

Chapter 561 - The Promised Land

“Alright, alright, alright.” Li Qingshan unfurled his wings of wind and fire and disappeared into the darkness with a trail of flames.

Gu Yanying shielded her eyes and gazed into the distance. “He sure is fast!”

“Big sis, are you going to just spare the moon demon like this and allow him to continue refining bodies of water?”

A young woman flew over. She had large eyes and thick brows, with a bright and clear expression. If it were not for her swelling chest, she could have easily been mistaken for a boy. She wore the uniform of a Hawk Wolf commander, making her the figure only second to Gu Yanying in the Hawkwolf Guard of the Ruyi commandery.

“What else am I supposed to do?” Gu Yanying shot a glance at her. “Call me commander.”

“Big sis, you can’t go easy on him just because he’s interested in you! Otherwise, wouldn’t that mean you can’t kill a single man in the world? Don’t tell me you’re actually interested in him, and you’ve even come specially to rescue him?”

Gu Yanying held the girl’s chin and pressed her face up close. “Are you jealous? Even without me, he wouldn’t die here.”

“I don’t believe it.” The girl’s face reddened as she shook her head.

“His powerful reinforcements will arrive very soon. If he can last until that child comes, Mo Yu really might be in some danger.” Gu Yanying released the girl.

“She’s that powerful?”

“If you’ve had enough fun, you better return to the Dragon province! The Green province is becoming less and less peaceful. Once you become involved in a battle like earlier, even you will be in danger.”

“Big sis, stop trying to coax me. I’m not returning. The confrontation between imperial brothers and sisters has already led to bloodshed for the position of Marquis of Ruyi. It only shows that the Ruyi commandery is a great place that everyone wants to be in,” the girl said seriously. Who knew whether she was joking around or truly ignorant.

“They’re coming here as marquises, not as a follower like you.”

“What’s wrong with being a follower? I’m constantly under big sis’s care. You’ll have to deal with a monster like the moon demon if you become the marquis. And, my imperial brothers and sisters can’t even obtain this position of a follower even if they want to!”

“Then you better follow me around!” Gu Yanying spun around and took off into the air like a white hawk, turning into a white speck in the blink of an eye.

“Wait for me, big sis!” The girl followed behind in a hurry, calling out from afar.

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Gu Yanying had not been the only one spectating Li Qingshan's battle with the Daemon Commanders. There were many other cultivators who used various methods to observe from afar. When they saw how the daemons were suffering from internal strife, they all cheered inside.

There were even many cultivators who considered swooping in for the kill, but when they witnessed the moon demon's great strength and vicious brutality, they all dismissed that thought. Against such a terrifying daemon, even if he were putting up a last stand, he would still be able to drag a Golden Core cultivator down with him, not to mention he had never revealed any true exhaustion the entire time.

As a result, Li Qingshan continued on his way with refining bodies of water, no longer encountering any obstructions.

Apart from those peak second heavenly tribulation people and daemons, only the kings who had undergone the third heavenly tribulation could subdue Li Qingshan. There were already very few figures that could pose life-threatening danger to him.

He arrived at the end of another great river. The surging daemon qi refined the river and the Water God Seal shimmered, now with another thick trajectory.

Li Qingshan could sense the daemon qi in the spirit turtle's daemon core had already reached the absolute peak. Once he devoured all the water spiritual qi of this river, he would basically be able to break through to the fifth layer of the spirit turtle. Afterwards, the heavenly tribulation would basically descend upon him.

Was he going to use this opportunity to break through to the fifth layer of the spirit turtle, undergo the heavenly tribulation and become a Daemon Commander, or was he going to remain at his current level and wait until the Phoenix Transformation caught up so that water and fire were balanced out and he managed to merge them?

Li Qingshan considered that question for a while before deciding on the former.

Normally, he would probably choose the latter. Although the long term benefits were not necessarily better than the benefits right before him, it was not like he was facing any life-threatening danger right now. Proceeding step by step in an orderly manner was obviously the best choice. Focusing on quick successes and instant benefits would only drastically increase the difficulty of cultivation later on, which would do more bad than good.

But right now, she was waiting for him!

Li Qingshan began absorbing the water spiritual qi, pouring it into the spirit turtle's daemon core.

He comforted himself inside, This should also be a form of choice! If I can become a Daemon Commander, I might not be able to oppose the kings, but I'll be able to protect myself to a certain degree. At the very least, I'll have the confidence to triumph over opponents like Mo Yu. I'll basically have a stable footing in the World of the Nine Provinces and can take my time with everything else.

Li Qingshan gradually shone with a resplendent, blue light, conjuring the figure of the spirit turtle again.

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The eighty-ninth day.

Han Qiongzhi meditated with her legs crossed. Seeing the window light up, she murmured that inside before opening the window and gazing out, only to discover the sun had not risen yet. It was merely the reflection of the snow. She had actually made a mistake.

“Sister, stop waiting for that heartless guy. He’s not going to come.” A young girl walked over from behind. The days when she had fun with Han Qiongzhi in the garden were gone forever. The pain from losing her father had made her become much more mature all of a sudden.

“I’m going out for a stroll.”

Han Qiongzhi did not respond to that and left through the door. The world was completely white as huge snowflakes continued to drift through the sky. The graves had been covered in thick snow, turning into mounds in the snow.

A tall figure walked over from afar, trudging through the snow. He walked in such a familiar way.

Han Qiongzhi rubbed her eyes and murmured, “Qingshan.”

The tall figure sped up his pace, and Han Qiongzhi could not help but speed up too. They went from walking to running.

The two figures overlapped, embracing one another firmly.

“Apologies. I’ve come late.”

Han Qiongzhi buried her face in his chest. Tears had already begun falling down her face like rain.

Descendants of the Han family emerged one by one from the row of simple buildings and witnessed this. Han Anjun and Han Tieyi were among them too, but they remained silent. All they could hear was the sound of falling snow.

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Under Han Qiongzhi’s lead, Li Qingshan arrived before Han Anguo’s cenotaph. He bowed with respect while holding incense and thought to himself, Uncle Han, I couldn’t save you back then, which I am truly sorry for. I will help out with the matters of the Han family as much as possible. I hope your soul can rest easy.

His breakthrough to the fifth layer of the spirit turtle had failed in the end. As the water spiritual qi gathered, it pushed the daemon qi in the spirit turtle’s daemon core to the very limit, but he encountered an unexpected yet also expected “bottleneck”.

Breaking through with the ox demon required devouring various pills and resources. Breaking through with the tiger demon required frenzied battles to the death.

As for the Spirit Turtle’s Method of Sea Suppression, it was similar to the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty, requiring the existence of a level of comprehension to break through. At the very least, that was not something that the current Li Qingshan who was bothered with various thoughts could achieve.

He attempted the suppression with the power of the peak fourth layer spirit turtle. Coupled with the Water God Seal's support, he finally suppressed the ox demon and tiger demon, turning back into human form.

However, the suppression had been extremely forced and difficult, such that he was unable to use any of the spirit turtle's abilities anymore. He could not predict danger with great precision, and he struggled to conceal his aura.

As a result, whether he was in human or daemon form, he was unable to hide his spiritual qi or daemon qi.

As for innate abilities like the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell, they became even more impossible to use. The mirror clone he had created with the Watermirror's Image also directly collapsed the moment he made this decision.

And, he was unable to freely interchange between Li Qingshan and Northmoon anymore. Once he released his daemon qi, suppressing it again would take a tremendous amount of effort. He could basically imagine the spirit turtle using everything it could to suppress the ox demon and tiger demon below itself.

Li Qingshan exhaled deeply inside. He had made it in time at long last.

He did not feel any regrets in failing his breakthrough to the fifth layer of the spirit turtle. Instead, it brought him relief. This was the best choice for him. He could slowly cultivate the Phoenix Transformation like this.

"You don't mind him coming so late?" A young man in black could not help but question. His facial features resembled Han Tieyi slightly. He was one of Han Anguo's sons.

The other descendants of the Han family were not particularly friendly either. With Han Anguo's death in battle, even some family and friends that they were not particularly close with had come and paid respects a long time ago, yet as the son-in-law of the Han family, Li Qingshan had actually done something like this. He made Han Qiongzhi stand watch over the grave alone, only hurrying over when the mourning period was about to end. He was truly as rude as he could be, and it made them feel he was not worthy of her.

Han Qiongzhi wanted to speak up, but Li Qingshan had already arrived before her. "I won't apologise, nor will I try and explain myself. The school of the Military doesn't seem to accept reasons, no matter how eloquent. If you find anything displeasing, just come at me!"

"You!?" The young man in black was taken aback.

"What, afraid?" Before Li Qingshan had even finished speaking, the young man launched a palm strike at Li Qingshan. With a thump, Li Qingshan allowed the palm strike to land on his chest. "To think you're actually a descendant of the Han family with such a weak and powerless attack."

The young man in black was furious. He no longer held back anymore, using a battle skill and unleashing a barrage of attacks. Blasts of air rushed into the surroundings, sweeping up the snowflakes in the air.

"Qingshan!" Han Qiongzhi cried out, but Han Anjun stopped her. "He knows what he's doing."

“Have you hit me enough? How useless. Why don’t you all come at me together?”

Li Qingshan stood like a rock in the ocean. Having endured countless horrific wounds before, a Foundation Establishment cultivator’s attacks were basically no different from a scratch.

Hearing that, the other descendants of the Han family were unable to hold back either. They all joined in, launching attacks at him.

Li Qingshan also began fighting back. After going through all those battles, he was now returning and fighting with his identity and strength as a Foundation Establishment cultivator. At first, he found it rather unfamiliar and was rather unaccustomed to it, but he developed skill and ease very soon. He pushed the Arts of the Boundless Ocean and Ocean Wielding, the complementary cultivation method and battle skill, to the limit.

The sky lit up and the sunlight illuminated the translucent, snowy ground. The descendants of the Han family all lay on the ground, gasping for breath.

Li Qingshan sat on the snow. He seemed rather tired.

His exhaustion was not an act. After going through several months of battles and refinement, his mind was indeed extremely tired. He had finally managed to hold on until he saw her, and after relaxing, he was unable to hide it anymore. He pushed off his knees and stood up.

Han Anjun nodded towards Li Qingshan. These descendants of the Han family did not actually hate Li Qingshan or anything. It was just that their emotions had been repressed for far too long, and they needed a battle like this to vent.

Li Qingshan had given them the battle. He used his own method to pacify their frustration with him while also proving his strength. He did not mind what the people of the Han family thought of him, but he did not want Han Qiongzhi to be questioned so much by her own clansmen because of him. They were her family after all.

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In the gloomy Hungry Ghost realm shrouded in dreary mist and clouds, Han Anguo wielded a crude blade fashioned from the ribs of some unknown animal. There was not a hint of confusion on his face. He was as determined as ever. He swung down with the blade and beheaded a corpse beast.

At this moment, a blood-red vortex appeared in the space there, rapidly growing in size like a great gate. A voice rang out.

“True warrior, your soul does not deserve to rot away in this land of death. Come, the endless battle awaits you!”

Han Anguo’s eyes shone. He dove into the blood-red vortex without even looking back.

That was the promised land of all warriors, the Asura realm!

Chapter 562 - The Heavens Are So Far Away

“Qingshan, you’ve changed a lot.”

In the dark room, Han Qiongzhi touched Li Qingshan's face with her hand.

Before she knew it, the flagrant youth of the past had already become a man. His jawline seemed to become more defined, while his gaze was as resolute as steel. As her father had said, she was unable to make clear of what it was hiding. The reason for exactly why he was so resolute seemed to be a mystery.

Her instincts told her that during the few years they spent apart, he had been through many things, far more than she could ever know or imagine, enough for him to develop a sense of unfamiliarity.

He was like a statue. He seemed no different on the surface, but as long as she touched him gently, she could tell. The material he was made from was completely different, such that every single detail had become different.

Li Qingshan grabbed her hand and said gently, "You're no different. You've become much thinner." And much more mature.

Han Qiongzhi let out an interjection of agreement and leaned against him in his arms gently. Li Qingshan embraced her firmly as he thought inside, Qiongzhi, I've already become very strong. I can protect you.

Perhaps he was fated to let go of many things on his path to the Nine Heavens, but he refused to let go of this person in his arms. He recalled a line from a movie in his past life, "Who said you can't roam the jianghu with your wife by your side?"

TL: Referring to the movie "Ashes of Time", released in 1994.

The room was tranquil. They simply listened to the sound of falling snow outside.

The two of them spent that night fully clothed, listening to the sounds silently.

Li Qingshan did not even have a hint of lust. Instead, he felt extremely peaceful.

In that moment, the battle-hungry, bloodthirsty Northmoon seemed to depart from him. His long-departed heart as a human returned to his chest, giving off warmth.

Only when the sun was about to rise did Han Qiongzhi hesitate and ask gently, "Qingshan, are you hiding something from me?"

Li Qingshan held her by the shoulders, separating them from one another. He stared into her eyes and nodded gently. "I am."

Han Qiongzhi found the gaze slightly stifling as she also felt vague hints of fear.

Li Qingshan sucked in a deep breath. He had decided to hide it no longer.

At that very moment, he was unable to tell anything that could deceive her. Even if she were unable to accept it, even if she would run out and disclose this secret to the world, he would accept the consequences calmly.

The moment he was about to speak, a hand pressed against Li Qingshan's lips. He was slightly taken aback, only to hear Han Qiongzhi say, "I'm a little afraid."

She felt like if she learnt about this secret, it would destroy the feeling of peace and tranquility between them and distance them.

Li Qingshan had no idea what to do.

Han Qiongzhi said, "I don't want to hear it anymore. You've refused to tell me this the entire time, so you must have your reason! Tell me when you think it's appropriate, alright?"

Li Qingshan hesitated for a moment. "Alright."

Her mind had yet to recover from the sorrow of losing her uncle. If he burdened her with something like that right now, it would probably exceed what she could cope with, which would instead be detrimental to her acceptance.

For the next few days, Li Qingshan and Han Qiongzhi frequently trudged through the snow as they roamed through the nearby mountains and forests. Most of the time, Li Qingshan was the one talking, telling her about what had happened after they separated. He no longer wanted to hide anything, so he covered it up without any lies, leaving many "blanks" in his stories.

Most of the time, Han Qiongzhi listened along quietly. She would ask a few questions every now and then, but she would never question him closely as if she was afraid of bursting this beautiful bubble. It only made Li Qingshan want to protect her even more.

During the other times, Li Qingshan would often spar with the descendants of the Han family in the open space outside the cemetery.

Watching over the grave was not about being cooped up in the building and lamenting all day long. The school of the Military had never placed a particularly great emphasis on these forms of mere courtesy. As a result, they gradually forgave Li Qingshan for his "rudeness". They would seek guidance from him modestly or gather around him and listen to his experiences with actual combat in the chaos of war.

The battle prowess that Li Qingshan demonstrated was truly powerful. When he fought, he did not use any one-sided power. Their speed, strength, and spiritual qi was roughly the same, yet he could easily emerge as the victor. This left the descendants of the Han family extremely unconvinced with their defeat, yet they were also forced to admire him. The school of the Military respected and admired the strong.

In reality, through the constant sparring, the strength that Li Qingshan used decreased as he went. He obviously did not do this just to gain the recognition of the descendants of the Han family.

Recently, his strength had grown far too quickly. He required some time for consolidation to integrate what he had learnt from the numerous life-threatening battles.

In the beginning, he was still using the same strength as his opponent to fight, but as he constantly suppressed it, he only used the strength of an early Foundation Establishment cultivator towards the end. He completely cast aside his powerful body as a daemon to train his skills in battle.

And while his father-in-law Han Anjun was nowhere close to him in terms of strength, he did come from an aristocratic family with a very deep heritage, so his many skills and ideas in battle still allowed Li Qingshan to benefit tremendously.

They had reached the hundredth day of watching the grave. After this day, they could take off their mourning clothes and return to their usual lives.

With a thump, Han Tiewi was launched far away. He slid over thirty meters along the ground before coming to a stop, kicking snow into the air. He raised his head, only to see Li Qingshan extending his hand over with a smile. He grabbed the hand and stood up. He could not help but admit that Li Qingshan had already left him behind on the path of cultivation.

He did not have the support of a clan. He did not have the guidance of a master. He did not even have a proper legacy. Even his primary cultivation method, the Arts of the Boundless Ocean, was incomplete, and he had joined the school of Novels. There really were so-called talented geniuses in the end. As it seemed, it was not without reason that he could stand beside the monstrous Xiao An and be so close with her.

“Qingshan, you’ve gone too soft on him!” Han Qiongzhi called out from afar, leading to noise and laughter from the descendants of the Han family, “Big sister Han, you sure are vicious!” “A younger brother just can’t compare with your man.”

After all, no one could dwell in sorrow forever. This was not the spirit that the school of the Military advocated. Otherwise, if they lost a fellow comrade in true war and became ridden with sorrow, unable to fight anymore, were they still disciples of the school of Military anymore?

Han Tiewi was unfazed. He asked, “You should be close to breaking through to late Foundation Establishment already!”

“I’m close.”

Similar to the fifth layer of the spirit turtle, he lacked an opportunity and a degree of comprehension. However, with this period of cultivation, Li Qingshan could vaguely sense that the Arts of the Boundless Ocean was close to breaking through, but the Spirit Turtle’s Method of Sea Suppression still refused to budge.

After all, the difficulty of the two were on completely different levels. They were worlds apart with how they affected Li Qingshan.

“How fast!” Even Han Tiewi could not help but sigh. Since Li Qingshan had said that he was close, then he truly was close.

Minor realms of cultivation were not as difficult to break through as major realms of cultivation, but they still required a relative amount of time and energy. Every single step forward was extremely difficult.

As long as Qi Practitioners had the guidance of their masters, the support of sufficient resources and enough talent, basically all of them could reach Foundation Establishment. This was the simplest, first step in the cultivation world.

Of course, it was not actually that simple. The resources alone daunted many cultivators. The True Spirit pill that played a critical role in the breakthrough to Foundation Establishment was not something every Qi Practitioner could possess. If they wanted to break through by only relying on themselves, it would be far too difficult.

Only after reaching Foundation Establishment could they be regarded as mastering the basics, allowing them to formally start cultivating. It was also the true beginning of the cultivation world. Even if they had sufficient resources, it would still be riddled with difficulty. Otherwise the large, resource-rich sects like the Sword Collection palace and Umbral Yin sect would not have so few Golden Core elders.

And, the second heavenly tribulation would not be as “gentle” as the first one. If they completely relied on other people or external objects and not themselves, there was a good chance they would die to the tribulation.

Han Tiewi was only at early Foundation Establishment right now, close to breaking through to mid Foundation Establishment. His talent could already be considered as impressive. He had advanced vigorously under the support of his clan, and he had basically forsaken all leisure, so how could he not sigh over Li Qingshan’s cultivation speed?

In the Academy of the Hundred Schools, there was also someone else who struggled as she crawled through these gates of the cultivation world.

In the seclusion dwelling below Contention island, the sound of thunder subsided.

A charred figure twisted about and struggled to her feet. She let out a fit of violent coughing at first, followed by gentle laughter from the depths of her throat. It gradually grew louder until it became hysterical, maddening laughter. She behaved like a cobra raising its head.

An aged and robust vine climbed out of Qian Rongzhi’s body. It coiled around her, and the charred layer on her body peeled off. It was impossible to tell whether it was her clothes or her burnt skin. She was like a black snake shedding its skin. Snow-white skin grew as a colourful little snake slithered happily on it.

Afterwards came a new round of torture, even at a time like this. No matter when it was, the pain would never be absent. It would only grow more intense, unprecedentedly intense.

She collapsed on the ground again. Her limbs writhed, like grubs over a fire. It seemed eerie and disgusting, but the more the pain intensified, the more resplendent her smile became. Even the torture from hell was unable to twist her inner joy.

When all of this settled down, she laid on the ground and lifted an arm into the air, pointing at the stone ceiling above. The Heaven Climbing Vine crawled up along her arm as the hell snake coiled around it, hissing as it flickered its forked tongue.

“Hehe, the heavens are so far away!”

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“Commander, I’ve come to collect the higher cultivation method of the school of Legalism.”

Hua Chengzan currently sat before the window as he dealt with the matters of the school of Legalism when Qian Rongzhi entered through the door and greeted him. She had changed into a new set of clothes, and her regular smile had become even gentler.

“Rongzhi! Congratulations on reaching Foundation Establishment!” Hua Chengzan was mildly surprised before congratulating her with a smile. However, he was astounded inside. Qian Rongzhi was shining

with vigour. Her bearing had changed drastically. The sinister feeling had all but vanished, actually giving off a strange sense of charm instead. It left him amazed.

However, he was not tempted by her at all. Instead, he sighed emotionally inside, She has finally become something even more vicious.

Qian Rongzhi said, "It's all thanks to commander's fostering!"

After a simple conversation, Hua Chengzan handed the new cultivation method to Qian Rongzhi and carried out a routine explanation. "The powers of the Hell realm are great, but they're dangerous at the same time. You need to be extremely cautious when you interact and use them. The slightest carelessness can lead to extreme pain. There have been many disciples of legalism who've committed suicide out of madness during cultivation."

"Thank you for your advice, commander. I will be careful," Qian Rongzhi said modestly.

"Have you chosen the hell you'll be interacting with?"

Hua Chengzan could not help but ask when Qian Rongzhi bade farewell and was about to leave.

"The Venomous Snake hell."

Chapter 563 - The Waterside Pavilion of Listening Wind

"I hope I can reach Golden Core before the age of thirty!"

Li Qingshan gazed at the sky. The snow had just given away to the sun, and the skies were blue.

"Thirty!"

Han Tiewei raised an eyebrow. Although he said "hope", his expression was filled with confidence. He did not seem like he was talking wildly, but declaring a simple truth, and nothing about it seemed impressive to him.

A handful of Golden Core cultivators had already died to Li Qingshan's hands already, which was why he did not place too much attention to it. His current goal was a beeline to the highest "realm of kings" of the nine provinces, so he could not help himself as he gave off a sense of "arrogance".

The other descendants of the Han family were amazed as well. He was not someone overly dependent on the Han family, but in the cultivation world, the strong would always be respected.

Han Anjun could not help but study Li Qingshan deeply when he heard that. Thirty-year-old Golden Core cultivators were very rare across the nine provinces. By then, his name would definitely echo through the world!

Ever since he laid his eyes on him, he already knew he was anything but mediocre and unambitious, but never had he thought there would be a day when he could mention the words "Golden Core" so easily. That was an objective even he had yet to reach. If he had to consider for the Han family, having a son-in-law like him was basically a blessing from heaven.

After Han Anguo died in battle, the heavy responsibilities of the patriarch landed on Han Anjun's shoulders. Never had his burden felt so heavy before. If it were not for all the Golden Core cultivators of

the Ruyi commandery who had died in battle and how the positions of the new Marquis of Ruyi and great general were undecided, the many resources that the Han family took up would have been carved up and taken away a long time ago.

A clan with only Foundation Establishment cultivators was only a small clan. However, a prodigious figure could change all of that. If Li Qingshan could use this talent to take on a powerful master, then the Han family would be able to brave the turmoil safely. Perhaps they might even end up with more than what they started with.

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The snow began to fall again very soon. In the crooning winds, the hundred days were up, and the descendants of the Han family took off their mourning clothes before the grave.

Li Qingshan patted Han Qiongzhi's shoulder. Han Qiongzhi looked back and smiled, but the rims of her eyes had reddened. She rested her head against his shoulder gently.

At this moment, she sensed something and suddenly looked back.

In the drifting snow, a figure walked over. Her footsteps were light and graceful like she was walking through thin air, while her wide sleeves and long hair rippled in the wind. Before she could even make out her appearance, she was overcome with the feeling of a supreme beauty walking over gracefully.

She squinted her eyes and peered through the snow and wind, suddenly catching a glimpse of the amazing beauty.

Her appearance was even more beautiful than she had imagined. She was the epitome of alluring beauty—no, it was not merely her appearance. Her pale clothes were wrapped around her waist by a blue silk band, accentuating her thin, slender figure. Her long, black hair that reached all the way to her knees drifted through the wind.

A pair of bare feet trudged over the translucent snow, advancing forwards firmly. Whether it were mountains of corpses or rivers of blood, nothing could make her footsteps waver. Her eyes were like deep, still pools of water, gazing straight ahead hollowly, yet also seeming like they took in everything there was in the world.

Compared to the simple title of “beauty”, she possessed a charm that could not be described with words. As a matter of fact, it was even enough for people to neglect her gender.

Who was she? Why was she here?

“Xiao An, you’ve come.” Li Qingshan looked back and smiled, but a sliver of surprise flashed through his eyes.

In the past, Xiao An had no concept of clothing. They were merely a layer that covered her body. But now, although she was dressed extremely simply, she gave off a feeling that this was her most optimal attire, radiating with unprecedentedly wonderful beauty.

As it seemed, it was probably a side-effect left behind from the recovery of her past memories. However, all people had a degree of love for beauty, so it was not necessarily a bad thing.

“Xiao An!”

Han Qiongzhi exclaimed. How could she connect the person before her to that blank-faced child? Although he had mentioned Xiao An’s changes to her, this was still well beyond her imagination.

The descendants of the Han family nearby ogled at her. Regardless of their gender, they were unable to shift their gazes.

Xiao An arrived beside Li Qingshan and grabbed his hand quietly. Her face was as blank as always, but her hollow gaze livened up in that moment as if it expressed everything she was thinking.

Han Qiongzhi felt like she had been ignored before realising she was not the only one who had been ignored. Instead, it was everyone, the entire world. Only he existed in her eyes.

“Alright, it’s time to go.”

Li Qingshan seemed to understand what she wanted and nodded with a smile. He rubbed her head naturally, and she lowered her head slightly. Her red lips curled up, and the world full of ice and snow melted.

“Where are you going?” Han Qiongzhi asked, speaking up to break free from this feeling of being cut off.

“Oh, I mentioned it to you. The Annihilum Light Chan Master paid a special visit, remember?” Li Qingshan explained. Xiao An’s Path of White Bone and Great Beauty had reached a bottleneck. The Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga represented an optimal opportunity to her. He could also complete his promise to Golden Cicada.

“You’re leaving right now!?”

Han Qiongzhi asked in surprise, but she felt relieved inside for some reason. Disciples of buddhist sects like the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga were clearly forbidden from developing feelings of love, or she really would have no idea what she would do.

“Yeah. Don’t worry, I’ll return as soon as possible.”

Li Qingshan hugged Han Qiongzhi and bade farewell again. Seeing how reluctant she was to see him leave, his heart skipped a beat, and he declared loudly to Han Anjun, “General Han, once Qiongzhi’s three years of mourning comes to an end, I will propose a marriage to the Han family again to complete our engagement.”

Han Anjun remained as silent as always. It was different now. No matter what perspective he looked at it from, he could not turn him down any longer.

“Qingshan!” Han Qiongzhi’s eyes immediately pooled with tears. She turned her head away and wiped her eyes against her arm as she let out a smile. “Alright, come back soon. Be careful on the way.”

Li Qingshan waved his hand. Clouds rose up beneath his feet, and he vanished into the wind and snow with Xiao An.

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Before he went to the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, there was one more person Li Qingshan had to see—Gu Yanying. He was still a Scarlet Hawk commander after all. He had not been a particularly diligent worker most of the time, but without his superior’s permission, he could not leave his post without formally submitting a request for leave. And, there was something that he wanted to ask her help for.

The white cloud landed outside the Ruyi commander, in front of a tall, precipitous mountain.

The stairs led straight up. Li Qingshan raised his head. At the top of the mountain, a silver hawk spread its wings as if it was clashing with the wind and snow.

Li Qingshan made Xiao An wait below and climbed up the mountain alone. As soon as he came into contact with the formation, a voice called out, “Who has come?”

The stairs before him twisted with light and shadow, and a man in white appeared out of nowhere.

Li Qingshan clasped his hands. “The Scarlet Hawk commander of the Clear River prefecture, Li Qingshan, wishes to see commander Gu!”

“So you’re Li Qingshan. Commander Gu has already given instructions that you can go to the Waterside Pavilion of Listening Wind to see her when you come.”

The White Wolf guard who watched the mountain studied Li Qingshan curiously. The Waterside Pavilion of Listening Wind was where commander Gu cultivated. She rarely ever received guests there, so why did she give Li Qingshan such a great privilege?

“The Waterside Pavilion of Listening Wind?”

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The wind and snow vanished before his eyes. The sky seemed to be painted with blue.

Green lotus pads covered the rippling lake as pink lotuses bloomed between the leaves.

With a gust of warm wind, the lotus pads rippled up and down, delivering a wave of fragrance like the height of summer.

The thick spiritual qi and heavy fragrance of flowers merged with the warm winds. It was over ten times denser than the Academy of the Hundred Schools in the Clear River prefecture. Just taking in a deep breath was enough to refresh the mind.

From the outside, the lake only seemed like a small lake at most, but upon stepping through the formation, Li Qingshan discovered that the lake was extremely large, on par with Moon Court lake. It stretched as far as the eye could see, just like the poem verse “the lotus leaves with their endless green touches the skies.”

The lotus leaves and flowers bloomed endlessly against the seasons and against all logic with an unexpected sense of glory.

The formation that envelops this place is something else. It can actually twist space. It’s probably the handiwork of a ‘king’, and it can’t be destroyed so easily.

Li Qingshan thought to himself as he shot across the surface of the lake. He heard the pleasant sound of chimes and flew in that direction, making out a delicate waterside pavilion clustered with lotus pads and flowers very soon. Wind chimes hung from the eaves.

Compared to the expansive lake, the waterside pavilion was unexpectedly small.

Gu Yanying walked out. Her long hair reached her waist, drifting gently in the warm breeze. A smile appeared on her face. She lacked a hint of valiance compared to before, actually giving off the feeling that she was at home.

On the terrace by the lake was a rattan table and a few rattan chairs.

Li Qingshan did not hold back, personally pulling out a chair and sitting down. Gu Yanying picked up a tea pot and personally poured him a cup, pushing it before him.

Li Qingshan stared at the tea before him and joked, "If Li Qingshan was just Li Qingshan, would he receive treatment like this?"

"Since when wasn't Li Qingshan Li Qingshan? It's just a cup of tea." Gu Yanying smiled and sat down before him.

Li Qingshan could not help but recall how she had invited him to a cup outside Qingyang city. Back then, he had yet to understand just how great of a distance existed between them. Compared to then, the way she treated him had not changed intrinsically at all.

To her, it had just been a cup of alcohol!

She was as composed as before, while he had developed far too many thoughts in comparison. He finished the entire cup of tea and cut right to the chase. "I've come to put in a notice for leave with you, commander, so that I can send Xiao An off to the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga."

"That's no problem."

"There's something else that I'd like commander's assistance with. Please pass this Origin Spirit pill to general Han Anjun."

Li Qingshan had thought this through. Han Anjun was currently at late Foundation Establishment. If he possessed this Origin Spirit pill, his chances at reaching Golden Core would definitely increase drastically. It could also make up for his regret of failing to save Han Anguo slightly.

However, he was unable to explain the origins of the Origin Spirit pill. It was far more precious than True Spirit pills could ever be.

Gu Yanying said, "It's nothing major, but I think you should still be the one to give it to him! You can just say I gave it to you. This is quite the lavish gift. Let alone marrying off his daughter, even selling off his daughter might be possible."

The issue regarding the origins of the Origin Spirit pill that caused Li Qingshan the greatest headache had been resolved as a result. He was obviously willing to accept the good graces that came with it too. Surely it would give him some bonus credit once he told Han Qiongzhi everything!

Gu Yanying said, "If you have any other troubles in the future, feel free to come and find me. My identity can still be of some use."

"This..." Li Qingshan raised an eyebrow. He sure was "privileged".

"Actually, I'll have some things that I need your assistance with too. Hehe, just 'Li Qingshan' probably would not receive treatment like this." Gu Yanying stood up and paced around, looking back with a smile.

"Just mention it, commander."

Sure enough, there was no free lunch in the world, but Li Qingshan instead preferred this kind of mutual benefit as equals.

Gu Yanying said solemnly, "But before this, it's best if I make some things clear."

Chapter 564 - To Be Unfazed By Emotion

Cling clang!

A warm breeze arrived. The wind chimes jingled, and the lotus leaves rose and fell.

Li Qingshan had never seen Gu Yanying with an expression like that. Of course, it was not like they had met a lot of times in the first place. He was curious what could make her so solemn.

Gu Yanying stood on the side of the terrace with her hands behind her back. "In the past, outside the Boundless mountains, someone had once said something to me. Back then, I didn't give a reply, as that person did not particularly care about my reply, but right now, I think it's best if I give a clear reply."

Outside the boundless mountains! Li Qingshan recalled it. There, he had confessed to Gu Yanying in front of countless people.

Back then, a great difference still existed between their strength, but today, never had they been so close before. Even if a difference still existed, it was not insurmountable. As a matter of fact, Li Qingshan was even confident that he would surpass her sooner or later and become stronger than her.

Then, what would her reply right now be?

Li Qingshan could not help but become rather eager. He checked his surroundings again and felt like he was extremely close to success.

Gu Yanying bent over slightly. "Thank you for your interest, but I can't accept it unfortunately."

So she's specially called me out just to put me in the friend zone.

Li Qingshan grinned and had no idea how to react. Although he had vaguely guessed this result, he still felt rather disappointed. He said, "It's fine. I'm still too weak!"

"You're so weak that you can rival a Corpse King in terms of brute strength with only a single heavenly tribulation. Your luck well surpasses mine, and the rate at which you grow is even more startling. I'm confident that your future strength will definitely exceed mine, just..."

Gu Yanying spoke extremely sincerely. She was definitely not trying to brush him aside. She paused there and dipped her index finger in the tea, writing six words on the table.

“To be unfazed by emotion,” Li Qingshan murmured.

Gu Yanying said, “In times of need, we can provide one another with mutual help and relief. We can support each other today, but if any of us leaves the other behind in the future, there’s no need to be overly attached. Even a parting of life and death could be dismissed with a single smile.”

“That’s reasonable!” Li Qingshan nodded. As it turned out, it was not emotionlessness, but being unfazed by emotion.

“It’s not an issue of reason. If you can’t accept it, then you can’t even begin to discuss this. We have some good will and recognition between us, which provides convenience to cooperation. However, if too many feelings become involved, it’ll be quite detrimental instead, and I won’t be able to work together with you.” Gu Yanying’s eyes were sharp like a hawk’s, staring straight at Li Qingshan.

For a moment, Li Qingshan had no idea what to say. This woman clearly had something that needed his assistance. Even if he would not agree to it, she could avoid the topic altogether and make use of his affection towards her. Yet, she had to draw a clear boundary between them, leaving absolutely no room for any ambiguous feelings.

As a matter of fact, if he refused to give up on his feelings for her, it would be downright impossible for them to work together. He could not help but grieve for Hua Chengzan. His infatuation and regretlessness might have been able to move any woman in the world, but it was completely useless against her.

“You may have a fortuitous encounter and a legacy, but your foundations are too shallow. For example, the many resources from underground. You have always struggled with converting them into your own strength. There’s also the issue of your identity. It can fall apart at any time right now. You won’t be able to hide it from observant and perceptive people forever. I think I can help you out in many of these aspects.”

Seeing how Li Qingshan remained silent, Gu Yanying thought he was still hesitating, so she increased her bargaining chip, solemnly persuading him to give up on meaningless emotions so that he could focus on pursuing the great path of cultivation.

“I accept, but not because of the various conditions you’ve offered. If others have no interest in me, I’m not one to become entangled with them. I’m going to be a person with a family very soon. Don’t overestimate your charm.”

“Alright. You really are a man I admire.”

Gu Yanying smiled and immediately switched out the tea for alcohol. She filled their cups to the brim before clinking hers with Li Qingshan’s, downing it all in one gulp.

Li Qingshan said, “You can tell me just what you need my help with now.”

“Now’s not the time. You will obviously know by then. I feel like as long as I give you some time, you’ll become even more powerful. By then, the chances of success will become greater too.”

“If you only help me out with a pile of trifles, yet want me to risk my life needlessly when the time comes, wouldn’t it be very difficult for me to accept?”

“There shouldn’t be any life-threatening danger. If there is danger, I will state it clearly. You are more than welcome to turn me down. There’s no need to feel embarrassed either, as I won’t insist on a single request. If you are tied down by the favours you owe and do something against your convictions, you probably can’t blame anyone else either.”

“Alright then!”

Li Qingshan did not lose anything and gained a powerful support instead. The way they cooperated was for her to deliver the goods first before accepting payment. If he felt like it was not worth it, he could even decline paying. There was nothing he could be displeased about, but she left him slightly dissatisfied by not viewing him as a man.

The two of them stood side by side, gazing at the endless lotus pads.

Gu Yanying suddenly said, “I won’t fall in love with anyone, if that makes you a little happier.”

“I’m in a much better mood now.” Li Qingshan glanced at her.

Gu Yanying smiled. “That’s good then. Sigh, female cultivators just have it tougher than men. Their tribulations of attachments are the heaviest, making it extremely easy for them to adversely impact their cultivation. Even I’m unable to transcend my own gender. As a result, it’s best if I just avoid the danger altogether without being involved in this matter.”

Li Qingshan fell silent for a while before asking, “What if you can’t uphold what you’ve said?”

Gu Yanying only smiled. She raised her head and gazed at the white clouds drifting past on the horizon. A question like that was not worth answering at all!

Li Qingshan gazed at the side of her face. He could not help but admit that her charm was truly extraordinary.

TL: Less of a translation note and more of a clarification for the interaction between Li Qingshan and Gu Yanying, as well as Gu Yanying’s philosophy.

First of all, the title of the chapter is 太上忘情 (tàishàng wàngqíng) tàishàng) is a reference to 太上老君 (tàishàng lǎojūn), the highest deity in Chinese daoism. Basically, it says that Taishang Laojun is unfazed, or unruffled, by emotion. Like what the author explained, it doesn’t mean emotionlessness and disregarding your emotion. You can still feel emotion, but emotions aren’t a hindrance to you anymore—they don’t tie you down. You can say this is a goal for cultivation in real life. Yes, the concept of cultivation in novels is based on a real concept, but in real life, it’s more of a cultivation of the mind, the cultivation of disposition.

The other thing is how Gu Yanying won’t fall in love with anyone. This does not imply Gu Yanying is afraid of falling in love, or becoming overly attached, or afraid of losing the person she loves—she’s not afraid of anything in this case. She knows what will happen if she falls in love and this is a conscientious, rational choice she’s made regarding the path of cultivation she’s chosen. Of course, she might just end up falling in love, but the consequences will be far worse than just becoming attached to someone.

She'll essentially be going against the belief she's been holding onto all this time and the path she's chosen.

If you haven't realised, this is also where her "graceful, unrestrained bearing" comes from. She refuses to be tethered down by anything, making her free like the wind, yet also making her seem a little heartless at times.

Leaving the Waterside Pavilion of Listening Wind, the heavy fragrance of flowers had yet to completely vanish. Heavy snow drifted through the air right before him.

"Let's go!"

Li Qingshan said to Xiao An and rode off on a cloud, heading into the horizon. He did not glance back even once the entire time.

Sitting on the cloud, he opened the mental map of the Green province. He could still remember the word of advice she had given him, "The Green province spans fifteen thousand kilometers. The jianghu is only but a corner."

He smiled gently. "The nine provinces are like a well, trapping me in here. I'm just a tiny tadpole. I better leap upwards as hard as I can! I can't let this bird woman look down on me."

Although riding clouds was nowhere near as fast as flying in his daemon form, it was still extremely fast. He reached the edge of the Ruyi commandery very soon and shot past it without halting at all. It was like he had crossed through an invisible barrier, stepping into a higher land.

Although there was as much as five thousand kilometers between them and the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, Li Qingshan was in no hurry. When he came across any particularly touching sights, he would stop and take a look, witnessing the fine landscape and scenery of many lands.

Apart from Xiao An behaving differently from the past, the journey was extremely smooth, taking up two days.

Suddenly, a steep, magnificent mountain appeared on the horizon.

Li Qingshan passed by many renowned mountains and rivers along the way, but none of them could rival this mountain in bearing.

It was not particularly tall or large, but it had a solemn bearing to it in the way it stood on the land.

The mountain was covered with buddhist pagodas, and the halls formed an unbroken chain with eaves that curled up and protruded corners, giving off the sound of chanting.

"We're here! This is the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga!"

Li Qingshan stowed the mental map of the Green province away and descended far away. Regardless of the sect, none of them liked cultivators flying over them. Li Qingshan was confident in his strength, but he was not confident enough to provoke this large buddhist sect.

At this very moment, the red sun rose up from the east, gilding the entire mountain with a layer of gold.

Li Qingshan's eyes lit up, gazing at it from bottom to top. The silhouette of the mountain was like a giant buddha sitting cross-legged. The obscure chanting was like the gentle recitals of the great buddha, awakening the people of the world from their blinding obsessions.

Under the sunlight, the golden hall at the very top gave off rings of golden light like the halo behind the great buddha. It accentuated its dignified aura of holiness, enough for people to drop to their knees and prostrate themselves even if involuntarily.

He understood why this mountain was called Great Buddha mountain now.

Li Qingshan sucked in a deep breath and regained his composure. Looking at Xiao An, her gaze was fixed on the great buddha. The Samādhi Flames of White Bone blazed in the depths of her eyes.

“Are you ready?”

Li Qingshan rubbed Xiao An's head, and she nodded.

The two of them purposefully slowed down, passing through the thick forest and arriving on the mountain path.

Perhaps this could not be regarded as a “mountain path” anymore. It was over three hundred meters wide, rising and falling, twisting and turning on the mountain like a dragon, extending towards the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga. If this world had not been a world of cultivation, it would be extremely difficult to construct such a path even using the modern technology from his past life.

Even more shockingly, the great path was covered with travellers. The closer it was to the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, the denser they became. Just by gazing over, Li Qingshan had spotted over a hundred thousand people; clearly, there were more paths like this elsewhere on Great Buddha mountain.

Countless men and women, old and young, prostrated themselves with each step, making their way towards Great Buddha mountain. There was even a grey-haired old woman who did the same. Whenever she took a step, she would throw herself onto the ground in prostration such that Li Qingshan even began to worry about whether she could climb back up or not. Beside her was a child, probably her grandson. He still seemed rather muddle-headed, but he still copied the old woman, bringing his hands together and prostrating with each step.

They did not talk. It was silent and solemn, yet as harmonious as if they were siblings. The sunlight illuminated their faces, which were sincere and determined, glowing with peace and happiness. This was the glow of resolute belief.

Even non-believers would be influenced by this sight. Li Qingshan also brought his hands together and bowed towards Great Buddha mountain in the distance.

As a transmigrator, he did not believe in anything, but he did respect the beliefs of others. The life of mortals was filled with pain. Not everyone had the opportunity to become a cultivator or was allowed to attempt to break free from the shackles of fate. Holding onto belief like this was not a bad thing.

People would always need some consolation. Non-believers would always look down on the word “belief”, but they would buy and drink alcohol without restraint, wallowing in the internet, gorging

themselves on indulgences like food, sex, or gambling. They were not necessarily more clever than people prostrating to the statue of a buddha.

Not to mention that buddhas actually existed here. They were powerful figures that possessed great wisdom and great strength. The Western Paradise Sukhāvātī and the Hell realm Naraka existed as well. Accumulating good karma and being reborn in paradise was all real.

Thinking up to there, Li Qingshan gained a clearer understanding of what the word “buddha” represented. They were existences with powers well beyond his imaginations. He glanced at Great Buddha mountain in the distance again and said to Xiao An with his soul sense, “If they don’t provoke us, there’s no need for us to actively work against them either.”

“You can just try out the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty and see how you go. There’s no need to be so serious. If believing in the Buddha is a form of blind obsession, then what doesn’t make believing in some White Bone Bodhisattva a blind obsession either? It’s just like the saying, if buddha doesn’t offend me, I won’t offend the buddha.”

Chapter 565 - The Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga

Li Qingshan reminded Xiao An as the two of them climbed up the mountain along the path. They obviously did not prostrate themselves with each step like the mortals, crossing through the crowd quickly and arriving below Great Buddha mountain in the blink of an eye, right in front of the gate of the monastery.

They were unable to advance any further upon reaching there. Two guardian gods stood to the sides of the gate with great vigour, each wielding a weapon. At first glance, he even mistook them to be two statues.

But suddenly, their eyes swiveled and landed on Li Qingshan. Li Qingshan’s breathing halted slightly. It really is the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga after all, just the two guardian gods who watch over the entrance of the monastery can make me feel threatened.

Looking back, there were thousands of buildings established at the foot of the mountain, specially for regular monks to provide guidance to their believers, ranging from residences, arrangements for food, and even the issuing of silver taels.

Unlike the temples of his past life, a sect like the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga did not require the donations of mortals, nor did it profit from the land it owned. It only required mortals to contribute their belief to them. Having accumulated over numerous millennia, just how terrifying of a force would this be?

“Those standing below the steps, why do you not bow?”

A monk in charge of reception asked loudly from a high wall that resembled the walls of a city. He was already different from those mortal monks. Instead, he was a Qi Practitioner, a true disciple of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga. Several tens of thousand people were prostrating themselves in the square at the bottom of the mountain, so Li Qingshan and Xiao An’s standing figures stood out very much.

In particular, everyone who saw Xiao An along the way was left stunned. The young men even forgot to bow, ogling straight at her. Even when the monk for reception saw Xiao An, he could not help but be taken aback before lowering his head in a hurry and muttering “amitābha” a few times.

Li Qingshan said, “We aren’t believers. Instead, we’ve come to see the Annihilum Light Chan Master.”

“Senior uncle Annihilum Light is currently in secluded cultivation and is not receiving guests. It’s best if you return!”

Before the monk for reception could even finish speaking, a streak of golden light suddenly rose up from the majestic halls on Great Buddha mountain, landing at the entrance and turning into an old monk. It was the Annihilum Light Chan Master in the flesh, gazing at Xiao An gladly.

“One Will, you’ve finally come.”

“Senior uncle Annihilum Light.” The monk was taken aback, bowing in a hurry.

The Annihilum Light Chan Master was the head monk of the Bodhi courtyard. He had a rather dull character, and he liked peace and quiet. Even his direct disciples would very rarely see his expression change, yet he had actually revealed such an expression because two measly Foundation Establishment cultivators had come to visit. It truly was quite an occasion.

Xiao An brought her palms together in an orderly manner and bowed. “Master.”

“Come with me!” The Annihilum Light Chan Master waved his arm, and the huge gate behind him opened loudly. Sunlight poured through, landing on Li Qingshan’s face and making him squint his eyes.

“The gate’s opening!” “The gate’s opening!”

Calls rang out from below the mountain. The gate to the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga normally never opened. The disciples of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga all entered through a minor entrance below. They only ever opened the main gate to receive important guests.

The Annihilum Light Chan Master glanced at Xiao An before waving his hand.

The melodious sound of a bell rang out from the top of the mountain at first, and afterwards, the entire mountain rang with bells, drowning out the chanting and spreading across the entire Great Buddha mountain.

The monk for reception was stunned. He studied Li Qingshan and Xiao An closely. Let alone two Foundation Establishment cultivators, but even two Golden Core cultivators had no right to receive such treatment.

The girl seemed to be senior uncle Annihilum Light’s final disciple, but she was a disciple at most, which made her even less qualified.

Golden light shone brilliantly. The sounds of bells rose and fell together. It was grand and imposing.

Li Qingshan eased up slightly inside. As it seems, the Annihilum Light Chan Master still views Xiao An with great importance, so he probably won’t allow her to suffer any abuse. Actually, he was purely

overthinking. With Xiao An's current strength, how many people could abuse her across the nine provinces?

The Annihilum Light Chan Master walked at the front and Xiao An followed closely behind, so Li Qingshan followed along too. The Annihilum Light Chan Master glanced back at him, and Li Qingshan smiled at him, so he said nothing.

Xiao An followed the light and stepped into the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga. Her seaweed-like hair and her pale clothes were dyed with a layer of golden light.

The entire Great Buddha mountain had been disturbed. The various head monks emerged from their courtyards and gazed at the entrance in the distance.

Among the various head monks, the Annihilum Light Chan Master had always approached matters discreetly, indifferent to most affairs, yet he had done something so conspicuously today, leaving many people astounded.

He represented the entire Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, presenting a new disciple with a courteous reception and respect. He was also expressing to the entire Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga just how much he valued her, so that no one, not even the abbot of the monastery, should underestimate her.

But did she truly deserve something like this?

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The buddhist pagodas that stood in great numbers resembled a forest, blocking the sunlight. They glowed with a gentle, golden light, hiding wondrous power. This power was not brutal in any way or form. Instead, it was like the sunlight, the rain, and the dew, silently nourishing the surroundings. It was filled with warmth and benevolence, enough to fill people with admiration.

They stored the ?arīras of past, revered monks. ?arīras were equivalent to the golden cores of regular cultivators. They could only be condensed after undergoing the second heavenly tribulation. Just the boundless forest of pagodas was enough to demonstrate how deep the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga's foundations ran.

He was unable to sense it when he looked at it from afar, but as he stood among them, he could feel their solemn dignity. These pagodas were all over thirty meters tall. Some of them were even larger than Li Qingshan's original daemon form.

Li Qingshan thought, These pagodas probably aren't just for remembrance. Instead, they've become part of Great Buddha mountain, probably some form of defensive formation.

Xiao An did not look around as if she was not walking through a cluster of pagodas and under the gazes of thousands, but walking alone through a spacious forest.

The Annihilum Light Chan Master smiled, while the many observers in the monastery secretly applauded her. This "One Will's" bearing really was something else.

On the other hand, Li Qingshan looked around like a tourist visiting a historic sight, but he was also unfazed by all the pagodas.

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On the peak of Great Buddha mountain, within the grand hall.

Li Qingshan had never seen such a majestic hall before. It was like another mountain sitting on top of the mountain. He understood it to be the “buddha’s head” of Great Buddha mountain.

Gazing into the hall, the over three-hundred-meters-tall buddha sat in the centre while overlooking the people of the world. Bodhisattvas and arhats stood beside it, with guardians of dharma, the eight legions, dragons, elephants, and various other buddhist beings and creatures depicted on the walls.

A monk stood before the buddha with his palms together. He was bald and beardless, and he wore a great, red kasaya. He seemed to be around forty years old, but his eyes were as deep as the sea.

He differed from Li Qingshan’s benevolent, compassionate impression of monks. The middle-aged monk stood there silently, but he hid a dignified aspect of force. He stood no more than two meters tall, but before the three-hundred-meters-tall buddha, he did not seem small at all. Instead, he possessed a dauntless spirit like he stood beside the buddha.

He was the current abbot of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, the Dauntless monk, as well as one of the “Monk Kings” conferred by the Great Xia empire. Beside him were head monks of the various courtyards. They all differed in appearance, some old and some young, some male and some female, some benign in appearance and some sunken and cold in appearance, some with hair and some without hair.

However, the auras they gave off were all more powerful than the last. Li Qingshan had killed a few Golden Core cultivators in the past, but he would never dare to be careless if he faced any one of them, let alone the “Dauntless monk”. If it were not for his aspirational mindset, he basically would not have even been able to stare directly at him.

Within the realm of Foundation Establishment, Fu Qingjin from the Sword Collection palace could sweep through them all. Gu Yanying would be unfazed by regular Golden Core cultivators, but even she found the Soaring Dragon Elder who wielded the Soaring Dragon sword to be troublesome. As for the Dark Queen, she had even demonstrated the terrifying strength to crush other Golden Core cultivators right in front of Li Qingshan. Despite all being in the same realm of cultivation, their strength could be worlds apart.

None of the three great sects of the Green province possessed an undeserved reputation. The Golden Cicada Spirit King had become one of the Seventy-two Daemon Kings several thousand years ago, yet he still relied on luck and schemes to obtain the Chant of Deva-Nāga, afraid to openly rob or steal it.

If Xiao An had gone to the Bodhi courtyard with the Annihilum Light Chan Master, this obviously would not have happened. Normally, Xiao An would settle down first before visiting the various courtyards to pay respects to the head monks, and it would even depend on luck whether she could see the “Dauntless monk” or not.

However, since the Annihilum Light Chan Master had already opened the main gates and rung the bells, the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga would obviously make a response and test whether this “One Will” actually possessed the right to receive such treatment.

The grander the reception, the more pressure she faced. The Annihilum Light Chan Master told Xiao An to wait outside as he entered the grand hall alone, bowing towards the Dauntless monk before taking up one of the empty positions.

As her master, he had already given Xiao An the opportunity. Whether she could grasp it would be up to her. If she succeeded and proved herself, then she would receive endless glory. The entire monastery would support her cultivation. If she failed, then she would have made a laughing stock out of herself, while he would come off as unperceptive and incapable.

Xiao An nodded slightly towards Li Qingshan. Li Qingshan stuck out his thumb to encourage her.

She stepped over the high door sill with a bare foot, stepping into the grand hall. She raised her head to gaze at the buddha, lowered her head to look at the Dauntless monk, before lowering her head again to look at her reflection in the shiny floor. She walked over slowly and sat down on an empty cushion under the gazes of all the monks.

A monk said, "You see the buddha, yet you do not bow. How rude and unruly of you."

Xiao An said, "I only see statues of stone and clay. Where be the buddha?"

"The light of the buddha illuminates all, bringing salvation to all living creatures. The buddha is omnipresent."

"All I see is me, not all living creatures."

Li Qingshan knew they had already begun their debate over the dharma. He did not really understand it, but he could tell how firmly Xiao An stood to her position. He secretly began to worry, Joining the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga peacefully should be the right course of action. Why must she oppose them firmly? This "Dauntless monk" clearly lives up to his name. You can tell with a single glance that he's not an easy nut to crack. If you irritate him, it probably won't do you any good.

The various head monks took turns in putting forth questions, barraging her like a storm. They launched vicious assaults and rebuked her loudly. Xiao An, on the other hand, was unfazed, replying one by one in an orderly manner.

Li Qingshan suddenly discovered that the Annihilum Light Chan Master simply stood there silently while the corner of his lips curled into a smile as if he was extremely satisfied. Then he looked around and realised that many disciples of the monastery stood quietly outside and listened along with focus, either learning something or being left at a loss.

As a result, he stopped worrying. So these monks buy into this kind of thing.

By late morning, convincing arguments were made one after another as they constantly put forward difficult questions. Xiao An answered them with composure, her voice pleasant like the jingling of pearls cascading into a jadeite plate.

The various head monks were all secretly convinced. With such wisdom and talent, she truly did deserve the most solemn of welcomes.

The Dauntless monk who had remained silent the entire time suddenly took a step forward. He erupted with golden light, turning into a guardian king that stood over three hundred meters tall, glaring at Xiao An. He wielded a pillar-like vajra in one hand, and the entire hall suddenly fell silent.

With a clang, the hall caved inwards, becoming covered in cracks. Clearly, he had truly unleashed the wrath of a guardian king.

He swung down with the vajra violently.

“Demon subdual!”

Chapter 566 - The Dauntless Guardian King

Everything had happened like a clap of thunder. No one could respond in time.

The many disciples outside the hall were all shocked and dumbfounded. Even the head monks were completely taken aback, at a loss over why the abbot had become so wrathful.

The Dauntless monk launched a powerful strike like a god splitting open a mountain. No one could stop him.

Has he been secretly observing the entire time and seen through Xiao An’s Path of White Bone and Great Beauty, which is why he’s suddenly trying to kill her?

Li Qingshan rushed into the grand hall, but it was already too late.

Boom! A wave of air gushed through the hall, producing a hollow whistle as it sent Li Qingshan flying out!

“Xiao An!”

Li Qingshan was utterly furious. The Dauntless monk’s strike was so powerful that he could even crush a mountain. Xiao An’s Path of White Bone and Great Beauty was powerful, but her cultivation was still low after all, so how could she withstand that?

Overcome with rage, he no longer cared about anything. He was about to revert to his original form and throw his life at the Dauntless monk.

“Don’t!”

Suddenly, a voice rang out in his head. It came from Xiao An. Li Qingshan calmed down immediately.

Even if the Dauntless monk noticed something, he would not launch a surprise attack like this as a man of his bearing. He could easily denounce her publicly before taking action and subduing her. They were in the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga. Even if there were ten Xiao Ans and a Li Qingshan, it would be useless.

Earlier, Li Qingshan had only been mentally perturbed due to his concern. Once he calmed down, he immediately realised how strange it was.

The violent winds settled down. The colossal, pillar-like vajra stopped above Xiao An’s head, and the surging hostility vanished completely, like going from a storm to clear skies in a single instant.

It felt very abrupt, but that only demonstrated that the Dauntless monk's control over his power had already reached a highly intricate level, and it also showed he had not used his full strength.

Xiao An sat on the cushion, her expression as blank as ever. Her seaweed like hair drifted with the wind, and she did not even lean back. She stared ahead with a hollow gaze, completely ignoring the huge vajra. She had basically reached the epitome of being unfazed by no matter what happened before her.

"Aren't you afraid I'll kill you?" The three-hundred-meter-tall guardian king gazed at the tiny Xiao An. The wrath on his face vanished as he opened his lips and spoke with a booming voice, echoing through the entire grand hall.

"If you want to kill me, I can't stop you, so fear is useless. If you don't want to kill me, then why would I fear?" Xiao An said calmly.

"With great wisdom comes great courage. Impressive, impressive. My Dauntless Scripture of the Guardian King can only be practised by the courageous. Would you be interested in learning it?"

The Dauntless monk asked. However, the true objective behind his strike earlier was not to test whether Xiao An possessed great courage and whether she was suitable for learning the Dauntless Scripture of the Guardian King.

The talent and ability to comprehend that Xiao An had demonstrated was unbelievably high. Even in his youth, he was nowhere close to her. As a matter of fact, it was even possible for her to be the most outstanding disciple of the monastery throughout history. However, there was something he could not make out within her hollow gaze, which caused him hints of fear and alarm.

Her entire being was like a cluster of nothingness. He was unable to tell what she desired, let alone reach her disposition. If someone like that devoted themselves to buddhism, then they would definitely become an eminent monk of buddhism, but if they possessed demonic thoughts, then no one could stop the misfortunes they could cause. As a result, he took action to test her.

Apart from purging daemons and demons, the demon-subduing vajra that the Dauntless monk had swung possessed the power to subdue demonic thoughts. This move was called "A Blow and a Shout," a secret technique within chan buddhism. If her demonic thoughts were weak, then they would directly collapse from the blow. If they were too powerful, then they would be triggered and revealed, allowing him to see what her disposition was like.

TL: A blow and a shout is an actual thing in Chinese buddhism. It's basically the master of a monk using a staff to smack his disciple over the head while shouting out, serving as a sudden warning or a reminder for disciples of buddhism. The origin of this story is basically a monk called Lin Ji, who was studying under chan master Huangbo. Lin Ji asked the chan master what buddhism was about, only to be met with a blow over the head from the chan master. Lin Ji put up with the pain and asked again, only for the same thing to happen again. This happened three times before Lin Ji shut up and went to study the buddhist texts himself, becoming enlightened as a result. Of course, the meaning of the phrase has deviated from its origins, so I wouldn't say to think too much about it.

However, the end result left the Dauntless monk rather disappointed. He did not sense any demonic thoughts at all, as if he had just struck air. Was her heart truly without even the slightest hint of wickedness or malice? But that was completely impossible. Only recently-born infants who were not

even self-conscious yet could achieve that. Once they grew a little older, greed and a combative drive would arise naturally.

Or perhaps the cultivation of her mind had reached that stage?

Even the abbot of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, the Dauntless monk, was unable to imagine what overwhelming effect the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty had on her mentally. Even Li Qingshan still possessed influence over her only because of the impressions left behind in the past, which made her behave a little more “human”.

Other times, she was a skeleton with no appearance or sense of self, neither dead nor alive. She did not fall into the concept of good or evil, wrong or right, so what demonic thoughts were there to subdue?

Since his test had resulted in nothing, the Dauntless monk could only accept the fact that a genius like her existed in the world. He guessed that she might have been the reincarnation of some eminent monk, only behaving in such a peculiar way due to the influence of her past life. This was without a doubt the most logical explanation. Whenever the world was thrown into chaos, prodigies would always emerge en masse. Even if there was something wrong with her, he only needed to give her some proper guidance, and he was confident she could return to the correct path.

However, the Dauntless monk obviously would not mention everything he was thinking, just in case she developed any feelings of repulsion. He merely went with the flow and mentioned how he wanted to teach her the Dauntless Scripture of the Guardian King.

If she had been a regular disciple, then it would have been a tremendous honour in being tested by the Dauntless monk alone. Even if he stated his intentions, the disciple would be moved to tears out of gratitude. However, facing a monstrous prodigy like her, even a Monk King like him had to reconsider a few things.

He was not valuing her present, but her future. If she developed like normal, then a great prodigy was about to rise up, deeply influencing the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga or even all nine provinces. Even the Dauntless monk could not help but become rather eager about that.

The monks outside the hall all returned to their senses, becoming filled with amazement and admiration. She had gained the Dauntless monk’s recognition the moment she joined the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, and he even wanted to pass the Dauntless Scripture of the Guardian King to her personally. It was such a special honour that he was basically nurturing her like she would become the future abbot.

The various head monks all changed slightly in expression as well, gazing at the Annihilum Light Chan Master like they had realised something.

I never thought this Annihilum Light completely devoted to the buddha, who never bothers with secular affairs, would actually scheme so far ahead. I’ve truly underestimated him.

The Annihilum Light Chan Master closed his eyes gently and revealed a smile of relief. He had achieved his objective. From now onwards, no one in the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga would be bold enough to do anything detrimental to her.

Yes, while they were all disciples of buddhism, which focused on a benevolent mind, conflict still existed wherever people existed. Apart from a conflict of interest and authority, there was also a conflict of ideologies and orthodoxy. Even the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga was not all filled with good will towards one another. There were quite a lot of disagreements between the head monks.

The Bodhi courtyard possessed quite the status in the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, but the Annihilum Light Chan Master hated taking part in these conflicts and disputes the most, so it was a lone force. Like how trees that protruded from the forest would always be the ones blown down, it was very likely for Xiao An's exceptional talent to incur jealousy and antagonism.

Although he disliked conflict, the Annihilum Light Chan Master still possessed great wisdom, so he came up with a way to deal with this problem once and for all, which was for her to join the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga with infinite glory. Then, she would gain the Dauntless monk's recognition in front of everyone, earning her an aloof status in the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga.

The Guardian King's Scripture of Demon Subdual that Xiao An practised in the past was only a foundation. If she continued upwards, there were guardian kings of fire, guardian kings of strength, and other forms that each had their own purposes.

The Dauntless monk practised the Dauntless Scripture of the Guardian King. His dharma name was not originally "Dauntless", but by now, everyone only knew him as the "Dauntless monk". They had completely forgotten his original dharma name already.

Cultivation methods that ventured past the third heavenly tribulation were the ultimate knowledge of this world. They were methods that each sect kept as a secret to themselves, and they would also have the guidance of seniors who practised the same cultivation method. Something as great as that was basically a great opportunity that regular cultivators could only come across through luck.

However, Xiao An hesitated for a moment before bowing gently. "I wish to learn the Chant of Deva-Nāga!"

"The Chant of Deva-Nāga!"

An uproar arose from outside the grand hall. The Chant of Deva-Nāga was the highest, most secretive cultivation method of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga. Normally, only the head monks of each courtyard had the right to practise it. Even regular elders did not possess that right. She was a new disciple, yet she was still dissatisfied with the abbot personally teaching her the Dauntless Scripture of the Guardian King, wanting to learn the Chant of Deva-Nāga instead.

Even the buddhist disciples who focused on cleansing their minds of desires could not help but experience envy. They refused to accept this. They all found her overly greedy, unable to appreciate what was right before her.

Li Qingshan grew nervous too. His main objective of coming to the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga was for the Chant of Deva-Nāga. If he brought the Chant of Deva-Nāga back to the Golden Cicada Spirit King, then apart from completing his promise of the past, the Golden Cicada Spirit King might even offer him some benefits from being put into a good mood.

The Golden Cicada Spirit King wanted to leap out of the well, but there were many things he could not take with him. Even if he only left a fraction of them to Li Qingshan, it would be a great treasure.

“Do you really want to learn it?” The Dauntless monk dispersed the avatar of the dauntless guardian king and furrowed his brows slightly. The Chant of Deva-Nāga was renowned, but if she really did learn it, it was not necessarily more practical than the Dauntless Scripture of the Guardian King that he could personally teach her. Why was she neglecting what was right in front of her for something much further away?

“Yes,” Xiao An said firmly. Her foundation was based around the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty in the first place. The Dauntless Scripture of the Guardian King might have been precious, but compared to the former, it was nowhere close. It was not essential to her. The Chant of Deva-Nāga, on the other hand, was a cultivation method she could unleash, and it was more useful to her.

“Alright, I can promise you that,” the Dauntless monk said resolutely before diverting the conversation, “However, you need to undergo the second heavenly tribulation and condense a ʔarīra before you can unleash the power of the Chant of Deva-Nāga. I’ll teach you the Chant of Deva-Nāga then.”

He obviously could not teach the treasured cultivation method of his sect to a disciple who had just joined. As a result, he set down a condition. No matter how great her talent was, undergoing the second heavenly tribulation was not something she could complete overnight. It would allow him to carefully understand her disposition and nurture her loyalty to the monastery.

“Yes.”

Xiao An agreed without hesitation. She was only a step away from the second layer of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty. As long as she cultivated for a while in the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga and overcame this obstacle, she could basically undergo the second heavenly tribulation. By then, as long as she had the support of sufficient resources, condensing a ʔarīra was just a matter that would occur naturally. She could basically imagine she would never lack resources in the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga.

Afterwards, the Dauntless monk specially arranged a place of cultivation for her, isolating her from the other disciples, just in case she influenced them with her appearance.

Normally, if buddhist cultivators could not even control a hint of lust within them, they would be better off directly jumping off Great Buddha mountain. However, her beauty was far too powerful, just like the legendary daughters of māra that obstructed the path to enlightenment. Disciples who lacked sufficient mental cultivation could be influenced very easily.

After completing all the arrangements, the Dauntless monk suddenly barked, “Who’s craning his neck and peering around there? Get in here!”

Chapter 567 - The Demon Suppression Hall

Li Qingshan strode into the grand hall and clasped his hands. “I’m the Scarlet Hawk commander of the Clear River prefecture, Li Qingshan. Greetings to the abbot and the head monks.”

Noticing the Dauntless monk’s hostile tone, he purposefully mentioned his identity as a Hawkwolf guard to make these monks reconsider what they wanted to do to him.

The Dauntless monk asked, "Who allowed you to set foot in here?"

"The Annihilum Light Chan Master-" Li Qingshan looked towards the Annihilum Light Chan Master, but never did he expect the old monk to not be looking at him at all. His head was lowered as he gazed down, remaining perfectly silent. His heart lurched. *Crap, I've been duped by this monk.*

The Annihilum Light Chan Master had never permitted him to follow along, so obviously he would not admit to it right now.

Xiao An said, "He came with me. He didn't know the rules of the monastery, so please forgive him, abbot."

The Dauntless monk could not help but glance at Xiao An deeply. This was the longest she had spoken for apart from when debating over the dharma ever since she set foot in the grand hall. Even when she spoke with him earlier, she had reduced her words to the bare minimum.

Li Qingshan clasped his hands. "The ignorant have no crimes. Please forgive me, masters. I will leave right now."

The Dauntless monk's gaze swept past the Annihilum Light Chan Master and Li Qingshan and seemed to understand something. He said, "This is the inner courtyard of the monastery. Only disciples of my monastery have the right to set foot in here. If outsiders enter here without invitation, then it is viewed as intrusion, and they will be executed without mercy."

Li Qingshan was startled. Surely these monks don't need to be so vicious!

The Annihilum Light Chan Master said to the Dauntless monk with his side facing him, "Abbot, he did indeed come in with me. Although I never gave him permission, his crimes do not warrant death. Since only disciples of the monastery can set foot in here, why don't we just accept him as a disciple? That'll be the best of both worlds."

Li Qingshan's eye twitched, finally understanding what this Annihilum Light was scheming.

He's clearly afraid I'll influence Xiao An's cultivation, so he just downright tricked me into entering the monastery so that he can turn me into a monk. By then, all I can do is reduce my desires to nothingness and give up on drinking and sex. And, if I become a disciple of the monastery, he can obviously do whatever he wants with me. Sure enough, if they aren't bald, they aren't vicious, and if they're aren't vicious, they aren't bald.

The Annihilum Light Chan Master could not be blamed for being oversensitive. A young man and a beautiful young girl, enough to be known as unrivalled, spent day and night together. They even shared the same dwelling. Even if something happened between them, it made perfect sense. And, the young girl clearly showed special concern towards this man. He basically garnered all the suspicion he could.

However, he was unable to approach this forcefully either, just in case it led to a schism with her. As a result, he came up with this brilliant plan, killing several birds with one stone. It would be quite a rare opportunity for Li Qingshan to join a sect like the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga with such ease too. Although Li Qingshan's talent was not as monstrous as Xiao An's, he was still a genius, which was a good thing for the monastery.

The Dauntless monk nodded. "That is an idea."

"Definitely not. I already have a family, and I need to carry out my duties as a Hawkwolf guard. I really can't just set aside my responsibilities."

Li Qingshan said, only to see Xiao An had actually become eager over this prospect. He smiled bitterly to himself. You're so clever, yet you've actually become so blinded right now. They're doing this to separate us. Why would they let me see you whenever I want?

"In other words, you don't want to?" The Dauntless monk furrowed his brows. If he were a White Hawk commander, then he would care a little more, but a measly Scarlet Hawk commander was absolutely nothing.

"Yes. I have never cultivated good karma in my life, with a special liking towards conflict and sins. I tamper with all of the indulgences and vices, whether it be alcohol, sex, greed, or pride. When the masters discussed the dharma earlier, I didn't even understand a single word. If I remain in the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, I'll probably disturb this peaceful, pure land of buddhism. I better go!" Li Qingshan turned around to leave as soon as he finished.

"You've never cultivated good karma in your life, and you have a special liking towards conflict and sins. Hmph, imprison him in the Demon Suppression hall until he repents and mends his ways!" The Dauntless monk ordered. Two huge, mighty guardian gods flew down from the walls on the side, pressing towards Li Qingshan.

This seems to be the handiwork of the school of Painting. The two guardians in the paintings are probably even more powerful than regular Golden Core cultivators.

Only now did Li Qingshan notice the wall painting around the grand hall. The divine generals, demons, monsters, and protectors were all true to life, extending from the walls to the highest part of the ceiling.

He vaguely found it rather familiar. Shifting his gaze, he noticed a bright, red seal the size of a table on the western wall, expressing three words, "Five Absolutes Immortal". The wall paintings were actually by the legendary Five Absolutes Immortal, and they had accumulated several millennia of power of belief, making them even more powerful than they were originally.

Xiao An suddenly stood up and stood in front of Li Qingshan, blocking them.

"The monastery has its rules. No one is exempt from them. If you want to stick up for this person, then you can enter the Demon Suppression hall and reflect on yourself too!"

An idea flashed through the Dauntless monk's eyes, and with a wave of his hand, even more guardian gods flew down from the wall paintings. Li Qingshan clenched his fist before loosening it again, placing it gently on Xiao An's shoulder.

The Annihilum Light Chan Master blocked the guardian gods and arrived before the two of them. "Come with me."

Li Qingshan and Xiao An exchanged glances and followed the Annihilum Light Chan Master. They left the grand hall, and under the gazes of the disciples of the monastery, they made their way to the back of the mountain.

“Monk, how dare you screw me over!” Li Qingshan questioned the Annihilum Light Chan Master aggressively through his soul sense.

“The Demon Suppression hall is not a place of punishment, but a place of cultivation. Take care,” the Annihilum Light Chan Master only said that before ignoring Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan had researched many things about the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga beforehand. He knew the monastery had a special Disciplinary courtyard. If disciples ever did wrong, they would obviously be sent there to be punished, and the head monk of the Disciplinary courtyard would keep an eye over them, so why were they being sent to some Demon Suppression hall instead?

Just what did the Dauntless monk have in mind with this?

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“Is this the Demon Suppression hall?”

Li Qingshan arrived at the back of the mountain with the Annihilum Light Chan Master. In a peaceful valley, the mossy, stone pillars formed a simple gate. It was very large and grand, but it was close to falling apart.

In front of the gate, a fat monk snored away thunderously on a great, grey rock. His bare belly rose and fell like a small mountain. He gave off a heavy scent of alcohol and still held the leg of a lamb in one hand.

Li Qingshan dared not be careless. This monk who ate meat and drank alcohol did not emit any aura at all, but with the senses of the spirit turtle, he knew he was no weaker than the Dauntless monk.

The fat monk opened an eye and glanced over. “Annihilum Light, why’ve you brought them here?”

“Senior uncle Unraging, I’ve come under the abbot’s orders to send them into the Demon Suppression hall for reflection.”

“Oh?” The Unraging monk rolled over and asked with a chuckle, “So what did you do?”

Li Qingshan noticed that the great, grey rock he was lying on was engraved with the three words, “Demon Suppression hall”.

“Your abbot wanted me to become a monk, and I refused.”

“Hahahaha, interesting, interesting. If I had such a beautiful girl, I’d never be a monk too. Why must senior brother make things difficult for you?”

The Unraging monk glanced at Xiao An and patted his belly. All of his fat jiggled as he laughed.

The laughter was extremely infectious. Even Li Qingshan could not help but smile. “The Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga really should have a master like you as their abbot instead.”

The Unraging monk shook his great big head around like a rattle-drum. “How uninteresting would that be? Hmm? This girl seems to be a disciple of buddhism.”

The Annihilum Light Chan Master gave a rough explanation of everything that had happened. The Unraging monk studied the two people before him as if he was in thought as he maintained a wide smile the entire time. He muttered to himself.

“You’ve never cultivated good karma in your life, and you have a special liking towards conflict and sins. You do have quite the courage to say something like that in front of my senior brother. Why don’t you just become my disciple? It’ll save you a trip into the Demon Suppression hall. Under me, apart from sex, eating meat and drinking alcohol isn’t particularly forbidden. How does that go again? The buddha passes through my belly, but alcohol and meat remain in my heart.”

“Senior uncle, you’ve gotten it the wrong way around,” the Annihilum Light Chan Master reminded. A sliver of surprise had appeared on his wrinkled face. The Unraging monk was a great buddhist cultivator who had undergone three heavenly tribulations. His status in the monastery was so great that it completely exceeded the various head monks.

However, his words and actions were twisted, and he did not abide to the buddhist precepts, spending most of his time guarding the Demon Suppression hall. Originally, with his cultivation, no one could stop him even if he wanted to leave the monastery, but he instead chose to stay behind and guard the Demon Suppression hall. Just like that, a century had already passed with him guarding the place.

He found it troublesome, so he never had any disciples before, but never did the Annihilum Light Chan Master imagine he would actually mention accepting a disciple today. That was an astronomical opportunity. If Li Qingshan had such a master, he might not be able to run amok through the nine provinces, but if anyone wanted to touch him, they would have to consider the consequences.

“It’s all the same.”

As the Unraging monk spoke, he fished out a great gourd of alcohol and took a few gulps before passing it to Li Qingshan.

Sniffing the overflowing aroma, Li Qingshan took a small sip. He felt like liquid fire had just flowed through his throat and into his belly. There was a fiery pain, as well as an indescribable sense of satisfaction. He had actually never tasted such strong alcohol before, and it contained extremely dense spiritual qi.

Li Qingshan could not help but suck hard, yet alcohol flowed endlessly out of the gourd. He drank several litres in one gulp, yet there was still no end in sight.

“That’s some great alcohol, but I don’t want to be a monk.”

Li Qingshan drank over fifty litres of alcohol before placing down the gourd, wiping his mouth as he said that. He was hiding a great secret. With the divine powers of the spirit turtle, even great cultivators of the third heavenly tribulation could not see through him, but once they spent some time together, he could not say for sure that he would be able to keep this secret. By then, they would go from master and disciple to enemies.

“Damn brat, why’d you only tell me after drinking!? Forget it then, you better pay a visit to the Demon Suppression hall!”

The Unraging monk had only thought of that spontaneously. If Li Qingshan refused, he would not care either. He extended a finger.

The stone gate opened loudly, revealing a murky cave that gave off a gloomy sense of coldness. Peering inside, it seemed bottomless. The feeling it gave off was somewhat similar to the Gate of Hungry Ghosts as if it led to another world.

The Unraging monk swung his hand, and a tremendous but gentle force swelled up behind them. Li Qingshan flew into the cave helplessly and so did Xiao An.

In the air, they linked their hands as they hurled into the Demon Suppression hall.

“Don’t go too deep or too far!”

The Unraging monk’s voice rang out from behind, growing more and more distant until it became so indiscernible that it sounded like it came from thousands of kilometers away.

The stone gate slammed shut, and the voice was cut off. All light vanished.

“Senior brother, aren’t you afraid that this one-in-a-millennium genius will experience danger in the Demon Suppression hall?”

The Unraging monk yawned and turned around. Before they knew it, the Dauntless monk was already standing beside the grey rock with his hands behind his back.

“As long as she doesn’t venture too deeply into the Demon Suppression hall, what danger will there be? If she were to die so easily, then she wouldn’t be a prodigy anymore. I want to test her disposition again.”

The Dauntless monk answered. Although the result of his testing had ended with nothing, the sliver of unease remained in his heart.

However, Xiao An’s behaviour earlier allowed him to discover an opening—Li Qingshan.

“Come, One Will. Show me where your path lies.”

Chapter 568 - Within the Demon Suppression Hall

The influence of such a supreme prodigy like this was far too great. Once he decided to support her in her path to the peak of the cultivation world, then if it resulted in any negative consequences, he would have to bear it all alone.

Several thousand years ago, the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga had once produced a buddhist genius known to be unrivalled, yet in the end, the monastery suffered tremendous losses, almost falling into decline. With this as a lesson, how could the Dauntless monk afford to be careless? He asked the Unraging monk again, “And why do you want that kid as your disciple?”

“I just find him pleasing to the eye,” the Unraging monk said as he chuckled. He could sense something special from Li Qingshan.

Just when the Dauntless monk wanted to ask further, the Unraging monk said, “Look, they’re already there.”

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It was as if they had been sucked into a black vortex, reaching the bottom of the water, passing through and setting foot in a different world.

Li Qingshan and Xiao An stood hand in hand. They looked around, only to see they had already arrived in a magnificent room. The ground was layered with golden tiles, while gold leaf covered the walls, detailed with graceful patterns. It resembled an imperial palace, forming a clear contrast with the gate that was close to falling apart.

However, when Li Qingshan studied the surroundings carefully, he discovered this was not an imperial palace, but a prison.

The room they were standing in was a cage. Before him was a row of glistening bars, blocking the path out, while opposite of the bars were similar rooms.

Li Qingshan walked over and pushed gently. With a clank, the prison door opened.

He arrived in a wide passageway, which was also beautifully decorated, but on the two sides of the passageway were various cages of different sizes.

Li Qingshan asked in confusion, "Why is the Demon Suppression hall built like a prison?"

When the Demon Suppression hall was first constructed, it did indeed function as a prison. The monks of the monastery would capture and subdue demonic cultivators, throwing them into the Demon Suppression hall to be detained, giving them the opportunity to turn over a new leaf.

However, during the several millennia since the Great Xia empire was established, the world experienced peace and tranquility, and demonic cultivators faded away from public sight. The conflict between good and bad ceased to exist. Even if cultivators made trouble, there was the Hawkwolf Guard that could capture them or hunt them down. There was no need for the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga to do anything.

As a result, the demonic cultivators originally suppressed in the hall either reformed and became buddhists, or they downright died from old age. The original purpose of the Demon Suppression hall was gradually abandoned, but it was soon repurposed with a new function. It had been turned into a ground of trials for disciples.

True, large sects would always remain vigilant. They were aware of the nature of bloody conflict of the cultivation world. They would never be corroded away by the false impression of "a peaceful world". They ground their blades constantly, ready to confront bloody conflict at any time. If buddhist scriptures, dharma, and benevolence were the only things they had relied on, the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga would have been destroyed countless times already.

While internal competitions could maintain a competitive mindset, it was nowhere near true conflict. As a result, whether it be the Sword Collection palace or the Umbral Yin sect, they all established facilities like these.

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"Argh!"

A shrill shriek rang out from the end of the passageway, filled with pain and refusal. It echoed throughout the magnificent prison, enough to send chills down the spines of people.

Li Qingshan's eyes narrowed as he withdrew his aura. He flew over to the end of the passageway with great speed and agility, only to see a group of people kneeling on the ground, huddling into a group. Fresh blood flowed out between them, dyeing the golden tiles red.

Among them was a child around seven or eight with his guts spilling out. They were grabbing his innards and shoving them into their mouths. The child was still alive, putting up a desperate struggle as he shrieked in pain and hatred.

"Stop!" Li Qingshan bellowed. The group of people looked over, all covered in blood and hideous. It basically resembled the classical scenes of zombie films from his past life.

But to Li Qingshan's surprise, they did not lunge over immediately. The burliest man among them even wiped the blood from his mouth as he asked, "You a newcomer?"

The tone of his voice was rather strange, but he was clearly intelligent and not a mad, wild beast. Yet, he behaved like he was not doing anything wrong at all. The child continued to scream. It was truly as strange as it could get.

"Release him!" Li Qingshan was taken aback before shouting out coldly. He had never thought something as tragic as cannibalism would happen in the renowned Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga. These monks were far more vicious than he had imagined them to be.

"Do you want some?" The burly man's expression changed, but his tone seemed like he was talking about a pig or a lamb, not a child.

At this moment, Xiao An arrived too, standing beside Li Qingshan. The burly man's eyes lit up, filled with undisguised lust. His crotch actually responded immediately, and he stood up without the slightest hint of shame.

The other men were no different. They opened their mouths and drooled. They were clearly people, yet they seemed to become wild beasts in the heat all of a sudden.

"Is that woman yours? Give her to me or die!"

The man pointed at Xiao An and said to Li Qingshan. Before he had even finished, there was a bang, and his head exploded like a watermelon. Brain matter and blood covered the golden walls nearby.

"You better use your head before you talk!"

Li Qingshan pulled back his leg as he said that.

"Roar!"

The other men lunged over wildly. Veins popped from their bodies, their muscles bulged, and teeth protruded from their mouths, producing howls like wild beasts.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The group of people all collapsed as heady corpses. Blood flowed on the ground with broken bones and brain matter splattered everywhere.

Li Qingshan was bewildered. These people had bodies far tougher than regular people, but they also did not seem like cultivators. They could not even be regarded as wild beasts. Wild beasts would always flee when they faced danger, but they seemed to be completely under the control of their urges.

The child no longer shrieked. He propped himself up and extended his hand, covering his belly and shoving all the organs and intestines back inside. His life force was unbelievably tenacious. Afterwards, he threw himself at a headless corpse nearby and began ripping away at it, not for revenge, but purely because he was hungry and wanted to eat something.

Li Qingshan found this all absurd. He actually had no idea what to say. After the child had his fill, the wound on his belly had basically recovered completely.

The child asked rather bashfully, "Thank you for saving me. Can I follow you?"

"What's your name? Who are they? Why were they..." Li Qingshan paused for a moment. "Eating you?"

"I'm Duoge. This is my dad. I don't know the others. Why were they eating me? Obviously because they were hungry!" The child called "Duoge" pointed at the first man that Li Qingshan had killed with a kick and answered innocently.

Afterwards, he waved his arm around and advertised himself. "I can fight for you. If you get hungry, you can eat me too. My flesh is very tender." His eyes swivelled craftily, and he pointed at the corpses on the ground, including his father's. "These are enough to eat for many days!"

Li Qingshan felt mentally overwhelmed. These "people" were not powerful, but the things they did and said was horrifying. It proved that their natures were twisted to the limit, so hideous that it was repulsive.

A father had brought a group of people to eat his child. The child treated his father as food. If any regular people were present, probably even their view on life and values would be heavily impacted.

Actually, there had indeed been many disciples of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga who were unable to endure the mental pressure when they undertook trials in the Demon Suppression hall, thus losing their minds and going crazy. With such flimsy willpower, they were not worth treasuring no matter how talented they were.

Is it just because they're trapped in here and they have nothing to eat, which is why they kill and devour one another? No, it's not that simple. These people carry out these things like that's simply how the world works. They aren't bound by any form of conscience, nor are they tortured by so-called humanity.

The Dauntless monk had been observing everything inside the Demon Suppression hall the entire time. He discovered that Xiao An had remained unfazed the entire time. Even the light in her eyes had not rippled. This was no longer just simple indifference or coldness, but disregard. She disregarded the bloody sights and disregarded the horrific feasting.

The Dauntless monk had no idea whether he should be happy or worried. Everyone wanted their disciples to have firm willpower, but with how firm hers was, it was rather eerie or even terrifying. It

completely exceeded her age. There was only one thing he could be certain about. She did not have a so-called "heart of compassion".

As for this Li Qingshan, he had not been soft-handed at all. Originally, the Dauntless monk had considered whether he should remind them that the beings standing before them were not truly humans, but looking at it now, it was completely unnecessary.

"Duoge, do you know if there's an exit somewhere?"

Li Qingshan asked. Although he knew the Dauntless monk would not let them go so easily, he still had to try and find the exit himself.

Duoge said, "There's no exit. Once you come in, you can never leave."

Li Qingshan said, "Then aren't there any special places?"

Duoge hesitated. Li Qingshan said immediately, "Take us there!"

Duoge dared not decline. He picked up a corpse and pointed at the other corpses. "It's very far away from here. You better bring those along to eat on the way!" He was worried Li Qingshan and Xiao An would run out of things to eat and eat him instead.

"Leave the corpse behind! Let's go!"

As a result, Duoge tossed the corpse behind and strode ahead to lead the way. He glanced back reluctantly. That was not an attachment to his father, but an attachment to food.

"There's meat!" "There's food to eat!"

Soon after they had left, another group of people arrived, throwing themselves on the ground and eating. They gorged themselves happily.

The prison was like a maze. The passageways twisted and turned and forks constantly appeared. The area it covered was so great that it even exceeded Great Buddha mountain. This was definitely not a regular hall built underground.

They constantly came across others along the way. Basically all of them were young men, who lunged over like bulls in the heat as soon as they spotted Xiao An. All of them possessed tremendous strength, and they moved as swiftly as the wind. They could basically rival Iron Plate corpses.

Li Qingshan obviously killed his way through them without holding back. He discovered some of them possessed deformities, showing that they were clearly non-human, such as swellings on their foreheads, bulging backs, discoloured skin, and sharp teeth and nails. Normally, the more prominent their deformities were, the more powerful they were.

Li Qingshan's doubts also grew heavier and heavier. Just what kind of people were they? Why had they become like this? And why were they imprisoned in the Demon Suppression hall?

The further they went, the stronger the enemies became. Some of them even exceeded the level of Corpse Soldiers, approaching the strength of Corpse Generals. He could not help but recall the Unraging monk's warning.

“Don’t go too deep or too far.”

Chapter 569 - Demonfolk

“The Dauntless monk worries about me. He wants to observe my disposition and responses. If I don’t leave him satisfied, he won’t let us out so easily.”

Xiao An’s voice rang out in Li Qingshan’s head. Li Qingshan continued forwards like nothing had happened at all. “Then are you supposed to show some kindheartedness?”

“Tricks and guises won’t be able to fool him. This is fine, but I can find some opportunities to use some buddhist techniques and dismiss his worries.”

“Alright!”

Li Qingshan nodded. So far, Xiao An had yet to fight. Since she wanted to demonstrate some techniques, it obviously had to be on opponents that were powerful enough, so they had to continue onwards!

Along the way, basically everyone they came across was male, who rushed over crazily as soon as they saw Xiao An. They basically came across no females. According to Duoge, females were too weak, so most of them had already been eaten. As for him, his father was already doting on him very much by only eating him now.

Li Qingshan was unable to comment on this form of doting. They turned around another corner, and an indigo man lunged over with a swift gust of wind. The power and speed behind this lunge was so startling that it had already reached the level of Steel Plate corpses, and his target was Duoge leading the way at the front.

Duoge cried out. Li Qingshan twisted his right arm and created a vortex-like sucking, drawing Duoge over. Afterwards, he pushed out conveniently, and the vortex turned into a water tornado with a whistle, piercing the man and tearing him to pieces. Flesh and bone scattered everywhere.

It had been quite a few years since Li Qingshan began fighting and killing. He had claimed countless lives with his hands.

However, rarely had it been more hardcore than the time he had spent in the Demon Suppression hall. His strength was far too great now. A casual strike of his could tear bodies apart, sending organs flying everywhere. It was an extremely bloody sight to behold.

However, the thin, dark-skinned Duoge, only seven or eight years old in appearance, would cheer every single time with a face filled with excitement.

Li Qingshan forbade him from taking corpses with him, so he scooped up the flesh messily and shoved it into his mouth, eating away happily like he was snacking.

There was nothing Li Qingshan could do either. He could not be bothered with stopping him.

The child was born with a demonic nature. He had absolutely no concept of good and bad, right and wrong. Or perhaps, all the people here were like that, bearing no resemblance to those who grew up in human society.

After all, even in uncivilised lands, tribes and clans would still develop a basic notion of morality. Unless due to certain customs or traditions, or having run out of choices, they basically would not feast on their clansmen, let alone fathers and sons feasting on one another.

However, if they were savages that grew up in the wilderness, they should not have been capable of such clear thought and language. And even wild beasts were not so savage.

He really had no idea where the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga had found these people. He did not mind judging people in the most pessimistic manner possible, but the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga was still an orthodox buddhist sect after all. Surely they would not go as far as to capture these people and then turn them into something like this!

Duoge raised his head and looked at Li Qingshan in veneration. “Venerable, are you a Demon General? You’re so powerful even without demonifying!”

Li Qingshan said, “I’m a human. What’s demonifying?”

“You’re a human!” Duoge took a step back in fright. He had always thought Li Qingshan was no different from him.

“What’s so scary about humans?” Li Qingshan was stumped. This child was not even afraid when he saw Li Qingshan massacre his clansmen, yet he actually became afraid when he heard he was a human.

“This...”

“Tell me!”

“I heard... I heard that humans are extremely lowly and kindhearted. They like to do foolish things like helping others selflessly, and they feel no shame in that, taking pride in it instead. They constantly attack us under that belief. They want us to become as foolish and lowly as them.” Duoge faltered.

Why was kindheartedness grouped with loneliness, turning it into a word of negative connotation?

Li Qingshan rubbed his head. He found it rather painful to understand. This was no longer merely evil, but a complete reversion of right and wrong, as if under their ideology, anyone who did good and made personal sacrifices would be extremely disgraceful and foolish.

He vaguely understood the meaning behind the Demon Suppression hall now. If these people were not suppressed here, every single one of them would be beings of great wickedness outside.

“Didn’t I just save you earlier? Isn’t that taking pleasure in helping others? Doing what’s righteous?”

“No, no, no, definitely not. I can help you lead the way, and I can help you fight. If you’re hungry, you can even eat me. This is all within your calculations. This is definitely not taking pleasure in helping others. You’re very clever and very powerful, a demon among humans of great wickedness and evil!”

Duoge paled in fright as he trembled in fear, justifying himself in a hurry. In the end, he even extended his thumb and gave Li Qingshan the honourable title of a “demon among humans.”

The feeling was like someone asking you, “You think I’m a bitch, an idiot, and a piece of trash?” It was very difficult to not take that as an infuriating threat.

The corner of Li Qingshan's lips twitched, and he forced out a happy expression. He sucked in a deep breath and raised his head, yelling at the ceiling.

"Release me! I'm completely unqualified to be in this Demon Suppression hall!"

Compared to this child, he felt like he could be considered as a peerless well-doer—oh wait, that was a curse here.

The Unraging monk laughed aloud, while the Dauntless monk shook his head. "These demonfolk are as dense as always. They don't know they should repent and mend their ways. Even this little demonfolk is filled with wickedness."

"Demonfolk are planted with a demon heart the moment they're born. Their five skandhas, their five aggregates of clinging, blaze brightly. They have no concept of good and bad, completely inverting right and wrong. Probably only the buddhas of the Western Paradise can lead them to salvation. It's well beyond what we are capable of. There's no need to lose your temper over them, senior brother."

"Junior brother, we might not be able to lead them to salvation, but we can exterminate these nemeses of buddha. We can halt their growth and prevent them from making even more trouble. We can't view them as humans, or become softhearted because of their age."

The Dauntless monk said as he seemed to indirectly warn the Unraging monk. The Unraging monk laughed aloud, but he said nothing.

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Their voices echoed through the long passageways, but there was not a single reply.

Li Qingshan let out a sigh and asked Duoge, "What's the demonification you speak of?"

"All demonfolk can demonify, just like this!"

Duoge clenched his fists, and his small face became bright red, even letting out straining sounds. In the end, only the colour of his eyes changed slightly, and his body loosened. Eagerness filled his eyes.

"I'm still too young. Once I grow up, I'll definitely become an extremely powerful Demon King."

"Demonfolk, Demon King..." Li Qingshan murmured. If he did not consider these strange words and actions, then Duoge behaved no different from regular children. They wanted to be scientists, presidents, and so on.

Li Qingshan patted Duoge's head and no longer said much more. "Let's keep going. Are there any stronger opponents here?"

"Venerable, you truly are a brutal and vicious demon among humans. The place we're going to has a lot of powerful people to kill!" Duoge's eyes lit up and admiration filled his face.

"I've heard my grandfather mention that it actually doesn't matter even if you're a human. As long as you have a demon heart, everyone can become demons. You will definitely become a powerful Demon King in the future."

He was solemnly trying to comfort Li Qingshan. Li Qingshan shook his head with no idea how to respond. He waved his right hand gently, and a rolling cloud rose up, lifting up Duoge as well. Afterwards, he said, "You just have to lead the way. We can get to the place you speak of faster."

The cloud took off with a swish. Duoge leaned at the front, constantly giving out directions. The cloud shot through the maze-like Demon Suppression hall just like that.

They flew past thousands of cages. Li Qingshan could imagine the past, dignified glory of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga suppressing daemons and demons when this place had been filled with prisoners. After thousands of years of rest and recuperation, the monastery had only grown stronger. If he revealed his identity, he probably would not be able to escape the fate of being suppressed.

"Demonfolk" appeared before them one by one. If they did not block their way, then Li Qingshan ignored them, but if they were bold enough to block their way, Li Qingshan would not be bothered with taking action either. He would just fly right through them.

He could modify the toughness of the cloud he rode on, and it moved with startling speed. Anything that was struck by it would have its bones shattered as blood sprayed into the air. However, with how tough these "demonfolk" were and how powerful their life force was, who knew whether they actually died or not.

The passageway gradually widened, and the twists and forks gradually decreased.

However, more and more "demonfolk" appeared, all of them growing stronger and stronger. Some even wielded weapons like blades, spears, swords, and halberds, and they became even more disfigured too.

The advance of the cloud obviously slowed down too.

Bang! The cloud smashed into a blade-wielding "demonfolk", and his blade flew into the air.

Duoge leaned out of the cloud, and with a scoop, he caught it. He tossed aside the bone club he had recently obtained and placed the bloody, long blade on his back, but it was even longer than him, so it formed quite a funny sight. However, he was very happy, as innocent as a regular child who had found a beloved toy.

Li Qingshan felt rather sorrowful. He was not a person overflowing with sympathy, but he would always be a little softer towards children. Children were always so feeble and vulnerable, completely bound by their environments. They were unable to fight back if they were abused, and they believed everything that people told them, whether it was true or not. By the time they had grown up and could make decisions for themselves, they would have been twisted beyond all recognition already.

Perhaps I was reminded of my past self!

Li Qingshan exhaled and rubbed Duoge's head. Duoge's head shrank back and turned away, cautious and uneasy.

"Don't worry. As long as you don't have any ill intentions towards me, I won't kill you, nor will I eat you. I'm not demonfolk, but a foolish human."

Duoge tried to say something, but he had no idea what to say!

A pair of huge, gilded doors appeared at the end of the passageway. Over a dozen strangely-shaped demonfolk gathered around it, either sitting or standing on the ground. Between them were two demonfolk fighting desperately as the others on the side cheered on.

“Kill him! Kill him!” At the same time, the others eyed them covetously, ready to feast on the flesh of the loser. When they saw the cloud approach, they all looked over. Only the two demonfolk in the centre continued to brawl with one another furiously, tearing at each other's bodies viciously with their sharp teeth like two rabid fighting dogs.

A demonfolk originally sat on the ground and leaned against the gilded door. Suddenly, he stood up. His height had completely exceeded that of regular humans. He was riddled with muscle, standing like an iron tower. He had a crown bulging from his head like a beetle's horns.

The “beetle demonfolk” emerged from the ground, striding towards Li Qingshan with heavy steps. The other demonfolk all formed a path for him. Only the two demonfolk continued to tear at one another.

The beetle demonfolk did not even look at them, striding right through the two. Squelch! Crack! Blood splattered and bones shattered. The bodies of the two demonfolk were squashed apart, but the upper halves of their bodies still embraced each other firmly, ripping away at one another as hard as they could.

The beetle demonfolk arrived before Li Qingshan. His eyes shone with lust as he stared straight at Xiao An. Thick drool spilled out of his mouth.

“What a beautiful woman!”

Chapter 570 - The Demon Suppression Statuary

“You better use your head before you speak. If you don't need it, I can help you remove it,” Li Qingshan raised his head and said in annoyance.

“Woman!”

The beetle demonfolk let out a furious roar, and his skin turned blue. The crown on his head protruded, extending into a huge horn that rammed towards Li Qingshan viciously.

“Venerable, be careful! He's demonfied!”

Duoge called out. If Li Qingshan died, then only death would await him too. He would not be able to escape the fate of being eaten.

Li Qingshan casually caught the horn. The beetle demonfolk continued to advance, but he felt like a mountain was standing before him, utterly immovable.

Li Qingshan pulled gently, and the beetle demonfolk felt an irresistibly tremendous force pull him over against his will. Afterwards, he felt his neck tighten, and Li Qingshan had already wrapped his other arm around his neck.

Li Qingshan pulled gently with both hands, ripping his skin and flesh open, revealing pale-white bone. Blood spurted out like a geyser. He forcefully ripped off the beetle demonfolk's huge head and tossed it into the air like a basketball.

With a thud, it landed against the gilded door, smashing to pieces and becoming stuck there.

The several dozen demonfolk roared furiously, all demonifying and killing their way over.

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A while later, the corpses of demonfolk were scattered across the ground, and the blood had even formed a thin layer. Only the two demonfolk left with the top half of their bodies continued to tear at each other mindlessly.

Li Qingshan walked over to the gilded door and kicked them aside. They slammed into the golden walls with a splat, reduced to mincemeat. They merged as one as they slowly slid down.

“Duoge, what’s behind the door?”

“A lot of very powerful demonfolk, but no Demon Generals. Demon Generals can’t seem to come up?” Duogo rummaged through the beetle demonfolk’s chest excitedly.

Demon General? They’re probably equivalent to Corpse Generals! Li Qingshan pondered for a moment. “Can’t come up? You mean there are more prisons down below?”

“Yeah, I fled my way up from down there, or I would have been eaten long ago.” Duoge buried his head in there as he searched, without even minding when his face became caked in blood. “Hmm? Why isn’t it here?”

Li Qingshan thought of the Unraging monk’s warning again—Don’t go too deep or too far.

I see now.

The Demon Suppression hall did consist of only a single floor. According to what Duoge said, the weaker demonfolk would all flee to the top floor out of a fear of being eaten, while the strongest demonfolk were probably all suppressed as low as possible.

“How many floors are there?”

“Nine. Ah, so it’s here!” Duoge exclaimed in joy. He found something in the beetle demonfolk’s head that was stuck to the wall and offered it up to Li Qingshan with both hands. “Venerable, please enjoy.”

“What’s this?”

Li Qingshan only saw a black, tumour-like object in Duoge’s hands. There was a hint of green, and at first glance, it resembled a hideous, shrunken head. It gave off a strange aura with a hint of sweetness within the stink.

He could not help but feel disgust as if he had just witnessed blasphemy, rot, and filth, smelling the very embodiment of sins.

“This is a demon heart.” Duoge licked his lips.

“I don’t want it.”

Li Qingshan had no interest in eating some unknown object removed from someone's head. Although it contained power, the power would bring him no benefit at all. If he ate it, he would probably require the power of the spirit turtle to suppress and purge it.

"Can you award it to Duoge, venerable?"

"Eat it if you want!"

"Thank you, venerable!"

Duoge was overjoyed. As if he was afraid Li Qingshan would change his mind, he shoved the demon heart into his mouth in a hurry and gulped it down. He almost even choked, only managing to force it down by thumping his chest.

The Dauntless monk and the Unraging monk both saw this. The Dauntless monk said, "How foolish. This will only strengthen this little demonfolk's demonic nature."

Li Qingshan pressed one hand against the gilded door and slowly drew the Heavy Water sword. "Little Duoge, what's the most offensive curse word among demonfolk?"

"You're a good person!" Duoge said after some thought.

Li Qingshan's face stiffened. "Alright then!"

Pushing hard, the gilded doors opened extremely quietly.

The first thing that Li Qingshan saw was a pair of widened eyes, glaring right at him. His heart lurched violently, and all of his hairs stood on end. He was truly alarmed.

There's actually such a dangerous enemy here!?

However, once he settled down, he discovered it was not a living person, but the statue of a demon male in his prime, standing over a dozen meters tall. He was bare-chested, revealing his sturdy body. He wore a pair of shorts below.

The statue was not looking at him. Instead, it gazed upwards, looking at the sky.

However, it was far too life-like. The emotions that it contained were so intense that it seemed to spring out vividly, which was why Li Qingshan was put under a false impression.

The demon male spread his arms as hard as he could. His face was viciously twisted, his veins bulged, and his teeth protruded. His ten fingers turned into claws as if he was undergoing "demonification", about to take on an invisible opponent in a great battle.

"Who are you?" "He's not a demon! He's a human!"

Li Qingshan's attention was completely drawn away by the statue. Only when he heard the sounds in the surroundings did he return to his senses. Around the statue was a huge, circular square. Including the doors behind him, there were a total of nine gilded doors around the square.

As it seemed, this was the very centre of this "maze".

Looking at the square, over a dozen demonfolk stood around here and there. The aura every single one of them gave off was even greater than the beetle demonfolk from before. They maintained their distance from one another, all focusing on the statue of the demon.

For once, there was a female demonfolk among them. Clearly, the strong were revered regardless of their gender. There was no food here, so the only way to survive was to devour one another.

Xiao An's appearance led to a series of restlessness. Greedy and hungry gazes were cast over one by one.

However, compared to the regular demonfolk, they clearly had better control over their desires. They studied Li Qingshan as they tried to estimate his strength. If Li Qingshan were a weakling, then what awaited him would be a hellish sight.

Li Qingshan scanned around, but he looked at them like they were already dead.

He sucked in a deep breath and stressed every single word.

"You- are- all- good- people!"

There was a commotion among the demonfolk. They all stood up as if they had just been severely insulted.

Seeing how it was effective, Li Qingshan grinned and continued, "Your whole family are good people! You've been good people your whole lives!"

The demonfolk all sank into rage. They demonified and rushed over.

At this moment, Li Qingshan's gaze instead skipped over them and landed on the statue of the demon again. He noticed something, He's not demonifying. It's the exact opposite. He's resisting demonification.

The demonfolk arrived right before him, and the Heavy Water sword became over thirty meters long—Siege Breaking strike.

Li Qingshan gripped it firmly with one hand as it whistled out horizontally, cutting through seven powerful demonfolk. Sword qi erupted in their bodies, tearing them to pieces.

Li Qingshan clearly saw the shockwave from the sword qi being blocked by an invisible barrier when it reached a few meters away from the statue. He understood something else. The statue is probably the centre of the hall.

Li Qingshan strode forwards. With a flick of his wrist, the Heavy Water sword whistled back.

As if he had pulled a veil of blood over him, sprays of spurting blood bloomed before him. Countless bloody, dismembered corpses swept past like a storm.

Li Qingshan simply ignored all of this. He only raised his head and continued to stare. The demon's eyes are not filled with fury, but pain.

Just what was this statue hiding?

Only the female demonfolk rushed towards the gilded door opposite of Li Qingshan. She was not under the control of lust, and her desire to survive had triumphed over her fury.

Li Qingshan tossed over the Heavy Water sword without even looking. It sailed over as a blue arc, passing through the demonfolk's body before returning to Li Qingshan's hand.

The demonfolk froze up and exploded.

Li Qingshan finally arrived before the stature. From this perspective, the demon male was extending his arms towards the sky.

"He's not fighting anyone, but praying. Praying for what? To who?"

"I heard that as long as you can understand the secret in the statue, you can escape from here," Duoge said suddenly.

"The statue possesses some kind of cultivation method."

Xiao An arrived behind Li Qingshan and said firmly.

Li Qingshan rubbed his chin and nodded.

He was not a supreme genius like Xiao An, but the feeling that the statue gave him was far too familiar.

When brother ox had passed the Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine to him, he had used a similar method. The eight demonic and divine figures still remained in his sea of consciousness, and they definitely hid an inheritance greater than what the statue before him offered.

He had already comprehended the true spirit of the ox demon and tiger demon from the figures. Now that he looked at this statue, he felt like it was not too difficult to understand.

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"Impressive. He actually managed to notice the Demon Suppression Statuary with a single glance."

The Unraging monk chuckled. When regular people saw the statue, they would only think it was a relatively more vivid and realistic statue. Who would have thought it would actually be hiding something else.

"Noticing it is one matter. Whether he can comprehend it or not is another."

The Dauntless monk said without approval, but he was rather perplexed inside. Li Qingshan did not come off as a person with an exceptional ability to comprehend, so how had he managed to notice the secret in the statue at first glance?

The existence of the Demon Suppression Statuary was a secret that was no longer a secret in the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga. Among the past disciples who entered the Demon Suppression hall for trials, plenty of them had been talented and bright, noticing the existence of the Demon Suppression Statuary. However, never had anyone managed to comprehend this cultivation method. They could not even comprehend the simplest first layer.

Even with the Dauntless monk's current level of knowledge and cultivation, he could only detect part of the statue's very essence, unable to truly comprehend it.

It was rumored that this cultivation method was not prepared for the monks of the monastery, but for the demonic prisoners who were once locked up here. It required people with an extremely strong demonic nature to cast aside their wickedness and repent, going from the demonic to buddhism.

However, this clearly was anything but simple. Not a single demonfolk had managed to comprehend it over the past few millennia.

The Unraging monk put forward a question. "If he really comprehends the Demon Suppression Statuary, what are we supposed to do?"

Speaking of which, the Demon Suppression Statuary was the greatest cultivation method of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga. Even the Chant of Deva-Nāga paled in comparison. However, because no one had ever managed to practise it throughout all these millennia, it was not renowned. If an outsider managed to learn it, then...

"That's utterly impossible!"

The Dauntless monk said flatly. Over the past few millennia, whether it were the monks of the monastery or the demonfolk imprisoned here, there had been countless figures of extraordinary intellect, yet none of them managed to comprehend the Demon Suppression Statuary. How could a measly Foundation Establishment cultivator like him achieve that?

Even if he truly possessed an exceptional ability to comprehend and understand, he was a Hawkwolf guard, so what demonic nature could exist within him? If there was no demonic nature, what demons was it supposed to suppress?