

GREAT SAGE 551

Chapter 551 - Battle

Time seemed to come to a standstill in that moment.

Under the vast, gloomy sky, two mountainous figures faced one another.

Li Qingshan's face had neither fury or hatred, only tranquility.

As tranquil and unmoving as the earth.

Divine strength emerged from every corner of his body and the earth below him, accumulating into an ocean drop by drop and merging with his body.

Boundless like the earth.

The entire world vanished. The vicious Corpse King who stood as imposing as a mountain gradually blurred in his eyes. Even the colossal, incoming punch no longer emitted any pressure.

That was merely a "rock in his way", something that a person would always come across in their lives.

All he had to do was shatter it!

Gazing into the resolute and tranquil eyes, the Corpse King became slightly perturbed as well.

Just what is this puny daemon? If he possesses the flames of the phoenix, then so be it, but he has so many variations. Looking at his aura, it's only at the level of overcoming a single heavenly tribulation, yet he possesses great strength that even Corpse Commanders struggle to rival. Even with that being the case, we're still worlds apart, yet he's bold enough to challenge me? Fine, I'll grind you into mincemeat then!

With a thought, four bone spikes suddenly protruded from his fist, whistling towards Li Qingshan's face. Before their punches had even collided, the spikes would have pierced Li Qingshan already.

The punch became even more dangerous, yet Li Qingshan remained unfazed.

Having changed his attack on the spot, it meant he was lacking in confidence.

Before he knew it, the momentum had shifted slightly.

The flow of time recovered.

The black shockwaves immediately shattered the bone spikes. The destructive power was so great that even the Corpse King felt shocked.

The moment when the two fists collided actually resulted in momentary peace.

The overly loud sound was like a colossal being, unable to worm into a person's narrow ear channels, instead leading to a false impression of silence.

Following that moment, the world seemed to sink into rumbling and shaking that never stopped.

The tranquil ground immediately began to surge like the violent waves of an ocean. Hills rose and collapsed as cracks opened and closed, without a single moment of pause.

Dust filled the air, rising into the sky.

Black corpse qi poured from the Corpse King's body like an avalanche, crushing the fragmented daemon qi and completely swallowing Li Qingshan. It pressured, ripped at, and seeped into his body.

Li Qingshan did everything he could to direct the Corpse King's power into the earth. He held his head high as he looked straight into the Corpse King's eyes, letting out a thunderous growl.

The surging flames of the phoenix erupted from his daemon core, expelling the corpse qi.

His arm that seemed to be forged from black iron swelled up, bulging and riddled with blood vessels.

The iron hooves produced two deep pits behind him without him taking a single step back.

Cracks appeared on his skeleton as they produced the sound of twisting metal. He completely disregarded it, simply pouring all of his strength into the punch.

He refused to budge!

The Corpse King's eyes widened, filled with disbelief. The force behind his punch had actually failed to reduce the measly daemon to mincemeat.

Instead, a wondrously great power emanated from the measly daemon's fist, shattering his strength and corpse qi.

This sight stunned all of the cultivators present. He was holding his ground against a Corpse King. Was this truly something a Daemon General could do?

Gu Yanying sighed in praise inside. What power! How impressive!

He definitely isn't an ordinary daemon. Just what kind of fortuitous encounter did he come across that provided him with the source of such great strength? The Dark Queen ingested another pill. As she recovered, she looked for Xiao An with her brows furrowed, but she found nothing.

The Marquis of Ruyi and Han Anguo exchanged glances. They also became extremely conflicted inside. They felt fear, yet they also hoped the moon demon could repel the Corpse King.

The daemon had the momentum. Force could not overwhelm him!

This power is far too strange. How can I lose to you!?

His dignity as a king had been viciously provoked. The Corpse King also began to roar. Corpse qi coiled around his arm like snakes and dragons, merging with it and turning it pitch-black before pressing forward viciously.

Thump!

Li Qingshan's colossal body was sent flying. He spun around in the air and landed firmly on the ground, leaning on one hand. However, he still slid several hundred meters before coming to a halt due to the great momentum.

He really is a Corpse King after all. His physical strength is something else. Though, that's only because my Tiger Demon Transformation and Spirit Turtle Transformation are only at the fourth layer. They're unable to endure and rein in the power of the fifth layer of the ox demon, or I wouldn't lose to him. What a pity!

He took on a Corpse King as a Daemon General and managed to survive a punch, yet he still felt dissatisfied, believing he had not unleashed his full strength!

If the Dark Queen and the others found out about his thoughts, they would never believe it.

However, that was the reality of the situation. Simply by throwing a punch, before even colliding with the Corpse King's fist, his bones had become riddled with countless tiny cracks. Even his tiger bones that were as sturdy as steel could not withstand it.

And, even if he used the spirit turtle to pacify his sea of consciousness, entering a state of intricacy, he was unable to completely control the flow of every bit of power.

Like a child swinging a large blade, it was already strenuous enough for him to point the blade at the enemy. He could not unleash the power of the blade at all, and he would even injure himself if he were not careful.

The three transformations were connected. If any of them lagged behind, it would prevent him from unleashing his full strength.

This was the power of the Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine. A single layer of difference among the nine transformations would make his strength grow in an overwhelming manner.

Whether his strength had multiplied by twenty times, fifty times, or even more, he was unable to estimate it right now, nor did he have the time to estimate it.

He gritted his teeth firmly as he forced down the surging blood. The flames of the phoenix coiled around him and healed his wounds. He stood up and made his way towards the Corpse King again.

The Corpse King said coldly, "I'd like to see how many of my punches you can withstand!"

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Again and again, the ground shook violently.

The hilly terrain around Burial Mound mountain had undergone a devastating change through the constant earthquakes. It had been reduced to a yellow desert.

Within a range of fifty kilometers, every single pebble seemed to be carefully crushed and ground, reduced to thin sand.

The Corpse King stood above the Gate of Hungry Ghosts without moving at all, sending Li Qingshan flying again and again and filling the air with sand and dust.

But every single time, he would stand up immediately, making his way back towards the undefeatable opponent.

The Corpse King's face became twisted as he gazed at the incoming Li Qingshan like he was looking at a monster.

From the constant clashes, Li Qingshan's strength grew. Under the tremendous pressure, he gradually forced out the strength of the ox demon.

If he could not be completely destroyed, he could not be defeated.

Gu Yanying noticed how the Corpse King's arm trembled and how it would only stop after a while. She thought in disbelief, He's harmed the Corpse King. Probably no one would believe me if I mentioned it.

But then she shook her head. But that's all. His great strength alone is not enough for him to defeat the Corpse King. The Corpse King has chosen to engage him like this purely because of his dignity as a king. Otherwise, he'll struggle very much once the Corpse King uses his various techniques and abilities. More importantly, the Corpse King is currently undefeatable. He's not afraid of wasting time at all.

The specks of green light in the surroundings grew clearer, like an ocean was extending over from the distance. She could already make out blurry figures—monstrous, twisted, colossal, obscure, and all forms of bizarre.

Li Qingshan threw another punch.

Under those gazes, the Corpse King felt deeply humiliated. "Since you want to die so much, I'll give you what you want!" He opened his huge, withered hand and avoided Li Qingshan's punch, grabbing Li Qingshan by the wrist with three fingers and wrenching him in.

Li Qingshan had never been able to control this overly great strength in the first place. Both his reactions and skills in battle paled in comparison to the Corpse King.

His punch missed.

Boom! Black shockwaves scattered, shaking up the space there.

At the same time, the other huge, withered hand grabbed Li Qingshan's head from above.

"It's over!"

Gu Yanying let out a gloomy sigh. The Hungry Ghost realm was about to descend. The final scene she had caught was indeed fascinating. It had not disappointed her.

In the end, she gazed at Li Qingshan deeply, actually feeling some pity inside.

Originally, we could travel along this path of cultivation together, at least for a while, but I never thought we'd have to bid farewell so soon. Perhaps there is a day when we meet again among sa'sāra.

Right when Gu Yanying wanted to turn around and leave, she suddenly felt something was amiss. Despite facing imminent death, the corner of Li Qingshan's lips curled slightly, and he let out a gentle sigh.

A huge, half-transparent white sword rose up from behind him, plunging into the Corpse King's hand and penetrating all the way through.

The blade of the sword suddenly turned into white flames, worming into the wound furiously.

When he fought a battle to the death, how could she not be present?

Xiao An had refined the Corpse King's ten fingernails and healed her wounds before secretly making her way over underground, all for this opportunity. She channeled the Samādhi Flames of White Bone into the Corpse King's body.

Their teamwork required no words. They completely understood each other tacitly.

An extremely-terrifying sensation of coldness sank into the Corpse King's heart. As he gathered his corpse qi, he was only able to suppress the Samādhi Flames of White Bone, but not extinguish it. The white flames slowly spread from the centre of his palm. He swung his hand hard.

Boom!

His palm exploded, and a huge, gaping hole appeared. Only then did he manage to purge the Samādhi Flames of White Bone.

How could Li Qingshan let such a great opportunity slip by? The burning phoenix wings spread out, reaching almost three hundred meters in length. The vague cry of a phoenix could be heard as he rose into the air, hurling both fists at the Corpse King's chest.

The series of dazzling, eye-catching attacks were simply to hide the true killing strike.

Below him, the Buddha Slaying sword embryo spat out another streak of light thirty meters long, swinging from left to right quietly, right towards the Corpse King's waist.

However, the Corpse King understood extremely well where the true threat lay. He raised his arm and swung it hard. Corpse qi turned into a huge wave and sent Xiao An flying. Only then did he free up a hand to stop Li Qingshan.

Although Xiao An had charged over immediately, a vigilant Corpse King would not fall for a trick like that so easily again. Meanwhile, the last smear of azure in the depths of the horizon was gradually being devoured by pale-white.

It was over. Even if Li Qingshan and Xiao An worked together, they were unable to defeat a serious Corpse King, let alone in such a short amount of time.

Li Qingshan was confident he could crush this bastard single-handedly if the tiger demon and spirit turtle both reached the fifth layer, but time waited for no one.

Gu Yanying glanced past their battle and let out a gentle interjection of surprise. Li Qingshan's punch that had missed left behind a thin, black crack in space. She called out, "Strike the space around him!"

"Your highness, prepare to take action!" Gu Yanying shot through the air towards the Corpse King. She held an almost-transparent feather between her fingers. Little bro Qingshan, I'll gamble with you this time!

Chapter 552 - Shatter

That was what Gu Yanying thought inside before seeing Li Qingshan punching the space in front of him viciously without any hesitation as soon as he realised what she said. Striking the enemy was extremely difficult, but how easy would it be to miss?

Even if he struck the Corpse King, it could not cause any lethal damage, so he might as well as see just what fantastic plan this bird woman had in mind!

I think I shattered something?

Li Qingshan could vaguely make out a shattering sound.

The sound was extremely gentle, like the hum of a mosquito. However, if he settled down and listened closely, it was like the sky had collapsed, enough to shake his soul.

The invisible space was like a transparent, glass container. Black cracks criss-crossed and littered the space like lightning. They were as fleeting as lightning, closing up and vanishing.

The Corpse King's huge withered hand, enveloped in rolling corpse qi, swept through the air like a black cloud before looming over it. It was completely unaffected by the shockwave.

It seems useless!

As Li Qingshan thought of that, a piece was suddenly cut away from the "black cloud" above his head. The cut was so smooth and straight that it seemed like someone had carried it out with a ruler.

Silently, three pillar-like fingers were cut off, falling out of the sky.

Li Qingshan moved out of the way, avoiding the fingers, only to see the cuts were smooth and neat, surpassing anything that any weapon could achieve. It also left him stumped. What is going on?

When he gazed at the sky closely, he discovered that while the cracks the shockwave created had vanished, a long, slender trajectory remained.

Due to being overly thin, he was unable to notice it if he were not paying attention. It was probably even thinner than a hair on the Corpse King, if he had hair.

The black thread was not a regular pitch-black or inky-black. Instead, it could not be described with words. It seemed to suck away all light. Simply by looking at it, it felt like his field of vision had been carved up.

It was like a rip in a canvas. Everything painted on the canvas would split apart with the rip, no matter what it depicted, whether it was powerful or weak, as the very object that contained their existence had split open.

Don't tell me... this is the shattering of space!? His punch can actually shatter space!

The Corpse King who always had a card up his sleeve, who always had the situation within the palm of his hand despite all the unexpected accidents, finally showed a sliver of fear.

Everything in the universe was contained in space that corresponded to them, whether it were the World of the Nine Provinces or the six realms of sa'sāra.

All the creatures of the six realms, corpses, ghosts, daemons, and humans, had to live in a certain region of space.

It was like how a painting could only exist when there was a canvas. It was already extremely difficult for figures in a painting to leave the canvas, let alone ripping the canvas. That was virtually impossible.

The Corpse King was already extremely powerful, but even he did not have that ability.

It was the Hungry Ghost realm that constantly devoured other worlds. He only took advantage of it and made the most out of the opportunity to create some advantages for himself and obtain some benefits. Moreover, he had only achieved this with the use of the eye of a strange beast like the “space-devouring beast”.

Only the gods and buddha of legends could traverse the void and the many worlds, unaffected by the various worlds.

Never could he have ever imagined that a puny daemon could cause something like this.

That was unless he possessed extremely great strength in the first place. Once figures in a painting reached a certain level of strength, they could leave the painting and ascend to higher worlds, called “ascension”.

But that was impossible!

Either that, or the power he grasped was at a very high level, having completely surpassed this world.

Li Qingshan checked his hand and thought with some disbelief. I never thought the Tremors of the Ox Demon would be so powerful after reaching the fifth layer with the Ox Demon Transformation.

Suddenly, a soul sense rang out in his sea of consciousness, “Stop staring around. This region is hovering through the void, being tugged at by the World of the Nine Provinces and the Hungry Ghost realm at the same time. It’s already become extremely fragile, and the Gate of Hungry Ghosts happens to be its most fragile location. It’s like its Achilles’ heel. That’s why you can destroy it like this. If this were a complete world like the nine provinces, you’ll never achieve something like this!”

That was what Gu Yanying said, but she dared not underestimate it. The quality of power he possessed was well beyond her initial imagination! Coupled with those various abilities and transformations, probably no one across the entire nine provinces could match his fortuitous encounter! Not even herself!

After all, he was merely a Daemon General right now. He had cultivated for a very short period of time, and his control over his power was not extensive. If he continued to advance like this, he would reach Daemon Commander or even Daemon King.

Even the older, reputed Daemon Kings would have to yield to a Daemon King with boundless strength who could shatter space with a punch. No, the entire Great Xia empire would tremble because of him.

I see!

Li Qingshan understood now, but he was not disappointed. His confidence swelled.

He reached out with both hands as the power of tremors constantly accumulated and coiled around his fingers, building up without erupting on his hands like two black cocoons. He built up terrifying power until he was unable to compress it anymore before finally pushing them forward.

The Corpse King let out a furious roar. The three severed fingers suddenly rose up, twisting and whistling towards Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan felt extreme danger. Shockwaves surged from his hands, sending him flying.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The three fingers exploded before him at the same time. The bones turned into flying shrapnel as the flesh and blood barraged him like a thunderstone. Every fragment and droplet possessed extremely great destructive power, no weaker than the explosion of three golden cores.

Li Qingshan brought in his phoenix wings and surrounded himself with fire. He was blasted away viciously, reaching over fifty kilometers away. He flipped through the air several dozen times before stabilising himself.

Even though he avoided the centre of the explosion, he was still heavily injured. His internal organs had been shaken to bits, while his brain was a slush. He had gone blind in both eyes and deaf in both ears. Jagged bones protruded from his body, riddled with cracks.

The Corpse King opened his mouth and exhaled. A black flow gushed towards Li Qingshan as the foul smell overwhelmed his nose. It was like a black, poisonous dragon, possessing a potently-poisonous aura of death.

Once it struck him, even the flames of the phoenix would be extinguished, and his tiger bones would be reduced to a puddle of fluid.

These were abilities that the Corpse King would only use when he fought opponents of the same level in the Hungry Ghost realm, when it directly corresponded with his breakthrough to Corpse Emperor.

It was extremely difficult to build up the corpse fluid. He had never even considered using it at a time like this, but he could not give Li Qingshan the opportunity to approach him again.

“Go, Northmoon! The outcome of this battle depends entirely on this!”

At this critical moment, Gu Yanying instead urged Li Qingshan to attack. Her fingers loosened slightly and a half-transparent feather flew over gently. It did not move particularly quickly, drifting and flickering about.

In the blink of an eye, it landed before the Corpse King and exploded silently. It turned into a spherical barrier that rapidly swelled and enveloped the Gate of Hungry Ghosts.

As if he were standing on the ground where waves of heat rose up underneath the scorching sun, the surrounding landscape twisted and changed. The Corpse King was surprised and doubtful, but he did not sense any form of threat or restraint. He only interpreted it as an attempt at deception.

“Little bro Qingshan, it’s up to you.”

Her voice entered Li Qingshan's sea of consciousness along with a wispy laughter. Even when she was in a situation of life and death, she was able to remain so relaxed and composed. Even when she faced imminent death, she was able to remain as graceful as the wind.

"It's up to me!"

Li Qingshan gritted his teeth and grinned hideously. On his back, the wind whistled, and the flames surged.

Boom! Like a flaming meteor, he went up to receive the poisonous-dragon-like corpse fluid with a long trail of fire, rushing towards the Corpse King.

From afar, the corpse fluid seemed like a trickle, but when he arrived up close, it was like a raging river as it tossed and surged while pouring out.

Around him, the sounds of howls, strange laughter, and weeping rose up from everywhere. Countless undead danced about outside the region, and one could even make out their appearances with the naked eye. Some of them were even larger than the Corpse King. Tremendous auras tried to penetrate the region, truly an alarming sight.

This was the moment when the Hungry Ghost realm was about to descend!

Whether he could hide or not, only death awaited him!

The flames of the phoenix burned even more intensely, illuminating the sky. He ignored the figures around him and the corpse fluid before him as he shot right towards the Corpse King.

At this critical moment, a white figure leapt onto Li Qingshan's shoulder. Xiao An waved the Blood Sea Banner and a river of blood poured out with an even greater disturbance, rushing into the corpse fluid like a blood dragon.

The two dragons entangled in the air. The poisonous dragon constantly lunged about, trying to reach Li Qingshan, but the blood dragon kept it firmly trapped.

Corpse fluid and blood constantly splattered about, producing swathes of dark red smoke.

Li Qingshan constantly strode ahead. He did not even glance at the intense battle above him that directly affected his life. He focused on advancing—advancing, advancing, and more advancing!

He kicked up yellow sand behind him, but before it could even fall back to the ground, he was already several kilometers away.

The Corpse King felt threatened. He spat out as much corpse fluid as possible, no longer caring about how much he used. The poisonous dragon whistled and tore apart the blood dragon before coiling downwards.

Li Qingshan was still five kilometers away from the Gate of Hungry Ghosts when he paused for a moment. His knees bent slightly as he raised his iron fist into the air. He unleashed a ring of shockwaves beneath his iron hooves.

He let out a furious roar!

The poisonous dragon struck nothing. Li Qingshan had taken off like a cannonball, landing a punch on the distorted space.

Boom!

The space shot violently. Black cracks rapidly spread out from his fist, filling the space above the Gate of Hungry Ghosts.

Like the cracked ground, the distorted space fractured into pieces. Unlike the tiny cracks earlier, they were like black abysses now.

Li Qingshan could not help but think about the four words, "the shattering of space". Otherwise, he would not have been able to describe what he was currently seeing.

"No!"

The Corpse King howled furiously, actually pulling his legs out of the Gate of Hungry Ghosts and lunging towards Li Qingshan. He fell like a mountain. He was unstoppable.

Li Qingshan had already used up his final shred of daemon qi and strength. He turned back to the size of a regular human as he raised his head and watched the Corpse King lunge over.

His shoulders suddenly tightened. Looking back, Gu Yanying had grabbed him by the shoulders like a hawk catching a rabbit, lifting him into the air.

The huge, withered hand extended over, reaching towards them as it pierced through the air. It rapidly closed the distance between them, actually moving even faster than Gu Yanying!

Li Qingshan's heart was in his throat, but he heard Gu Yanying say, "Relax!" She slowed down. Looking back, the tips of the sharp fingers were about to touch her face when they suddenly stopped.

She smiled. "Looks like we've won this round!"

Chapter 553 - Seal

Li Qingshan guessed that the transparent feather from Gu Yanying originally possessed the power to destroy boundaries. By exploding above the Gate of Hungry Ghosts, the power was evenly spread through the space. As a result, the space became weaker, which was why he could shatter it in a single punch.

"Thanks!"

"No problem."

Sharp, mocking laughter and sneers of disdain rose up like the tide in the Hungry Ghost realm. The glowing, green eyes all gazed at the carved-up Corpse King greedily as if they were not looking at a dried corpse. Instead, it seemed like they were people who had been starved for three whole days, looking at a table of delicious food.

At this very moment, the chunks of the Corpse King's body flew together and assembled once again. He let out a furious roar, actually still alive.

The Void-bellied Ghost King rose up from the ground, and its mouth opened to an unbelievable size like opening a massive bag, pointing it at the Corpse King and sucking hard.

The Dark Queen who had been preparing the entire time finally took action.

Corpse qi oozed out of the severing wounds across the Corpse King's body, sucked into the Void-bellied Ghost King's mouth.

The Void-bellied Ghost King's stomach swelled up like it was heavily pregnant. Its figure became more and more consolidated, and its aura became greater and greater too.

The Corpse King finally showed fear. He swung his arms madly as he put up a desperate struggle, but he was unable to stop his aura from leaking away.

Li Qingshan was slightly surprised. Gu Yanying explained, "The reason why the Hungry Ghost realm is called the Hungry Ghost realm is because the undead in there can only constantly devour one another to constantly grow stronger and survive. Look, the Corpse King would much rather put up a struggle here than return to the Hungry Ghost realm. He still has a chance of surviving here, but if he returns, the only fate awaiting him would be being carved up and feasted on."

There was something else Gu Yanying had not mentioned. If the Dark Queen devoured a Corpse King, her strength would definitely increase drastically, and her cultivation had reached the peak of the second heavenly tribulation a long time ago. If she could overcome the thing holding her back mentally, she had quite the confidence with overcoming the third heavenly tribulation. The situation of the Green province would change once again.

The Samādhi Flames of White Bone swept over, covering the Corpse King and severing his slim chance of survival.

The Corpse King was heavily injured and suppressed by the Void-bellied Ghost King, so he could no longer stop the spread of the fire. His divided body was immediately set alight, turning into a great blaze in the blink of an eye.

The Dark Queen and Xiao An exchanged gazes from afar. They carved him up and completely killed off the Corpse King.

"Argh! I refuse... I refu..." The Corpse King let out a final groan. He had never thought he would die in such a world, to a group of people like this.

The flames fueled by the Corpse King's remains were especially distinct and contrasting in colour. Clearly, it was well beyond what regular Corpse Generals and Corpse Commanders could produce.

Xiao An did not continue to forge the Buddha Slaying sword embryo. Instead, she gathered it all carefully. This was critical for her breakthrough to the second layer of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty.

The white flames roared, illuminating the entire region. The light even reached the Hungry Ghost realm.

There were countless gasps of surprise in the Hungry Ghost realm. The legend of the "white holy fire" was extremely widespread in the Hungry Ghost realm.

Now, it truly appeared!

The Dark Queen immediately got to work with sealing the Gate of Hungry Ghosts. She took out a pale-white item that resembled a sharp pick. Li Qingshan could vaguely make out countless hideous corpses and ghosts embracing one another on there.

The Dark Queen tossed it into the air, and it expanded to over thirty meters long. The undead became clearer. It hovered in the air like a huge sword, slowly and sturdily planting into the Gate of Hungry Ghosts.

The black cracks all closed up when they encountered the pale-white sword, unable to damage it.

Li Qingshan asked, "This is?"

Gu Yanying said, "A Key of Hungry Ghosts!"

To be bold enough to use the powers of the Hungry Ghost realm, the Umbral Yin sect understood its horrors the best. They had prepared numerous countermeasures to prevent Gates of Hungry Ghosts from devouring and invading the space around them. This was one of them.

However, the Dark Queen was rather worried inside. If another Corpse King or Ghost King appeared and kept the Gate of Hungry Ghosts open, they would only need a few seconds, and the Hungry Ghost realm would completely descend.

However, bewildered by the white flames and the shattered space above the Gate of Hungry Ghosts, there were no undead bold enough to charge over and risk their lives immediately. All of them hesitated.

Just like that, the Gate of Hungry Ghosts rapidly closed.

The reluctant roars and howls from the Hungry Ghost realm flooded over like a tsunami. The undead all reacted, lunging over.

However, as the Key of Hungry Ghosts turned, the sounds rapidly receded and grew distant. The hideous figures of the undead gradually blurred. In the end, only the glimmering specks of green light remained before dimming and vanishing.

The Gate of Hungry Ghosts slammed shut.

The voices and figures all vanished in that instant, locked up in another world.

Gu Yanying clapped her hands. "We've succeeded!"

The Marquis of Ruyi's eyes heated up. He could not help but feel like he wanted to cry. This was the feeling of surviving a great disaster. It was simply fantastic.

The Dark Queen looked back, gazing at Xiao An again. Her brows furrowed slightly as she wanted to say something, but she faltered.

Her originally-chilly gaze became filled with an indescribable sense of tenderness. Even though there was no evidence and she had never received any response, she had already become extremely certain inside.

Feng Buquan had become convinced of Xiao An's existence because of that thread of fate.

Yet, the Dark Queen and Xiao An were basically closely linked, their lives joined with one another. This in itself was a fetter that could not be described with words.

Xiao An stowed the Buddha Slaying sword away. Without even caring about the Dark Queen's dejection, she turned around and returned to Li Qingshan's side.

Li Qingshan also let out a sigh of relief. He gazed into the distance, but he only saw complete darkness outside the region. "How are we supposed to leave this place?"

Gu Yanying said, "The eyeball of the space-devouring beast has already sealed this place. It's been separated into a region of its own. However, as long as the Hungry Ghost realm hasn't completely devoured it, returning to the nine provinces is simply a matter of time."

Sure enough, a smear of azure appeared in the depths of the sky. The haunting mists and clouds gradually dispersed.

The region shifted away from the Hungry Ghost realm, currently returning to the World of the Nine Provinces.

They had finally brought an intense battle to an end, grasping their survival against all odds. Relieved smiles infected everyone's faces.

The Dark Queen gazed at Xiao An for a long while, but she refused to speak the entire time as if she was trying to call her back with her gaze. Her gaze contained indescribably mixed emotions, like guilt, concern, relief, sorrow...

She only muttered inside constantly, My Yue'er! My Yu'er!

Restless, Xiao An simply hid behind Li Qingshan, clutching her head with her hands as if she wanted to cover her non-existent ears. Although she wanted to sever the past, the memories of the past continued to surge, bothering her endlessly.

That was everything she had gone through before practising the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty, as well as her entire life. Wanting to just swing a sword and sever it all away was easier said than done.

"Your highness, the two monsters are both powerful and vicious beings. If we let them escape here, they'll definitely turn into great sources of trouble in the future." The Marquis of Ruyi gazed into the distance, but he conveyed silently to the Dark Queen with his soul sense.

It had to be acknowledged that he was quite perceptive. If the Dark Queen took action, Li Qingshan and Xiao An truly would not be her opponent right now. The Void-bellied Ghost King had become even stronger after devouring the Corpse King's aura, and with this reunion, her mental shackles holding her back had also begun to budge. She was completely capable of unleashing even greater strength with the Void-bellied Ghost King.

Even if she faced a regular Soul Nascence cultivator at this moment, the Dark Queen was confident enough to take them on in battle. To make matters even worse, Li Qingshan was extremely frail currently, and he was trapped in this region, unable to escape.

After witnessing Li Qingshan and Xiao An's performance, the Marquis of Ruyi became determined to kill them. Otherwise, once they broke free from this region, they would still end up making a mess out of the entire Ruyi commandery. Probably even his life would be at risk then.

The Dark Queen retracted her gaze, lowering her head, and looking at the Marquis of Ruyi. She recovered her chilliness, "Really?"

"Yes!" The Marquis of Ruyi was forced to turn around and bow at the Dark Queen. He was frantic inside. She had cultivated for all these years too, so why did she not understand the principle of a sudden sneak attack? Though, to be bold enough to state it in the open, perhaps it proved she possessed absolute confidence.

At the same time, he contacted Gu Yanying with his soul sense, "Yanying, prepare to take action. We need to kill these two daemons here, or the entire Ruyi commandery, or even the entire Green province, will be in danger."

Gu Yanying tapped her chin with her folding fan. She began to ponder. If she had guessed correctly, his request sure was startling!

She frowned and replied, "I don't think that's a good idea!"

Li Qingshan asked, "What's going on?"

"Yanying, do you really plan on colluding with daemons? Aren't you afraid of shouldering the blame from sir Hawk God?"

The Marquis of Ruyi was furious. Why was she like that too? What was wrong with both of them? Wouldn't they raise the moon demon's guard like that? He also vaguely felt that something was amiss.

"He is him. I am me!" Gu Yanying raised an eyebrow and became displeased.

The Dark Queen asked indifferently, "Who do you think I should kill first?"

The Marquis of Ruyi could not bother with thinking carefully. He said reluctantly, "I think the skeleton monster should be killed first. The moon demon is merely a spent force. There's no need for your highness to take action against him."

His calculations were very precise. The moon demon's aura had declined completely. As long as he was careful, taking him down was no problem. However, the skeleton demon was unfathomable, so it would be best for the Dark Queen to take action.

He completely ignored the fact that if it were not for them, he would have died already.

The other cultivators suddenly realised too that the battle had yet to completely end. Now that the foreign issue was dealt with, they immediately turned against one another.

The main conflict in the World of the Nine Provinces was still between humans and demons. Even though they had been in the same boat earlier, that was definitely not enough for any gratitude. With how the moon demon and the skeleton monster had performed, they needed to kill them in their cradles.

They all picked up their weapons as well, ready to strike and encircle them, to avenge the fellows that the moon demon had just slain!

The Dark Queen lowered her gaze, and the Void-bellied Ghost King with its bulging stomach suddenly struck. It swung its hand, but it did not swing it towards Li Qingshan or Xiao An, but the Marquis of Ruyi standing right in front.

“Your highness!”

A huge shadow loomed over him. The Marquis of Ruyi had never even thought the Dark Queen would attack him. His face was filled with disbelief. Before he could even respond, he was swatted away like a fly. His body was smashed into pieces in the air, as dead as he could be.

Chapter 554 - To Not Return, to Accompany Forever

“Why, your highness?”

The sudden change in the situation took all the cultivators by surprise. Han Anguo’s face sank heavily as he tightened his grip around his spear.

The scholar in white could not help but recall Feng Buquan’s words when he behaved erratically, as well as the Dark Queen’s strange behaviours. His eyes were filled with surprise and doubt as he was on full alert.

Li Qingshan had never thought the Dark Queen would strike so ruthlessly either. He frowned and thought, She may be of noble status, but killing a marquis who was conferred by the Great Xia empire is no laughing matter. I wonder how she’ll clean up after herself.

The Dark Queen gave him an answer immediately. After killing the Marquis of Ruyi, she did not recall the Void-bellied Ghost King immediately.

The Void-bellied Ghost King’s huge, hideous head rotated slowly. His colossal body abruptly moved, striking flagrantly.

Gusts of wind kicked up the yellow sand, blowing into his face.

Li Qingshan squinted his eyes before widening them.

Within the sky filled with sand, the Void-bellied Ghost King rushed about quickly, unleashing a massacre. It basically killed off the remaining Golden Core cultivators one by one with a single strike each.

Li Qingshan wanted to say something. A hand was placed on his shoulder. He turned around, only to see Gu Yanying gazing into the distance and shaking her head gently.

Li Qingshan returned to his senses. The last sight he saw was Han Anguo merging with his spear, charging towards the Ghost King countless times larger than him. His gaze was as firm as steel as the spear burst forth from his hands, whistling and spinning like a tornado. It pierced the Ghost King’s huge hand, directly targeting the Dark Queen’s head.

Boom!

Following that sound, the fierce wind subsided, and the sand settled.

The Void-bellied Ghost King grabbed the spear like it was holding a toothpick. Han Anguo's aura vanished.

Li Qingshan remembered how the Arts of the Boundless Ocean he practised had only been assembled by borrowing his power. He was also Han Qiongzhi's uncle. He could not help but become heavy-hearted.

The Dark Queen rubbed her forehead gently. There was a red mark on there, but apart from that, she was unscathed.

She turned around. Her expression was as chilly as frost as the hem of her clothes swayed slightly. She hovered in the Void-bellied Ghost King, approaching the three of them.

The smear of azure in the centre of the sky began to spread and permeate sliver by sliver. A white sun radiated with light before rapidly descending in the west. The sky had been dyed red too before becoming a dark blue very soon. A lone moon hung high in the air.

Li Qingshan was unable to observe this bizarre phenomenon as he stood in the desert soaked in moonlight.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

The Void-bellied Ghost King strode towards the three of them.

She wants to kill everyone! Li Qingshan shivered inside. He was forced to admit that the Dark Queen did possess that strength right now.

The Void-bellied Ghost King extended its arm, reaching towards Li Qingshan. It did not move quickly, but it did lock onto Li Qingshan's aura firmly, sealing off any room to dodge.

Completely exhausted, Li Qingshan was unable to dodge at all.

Xiao An leapt out and there was a flash of her sword.

The Dark Queen drew back her hand, now with a slash in her palm. She closed her hand firmly and gazed over coldly. The flames flickered in Xiao An's eye sockets as she met her gaze.

"Your highness, it's quite late already. It's time for us to return."

Gu Yanying gazed at the sky. The rate at which everything changed was currently slowing down silently.

"I know you've guessed it already. If you can keep this secret, you will obtain the friendship of the Umbral Yin sect."

The Dark Queen shifted her gaze away and dispersed the Void-bellied Ghost King with a wave of her hand as she said that to Gu Yanying.

She had not carried out a massacre on impulse. Cultivators were thorough with their thoughts, let alone Golden Core cultivators. Every single one of them were well-versed with how to deal with people. The Marquis of Ruyi had come from an aristocratic background and had become rooted in fear and hatred, which was why he was unable to see through her strange behaviour. However, that did not mean other cultivators had not noticed or seen through it. Silencing them was necessary.

The very belief of a demonic sect like the Umbral Yin sect was to view human lives as nothing. They were not bound by any laws or morals at all, completely doing whatever they wanted. Even if it were not for this secret, she probably would still do the same for the cultivators' golden cores and belongings. Every additional golden core gave her greater confidence with overcoming the third tribulation.

As for Gu Yanying, she was on rather friendly terms with her. Moreover, Gu Yanying stood aloof from the world and was not a so-called person of the "righteous path". Although she could be rather heartless, she was not sinister.

Most importantly, the Dark Queen had no confidence in being able to kill her here. This was how people of the demonic path did things. As long as they could increase their cultivation, even by only a bit, it would be worth it no matter how many "fellows" they had to kill. To her, cultivators like the Marquis of Ruyi had enjoyed peace for far too long. They had forgotten about the age when cultivators fought and killed one another.

Gu Yanying lowered her head slightly and bowed gracefully. "Please exchange this friendship for three golden cores."

The Dark Queen immediately tossed three golden cores to Gu Yanying. One of them was pure-white and out of the ordinary. It was the Marquis of Ruyi's golden core. Gu Yanying ingested it without minding at all and began meditating to refine it.

Only then did the Dark Queen relax, completely extinguishing the killing intent inside.

They no longer said anything afterwards, waiting quietly to return to the World of the Nine Provinces.

Li Qingshan had no idea whether Gu Yanying and the Dark Queen were communicating with their soul sense.

However, from the beginning till the end, the Dark Queen and Xiao An did not speak a single word to one another.

Only when the sky brightened did the surroundings gradually clear up. The rate at which the celestial bodies in the sky moved about returned to normal.

As soon as they returned to the World of the Nine Provinces, Li Qingshan dove into the ground immediately with Xiao An. He completely refused to look back. He could sense several tremendous auras shining in the night sky like torches. Several strands of soul sense swept past him as if they wanted to see through him completely.

In that moment, the spirit turtle gave off several warnings. Every single one of them was as terrifying as almost certain death, but no attacks rained down.

The sky was enveloped with thick clouds that constantly churned about. Half a claw could be vaguely made out, black as ink, as it traversed through the clouds. On the other side of the sky, a sword that leaned against the heavens seemed to stand in opposition.

That was a clash that the current Li Qingshan could not become involved in, the game among the kings.

A man stood in the air with his hands behind his back. His clothes were black, and his hair was combed back meticulously. His eyes were filled with an imposing sense of dignity as his soul sense chased after Li Qingshan and Xiao An. His brows were furrowed as if he was thinking of something.

The Dark Queen flew into the horizon, arriving beside this man and bowing. Only then did the man retract his gaze, looking at the Dark Queen. He was slightly surprised. "You're close to undergoing the tribulation?"

"Yes!"

"Very good." The man nodded, but his brows remained locked. He did not seem particularly happy.

Gu Yanying bowed. "Greetings from subordinate Gu Yanying, lord of the province!"

The man happened to be the Fierce King of Chu who governed the fifteen thousand kilometers of the Green province. "As long as you're fine, or I'd really have no idea how I would tell sir Hawk God about this. Just what exactly happened inside?"

At this moment, a streak of light arrived. A woman wielding a sword approached them and bowed towards the Fierce King of Chu before looking at Gu Yanying. Her expression was cold and her gaze was as sharp as a sword, but she completely overlooked the Dark Queen's existence.

"I'd like to hear it too."

"Your majesty the Light Queen has arrived too!"

Gu Yanying gave a rough explanation of everything that happened, but she obviously covered up and changed a lot of details.

The Light Queen clasped her hands at the Dark Queen. "Younger sister, you've done a tremendous job with sealing the Gate of Hungry Ghosts. Once we get back to the estate, I'll definitely give you a toast."

The Fierce King of Chu swung his hand. "Everyone, let's disperse!"

Just like that, the powerful auras that watched from the sky or from afar receded, and the dark clouds dispersed.

Before she returned, the Dark Queen glanced back at the boundless earth. Yue'er, it's still not time right now, but I'll be bringing you home very soon!

.....

Li Qingshan constantly ventured deeper underground. Only when the underground magnetic field completely wrapped around him and he was unable to sense anymore soul senses did he stop. He exhaled deeply and smiled. "It sure was dangerous this time."

Although it was a very close shave, he did manage to break through to the fifth layer with the Ox Demon Transformation, allowing him to witness the future powers of the ox demon. As long as he had the time to familiarise and digest everything, his personal strength would definitely increase drastically. Even if he ran into Golden Core cultivators, he would have the confidence to defeat them.

There was no reply. Xiao An seemed rather distracted, only replying after she realised he had said something, “Y- yeah!”

Li Qingshan pulled her into his arms. His expression changed constantly as he faltered. Only after a long while of hesitation did he ask, “Have you remembered where your home is?”

Xiao An nodded before shaking her head firmly.

“It doesn’t matter. If you want to go home and take a look, I’ll accompany you. I’ve promised this to you. Hehe, didn’t I even carve a tablet for you? Don’t worry, it’s fine...”

Li Qingshan’s voice gradually grew softer. Who knew who he was trying to comfort. His voice was rather hoarse and he held her firmer. If it really were like what he had guessed, why would the mighty provincial lord’s estate allow her to remain by his side? However, perhaps that would be slightly better for her.

Xiao An stood up and took out the scholar wood tablet. One side had the word “south” carved into it, while the other had the word “An”. The craftsmanship was crude and the characters were ugly. There were even traces of being burned by fire, but she held it preciously in her hand.

“No matter how many dangers, difficulties, obstacles, and hardships there are, there will be a day when I send you home!”

Under the moonlight, the young man had promised seriously. The scene was just like the red mole on her forehead, something she could never forget about.

The scholar wood tablet with the words “south” and “An” carved in was evidence.

With a crack, Xiao An closed her fingers around it, and the scholar wood tablet split open. It was crushed to pieces as splinters flew everywhere.

Li Qingshan was stunned, only to hear Xiao An say, “I’m going nowhere. Don’t cast me aside either. I will remain by your side forever, all the way to beyond the Nine Heavens, unless death parts us!”

.....

“Where is this? Didn’t I die?”

Opening his eyes slowly, he looked at the gloomy sky and the ground piled with endless bones and corpses. A figure climbed up, supporting himself by leaning on the huge, withered tree by his side. Suddenly, he discovered that his hand had become just as withered as the dead tree, pale-white and icy-cold.

He immediately noticed the peculiarities of his body. He did not have to breathe, and when he touched his chest, his heart no longer beat either. All of his bodily functions had ceased. He had become a corpse.

It was true. He was already dead, but this world happened to be the paradise of the dead. The living could not survive here.

Oh right, I fell into the Hungry Ghost realm. “Have we met somewhere before?”

Ma Chaoqun gazed at the vast wasteland. Right as he thought of that, a voice suddenly rang out behind him. Ma Chaoqun turned around and saw a violet figure standing there gracefully. Her eyes were clear and her skin was fair. She seemed very much alive, but that was only because of how powerful she was. She was unable to hide the powerful aura of death she gave off.

“Zi’er!” Ma Chaoqun murmured. If this were hell, then he was willing to fall forever.

Chapter 555 - Aftermath

In the pitch-black depths underground, Li Qingshan embraced Xiao An as his heart was at peace. As long as she was here, as long as they worked together, they could deal with anything no matter what they encountered.

The Dark Queen could just go and die. No one could take her away from his side.

However, he discovered a horrible problem very soon.

With the current fourth layer of the Spirit Turtle Transformation, he was unable to suppress the fifth layer of the Ox Demon Transformation.

In other words, unless he also reached the fifth layer with the Spirit Turtle Transformation, he could not turn back into human form and return to the academy. However, the difficulty in this would definitely be greater than reaching the fifth layer with the ox demon or the tiger demon.

The ox demon and tiger demon determined the strength of his body, while the spirit turtle determined his cultivation. Once he broke through to the fifth layer, he would be standing firmly in the realm of Daemon Commanders. He would even gain a footing in this world.

Sigh, what was he supposed to do? He still had many ties in the society of humans.

Qiongzhi should be very sad over losing her uncle! I even once considered taking him on as my master. I didn’t think the first time we met would also be when death takes him.

Although he was connected to Han Anguo in a certain way, they had never met after all, so there were not exactly any deep emotional ties between them. If he could save him, then he would save him. If he could not, then there was nothing he could do. He could only leave it up to fate. After all, if Li Qingshan died, Han Anguo would not feel miserable for him either. However, he was worried about Han Qiongzhi becoming overly sad. Fortunately, the people the Dark Queen had killed were not the Han father-son duo, or he would truly become conflicted to death.

This was the difference between being close and being distant. He could go as far as to risk exposing himself to save Hua Chengzan, but if it were Hua Chengzan’s parents or siblings instead, he would have to give it some consideration. At most, he would do what was within his means. After all, reasonless affection did not exist in the world.

I wonder if Hua Chengzan is going to divulge my identity. Probably not, right? I saved his life after all.

Li Qingshan said to Xiao An, “You should return to the dwelling first and handle any situations that may arise. If no one comes looking for us, just say I suffered some internal injuries and am healing in seclusion. I’ll return to Moon Court lake and try and see whether I can use the power of the Water God

Seal to suppress the ox demon. If I can't, then I probably won't be able to return to the surface any time soon."

Xiao An left reluctantly. Li Qingshan noticed she had changed slightly after recovering her memories, but he had no idea whether that was good or bad.

Li Qingshan rested his head on his arms as he leaned against the boiling-hot stone wall. He gradually recovered his daemon qi as he tidied through his thoughts, considering what he should do next.

"Northmoon!" An enchanting, curvaceous figure walked out of the darkness. Lolth licked her bright-red lips. Her absolute beauty was mesmerising as she asked with a smile, "Are you injured?"

After a tough battle, Li Qingshan seemed to be in a rather horrible shape, and he had only recovered twenty or thirty percent of his daemon qi.

And, after breaking through to the fifth layer of the ox demon, he was unable to conceal his aura anymore, so he was obviously discovered by the owner of this territory, Lolth. She had come to investigate.

Noticing his current shape, Lolth's eyes lit up. She felt like this was a heaven-sent opportunity to redeem her pride.

Li Qingshan shot a glance at her. "Yeah, do you want to take care of me?"

"Sure!" Lolth said with pleasure before looking around. "Where's that skeleton friend of yours? Why isn't it taking care of you?"

"She's busy, so she left first already."

"You mean, it's just us here?" Lolth smiled as she approached him slowly.

"Yeah, just us."

Li Qingshan finished speaking and the poisonous whip whistled through the air like a bolt of black lightning. He extended his hand and grabbed the whip, so the whip coiled around his arm.

Lolth's red lips curled. She tugged the whip backwards and it became taut.

Li Qingshan did not budge at all. He maintained his sneer as he pulled backwards. "Come!"

Lolth felt an unbelievably great force pass through the whip as she was pulled over helplessly. She went with it by lunging at Li Qingshan, waving her spider legs about as her fangs protruded.

Li Qingshan casually threw a punch. He did not even look at Lolth. Shockwaves surged out in all directions.

Lolth's skin became silver in colour. She had experienced this move from him countless times already. Even if he landed a direct blow on her, she would not care, let alone when it landed on empty space.

However, the moment she came into contact with the shockwaves, she immediately sensed that something was amiss. It was already too late for her to dodge. Every single bone in her body and every

inch of her skin shook. Even her daemon qi showed signs of being shaken apart. She was thrown away helplessly, smashing into the stone wall and sinking over thirty meters deep.

Wherever she passed by, shockwaves emerged from her body, shattering all of the rock and creating a huge, funnel-shaped cavity. She lay at the bottom of the funnel.

Lolth's jaw trembled as she was unable to say anything. Her face was filled with shock. The part of the poison suit over her chest had been ripped apart, exposing her voluptuous breasts as well as a deep gully. Cracks appeared on her silver skin.

Even her strongest defensive ability was unable to block the power from the Tremors of the Ox Demon. If the punch had landed on her, the outcome would have been unthinkable.

At the very beginning, the Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine did not seem particularly powerful. When Li Qingshan reached the first layer of the ox demon, he was merely a master of the jianghu. However, the growth that came with each layer afterwards became more and more startling.

When he could not even unleash the full power of the fifth layer of the ox demon, he was already strong enough to engage a Corpse King with an extremely tough body in a trial of strength. In terms of brute strength, he had probably approached the peak of this world already.

Although the Tremors of the Ox Demon could not shatter space in the World of the Nine Provinces, its power was still not something that could be endured by anybody.

He's become even stronger yet again, countless times stronger than before. This is impossible. Is he really a daemon?

Lolth's eyes were filled with disbelief; she was unable to accept this reality. She had clashed with Northmoon several times in the past. Although it had ended with her defeat every single time, all of them involved intense battles, with plenty of opportunities for her to prevail. Yet now, she could not even withstand a single punch from him. How was she supposed to accept this? And he was actually still a Daemon General right now!

Regardless of whether she could accept it or not, she made the most correct choice immediately—flee!

The tiger demon lunged and the phoenix danced. Wind and fire whistled, vanishing in a flash. Li Qingshan arrived before Lolth and pressed his arms right beside her. Their noses were almost touching as he smiled viciously.

"Didn't you say you'd take care of me?"

After the battle of Burial Mound mountain, the tiger demon had not been able to break through to the fifth layer, but he did gain a deeper comprehension. His control over the wings of wind and fire had become more natural.

"Don't you even think about it!" Lolth spat out a thread, shooting towards Li Qingshan's forehead like a streak of white light. At the same time, she wormed into the rock behind her, wanting to escape from the range of his arms.

"Tremor!"

Li Qingshan bellowed out and grabbed her by the shoulders, unleashing the power of tremors madly.

Rings of shockwaves weaved in the air into black cracks that resembled lightning around him.

The spider silk shattered in the air. As if a bolt of lightning had struck her, Lolth shook violently in the air. Her poison suit was ripped apart, reduced to shreds. It fluttered through the air like butterflies before being reduced to dust and exposing her silver body.

A while later, even her daemon qi had been dispersed. Unable to maintain her innate ability, the silver colour receded, exposing her naked, pale body. Her chest stood plump and erect, jiggling like jelly from the lingering tremors as the two bright-red cherries danced about.

Lolth was filled with shock. Li Qingshan said, "Since you refuse to take care of me, I'll take care of you!"

.....

When the lord of the Green province arrived, he dismissed the school leaders to return to the academy. This was no longer something they could partake in.

The school leaders were all stricken with worry in the academy. If the Hungry Ghost realm truly descended, then all they could do was flee for their lives, and they still had no idea where they would flee off to.

Liu Zhangqing glanced around and asked, "Chengzan, where's Qingshan?"

In a corner, Ru Xin lowered her gaze as she thought of something.

Hua Chengzan's thoughts happened to be running wild. Hearing that, he was taken aback momentarily. "He seems to have returned to his dwelling already."

Now, he knew Li Qingshan's identity, but he had no idea what he should do. Technically speaking, he should have exposed him, but "Northmoon" had never targeted the academy, even giving them rather special treatment. He had spared him multiple times, even saving his life this time. With how much he owed him, it would be no exaggeration even if he were to give him his life. How could he sell him out?

Ru Xin furrowed her brows slightly as she became rather doubtful. There's no reason he wouldn't partake in something like this. Wait, don't tell me he's in there too!

Liu Zhangqing sighed. "He sure is straightforward. It's probably caused him quite the impact again! After all, nothing is more important than your personal cultivation. Foundation Establishment really is just foundation establishment!"

Including him, no one present had not been impacted. In a great battle like that, the lives of Foundation Establishment cultivators were basically no different from dust.

Hearing that, Hua Chengzan instead eased up. The war between humans and daemons was not something a measly Foundation Establishment cultivator like him could partake in. If he became involved rashly and ignorantly, it would only claim his life pointlessly. I better just stick with cultivating and increasing my own cultivation! Though, I wonder how Qiongzhi would respond once she finds out.

This wait lasted for several days. Sunlight and moonlight constantly replaced one another outside the window.

Everyone felt more pessimistic than optimistic, but they refused to leave, afraid they would miss out on immediate news and thus face a great disaster.

“Fellows, there’s news. The Gate of Hungry Ghosts has been sealed.”

The puppet that the leader of the school of Mohism had left behind watched over the situation constantly. Now, he had finally spoken.

Everyone eased up. They almost could not help but cheer aloud. However, they then saw the leader of the school of Mohism’s face change, speaking only after faltering.

“I saw Gu Yanying and her highness the Dark Queen. Yep, and that cat daemon. The other cultivators have all fallen in battle!”

Crack! The cup in Han Anjun’s hand broke. Although his expression remained as resolute as before, his lips were trembling.

The room was thrown into an uproar. That was a group of Golden Core cultivators for heaven’s sake! There had been so many renowned figures, yet they actually all just died like this!

Hearing how Gu Yanying was still alive, Hua Chengzan eased up slightly. Then he asked in a hurry, “Was there anything else? Did anyone else emerge?”

“My puppet only monitors the outskirts. It didn’t see anyone else appear.”

Chapter 556 - A Conclusion

A pair of scarlet eyes lit up in the darkness. They swiveled around, taking in all of the surrounding scenery.

The small lake that gave off the smell of sulphur gurgled as it churned about. He currently leaned against a scorching-hot boulder by the lake. All of the tension he had built up in the battle had been released. He felt the comfort of being at ease.

Only then did he look at the plump, mesmerising figure in his arms. The craziness from earlier was still visible before his eyes. He let out a smile. Suppressed by his absolute power, all of her struggles were useless. In the end, she simply gave up, choosing to cooperate with him instead, very much like if she could not resist, she would just enjoy it.

He gently slid his hand down her back, following a beautiful curve until he reached her plump, full bottom, slapping it gently.

Smack!

Loth opened her eyes. There was no longer any hatred or enmity anymore. Instead, there was actually a mesmerising laziness. Leaning against him, she had never been so docile before.

Their strength had completely pulled apart now. Li Qingshan had already demonstrated his strength in full, proving to her that he possessed the right to mate with her. All of the hatred from the past that could not even be considered as proper hatred could only be regarded as flirting before the deed.

For the weak to hate the strong, not only was it pointless, but it would even bring them no benefits for survival. To daemons, being humiliated by the weak was something worth hating over, while submitting to the strong was not shameful.

Li Qingshan pushed away the figure in his arms that could bewitch any man and swam up the underground river alone.

Suddenly, he turned back and said, "You and your territory, all belong to me."

"Yes," Lolth was very straightforward. With his strength, possessing all of that was natural. As a matter of fact, it was even lacking.

Li Qingshan smiled. The simplicity and straightforwardness of the world of daemons was what he liked most. There was no right or wrong, no morals or laws. It was the survival of the fittest, natural selection.

Only when his figure vanished did Lolth let out a long sigh.

If only she had killed him the moment she saw him.

.....

Near Moon Court lake, the rain poured down, the winds whistled, and the turbid waves filled the air.

Passing through the churning surface and venturing all the way down, blue light shone dimly.

At the bottom of the lake, within a semi-transparent sphere of light formed from countless hexagons, a flawlessly handsome, slender and imposing man hugged his knees and curled up.

He shut his eyes and gritted his teeth, revealing his four canines. His scarlet hair that reached past his waist floated in the water like burning fire.

The sphere of light pulsed like a beating heart.

When it brightened, the waves on the surface would become more intense, and when it dimmed, the waves would settle down.

The figure of a spirit turtle appeared as if it was doing everything it could to suppress something.

A smear of black appeared in the drifting, scarlet hair, permeating the surroundings bit by bit. His appearance changed with that, no longer as handsome anymore. He became as ordinary as a stone statue.

Boom!

There was a great eruption deep under water, sending a pillar of water over thirty meters into the air. The rain shot horizontally into the horizon.

However, the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell disassembled.

Unbelievably, the raging waters settled down like it had become a huge mirror. The rain gradually lightened, now falling sparsely. As the drizzle landed on the surface of the mirror, it kicked up ripples, which intersected and merged with one another.

Li Qingshan exhaled deeply. He spread his arms and floated quietly on the surface.

His face was still handsome. His hair was still scarlet. He had still ended up failing.

He raised his right hand, waving it gently from left to right.

The clouds scattered, and the rain dispersed. The moonlight illuminated the surroundings like it was daytime as the stars twinkled throughout the night sky.

“How beautiful!”

He sighed emotionally and forgot about his worries. He stood up, seeing the specks of firelight by the shore of the lake and listening to the voices near the firelight. This was the life of mortals. It had its own sense of tranquility and peace.

He realised very soon that this was merely a false impression. The lives of mortals were filled with pain. Having gone from being a cowherd to where he was today, how could he forget about his origins and do some reminiscing or whatever that was? He was foolishly hooking himself with his own lies.

Even if the happiness were real, he would never cling onto it. What he pursued had never been so-called “happiness”. Gazing into the depths of the stars, he laughed aloud. Since he had no intentions of turning around, then he would continue forwards!

Li Qingshan leapt up, turning into a streak of red light and shooting into the horizon. Looking down, the world was bright and clear. Moon Court lake occupied a huge area, while the Clear river in the distance raged endlessly, extending into the distance.

The Marquis of Ruyi has been finished off. The group of Golden Core cultivators have been finished off. Right now, the Ruyi commandery is leaderless, so who can still stop me? I'll continue refining water systems and strengthen the power of the Water God Seal. I refuse to believe I can't break through to the fifth layer of the spirit turtle after I refine all the water in this region!

.....

“Master, you found her? Li'l Whitey is it?”

In the carriage flying towards the Umbral Yin sect, Xuanyue curled up in the Dark Queen's lap as she raised her head and asked curiously.

The Dark Queen's expression coldened and said with a sternness that Xuanyue had never seen before, “Shut up!”

She frightened Xuanyue to the point where she shuddered and her hair stood on end. Only then did the Dark Queen's expression slowly soften, stroking Xuanyue gently. “You must not mention this to anyone, or I'll...”

She stopped there, but Xuanyue shivered. Ever since leaving Burial Mound mountain, her master seemed to have changed. Her feeling of lament had vanished, replaced by a dignified bearing of resolution.

As she stroked her, her movements were just as gentle as before, but it now lacked a sense of tenderness. She no longer looked at her either, instead staring into the endless darkness. A fire blazed in her eyes.

Perhaps, this was how she had been originally. Perhaps, this was the bearing that a demonic cultivator was supposed to possess.

A man suddenly appeared in the carriage, completely overlooking the guards in the surroundings and the many formations on the carriage.

He was disheveled, with his hair covering most of his face. His skin was pale-white as his eyes shone brightly. He wore a set of black robes, and the hem of his clothes and his cuffs were ragged, coiling about like black fire. He gave off an indescribable sense of power and influence.

“Sect master!” The Dark Queen bowed as she showed respect.

“You’ve finally returned. Looks like you’ve benefited quite a lot from this trip!” the master of the Umbral Yin sect said.

The Dark Queen told him about everything that happened near the Gate of Hungry Ghosts, but it was completely different from what Gu Yanying had said. She confessed that she killed the Marquis of Ruyi and everyone else, but even she did not disclose Xiao An’s identity.

“Very good!” The sect master revealed a sunken smile. “Do these whelps really think the world of cultivation is filled with happiness, a place where they can be at ease and lengthen their lives? Have you captured their souls?”

“Yes.”

“Torture them first and see if you can force out anything useful from them, then send them off to be sacrificed to the Myriad Ghost Banner. If you can overcome the heavenly tribulation, the position of sect master will definitely be yours in the future. The Myriad Ghost Banner will end up in your hands sooner or later. Turmoil is about to arise. The principles of the cultivation world have been twisted by the Great Xia empire for so long. It’s about time for it to demonstrate its true colours.”

The sect master revealed his ghastly-pale teeth as he grinned silently.

Xuanyue shivered, shrinking into the Dark Queen’s arms.

The Dark Queen stroked Xuanyue to comfort her as she thought, Master, even if you refuse to give me the position of sect master, I’ll never accept your decision. You have no idea how my child has turned out. Although she’s lost her identity as a human, it’s nothing compared to the power she’s obtained.

Yue’er, oh Yue’er. You are my flesh and bone. Even if you’ve turned into white bone, you’re mine. You’ll return to my side one day! If we work together, the Green province is ours.

.....

To the boundless Hungry Ghost realm, a Corpse King's death could only be considered as a small splash. It could not create too big of a disturbance, so it settled down very quickly.

However, the appearance of the white flames kicked up a ripple that spread into the distance rapidly.

After who knew how long, a wisp of black smoke sailed across the sunken sky, shooting off into the distance. A mountain range stood several hundred kilometers long like a colossal beast crouching on the horizon.

Only by arriving closer could someone realise the mountains were not mountains, but an actual, colossal beast. More accurately, it was the remains of a colossal beast. It was impossible to imagine just how powerful and terrifying it had been when it was still alive.

Vicious, bone spikes of various sizes jutted straight into the air like mountain peaks. In particular, the lone horn on the colossal beast's skull was unscalable.

Figures stood atop the lone peak. They varied in appearance and size, but their auras were all similarly strong, even greater than the Corpse King's. They were currently holding a discussion.

"What's happened? Why have we all been summoned here so urgently?" Some were perplexed.

"What? The legendary white holy fire appeared?" Some were bewildered.

"It's just a legend, isn't it? The colours of flames vary in the first place. As we stand in the trichiliocosm, no one can be too powerful, so how can they destroy the Hungry Ghost realm? It's merely a Corpse King. If he's dead, then he's dead. Do we really have to assemble over something as small as that?" Some were scornful.

"Cough, cough. All of you, shut up! What a ruckus. Do you want me to eat you all?"

A hunched-back figure arrived on the huge horn with a walking stick. He was wrapped in white bandages as he carried a few large flags on his back, all depicting vicious beasts.

His first sentence was as feeble as an old man on his deathbed, but what came afterwards seemed like the colossal beast below them had revived. It was a roar, shaking up the surroundings.

All of the undead fell silent and bowed towards him frantically.

He raised his walking stick and ordered, "Open a Gate of Hungry Ghosts as soon as possible and enter that world!" His voice became weak again. "Cough cough, only the young and weak will overlook legends."

The undead dared not ignore him. They all stated their ideas, "The trichiliocosm has its laws. If we forcefully enter, we'll be suppressed by that world, which will be extremely detrimental to us."

"Even if we open a Gate of Hungry Ghosts, we can't enter that world. However, there seems to be a sect called the "Umbral Yin sect" in that world that is closely connected to the Hungry Ghost realm. We can make a deal with them."

"If we use the undead from that world, the suppression we'll face will be weaker."

“He” said, “Find undead from that world. It’s fine if they’re a little weaker. We can feed them slowly. Go contact the Umbral Yin sect and give them what they need, or even support them in becoming the rulers of that world. Our condition is that they must kill the owner of the flames.”

He tapped his walking stick, and his voice suddenly became deafening. “If none of that works, then have the Hungry Ghost realm devour that world!”

Volume 8 Afterword

It’s been a very long time since I’ve written an author’s word, so let’s use this opportunity to say something. However, despite being an author who’s written several million characters, I always find it difficult to express what I want to say every single time. How strange!

What should I say? Can I make it moving? Can I make others smile?

If I can’t, then what’s the point?

I’ve never been a confident person, but I do have a great pile of things I take pride in!

I proudly believe that I can reach beyond the nine heavens some day and pluck the moon and stars from the sky. Afterwards, I’ll lower my head and discover I’m just at the level of the “Three Talents of the Crouching Ox”. I’ll ask myself with a bitter smile whether I can call someone “strong” if they can just kill a tiger with a single punch.

As a result, when I see comments of criticism, I’ll read through them all carefully if they have substance.

But when I come across some over-the-top praises and commendations, I’ll regularly stop reading half way out of embarrassment, giving it an upvote before closing the window. Woah, I can relax a little. I’m very happy, but it feels so embarrassing!

As a result, I often can’t even bring myself to ask for things like votes. I always have to pluck up my courage and cast away my shame every time I ask. Hah, it’s like a confession! Hehe, please view my requests for votes like how you would face a confession! Even if there aren’t votes, at least you can say “you’re a good person”!

Anyway, I want to become better, so good that I can eliminate this feeling of lowliness and inability, so good that I can confidently accept these praises.

This volume is the shortest volume of Legend of the Great Sage. I’ve written exactly what I’m least skilled in and least inspired and passionate about, but it is the most complete. It has the complete composition of a piece of writing, filling in holes, digging new holes, twists, suspense, and the development and closure of foreshadowing clues.

In writing, this is a summary of one and a half million characters, using a very clever way to realise my attempt at the ordinary~

I don’t lack inspiration or writing style. I need this ordinariness. Another word for it would be “foundation”.

To me, this has been another case of practice and improvement. I believe I can offer up an even better novel now.

Actually, if I wanted a better income and results, I would continue to use my talent to write female characters and write a love story of ambiguity. That should be the more correct choice. Instead, it shouldn't be abandoning what I'm good at to go for what I'm bad at, writing a story of levelling up and battle.

However, I won't be able to reach beyond the nine heavens like this.

Don't be confused by why I'm dripping with sweat, digging around randomly in the soil. I'm currently cultivating a plot of land. Don't be confused by why I'm burying steel and rocks underground. I want to build a proper foundation so that I can construct a great skyscraper.

Chapter 557 - Refining the Lake of Dragons and Snakes

In the commandery city of Ruyi, within the great general's estate, joss paper filled the air. White banners trailed into the distance.

An empty coffin sat on the mourning altar.

Below, the descendants of the Han family were dressed in mourning attire, kneeling on the ground. However, underneath their white clothes was sturdy armour.

The sandalwood incense burned quietly. There was not a single sob. Only the endless sound of autumn rain could be heard from outside.

Outside the mourning hall, armoured soldiers stood in formation with their weapons. The rain fell on their icy-cold armour. All of them were sorrowful.

The Marquis of Ruyi's funeral was being carried out at the same time. A downcast cloud loomed over the entire city.

"Commander Gu arrives!"

A messenger reported. The soldiers all lifted their weapons as their armour clanked like thunder.

Gu Yanying made her way over down the centre of the path. She stepped into the mourning hall, paid her respects, and offered up incense. She did not say much, turning around and leaving immediately. Her gaze swept past the descendants of the Han family in front of the mourning altar, only to see Han Qiongzhi among them. She glanced past her before flying out the door.

She pierced through the cloud layer and began to drift down gently like a feather. She lay between the white clouds.

She rested her head on her hands and closed her eyes, crossing one leg over the other leisurely as she took a small break.

After lying for a while, she frowned and changed her posture. She laid on her side before flipping over before eventually leaning on the clouds. She tossed and turned a full cycle before returning to her original, flat posture. She recited slowly, "His life is like floating; his death is like resting. He 'does not dream when he is asleep, does not worry when he is awake.' Sorrow and joy are perversions of integrity; happiness and anger are transgressions of the Dao; likes and dislikes are failings of the mind."

Her voice gradually softened, falling asleep peacefully.

Han Qiongzhi was dressed in full mourning attire. Her eyes were very red as her tears trickled down. She thought of her uncle's voice and expression when he was still alive and the various forms of care and concern he had shown her. Her heart was a tangled mess. She shoved her fingers into the spacing between the bricks, but she refused to let out a single sob.

This was the rule of the Han family. They were forbidden from showing a weak side and sobbing aloud. The women and children who could not achieve that would all be expelled. They would not be worthy of paying respects in the mourning hall.

Han Anjun stood up and said, "You better all wipe away your tears. The spirit of my departed brother remains. He's already ventured to the final home of all disciples of the school of the Military to continue battling in the Asura realm. There's nothing worth crying over!"

He exhaled deeply, turned around, and offered up another stick of incense. However, he was worried inside. He had fallen in battle against the Hungry Ghost realm. If he ended up in the Hungry Ghost realm, it would be bad.

Han Qiongzhi thought, Qingshan, where are you? Have you received my letter? I really want to see you!"

.....

"The moon demon is here!"

The Academy of the Hundred Schools was thrown into a panic.

Hua Chengzan was currently in secluded cultivation. He could hear the disturbances, only to see huge waves reaching towards the sky above the Lake of Dragons and Snakes. A huge figure was crossing through the lake, passing through the mist and making his way towards the academy with heavy footsteps.

His curved horns were like a pair of crescent moons as his scarlet eyes flickered like embers. He gave off a heavy pressure simply by standing there.

He was actually still alive!

Liu Zhangqing had yet to recover from the sorrow of the loss of his dear disciples. Standing on a tall building on Contention island, he lamented at the sky, "Why has my Clear River prefecture been dogged by bad luck?"

The other cultivators were ashen as well. They could only hope the Formation of Dragons and Snakes could halt the moon demon's advance.

On Cloudwisp island, Liu Chuanfeng called out, "Come with me, everyone!"

The disciples of the school of Novels, both young and old, huddled around him in a hurry. They followed behind him as the disciples asked, "Master, are we going to face the moon demon in a battle to the death?"

“It’s about time for our school of Novels to demonstrate its power.” A young man swung his fist viciously.

Liu Chuanfeng remained silent. He brought the disciples to a dense bamboo forest. His expression was fervent and solemn as he ordered, “Everyone, lie down!”

The disciples were all confused, but they still abided to his order and laid down.

Liu Chuanfeng laid down too and began focusing his attention on the Divine Talisman of Great Creation. Gradually, his figure vanished, replaced by a huge, dead log, and the disciples all turned into logs of various sizes too, strewn across the bamboo forest.

Liu Chuanfeng ordered with his soul sense, “Hide your aura as much as possible. Don’t let the moon demon discover us!”

“Umm, master, aren’t we going to face the moon demon in a battle to the death?”

“You can go. It’s not like I’m stopping you!”

After a moment of silence, someone said, “But master, this is a bamboo forest. Why would there be dead trees?”

“Shut up! Your master has his own brilliant plan... Am I supposed to conjure bamboo this thick?”

Although he no longer worried about any punishment from the Marquis of Ruyi, even the Marquis of Ruyi was dead, so who could still stop the moon demon? Liu Zhangqing completely disregarded his identity and roared at Hua Chengzan, “Chengzan, go find ma’am Gu to slay the daemon!”

He made up his mind. He would never remain in a state of constant alarm and be some prefect anymore. Instead, he would be like Li Qingshan. He would find some remote dwelling to cultivate in seclusion.

“Yes, sir!” Hua Chengzan’s expression was mixed. Perhaps she had seen through Li Qingshan’s identity a long time ago, which was why she paid special attention to him. Why would she come and slay daemons?

However, he probably did not come to the academy to start a slaughter. Hua Chengzan only noticed daemon qi permeating the upper stream of the Lake of Dragons and Snakes before suddenly realising. Yes, he wants to refine the Lake of Dragons and Snakes.

On Benevolence island, Ru Xin crossed her arms in relief. Sure enough, this guy truly would not die so easily.

“Moon demon, didn’t you say you want to coexist with us in peace? Why have you gone back on your word? Don’t you know that the Academy of the Hundred Schools is the foundation of the Great Xia empire? Don’t you know about the consequences of attacking here?”

Liu Zhangqing unleash his talent of eloquence as he questioned loudly while hinting with threats, only in hopes that the moon demon would reconsider his actions.

Li Qingshan was scornful. Didn’t the White Lotus Mother almost do the same with you back then?

In the thick mist, a huge figure swam around. A strange fish lunged over viciously with its mouth filled with horrific teeth, but strangely enough, it did not give off the slightest hint of daemon qi.

Not only was entering the thick mist around the academy like a mortal entering dense, confusing mist, but it could also turn into a powerful mist beast. Even Foundation Establishment cultivators would suffer when they faced it.

Li Qingshan recalled when he first entered the academy, he had once seen this fish's figure. Back then, he found the strange fish to be so colossal, radiating with a terrifying aura.

Now, he casually gripped the strange fish like he had caught a dog. He allowed the strange fish to struggle as much as it wanted, but it could not break free. Afterwards, he clenched his hand and crushed it.

The monster dispersed as mist before reassembling as a long snake that coiled around him.

Li Qingshan's body shuddered, unleashing the power of tremors. The Lake of Dragons and Snakes around him seemed to be ripped apart. It surged violently. The snake dispersed and did not condense again. Even the mist that surrounded the academy all year round began to scatter gradually.

He arrived before the Formation of Dragons and Snakes and said with his metallic voice, "Open the formation! I'll leave as soon as I refine the Lake of Dragons and Snakes!"

"T- that's impossible, unless you-"

Before Liu Zhangqing could even finish, Li Qingshan had already thrown a punch.

Boom!

Rings of light surged into the surroundings in the sky, away from Li Qingshan's fist.

The crucial points on the various islands erupted with light, supporting the Formation of Dragons and Snakes and fending off Li Qingshan's terrifying power. The formation constantly twisted.

"That's impossible!" Liu Zhangqing widened his eyes, filled with fear. Ever since the White Lotus cult infiltrated, the academy had reinforced the Formation of Dragons and Snakes. How could it be pushed so far with brute force alone?

Tremor!

A crack appeared on the Formation of Dragons and Snakes. Liu Zhangqing had already become completely speechless. When he considered the fate awaiting him for rejecting the moon demon once he breached the formation, he could not help but gulp.

"Hold on! Shut up! I can open the formation as long as you promise you won't harm the disciples of my academy..."

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Li Qingshan completely ignored him. He threw consecutive punches and the crack constantly widened. The entire formation collapsed.

Hmph, I might not be able to shatter space, but that doesn't mean I can't shatter your puny formation!

Li Qingshan strode towards Contention island and glanced at Cloudwisp island in the process. With how sharp his eyesight was, he spotted the contrasting dead logs in a single glance. He could not help but be at a loss as for how to react. This bastard sure was a genius!

He held back his urge to throw a punch that way, turning around instead. He bent over and brought his face up to the tall building, asking Liu Zhangqing, "Is there anything else you want to say?"

Liu Zhangqing shook his head. Li Qingshan left as soon as he refined the Lake of Dragons and Snakes. He had yet to even open the Golden Core cultivators' hundred treasures pouches he had obtained. The academy truly did not possess anything that could interest him anymore.

However, it was still not enough. If he wanted to suppress the ox demon, he needed even more and even vaster expanses of water.

Li Qingshan directed his gaze to the end of the Clear river.

"Piss off, Northmoon. This is already beyond Lolth's territory!"

Above the marsh that the waters of the Clear river flowed into, Li Qingshan was constantly devouring and refining water when a bald, naked man leapt out of the marsh. He was sturdy, standing over three meters tall as his entire body rippled with muscles. He was like a bodybuilder.

Daemon qi surged from his body, on par with Lolth's. He was actually a Daemon Commander too.

Li Qingshan had never thought the ones obstructing his plan to refine water would not be humans, but a daemon, and a powerful Daemon Commander at that.

Within the territory of the Ruyi commandery, Lolth was obviously not alone as a Daemon Commander. Otherwise, with how many Golden Core cultivators there were in the Ruyi commandery, they would have dealt with her a long time ago. The power of the daemons did pale slightly in comparison to the humans, but the difference was limited.

Lolth's territory roughly spanned the region underneath the fifteen hundred kilometers of the Clear River province. The special characteristic of her territory was that it was not particularly large in area, but it reached very deep into the earth. It was equivalent to more than ten Clear River provinces.

Other regions obviously had other Daemon Commanders, and they also covered a territory more than ten Clear River prefectures.

In reality, because of her identity as a carapaced Daemon General, Lolth's body was much tougher than regular Daemon Generals, and her three innate abilities covered both offence and defence flawlessly, even propelling her ability to fight and kill to the limit. As a result, her territory was relatively larger.

"You know me?" Li Qingshan was confused.

"I've obviously heard about the strongest Daemon General beneath Lolth. However, no matter how powerful a Daemon General is, they're still a Daemon General. It's not too late for you to piss off right now, or I'll teach you a thorough lesson and have you understand what your identity is!"

The Daemon Commander brought his hands together and closed them viciously. His muscles popped even more as he revealed a cruel expression.

Chapter 558 - Above the Marsh

The rain fell thick and fast. Li Qingshan gazed at the marsh that was even larger than Moon Court lake in the distance as the bodies of water reflected the dark clouds in the sky.

Overall, it was a little more shallow, but its advantage was its vast area. If he could refine it, then the benefits he would receive might even exceed the Clear river. Perhaps he would be able to accumulate enough power to suppress the ox demon.

“Is this marsh your territory?”

Li Qingshan reeled in his gaze, directing it at the burly Daemon Commander before him. He refused to believe any Daemon Commander was bold enough to move around on the surface. The Ruyi commandery neighbored the Dragon province, which was the nucleus that ruled over the Great Xia empire. It was not a place remote like the Mist province.

“Piss off!”

The burly Daemon Commander bellowed, giving no explanation. How dare a measly Daemon General question him!

At the same time, he opened his mouth to an unbelievable degree and spat out a half-transparent gas. It rapidly moved through the air, stretching into an oval as it flew towards Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan raised his hand, spread his fingers, and grabbed the gas. He felt a tremendous force applied to his palm, actually causing it to ache slightly. “You really are a Daemon Commander. All of you are quite capable.”

“That’s impossible!” The Daemon Commander’s eyes popped out all of a sudden. The gas was one of his innate abilities. It was so powerful that even Daemon Commanders dared not receive it directly, yet this Northmoon had managed to block it with a single hand.

He caused Li Qingshan quite the surprise. “There’s no need for you to respond as exaggeratedly as a cartoon character!”

The Daemon Commander had no idea what he was saying. The gas pushed hard, but it refused to budge anymore. He suddenly sneered, and the gas distorted violently.

Li Qingshan felt that an explosive power was about to erupt in his hand. He suppressed it momentarily with the spirit turtle, tossing it behind him casually.

Boom!

With a great rumble, a huge pit was created in the marsh from the blast. The fierce wind surged like a typhoon, and muddy water shot off like bullets.

A tree became riddled with holes before being uprooted by the fierce wind. It flew into the air, rushing past Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan patted his hands and continued with the topic from earlier. "Since this territory isn't yours, it's mine. Please piss off, alright?"

"I've changed my mind. You better stay here so Lolth can offer up a piece of territory to pay off your ransom!"

The Daemon Commander immediately flew into a rage. He leapt up with his two feet, slamming towards Li Qingshan.

No different from before, Li Qingshan simply raised a hand like normal.

The Daemon Commander opened his great mouth and spat out balls of gas again and again, but they all followed different trajectories, flying randomly through the air.

Li Qingshan became completely surrounded by the gas.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

When the gas exploded, the Daemon Commander rushed into the centre of the explosion against the wind with a sneer, only to see Li Qingshan maintaining the same posture as before. His arm was raised and his scarlet hair fluttered about. While his body was riddled with many wounds, it was nothing compared to how tough a daemon's body was.

After breaking through to the fifth layer of the ox demon, his innate abilities were not the only things that had strengthened. His ox hide had truly become much tougher than before. For the first time, it had surpassed the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell, becoming his strongest defence.

The Daemon Commander's eyes suddenly popped out again. He felt like the battle was going extremely badly. He wanted to halt himself, but there was a flash of scarlet and it arrived before him, only inches away. A hand pressed down on his huge, bald head as an overwhelming and terrifying power was applied down.

"I said to stop behaving like a cartoon character! If you make me laugh while fighting, what am I supposed to do if I ruin the atmosphere?"

Li Qingshan roared. He gripped the Daemon Commander's bald head and spun around three times in the air before throwing him at the ground.

With a boom, the Daemon Commander was thrown deep into the marsh.

The marsh suddenly swelled. Something seemed to be rapidly growing beneath the marsh, reaching the size of a hill.

A pair of eyes the size of ponds bulged out, lifting up the mud. It opened its fissure-like mouth and let out a thunderous cry.

"Croak!"

Li Qingshan exhaled. "Looks like it's my mistake."

.....

Within the drizzling rain, a small village sat peacefully between two mountains. The chaotic sound of galloping hooves broke the peace. A group of bandits arrived in the valley and the only one-eyed rider drew his blade and pointed it at the village.

“Brothers, you wanna do this?”

“We do! We do! We do!” the mountain bandits called out together.

“Steal money, steal food, steal women! We’ll kill anyone who blocks our way!” the bandit leader called out as his horse reared.

“Kill them all! Kill them all!”

At this moment, there was a rustle in the bushes. The bandit leader’s ears caught the rustle, and he called out, “Who’s there!” He swung his hand and a caltrop flew out. He was a master of the jianghu who used throwing knives.

Clang! The caltrop seemed to strike something, flying back out of the bush. The mountain bandits huddled over and swung their weapons wildly. The bush collapsed, but no one was there.

“Hmm? What’s this? It seems like a letter!”

A short, small bandit knelt on the ground and blinked his eyes. Sure enough, a letter laid on the grass. They had no idea what kind of paper it was, as it remained dry even in the rain. A series of words, “For Qingshan; Private and Confidential”, were written on it. He extended his hand to grab it and the letter moved, and it moved extremely quickly.

Only then did the mountain bandits notice what was beneath the letter.

A skeleton the size of an index finger held the letter. It seemed rather hideous, but with how small it was, there was nothing frightening about it.

“What is this strange thing!?” the bandits called out.

“It might be a treasure! Capture it!” the bandit leader ordered.

Swish!

The skeleton turned into a streak of white light and vanished. The short bandits suddenly froze up and a bloody hole appeared on his forehead. What spurted out was neither blood or brains, but white flames.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! The white light shot through the bushes and the bandits froze up one by one.

Within the whinnying sound of a horse, the bandit leader held the reins and slowly backed away. He waved his blade around madly, only to see the tiny skeleton stop right before him.

“This one has offended the great immortal! Even death cannot atone my offence! Please punish me, great immortal!”

The bandit leader fell off his horse with a thump. He knelt on the ground and bowed his head constantly.

The skeleton began to swell, becoming a Skeleton Demon several meters tall. It held the bandit leader in its hand with a strange cackle and did not refine him with the Samādhi Flames of White Bone, shoving him into its mouth instead. It chewed with a series of crick-cracks, spluttering blood everywhere.

“Aaaaaaargh! Aaaaaaaaargh!” The shriek alarmed the tiny village between the mountains.

Thump!

As it was feasting, the Skeleton Demon’s head tilted and fell to the ground heavily as if a huge, invisible hand had flicked its head.

The Skeleton Demon climbed back up. Its head spun around a few times and it rapidly shrank, turning back to the size of an index finger. It picked up the letter and dove into the bushes.

Xiao An gently brought her thumb and middle finger together. Her hand resembled a lotus flower as she sat in the main hall of the Anāsraṃā? temple, gazing at the statue of buddha while listening quietly to the bells. Hidden within her sleeve, the string of shiny, white prayer beads on her wrist was missing a bead.

Once it got too far, it would take her even more effort to control the Skull Prayer Beads. However, with the Skeleton Demon’s strength, delivering a letter was nothing difficult.

After recovering her past memories, her thoughts had become even more nimble. In particular, she understood the codes of conduct much better, but with it came many distracting thoughts and mental afflictions.

In terms of “the ability to comprehend”, she instead paled in comparison to the old Xiao An now. Although she had been rather muddle-headed, the pureness of her thoughts were better for comprehension than her newfound cleverness and sensibility.

She had come before the buddha to purge the cleverness and sensibility and consolidate her will to destroy buddhism.

She did not want to be her past self. She wanted to forget her past name and only be his Xiao An.

However, she was lacking something for the second layer of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty, preventing her from breaking through. She needed an even deeper comprehension of the buddhist dharma.

Xiao An murmured to herself, “The Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga.”

.....

A huge bullfrog had flipped over, lying on the marsh with its white belly up as if it were a lone island in the endless swamp.

Li Qingshan laid on the lone island, basking in the sun as he gradually recovered his daemon qi.

The bullfrog Daemon Commander was a little weaker than the Spider Queen, but he did have an innate ability that could reflect foreign powers. It took him quite the effort to deal with him.

The bush rustled, and the Skeleton Demon leapt out, flying over to him.

“Hmm?” Li Qingshan cleared away his messy, scarlet hair to the back of his head and accepted the letter from the Skeleton Demon. Looking at the words, he recognised them. “Qiongzhi!”

He immediately opened and read it carefully. His mood gradually grew heavier.

The letter was not long, but it was written in bits and pieces. There were traces of tears at the bottom. He reached the last sentence.

“Qingshan, I really want to see you!”

Li Qingshan blanked out for a moment. He felt rather ashamed inside. He had underestimated this uncle Han’s position in Han Qiongzhi’s heart.

His parents had died long ago, and he had grown up in loneliness. He had never experienced any so-called “family affection” from his elder brother and sister-in-law. Underestimating the weight of those two words was unavoidable.

He stood up and imagined her teary, sorrowful face. He was tempted to rush to the Ruyi commandery immediately and stand by her side, but when he looked at himself, all he could do was let out a long sigh. Right now, he could not even suppress his daemon qi. Thinking up to there, he suddenly made up his mind. His gaze became resolute.

The Skeleton Demon circled around the huge bullfrog as the fire in its eyes shone brightly. It was very interested in such a large chunk of quality flesh. Finally, it could not help itself anymore and swelled to several meters tall, biting down viciously.

“Croak!” The bullfrog let out a frightful cry and leapt several dozen meters into the air, fleeing into the distance in a panic.

Just when the Skeleton Demon wanted to chase after him, Li Qingshan grabbed its neck and shoved the letter back into its hands.

He gazed into the horizon and said to himself, “I’ll rush over as soon as I can. Wait for me!”

.....

In the Umbral Yin sect, the Dark Queen took out the souls she had captured. She ignored the pleas and curses from the Marquis of Ruyi and everyone else. They had plenty to enjoy later.

This was probably the misfortune of cultivators. If mortals died, their souls would return to sa?sāra, which instead made them almost immortal.

Cultivators seemed to possess lengthy lives, but that was only if they died from old age. If they were killed in battle, their souls might not necessarily have the opportunity to return to sa?sāra.

If their cultivations were higher, then it also meant the cultivations of the cultivators that killed them were higher too. Their souls were basically unable to escape the fate of being captured and killed. This was the so-called true destruction, dooming them eternally.

The Dark Queen was slightly surprised. She noticed that one was missing. She rubbed her forehead and remembered that final spear thrust. “Did his soul escape?”

Chapter 559 - No One's Allowed to Leave

Because the Dark Queen had devoted her attention to Xiao An, she had failed to notice this. During Han Anguo's final strike that he poured all his strength into, he had failed to defeat the Dark Queen, but his soul did manage to escape, allowing him to avoid the fate of ending up in the Myriad Ghost Banner.

"If his soul has remained in the World of the Nine Provinces, that'll be troublesome. However, in that sealed region, the only place his soul can venture to is the six realms of sa?sāra. Has he been sucked into the Hungry Ghost realm, or is he currently facing judgement in the Hell realm? No, with his character and aptitude, he's probably been accepted into the Asura realm!"

Although the school of the Military had methods to connect with the Asura realm, the Asura realm was boundless, so finding a newborn asura was absolutely impossible. There was nothing for her to worry about.

She stopped worrying and began torturing and interrogating the souls of the Marquis of Ruyi and everyone else for their cultivation methods. Although it was useless to her, she could offer it up to the Umbral Yin sect in exchange for resources. They were absolutely necessary for a sect to gather.

.....

Light poured in through the window and into the gloomy hall.

Han Qiongzhi stood by the window. She finished reading the letter, but she was unable to hide her disappointment. In the end, he had not even given her a precise time. He only said as soon as possible.

"Qiongzhi, we're setting off."

Han Anjun entered the hall. The funeral rites were complete. Today was the day for interment.

Han Qiongzhi asked a question, "Father, does cultivation come before all?"

Han Anjun said, "Then why else would we be called cultivators? Turmoil is about to erupt. If you don't have strength, you won't even be able to protect your own life, just like your uncle. He hasn't done anything wrong. As a father, I don't like the way he treats my daughter, but as 'fellow cultivators', I must recognise him."

Han Qiongzhi shook her head gently and said bitterly, "I understand, I understand. That's why women are always in the minority in the cultivation community. Men sure are cold-hearted!"

"It's not cold-heartedness. It's just that his greatest passion is not the feelings between a man and a woman. He's shrouded in a layer of mist, which even I cannot see through. However, his ambitions are anything but small. If you really want to become partners with him, then all you can do is attempt to understand his path. If you share the same path, then that would be for the best. If you don't, there's no need to force it either."

Han Qiongzhi was taken aback. Although they had already engaged in intimate contact countless times already, she would still be left at a loss if she was asked what his "path" was. In retrospect, she had never been able to see through the layer of mist around him either.

Within the drizzle, the army meandered and advanced, taking part in Han Anguo's funeral procession.

They interred him in the ancestral grave of the Han family, establishing a cenotaph.

Outside the cenotaph was a row of simple buildings. All of his blood relatives would stand watch there for a hundred days.

Han Qiongzhi chose a simple room and walked in. She gazed into the horizon. "I will wait for you and try to understand your path."

.....

Light shimmered on the Water God Seal. It had gained an area of marsh, becoming even more resplendent.

The Water God Seal drained all the water spiritual qi that had accumulated in the marsh over the past millennium, all flowing into the spirit turtle's daemon core.

The spirit turtle's daemon core was like a whale taking in water, absorbing all of the spiritual qi without holding back. However, it still seemed dissatisfied, showing no signs of breaking through to the fifth layer of the spirit turtle.

Li Qingshan exhaled deeply. The Spirit Turtle Transformation determined his cultivation, and it had always taken up more resources than the ox demon or tiger demon. However, he still had never expected the breakthrough to the fifth layer of spirit turtle to actually be so difficult.

But from a different perspective, this was instead a good thing. The more accumulation he required, the greater the benefits the breakthrough would bring. Currently, the "quality" of his daemon qi was already on par with Daemon Commanders, but his "quantity" was still insufficient.

If he could break through to the fifth layer of the spirit turtle, then both the quantity and quality of his daemon qi would completely surpass Daemon Commanders. Even when he faced those "kings", he would have what it took to speak up.

Li Qingshan continued on his way. What awaited him was obviously constant battles. Daemon Commanders were extremely territorial and none of them could be dealt with through talking alone. However, none of the Daemon Commanders were his opponent either.

With how powerful and ingenious his innate abilities were, Li Qingshan used force to triumph over both force and trickery.

Time passed by. In the blink of an eye, it was already two months later.

Autumn left and winter came. Snow drifted through the air.

A river bound in ice meandered along the ground. Beneath the ice, the river water raged.

A man with scarlet hair ignored the icy-cold climate and travelled on the ice. Wherever he passed by, the ice would shatter loudly, and the slumbering river would toss and turn like a waking dragon, while he was standing on the dragon's head.

Li Qingshan gazed at the snowy sky and let out a white breath before gazing ahead again. This river that was no smaller than the Clear river finally reached its end too. He had almost refined it completely.

If this one was included, he would have refined four large rivers and eight large lakes. These lakes and rivers were all major rivers and lakes that could rival the Clear river and Moon Court lake. There were countless other bodies of water too.

He was already very far away from the Clear River prefecture now. He had basically followed the twisting rivers and traversed the entire Ruyi commandery. The spirit turtle's daemon core finally showed signs of filling up, and the fourth layer of the spirit turtle had finally almost been pushed to the peak. Now, both the quality and quantity of his daemon qi had achieved or even surpassed the level of Daemon Commanders.

However, a new problem arose at the same time. As the spirit turtle strengthened, the pressure that the phoenix faced gradually intensified. It had even become sluggish for him to use the phoenix wings. Once he truly broke through to the fifth layer of the spirit turtle, then the balance he had narrowly achieved would probably be broken.

By then, perhaps the spirit turtle would completely suppress the phoenix and reject this power that was a polar opposite. His cultivation of the Phoenix's Scripture of Nirvāṇa would become even more difficult.

There was a hint of exhaustion on his face too. Although he could recover his daemon qi through the Water God Seal and he could recover his strength through the Strength of the Earth, he had been constantly battling, refining bodies of water, before battling even more.

In order to see Han Qiongzhi as soon as possible, he seized every second. He did not relax mentally for even a moment.

Li Qingshan pondered with his brows furrowed for a moment before deciding to continue on his way. He would refine this river first before deciding what to do next. Right when he was about to refine the river, it suddenly ended in failure.

Li Qingshan looked back in the direction of the river. "Someone is making trouble upstream! That's strange. I've already defeated this territory's Daemon Commander. Who can still obstruct me? Have the humans finally responded and sent someone?"

He unfurled the phoenix wings and soared into the sky, arriving upstream very soon. He was surprised. "It's you!"

Surprisingly enough, the one that got in his way of refining the river was the bullfrog Daemon Commander he had defeated first. He currently had his mouth wide open as he looked at Li Qingshan in a mocking manner.

"How bold of you. This isn't even your territory, so why are you here... Hmm? All of you, come out!"

Li Qingshan's heart skipped a beat. The spirit turtle actually detected a sliver of danger. Combined with the bullfrog Daemon Commander's arrogant attitude, he immediately understood what was going on and called out.

The haze in the air twisted, revealing multiple Daemon Commanders. Li Qingshan was very familiar with this move too. It was the innate ability of a Daemon Commander he had defeated a month ago. In order to deal with him, it had taken him quite the effort.

Sure enough, when he looked at the Daemon Commanders, there were many familiar faces.

Li Qingshan scanned past them. There were thirteen Daemon Commanders in total, some defeated by him and some he had never seen before. Most of the Daemon Commanders within the Ruyi commandery had appeared.

They all leered at Li Qingshan as powerful clusters of daemon qi rushed into the air. They were hostile.

The bullfrog Daemon Commander let out a strange croak. "How's that, Northmoon? You afraid now? Hand over your Water God Seal and bow to us in apology and we'll spare your life."

"You're bold enough to try and kill me?"

Li Qingshan frowned. Daemon Commanders all occupied their own territories. Rarely did they band together like this, and he had not even seen some of the Daemon Commanders before. He did not have any disputes with them, yet they had actually come to gang up on him.

"You've defied your superiors and encroached upon our territory. Even if we kill you, the dragon king won't blame us," the bullfrog Daemon Commander said viciously. Laws could not punish too many people. It was impossible for the Dragon King of Ink Sea to punish them over the death of a "Northmoon".

"I defeated you and spared your life, yet you're shameless enough to gang up on me?"

Battles for territory among daemons had their own set of rules. Defeat was defeat. This was why Li Qingshan had never gotten Xiao An to assist him, just so he could avoid any Daemon Commanders unconvinced with their defeat and hassling him endlessly. Their actions had basically broken the rules.

And, rivers and lakes on the surface were not particularly important to them unless they were water Daemon Commanders. As a matter of fact, it did not even count as their territory. There was absolutely no need for them to go to war like this.

There were far too many things that made no sense.

"Cut the bullsh*t!" The bullfrog Daemon Commander let out a strange bellow and reverted to his original form. He crouched on the ground and opened his mouth, spitting out a huge bubble.

"Come!" The exhaustion in Li Qingshan's eyes vanished, shining with a blazing light instead.

In that moment, over a dozen abilities dazzled his eyes. There were direct attacks and abilities to ensnare the opponent. There were far too many to see, let alone dodge.

Light illuminated the air as streams of air swept out violently.

Even if a Daemon Commander was sucked in, only death would be awaiting them.

Li Qingshan spread his arms and struck the space heavily. Around him, black shockwaves dispersed outwards as black cracks spread out like spiderwebs, shattering and tearing apart the countless abilities.

The phoenix wings unfurled and fire and wind blazed and danced. He created a trail of fire as he broke free from the encirclement.

“Don’t let him escape!” Some Daemon Commanders called out.

“Escape? Hmph!” Li Qingshan flapped his wings, approaching the Daemon Commander closest to him in the blink of an eye and used the “Tiger Demon Digs Out the Heart” he had not used in quite some time.

In human form, the Daemon Commander was a stocky, dark-skinned man. Two long, sharp teeth protruded from his mouth as he butted them towards Li Qingshan. He was a wild boar daemon.

He completely ignored Li Qingshan’s strike. One of his innate abilities was his thick hide. In terms of defence, he was even more powerful than Lolth.

Clang! Li Qingshan extended the horns on his head and caught the tusks.

Black cracks coiled around his slender, white arm, piercing the wild boar daemon’s hide and digging out a bloody heart. He directly shoved it into his mouth, chewed it a few times before swallowing.

The boar heart reeking of blood riled his killing intent. He grabbed the wild boar daemon’s tusks with both hands and snapped them off with a crack. Then he wrapped his arm around the wild boar daemon’s neck and malice surged from his body. He sneered. “Apologies, I went too easy last time, which is why you all still think you stand a chance. Today, no one’s allowed to leave!”

Chapter 560 - Mo Yu Appears Again

The Daemon Commanders that Li Qingshan had once fought before all showed disbelief.

He had become even stronger, much stronger than when they fought with him before.

Over the past two months, Li Qingshan had been constantly refining bodies of water. As he pushed the fourth layer of the spirit turtle to the limit, he could gradually unleash the true power of the fifth layer of the ox demon bit by bit. He grew stronger with each step forward.

The wild boar daemon shrieked, “If you kill me, the dragon king will never spare you.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t kill you.”

Li Qingshan’s hands slid past his body and grabbed his wrists. He planted a foot on his chest and pulled hard.

With a tearing sound, he forcefully ripped off the two stocky arms of the wild boar daemon. Blood sprayed out like geysers.

The wild boar daemon squealed and fell down. Li Qingshan lunged over and grabbed his heels, placing his foot between his legs before pulling hard again and ripping his legs off.

The wild boar daemon had lost all of his limbs, but Li Qingshan still did not spare him. He formed a claw and dug it into his abdomen, pulling out a handful of bloody organs before punting him in the head. Brain matter splattered, and he was sent flying.

The power of tremors then emerged, and the wild boar’s entire body crackled like firecrackers. By now, all of his bones were broken, his limbs were severed, and his organs had been ripped out. He was on his last breath, only remaining alive due to his powerful life force as a Daemon Commander.

“You better piss off and go cultivate for another century!”

Even for Daemon Commanders, recovering from such severe wounds would be difficult if they did not possess any healing innate abilities.

Li Qingshan could vaguely guess who was behind this.

If he killed any of the Daemon Commanders here, he would definitely end up with the crime of murdering a clansmen, and with how he was a loner among the daemons, it was impossible for this to receive a clear resolution.

By then, the Dragon King of Ink Sea would not even have to take action. He only needed to expel him and probably both the master of the Sword Collection palace or the lord of the Green province would not mind spending some time to kill a threatening wretched daemon.

Li Qingshan obviously would not fall for this. I can't kill you, but I can cripple and disable you. I'll use the most brutal methods possible to make you experience the consequences of opposing me.

With how horrific it was, the Daemon Commanders all began to consider retreating, but when they remembered that person's orders, they refused to flee.

“Let's get him together! His daemon qi won't be able to last too long!”

Violent booms and bellows rang out like thunder, reaching hundreds of kilometers away. Light flashed, winds surged, and blood spattered.

Li Qingshan's daemon qi was indeed limited, and this was not within the range of his water territory, so the Water God Seal was useless. After defeating six Daemon Commanders consecutively, his daemon qi had basically run out.

However, under the Strength of the Earth, his physical strength was inexhaustible. He reverted to his original form and used his ox hide alone to endure the attacks, fighting in the most primitive way possible.

Escape was no longer possible for any Daemon Commander that ended up in his hands. They were all ripped apart.

Blood poured down like rain, dyeing the ice river red.

Li Qingshan bathed in blood as his scarlet hair danced. He fought furiously as the ice river beneath his feet broke. He could vaguely hear mad laughter that resembled a tiger's roar rushing into the air, only to suddenly realise it was his laughter. As a result, he laughed even more violently.

“Hahahahaha!”

What clansmen? Isn't there still endless conflict? I don't care if you're from the Daemon race or the Human race. I am a race of my own, and I don't need to work with anyone. Everyone who blocks my way is my enemy. I will use these hands to rip apart all those who block my path!

The Daemon Commanders were utterly horrified. As long as they could still move, they no longer cared about anyone's orders anymore, scattering and fleeing for their lives.

The bullfrog Daemon Commander reverted to his original form and pushed hard with his feet, leaping over fifty kilometers away.

An iron hoof descended from above, pushing him to the ground and stomping down on him.

The bullfrog Daemon Commander struggled desperately. He turned his head and spat out bubbles.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! They blew up small mountains and blasted open huge pits.

Li Qingshan pressed the bullfrog Daemon Commander's head into the earth with his hand as his hoof gradually dug into the latter's skin.

With a crack, the bullfrog Daemon Commander's spine was forcefully crushed. He lay on the ground with his limbs splayed out messily.

"Do you know how I roasted frogs when I was young?"

Li Qingshan asked. Without even waiting for his reply, a black claw plunged directly into his mouth and grabbed a handful of soft tissue, pulling at it messily.

"Save me, sir Mo Yu!"

Li Qingshan felt a hint of danger. A black shadow in the sky enveloped him. Li Qingshan looked back and laughed madly. "Mo Yu, have you finally run out of patience and decided to take action?"

"Northmoon, you've brutally abused your own clansmen. Do you know what crimes you've committed?" The deathly Mo Yu unfurled his black wings and descended from above. This powerful, arrogant crown prince of the Green province daemons had become even paler now.

As Li Qingshan had expected, Mo Yu was behind everything, and this was no longer just about jealousy anymore.

Northmoon made him feel deeply threatened. Not only did he cultivate at a startling speed, but he had managed to overwhelm the Daemon Commanders of the Ruyi commandery as a Daemon General. If he were allowed to continue refining regions of water, probably even he would not be able to keep him at bay once he became a Daemon Commander. It also impacted the struggle for the throne among the Green province daemons.

"As a daemon, you make me sick to be able to say something so hypocritical! If you find me displeasing, then come kill me!" Li Qingshan stood on the bullfrog Daemon Commander beneath him, raised his hand, and spread his fingers.

Mo Yu stood in the air, staring into Li Qingshan's eyes. Li Qingshan stared right back at him without holding back. Black feathers began to drift down from above, leaving behind smears of black.

Li Qingshan dared not be careless. Since Mo Yu could become the crown prince of the Green province daemons, he was definitely much more powerful than regular Daemon Commanders. He would not be surprised at all if he possessed the ability to contend with regular Daemon Kings.

He was ready, poised for any attacks that would rain down on him at any time, but the feathers did not fly over and attack him. They simply drifted through the air as if the entire sky had been dyed black. It was filled with an ominous feeling.

The vegetation on the ground immediately died, their vitality severed, but they maintained a false, verdant impression. They would only wither completely several days later. The wild rabbits hibernating deep underground would never wake up again either.

Li Qingshan suddenly felt a chill run down his spine. He clearly possessed boundless strength, yet in that moment, he felt like he was unable to support his body anymore. With a bang, one of his knees dropped to the ground as if his soul had separated from his body.

His heartbeat became slower and slower, his breathing gradually stopped, and his thought processes halted too.

This was the feeling of death!

“Gaze of Death!”

One of Mo Yu’s innate abilities could directly bypass all of the enemy’s defences and directly extinguish their flames of life. People killed by him would all be unscathed. They all seemed like they had suddenly died on the spot.

“You’re actually stupid enough to exchange gazes with me! I’ll simply kill you right here and then seek punishment from the king!”

While daemons did possess an iron rule that prevented them from killing one another, leading to severe punishment if they broke it, but rules and laws had always just been used to restrict the weak.

Suddenly, a cry rose up from soft to loud. It possessed beauty that could not be described with words.

The phoenix wings suddenly expanded to several dozen meters across, and the phoenix that had become rather haggard under the spirit turtle’s suppression blazed with dazzling flames of life under the threat of death.

The sky full of feathers vanished together. As it turned out, it was merely an illusion.

Mo Yu was mildly surprised. He had never seen a Daemon General who could put up a struggle against his Gaze of Death. Northmoon’s body contained a powerful life force that clung on persistently.

“But do you really think you can escape from your fate of certain death like this?”

His black irises flowed like liquid, filling his entire eye. In the blink of an eye, there was not a shred of white left in Mo Yu’s eyes. They were filled with a terrifying, eerie aura.

The raging flames of life immediately dimmed like a black veil had covered it, suppressing and extinguishing it.

Black feathers drifted through the sky again like black snow.

This was a clash between life and death, a battle between the phoenix and the crow.

The phoenix was a divine bird, but it was far too young and feeble right now such that it was inferior to the crow in strength.

“You better stop, the two of you!”

A voice rang out, and with a flash, Gu Yanying appeared between Mo Yu and Li Qingshan, blocking their vision of each other and ending their clash.

“Yanying, move aside.” Mo Yu frowned.

Gu Yanying raised her hand, and a circular Ink Dragon talisman dropped down. The Ink Dragon talisman that an ink dragon seemed to be coiled around suddenly sprung alive. It opened its eyes and looked at Li Qingshan first—Li Qingshan experienced intense pressure, the dignified pressure of a king—before looking at Mo Yu.

“Stop where you should.”

No one knew who he was directing those words towards, but since the boss of the Green province daemons had told them to stop where they should, both Li Qingshan and Mo Yu were forced to stop.

“You will die!” Mo Yu’s lips pulled backwards, revealing that eerie, mask-like smile before producing a strange, sharp cry like a crow. “Caw!” His daemon qi plummeted.

Li Qingshan shivered, but nothing seemed wrong to him.

Seeing how Li Qingshan was perfectly fine, Mo Yu frowned again. He spread out his black feathers and vanished into the distorting, collapsing darkness.

Gu Yanying stowed the Ink Dragon talisman away and yawned. She said with her soul sense, “Oi, I’m the White Hawk commander of the Ruyi commandery after all. It’s time for you to run.”

“What did he do to me?”

“The Death Bringer Curse. It’s his most terrifying innate ability. It directly reduces the target’s lifespan depending on their strength and race. That caw of his earlier took away a century of life from you at the very least, but it seems like your lifespan is plenty long.”

Li Qingshan was stunned. Mo Yu’s ability sure was strange and powerful. If he used it on daemons, then so be it, but if a human cultivator lost a century of life all of a sudden, that was even more terrifying than being stabbed ten times. In particular, a few older cultivators might even die on the spot.

But as it seemed, Mo Yu also had to pay a price to use this move. He could not use it consecutively, or he would be invincible if he simply cawed a bunch of times the moment he saw people.

This extremely terrifying innate ability was not particularly effective against Li Qingshan. Like the Chinese saying, “A millennia a tortoise, ten millennia a turtle.” even he had no idea how long an almost-godlike spirit turtle’s life span was. Moreover, the phoenix was a symbol of eternal life.

However, losing a hundred years of life for no reason still left Li Qingshan with a horrible taste in his mouth. Then he asked, “How do I undo the curse?”

“That’s very simple. Kill him.”

“If it weren’t for you, I could have killed him,” Li Qingshan said. However, he also understood that just with the innate ability Mo Yu had used when he left alone, killing him would not be that easy.

“And what benefit would that bring you? You better run. I’m about to take action!”