointing.”

Li Qingshan did not chase after him. He suppressed the tiger demon’s roaring killing intent and said in some disappointment.

“Myriad Sword technique!”

Fu Qingjin came to a halt and swung his hand. The Green Ruins sword flew into the air and turned into a speck of green light, like a twinkling star in the clear sky. Following a flash, the star multiplied into thousands.

Then he pointed at Li Qingshan. “Green Threads as a Net!”

The thousands of specks of light descended from above, turning into thousands of streaks. They were in twists and turns, like hair drifting through the air. At first glance, they seemed aimless, without even a hint of sharpness. However, the net completely enveloped Li Qingshan, leaving him with nowhere to dodge.

“It’s finally getting a little interesting.”

The corner of Li Qingshan’s lips curled slightly as he lamented to himself. He allowed the net to fall over him.

“Northmoon, you’ve been too careless. If you tell me the truth regarding the Soaring Dragon Elder’s death, I might consider sparing you. Otherwise, the Sword Net of Green Threads will cut you to pieces with a single thought of mine.”

Fu Qingjin said coldly. He had already considered that the Green Ruins Illusion was unable to keep a Daemon General at his level trapped. For this battle, Fu Qingjin had specially refined the Sword Net of Green Threads. Although it was nowhere near as mysterious or flexible as the Green Ruins Illusion that could completely lock up the surroundings, it even surpassed the Green Ruins Illusion when it came to trapping and killing the enemy. The sword qi was extremely flexible. It was impossible to break out of no matter how much strength was used.

“Run!”

“What did you say?”

“Otherwise, I’ll end up killing you.”

“Split!” Fu Qingjin called out. The Sword Net of Green Threads immediately tightened, but it failed to draw a single droplet of blood. The sword qi that could cut through stone and jade pressed against Li Qingshan’s skin deeply, but it was unable to cut through that thin layer of skin.

Fu Qingjin’s expression changed. He formed a seal with one hand and pointed it at the sky. “Go!”

The Green Ruins sword fell like a meteor with a long, green tail trailing behind.

“Shatter!” Li Qingshan shuddered, and the green threads snapped. Blood-red light surged into the air as he landed a strike on the Green Ruins sword.

The Green Ruins sword dimmed, thrown far away. Fu Qingjin paled slightly. He had merged with the Green Ruins sword, so if the sword was damaged, his mind would be injured too.

He called back the Green Ruins sword in a hurry, but he saw a sudden, scarlet flash. He could not think too much about it as he flew backwards in retreat. A sharp flash shot across his eyes. The mountain he was standing on earlier had been split open by the swing, collapsing towards the two sides.

Oh no. I didn't expect his strength to be this great. The Sword Net of Green Threads was actually so futile against him. Now that I'm separated from my sword, I'm at my weakest point. If he pursues relentlessly, I'll be in danger.

"Grip your sword firmly!"

What Fu Qingjin worried about did not happen. After unleashing that swing, Li Qingshan hovered in the air, staring at him quietly. He waited for him to retrieve the Green Ruins sword.

"You will pay for your arrogance!"

The Green Ruins sword flew back to him, and Fu Qingjin grabbed it. He felt deeply humiliated.

"I'm waiting." Li Qingshan placed the blade over his shoulder casually.

Fu Qingjin closed his eyes, and the Green Ruins sword thrummed gently. He recovered his composure, and his bearing changed drastically. When he opened his eyes again, his pupils had already become green, with dilapidated walls floating through them vaguely. It was the scenery of the Green Ruins Illusion.

"Are you done?" Li Qingshan said impatiently.

With a flash, Fu Qingjin vanished and arrived before Li Qingshan. He began swinging his sword.

Li Qingshan swung down fearlessly just like before. The blade and sword collided, and he felt like he had struck cotton, completely absorbing the force. The Green Ruins sword trembled elastically as it completely nullified the terrifying force within the blade. The tip of the sword trembled like a flickering snake's tongue, hiding a crafty killing strike.

What a powerful sword style. This is no longer Fu Qingjin's power, but the mental legacy left behind in the Green Ruins sword by those old coots! He's even bold enough to use the heart of the sword. Looks like kiddo Fu has been forced into a tight spot. Interesting. Absolute technique against absolute force. Who will win in the end? Gu Yanying was slightly surprised before understanding what was going on.

What made the Sword Collection palace powerful was that every single sword contained the mental legacies of countless seniors. They were like teachers and masters available every hour of the day. As long as someone excavated slowly and inherited the legacies, they could naturally become an unparalleled swordsman.

For a renowned sword like the Green Ruins sword, there had been plenty of wielders who had undergone three heavenly tribulations and condensed a "Sword Nascence". They had left behind their extraordinary path of the sword in the Green Ruins sword.



Even with this shortcut, the master of the sword would only be able to take one step at a time, unable to accept the sword intent in one breath and unleash the extraordinary sword techniques.

There was only one method, which was to replace the wielder's heart with the heart of the sword. It was letting go of the wielder's will, allowing the will of the Green Ruins sword to enter its wielder, which was equivalent to letting an ancestral spirit possess them. The slightest carelessness could make the wielder lose themselves and turn them into sword slaves. It was truly a taboo technique from the Sword Collection palace.

Li Qingshan became excited. Red light flashed in his eyes as his blade shone like a blooming flower, blooming with flashes of light. He was like a vicious tiger mauling at Fu Qingjin.

Fu Qingjin was completely unfazed. Swords knew no fear or hesitance. All they knew were to push the sword style in their memories to the limit. He ignored the incoming strikes and stabbed his sword into the attacks.

With a clang, the tip of the sword struck the blood-red blade perfectly. Like it had pierced the throat of the tiger, the flashes immediately subsided, and a mark appeared on the blade. The light from the sword drifted about, sliding past Li Qingshan's shoulder, and a deep, bloody gash immediately appeared.

Li Qingshan began laughing instead. He did not even use the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell. He raised his sword and knocked the Green Ruins sword away before slashing down viciously.

In a single instant, Fu Qingjin had already stabbed out three times. As if he had predicted all of Li Qingshan's responses, each strike was more vicious and resolute than the last.

Li Qingshan's bold, extravagant blade style seemed to meet its nemesis. He was constantly suppressed by the Green Ruins sword. Often, he would be interrupted before he could even begin his swing. Despite his great strength, he was constantly picked apart by Fu Qingjin's ingenious swordsmanship.

He suffered over a hundred wounds in a short while, but his smile only grew wider. Now this is the battle that I want!

Regardless of how many wounds he suffered, his attack did not weaken at all. It only became even more frenzied.

Li Qingshan did not take a single step back. He swung the blade aura around, meeting the sword with his blade without using any abilities at all. However, this did not give him the upper hand. He suffered a thousand injuries, but he had yet to land a single attack on Fu Qingjin.

"Master, use your abilities!" Ye Liubo called out anxiously.

The flames of hope lit up in the hearts of the human cultivators. If this continued, they had a chance at victory.

To match the opponent's strength with your weakness is not a clever decision. Wait, he's gradually growing accustomed to Fu Qingjin's swordsmanship. Originally, Gu Yanying objected to his battle tactic to a certain degree, but she suddenly realised it was becoming more and more difficult for the Green Ruins sword to harm him, while his sword was growing closer and closer to Fu Qingjin's body.

He's battle hungry and skilled at battle. If he were to enter the six realms, he would definitely be an asura of endless slaughter!

The flashes and blurs of weapons filled the surroundings. The two of them battled from the sky to the ground, gradually becoming blurry until only scarlet and green remained. They constantly collided.

All of their gazes were fixed to it. They forgot to breathe.

The two of them suddenly parted. A bloody hole had appeared in Li Qingshan's throat, but he began laughing madly. His voice reached hundreds of kilometers away.

A horrific wound stretched from Fu Qingjin's left shoulder to his right waist. There was not any flesh or blood within the wound, only specks of green light.

I'm willing to take a thousand slashes in exchange for a fraction of strength.

If this continues, I'll be devoured by the Green Ruins sword intent! Under Fu Qingjin's cold outer appearance, a voice moaned painfully. The sliver of a struggle flashed across his eyes.

However, his realisation came too late. Sword intent had already begun to surge. In a daze, he saw a person in green staring coldly at him. The person in green's appearance was blurry, with many faces vaguely overlapping together, both men and women. The person clutched a clear, shiny Green Ruins sword, while Fu Qingjin's hands were empty.

The blood-red blade whistled madly, spitting out an aura several hundred meters long that pierced the landscape and slashed across Fu Qingjin's waist. The struggle in his eyes completely vanished. He did not check the wound on his waist. He only stared at Li Qingshan.

The wounds closed up instantly. With a flash of green light, he arrived before Li Qingshan. He completely ignored the blood-red blade that fell down from above and stabbed towards Li Qingshan's forehead, as if he wanted to take Li Qingshan down with him. Normally, only when Fu Qingjin merged with his sword could he demonstrate such speed.

Li Qingshan frowned. He could sense there was something wrong with Fu Qingjin, so he turned his head in a flash, and a gash appeared on his chest. He raised his fist and threw it at Fu Qingjin's face, but it did not feel like he had struck someone's body. At a closer glance, Fu Qingjin's body shone with a metallic sheen.

"Is my opponent now this sword? That's far too boring."

The Green Ruins sword stabbed out again. Li Qingshan raised his hand to catch it, and his palm ached, having been pierced by the Green Ruins sword. He grabbed the blade of the sword and shook hard, but Fu Qingjin seemed to be glued to the hilt. His ears, eyes, mouth, and nose all shone with light.

Li Qingshan used the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell to block the light and unleashed the power of tremors, shattering Fu Qingjin's sword-wielding hand and finally separating him from the sword. As if his soul had been sucked away, he shut his eyes and hurtled towards the ground.

Li Qingshan gripped the trembling Green Ruins sword with his left hand and constantly poured his power of tremors into it to prevent it from turning into light and escaping. He raised the blood-red blade in his right hand and swung down viciously.

Clang!

The Green Ruins sword produced a sorrowful thrum, and a mark appeared on the sword.

“Stop!” Fu Qingjin jerked awake and cried out involuntarily.

Clang!

Li Qingshan swung down again, striking the mark accurately. The mark turned into a fracture.

### **Chapter 480 - A Broken Sword**

Fu Qingjin used his last bit of spiritual energy to fly over.

Li Qingshan let out a crazed burst of laughter and swung down with his blade.

With a crack, the fracture expanded across the entire sword.

The treasured sword renowned throughout the world was severed into two pieces just like that. Green light poured out from the crack, permeating the surroundings.

Regardless of the toughness of the sword, it was unable to escape the fate of being destroyed when it sustained such forceful damage without the support of spiritual qi.

Fu Qingjin felt like a bolt of lightning had just struck him. He was thrown into a daze, spraying with blood violently.

The blood-red blade and the Green Ruins sword had clashed countless times. They had already become riddled with damage. Now, it turned to fragments with the Green Ruins sword.

Fu Qingjin flew into a frenzy, lunging over madly. This was a sword that had been passed down in the Sword Collection palace throughout the ages. This was a sword even more important than his life. If he lost this sword, what right did he still have to return to the Sword Collection palace and face the palace master, the elders, and his master!?

He took out a handful of scarlet talismans from his hundred treasures pouch. He could no longer care about whatever oath he had sworn. He wanted to drag Li Qingshan down with him.

Li Qingshan casually tossed out the hilt of the blade and struck Fu Qingjin’s chest.

With the Green Ruins sword broken, both Fu Qingjin’s body and mind suffered extremely heavy damage. His cultivation had receded drastically, so it was impossible for him to dodge or block that. He was unable to turn into green light and drift away anymore, nor did he possess a body as tough as metal.

With the sound of cracking bones, the talismans were thrown into the air.

“Fu Qingjin, that’s the end to our grievance!”

Li Qingshan held back the killing intent in his heart. Having reached a point like this, slaughter had already become pointless. Leaving Fu Qingjin to bear with the pain of losing the Green Ruins sword was the best revenge there was.

A daemon core that came from a thousand years of cultivation for a sword that had been passed down for a thousand years. This was very fair.

Fu Qingjin fainted once again.

Before they knew it, the dark clouds had gathered over once more. The battlefield under the clear skies gradually shrunk.

“We’ve failed!” Liu Zhangqing murmured. The gloominess infected all the cultivators.

This was not only a single failure. The one-sided strength the moon demon had demonstrated left everyone astounded. In this realm of cultivation, did he still have any opponents? If he wanted to massacre them all, just who could stop him?

As Gu Yanying had said, this was a battle between commanders. They had been checkmated before they even reached the end game.

“Northmoon, I order you to kill him!”

A voice seeped out from underground, clear like silk. Everyone heard it. The Spider Queen saw how Li Qingshan wanted to let Fu Qingjin go, so she issued an order.

Li Qingshan frowned. He extended his hand and scooped up the unconscious Fu Qingjin. As long as he tightened his grasp gently, a genius of the Sword Collection palace would die here.

Just as everyone thought he would follow the Spider Queen’s order and deal with this problem for good, he instead tossed Fu Qingjin towards the human cultivators in the distance, leaving everyone surprised.

Liu Zhangqing caught Fu Qingjin and glanced at Li Qingshan in surprise. “Fellow Hua Ci, please tend to him immediately!”

“I hope that even without this sword, there will be a day when you can still stand before me and take me on in a real battle.”

In his groggy state, Fu Qingjin vaguely heard a familiar voice say that.

The Spider Queen was stunned. She never expected Li Qingshan to actually defy her order. Her beautiful face twisted into a mess.

“Northmoon, I order you to kill them all, or you will face the worst punishment possible!”

Alright!

Li Qingshan unfurled his wings of wind and arrived before the cultivators in a flash. His scarlet eyes glanced past the face of every cultivator.

“Get him together, everyone! I refuse to believe we can’t even deal with one of him with all of us!” Cheng Kaishan bellowed out loudly. The cultivators were all on the verge of fighting. They flashed with light as they gripped spiritual and arcane artifacts in their hands, poised for battle at any time.

Li Qingshan stood with his arms crossed, smiling silently. Figures appeared one by one behind him. The night roamers had all gathered over, proving it was not only one of him.

Faced with this colossal disadvantage, Cheng Kaishan's face sank. He was unable to say anything else.

"Wait. Moon- Northmoon, what do you want to say?"

Liu Zhangqing stopped the cultivators and went up to receive him. He remembered how he had chased away a crying child in Clear River city in the past. He was not bloodthirsty.

Li Qingshan opened his mouth and let out a great yawn. He waved his hand impatiently. "Don't bug me again in the future."

"Yes! Let's go!" Liu Zhangqing was taken aback at first before beaming in joy. He thanked him with a bow before turning around and telling everyone that.

Many of them were dissatisfied, but at a time like this, who was still bold enough to stay behind and play the hero? They all rode off on their artifacts. Even Cheng Kaishan left with the group, afraid to fall behind.

Underground, the Spider Queen flew into a rage. She ground her teeth. "Northmoon!"

Li Qingshan smiled and thought to himself, Lolth, don't even think about using me as entertainment anymore. Of course, I don't mind pleasing you in a different way.

However, as the cultivators all retreated, one person remained where he was, without budging at all. He glared at Li Qingshan. He was the greatest within the Clear River prefecture, the slovenly daoist priest, Zhou Tong.

He was wrapped in sparks as his messy daoist robes glowed with light. He seemed like a deity.

The Lightning Slaughter wooden sword in his hand flickered with lightning, like a bolt of lightning directly plucked out of the sky. He directly pointed it at Li Qingshan as he glared at him furiously.

"Fellow Zhou, don't bite off more than you can chew!" Liu Zhangqing called.

Zhou Tong turned a deaf ear to him. "Moon demon, are you bold enough for a battle to the death with me? I'll make you know that the Clear River prefecture has other people even without the disciple of the Sword Collection palace!"

"Alright, come at me!" Li Qingshan laughed aloud. I've almost forgotten, but we also have a small grievance between us. I'll use this opportunity to settle it as well!

Rumble!

Zhou Tong pointed at the sky and electricity swam through the clouds. A bolt of heavenly lightning descended and struck Li Qingshan.

Lightning was the punishment of the heavens. Among the various different techniques, it was second to none in terms of destructive power. A bolt of lightning even thicker than a tree with countless smaller sparks wormed into Li Qingshan's body, wreaking great havoc. His entire body became numb as even his bones shuddered.

Just as Li Qingshan wanted to use the spirit turtle's daemon core to suppress the power of the lightning, he suddenly discovered that his body was rapidly recovering with his powerful life force as it was being destroyed. And, after recovering, a refreshing feeling overcame him, like his body had been forged.

The sea of qi in his dantian was filled with flashing lightning and thunder, constantly weaving around the spirit turtle's daemon core. However, as Li Qingshan's strongest defence, the daemon core could not be destroyed by a few bolts of lightning.

He actually felt like he was facing a tribulation. It was very satisfying.

"How satisfying!" Li Qingshan just stood there, allowing the lightning to rain down on him.

"I'd like to see just how long you can last!"

Zhou Tong was furious. He moved with his sword, conjuring numerous blurs to receive Li Qingshan. He appeared from every single angle as bolts of heavenly lightning slammed against Li Qingshan endlessly.

Li Qingshan stood with his arms crossed without budging at all. His head full of scarlet hair stood on end. As he shook his head, he spat out a poem.

"From whichever direction the winds leap, I remain strong, though dealt many a blow!"

Continuing like this won't work. This bastard's body is just too tough. Regular lightning won't be enough to heavily injure him. The Divine Heaven Method of Lightning Wielding is powerful, but it consumes spiritual qi far too rapidly. I can't even replenish it in time with spiritual stones. Northmoon, since you're so arrogant, I'll have you witness the power of true heavenly lightning!

Zhou Tong thought to himself and withdrew the numerous blurs. He performed a series of ritualistic daoist gestures and began chanting. The Lightning Slaughter sword in his hand glided up and down, and with a crackle, he produced arcs of lightning.

Overhead, the dark clouds became brighter and brighter, but no lightning fell. The rumbling thunder was like a colossal beast building up energy.

A figure wrapped in lightning rose up from Zhou Tong's body. His mouth protruded like a hawk's with a pair of wings on his back. He wielded a mallet in one hand and a chisel in the other. It resembled the form of the legendary Lord of Thunder.

Although this was a world of cultivators, no one dared to claim they were god. Even the most powerful soul nascence cultivators lacked the right to. He was borrowing the power of gods, which only demonstrated how terrifying the attack was.

The spirit turtle's daemon core immediately let out an omen of warning. If he could endure the power of lightning, then it was forging. If he could not, only death would await him.

"Lord of Thunder..." Zhou Tong roared out furiously with the vague rumbling of thunder. However, before he could even say "Strikes the Daemon", Li Qingshan, who had been playing the role of a living target obediently the entire time, arrived with a flash and grinned.

"Give it here!"

“Be careful, fellow Zhou!”

Zhou Tong was just about to unleash his ultimate move, so he was immobilised. All he could do was watch as Li Qingshan grabbed the Lightning Slaughter sword and forcefully ripped it out of his hands with brute strength.

Rumble! The dark clouds in the sky erupted with a string of lightning, turning the landscape white and drowning out the startled cry.

Having lost Zhou Tong’s control, the terrifying move of the “Lord of Thunder Strikes the Daemon” ended without resolving properly.

“Do you really think I’ll let you rough me up as you please?” Li Qingshan said with hidden meaning. He weighed the Lightning Slaughter sword in his hand and said, “I’ll spare your life, but let me keep this to fiddle around with!”

Although the Lightning Slaughter was an item connected to the slovenly daoist priest’s life, his power to control the sword remotely obviously paled in comparison to Li Qingshan’s fourth layer of the ox demon.

Zhou Tong stared at the Lightning Slaughter sword in Li Qingshan’s hand. Overcome with humiliation and fury, his face became twisted. He was forcefully dragged away by Liu Zhangqing. He did not put up much of a struggle, as he knew if he continued, he would only be inviting humiliation.

Never would he think that the disaster he faced today would be connected with the karma he had sown several years ago.

Li Qingshan pointed out. “Is there anyone else who refuses to accept this? I’ll specially deal with the discontent today!”

“Let me try out this daemon!” Cheng Kaishan called out.

“But if you do plan on continuing, I’m going to start killing.” Li Qingshan rubbed his fingers and glanced at Cheng Kaishan indifferently.

Cheng Kaishan felt all his hairs stand on end. He saw how Li Qingshan had no intention to kill, which was why he contemplated taking on the moon demon in battle. Even if he was defeated, it would not exactly be humiliating. However, when he heard Li Qingshan say that, he immediately became filled with regret.

“Fellow Cheng, keep your cool. The daemons have the advantage. We must consider the greater picture!”

“Fine. Today, I’ll spare—” Cheng Kaishan immediately used this to get out of the situation without humiliating himself. Originally, he wanted to say “I’ll spare you.” but upon further thought, if he ended up angering the moon demon with that, it would probably be difficult to pull out, so he simply shut up unhappily.

“Mighty be sir Northmoon!”

Among the celebratory cheers of the night roamers, the cultivators all flew away in low spirits.

Just when Li Qingshan gave up on stopping the war, the war had instead approached a premature end due to his will.

With all these grievances resolved, he was filled with utmost delight.

However, he understood that the chaos was nowhere close to coming to an end. Once the game of chess came to an end, the chess players could finally break free from their final restraints and enter the stage gloriously.

His troubles had only just begun. Whether it was the Sword Collection palace that had lost its sword or Wen Zhengming who had lost his disciple, they all viewed him as a mortal enemy. However, these matters were still far away in the distance.

Ye Liubo said anxiously, “Master, how do you plan on dealing with ma’am Spider Queen’s side of things?”

Li Qingshan gazed at the sky. Gu Yanying had already vanished. He lowered his head and smiled.

“I’ll go see her right now!”