

Immortal 1251

Chapter 1251: Azure Dragon and White Tiger

The giant crocodile had already been sucked dry into a corpse by Ma Huang. With a motion of his hand, he even collected the corpse, remarking, "This crocodile's skin is good stuff." Whether it would be used for defensive or offensive gear, it would be a good choice.

Princess Suolun and Prince Yin Sha frowned. They had clearly contributed a lot to the defeat of the giant crocodile too. If not for them keeping it at bay from the front, Ma Huang wouldn't have had any chance to launch a successful ambush.

However, the two of them came from distinguished backgrounds, and their clans operated huge industries. They didn't care that much about the crocodile skin. Besides, they didn't want to offend a powerful enemy at the moment. As such, the two suppressed their discontent and took the chance to fly over the swamp. Ma Huang chuckled, then followed closely behind.

The ones who were still fighting cursed inwardly. They had thought that once the crocodile was defeated, the three would come and help with the other two beasts. And yet now, they had actually gone ahead first!

Shi Ling let out a cold snort. He kicked off the ground, then rushed through the gap in the giant crocodile's domain.

Even though the bear brothers looked tough and simple-minded on the surface, they weren't stupid either. When they saw that, they had no reason to foolishly continue fighting. As such, the two worked together to lead the giant toad toward the people on the shore. Then, the two of them crossed to the other side too.

Those on the shore broke out into curses. They had been hoping for the others to help them open up a path, and yet now, they instead became cannon fodder to stall the beasts! Still, curses were just curses. They still had no choice but to fight now that they were up against the toad. At the very least, there were quite a few strong individuals in the group, so even though it was a bit chaotic, they weren't completely helpless.

After the earlier exchange, the Redthorn Flower Mantis also knew that these were no pushovers. Between that and the giant crocodile's bitter death, it was no longer committed to a fight to the death.

The others who were nearby quickly moved forward. Only those who had been scared of being caught in the battle and had hidden far away couldn't make it in time and cursed inwardly.

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A chubby figure also arrived on the shore while hiding within the crowd. He said to himself with a smile, "This plan to give them the map really was too brilliant. What can I say? I'm just that great." He was naturally the fat daoist Wu Liang, whom Zu An's group had encountered earlier.

While he was feeling smug, he suddenly saw the forest in front of him, as well as the stone memorial statues off to the side. He sensed a kind of profound and mysterious feeling. His smile instantly stiffened.

Huh?

He quickly took out a divination circle and began to fiddle with it. He started looking more and more alarmed, muttering, "Azure Dragon, White Tiger, Vermilion Bird, Black Tortoise! Why is it this kind of forbidden land of inevitable death? That's impossible; it doesn't make any sense!"

He became incredibly anxious, pacing back and forth in circles. Those who were passing by looked at him as if he were crazy, staying far away.

A while later, Wu Liang saw the crowd gradually leave. He gritted his teeth. Since he had already come this far, there was no backing out now. He could only brace himself and go for broke.

No matter how dangerous it is, the heavens will grant me a path of survival!

He continuously consoled himself while taking out talismans belonging to an assortment of gods and buddhas and hanging them on his body. He hoped that at least one of those gods and buddhas would protect him somehow.

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Meanwhile, Zu An's group was well ahead of the others. When he saw the stone memorial statues on either side, Zu An said with a sigh, "This is the divine path, I presume. I wonder just what kind of important figure is buried here."

Yun Jianyue said seriously, "Be careful, all of you. Anyone who could have memorial statues on this scale was definitely no ordinary person. Besides, how could someone like this ever permit another to disturb their place of rest?"

"Indeed. The layout of the trees here feels a bit strange, as if they are a kind of formation," Yan Xuehen added, continuing to examine the trees around her.

Zu An tried to use the jade badge to connect to the surrounding small creatures, but there was no reply at all. This was purely a land of death.

Yu Yanluo said, "Just now, that great snake told me there was something inside that could help me activate my bloodline and break through."

Zu An was surprised. Cultivation was completely different for the fiend races compared to humans. Even though Yu Yanluo could use the Medusa's ability, there were great limitations. If she could completely awaken her bloodline, her strength might take another huge leap!

Looks like we have to risk it, even if we're headed straight into the lair of a dragon.

Yun Jianyue said, puzzled, "It didn't look as if the two of you were talking, though."

Yu Yanluo blushed and said, "Our Snake race has some special communication methods." Since she had spent most of her time in human society, she mainly considered herself a human. She was a bit embarrassed about talking about her Snake race side in front of others.

Suddenly, cries of alarm rose from nearby.

Zu An's party looked around and noticed that as they had gone deeper, a fog had begun to surround them. At first, the fog was still quite thin. It wasn't too rare to see fog in forests, so no one had treated it as a big deal.

However, in the blink of an eye, people all suddenly noticed that they couldn't even see more than a meter past themselves. The change had happened far too quickly! This definitely wasn't normal.

The sounds of weapons leaving their sheaths rang out. The cultivators were on high alert, fearing that something might jump out and ambush them from the fog.

Zu An said grimly, "This fog seems to be able to cut off spiritual sense. We have no idea what the situation is like farther out." Ever since he had condensed his soul, everything within a large region around him had constantly been within his senses. Now, it almost felt as if he had gone blind.

As expected, it really is easier to get accustomed to extravagance than to return to a frugal lifestyle after luxury...

Yan Xuehen nodded and said, "It is the same for me. Stay close and do not wander off. This is probably some kind of maze."

Yun Jianyue remarked with a smile, "Are you scared of getting lost, stone cold woman? Why don't I hold your hand? You won't get lost then."

Yan Xuehen replied in annoyance, "Witch, will you ever stop?"

Zu An was about to interfere when his group heard a horrifying, miserable scream nearby. Then, they could vaguely sense someone crashing and bashing around. They seemed to be clawing at something on their face too. A while later, they collapsed heavily to the ground, subsequently falling silent.

Those present were shocked. The scream had just been too bitter. Even the ones who had been eaten by the beasts in the swamp hadn't screamed like that...

Zu An and the other members of his group exchanged a look. They decided to observe the situation first. That scream was too terrifying; they had to figure out what was going on. Several others thought the same way, including those who had fought against the ferocious beasts in the swamp.

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There was a fiend race cultivator lying on the ground, his body already deformed beyond recognition. His face and neck were badly mangled from clawing. Judging from the blood on his fingernails, his wounds were all self-inflicted. Many people had seen how he had fought before. Even though he couldn't compare to Princess Suolun and the other elites, he wasn't that far off. After seeing such a strong person die so mysteriously, the survivors felt an ill foreboding.

"Was there something hiding in the mist, waiting to ambush him?" Princess Suolun wondered.

"That's not possible. I was near him just now and no one approached him. He was also on high alert himself, always keeping a set distance from others," Duan Tiande said. Dark Elves excelled in assassination; if even he said that nothing had approached the other person, there was definitely nothing.

“Then just how did he die?” the others asked, stunned.

Just then, more bitter cries rang out. The survivors quickly turned around. The ones who were closest to the corpse were those with the highest cultivation and status; the others had no choice but to get on their tiptoes and take a look from the periphery. The farther out they were, the lower their cultivation.

Of course, there were some independent, powerful experts watching from a distance. They were clearly on high alert, on guard against anyone and anything that approached them. The others thought that the first ones who would encounter trouble would be those solitary individuals, but it was actually the ones in the group who were the farthest out.

They became just like the corpse, frantically clawing at their own face and neck. Their bodies twisted and writhed strangely, as if they were zombies.

Thud! Thud! Thud...

They weren't able to hold on for as long as the other, stronger cultivator. They all collapsed, not making another sound.

The other cultivators had seen the deaths happen right before their eyes, and yet they still didn't know how those people had died. A chill ran down their backs.

Chapter 1252: Can't Advance or Retreat

People began to panic when they saw so many people die mysteriously. The worst part was that there weren't even any injuries on their bodies!

Someone stooped down next to the corpses and reached out a hand to check their condition, muttering, “They haven't been poisoned... Hm? Why does it feel as if all of their blood essence has been sucked dry?”

The others all looked toward Ma Huang. Ma Huang jumped in fright and quickly waved his hands, protesting, “It has nothing to do with me! There are many people who can testify that I was here the entire time; there was no chance for me to do anything.”

Prince Yin Sha added, “I can attest to that. I was watching him just now; he really didn't do anything.”

He had seen how the giant crocodile was sucked dry, and he himself had been injured. Fearing that Ma Huang might have bad intentions toward him, he had always been on guard. However, his attention had actually unexpectedly given Ma Huang an alibi.

He regretted speaking up somewhat as soon as he finished. He should have used the situation to get rid of this dangerous guy! Not only would he not have anything to worry about then, there would be one less person to have to split the loot with. Unfortunately, there was no way to take back his words after he had spoken them.

Fortunately, there were others who voiced their suspicions. “Even if it wasn't him, there might be others from his clan hidden here. Otherwise, who would be able to suck all of their blood essence dry?”

They all aimed their weapons at Ma Huang. At the same time, they looked vigilantly at any nearby people they didn't recognize. They were all scared of becoming victims, so they would rather kill the innocent than let any suspicious people go.

Ma Huang's expression suddenly changed. He protested, "Do you all think I'm scared of you?!" He was always someone who did what he wanted. When had he ever allowed such a thing to pass? He also raised his weapon, ready to launch a counterattack at any time. A fight was on the verge of breaking out.

"In a moment of crisis, the first to become uneasy is the mind. Who would've thought that the fiend races would be the same as humans in that regard?" Yun Jianyue remarked, a hint of mockery on her lips. It was as if she were superior to all the others. The current situation was indeed a bit bizarre, but it wasn't enough to scare her.

Yan Xuehen also simply watched calmly as a bystander. After all, they were grandmasters with extraordinary experience. They already knew what was going on, but these were fiend race individuals, so there was no reason to worry for their sake.

Princess Suolun stepped forward just then, saying, "Everyone, do not act rashly. If the blood essence is sucked out, the body turns into a withered corpse. However, you can all see that these corpses still have intact skins. They look the same way they did before they died. It is just the blood essence inside that has withered."

The others nodded. Indeed, it didn't really seem like the work of the Blood race.

"What is this?" Princess Suolun suddenly exclaimed, her eyes narrowing. She pointed in a certain direction, and the others looked at the place she indicated. They saw that some small green sprouts resembling bean sprouts had begun to appear from the corpses' ears.

"There are some here too!" the others quickly cried out. They saw that apart from the corpses' ears, their noses, mouths, eyes, and even the tops of their heads were covered in those sprouts. Their leaves were a shining green. Even though they were small and tender, not a single person dared to look down on them.

"They weren't here a moment ago!" someone exclaimed, then cut open the corpses' clothes and saw that many parts of their skin had ruptured. Dense and numerous green sprouts tore through their bodies and emerged all at once. So it was the sprouts that had sucked their blood essence dry!

"Why do their bodies contain these kinds of sprouts?" someone wondered; that was what the cultivators had all been wondering.

"Could it be that they were poisoned before?" another person suggested.

"These people don't know each other. Why would they be affected by the same kind of poison?"

Just then, someone said weakly, "These sprouts... Don't you feel that these sprouts... are similar to the leaves of those trees?"

The others looked at the trees. Sure enough, even though the sprouts were many times smaller, the leaves' shapes and vein patterns were all identical. The cultivators were horrified. So the poison had come from the trees!

They looked at the forest all around them. A chilling thought suddenly appeared in their minds. There are so many trees; can every single tree create one sacrifice?

Are we going to become the next batch?

The cultivators began to discuss things among themselves, but they really couldn't figure out how the trees released their poison.

"It's not a poison, but rather seeds. These trees scatter their own seeds through the air. These seeds are extremely small, and the cover of the fog makes them hard to notice," Yun Jianyue explained to Zu An and the others. "As long as you cover your body with a ki barrier or use some kind of treasure to shield your body from even the specks of dust around you, you'll be fine."

Zu An's group all had extensive knowledge, and they carried quite a few treasures themselves. Between that and their great strength, the seeds knew that they weren't easy targets and didn't disturb them.

When the people around them heard their discussion, they finally understood what was happening. Quite a few looked at Yun Jianyue with surprise. They had thought that she was just a concubine a spoiled young master had brought with him, and hadn't expected her to have such knowledge. Magic artifacts lit up one after another, and those without treasures used their ki to put up barriers to prevent the seeds from approaching them.

Some people were worried that they had already breathed in some seeds, so they quickly used their skills to remove the impurities within their bodies. Sure enough, they found some seeds inside them.

Those with higher cultivations used all sorts of secret methods to get rid of the seeds that had already taken root. Those who were weaker had no choice. They could only struggle bitterly before ultimately losing to the seeds' tenacious vitality. As they were sucked dry, sprouts burst out from their bodies, and they died miserably on the spot.

The other fiend race cultivators showed no interest in saving them. The strong preyed on the weak; that belief was already deeply embedded in their minds. They wouldn't talk about something like friendship in such a situation.

Hunting for treasure was dependent on risking one's life to begin with. Loss of life was just too common. They could even eliminate some of their competitors this way, so what more could they hope for?

Still, the cultivators were furious when they found out the identity of the main culprit. They wanted to vent their anger on the trees, bringing out all sorts of weapons to cut them down. After all, with a cultivator's strength, chopping down a tree wasn't difficult at all.

However, no one knew what kind of material these trees were made of; no matter how they hacked at the trees, they could only leave behind some shallow cuts. Furthermore, the trees regenerated, continuously recovering from their wounds. In the end, even after the cultivators exhausted a ton of strength, not a single tree could be cut down.

There were some people who tried to use elemental power to burn down the trees. However, fire merely scattered on its own before reaching the tree, extinguishing itself in midair. How could they even burn anything?

When he saw their stupefied appearances, the fat daoist Wu Liang, who had been hiding, cursed, "A bunch of idiots! These trees are a special formation that person established while borrowing the power of ley lines! As long as these ley lines still contain power, the formation can't be destroyed. Forget about you, not even a grandmaster would be able to destroy them!"

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Zu An's group had also noticed that the place was different. They hadn't wanted to stay together with the fiend race cultivators, so they turned around and headed deeper inside. Some independent cultivators could tell that Zu An's group was special, so they quickly followed as well, thinking it might make things a bit safer for them.

When the other fiend race cultivators saw that it was useless, they gave up. Who wanted to waste valuable strength here? After all, they still had to fight against each other over the treasure later! Now that they were aware of the problem, the trees' seeds could no longer harm them.

Of course, there were some with lower cultivations who didn't have magic artifacts to protect themselves. They could only helplessly withdraw from the place. Even though treasures were important, their lives were still the most precious of all.

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Zu An's group walked ahead of all the others. Because of the fog, they couldn't see the sun or moon. They didn't even know if it was day or night. Soon, however, they frowned. The forest hadn't seemed so big when they saw it from the swamp area earlier. Normally, they should long since have gotten out of the forest.

"This is most likely a maze. An extremely profound formation has been established here," Yan Xuehen said, stopping. The further she walked, the more she lost her sense of direction; however, that kind of thing was normally impossible for a high level cultivator.

Everything around them was extremely quiet. The only sounds came from the crumbling of dry leaves under their careful steps. In such a quiet and empty night scene, even those sounds seemed to echo throughout the place. The atmosphere was a bit strange.

"I do not think we can keep going. Something seems to be wrong with this direction," Princess Suolun said.

Jin Shi nodded and replied, "You're right. If we continue this way, we'll only get more and more lost. We'll just end up exhausting our strength for nothing, and we'll be eaten up by these demonic trees. Why don't we leave this place for now? Earlier, this forest didn't seem to be that large. We can make a detour around it from that shore."

His suggestion received a lot of approval. The psychological pressure the endless fog gave people was a bit too much. If they left the strange forest, a couple dozen li wouldn't be anything too difficult for them to cover. Thus, their group quickly put the plan into action.

Yu Yanluo gave the people around her a look and asked, "Should we continue further or leave?" She was a bit worried too. She didn't want to put the others in danger because of something that might make her stronger.

Yun Jianyue didn't seem all that bothered and replied, "We've already come all the way here, so how can we just leave now?" No matter how injured she was, she was still a grandmaster. She was more courageous than normal people.

Yan Xuehen nodded and added, "I agree with the decision to keep going. However, we cannot rush in blindly; we should first figure out the rules of this formation."

Zu An had a pensive expression as he wondered, "The one who designed this maze probably wouldn't let those who entered leave that easily, right?"

Just then, there were cries of alarm from the other group.

"Huh? Why do I feel as if the path is a bit different from earlier?"

"Wait, why did the marks I left behind disappear?!"

Chapter 1253: Leading the Way

There were pretty much no weaklings among the ones who had made it thus far. They were also well-versed in the ways of the martial world. That was why they had been immediately mindful when they saw the fog; they had all left behind various markings along the way. When they had heard that some people were going to leave, they had actually felt a bit pleased with themselves. They had even thought of not disclosing anything and just letting the others remain trapped inside.

And yet, when they started to look around, they themselves couldn't find the signs they had left behind. They were completely flustered, so how could they be bothered to mock others? They all began to cry out in alarm.

Fear was infectious, so more and more people began to cry out. Even Shi Ling, Princess Suolun, Jin Shi, and the others were starting to feel a bit shaken up. They had left behind markings too, but they couldn't find them anymore either.

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Meanwhile, Yan Xuehen said, "This fog is a bit strange; it seems to be connected to the power of the earth. The formation is always changing, so of course they cannot find the markings they left behind anymore.

"This formation is always changing? But why is it that we haven't noticed the trees around us moving at all?" Yu Yanluo asked in surprise.

"This is why high-level formations are so profound. Those in the formation cannot sense that anything is off at all," Yan Xuehen said. She added in praise, "I wonder which formidable figure created this formation. It truly is brilliant."

Yun Jianyue snapped in dissatisfaction, "Can you stop your kiss-assery already? I know your White Jade Sect excels at formations, and since you're the sect master, you're obviously not bad at them either. Hurry up and figure out a way to get out of this thing."

If she hadn't been injured, there would obviously be no need for all of this trouble. She could just break it through brute force. At the moment, though, she could only bow down to reality.

Yan Xuehen blushed and said, "I still need some time."

She squatted down and began to sketch with a tree branch. The lines depicted the paths they seemed to have taken just then, as well as the appearance of the forest when they had looked at it from the marsh. She was clearly carrying out complex calculations.

As she observed Yan Xuehen's perfect side profile and her sparkling, radiant skin, even though Yun Jianyue usually fought with her, she still had to admit that this stone cold woman was beautiful. No wonder people always treated her like some goddess wherever she went.

On the other hand, the fiend race cultivators were also trying to figure something out. The Peacock race's Princess Changning and the Peng race's Jin Shi flew high up into the air, trying to see if they could break out of the fog and get a better view. However, they could only fly three feet into the air before crashing back down.

Both of them had fearful expressions as they said, "We cannot fly here."

Some others tried to fly too. Even though they hadn't reached the master rank, some of them were already at the ninth rank. Short-term flight wasn't an issue. However, they discovered that none of them could fly at all.

Yun Jianyue rolled her eyes and muttered, "Are these fiend race cultivators delusional? Did they only realize that they couldn't fly now? They really are getting worse with each generation."

Yu Yanluo said quietly, "I'm from the fiend races too..."

Yun Jianyue grinned and replied, "I didn't include you."

Zu An couldn't help but smile when he saw that. They had noticed that flight wasn't possible as soon as they entered. It was clear that the special region had stripped people of their ability to fly. Just how incredible did one's skills have to be to create something of this scale?

He was curious as to whether the Wind Fire Wheels could still be used. However, there were too many eyes present, and bringing them out might only draw unnecessary attention, so he decided against it.

Suddenly, someone in the other group shouted, "Who are you?"

Then, a large and tall shadow flashed past them and quickly disappeared into the fog.

"What happened?" Shi Ling asked unhappily. They had been discussing an important matter, and yet one of his subordinates had suddenly called out. Others might think that he didn't have good control over his people.

"Replying to the prince, just now, I suddenly turned around and noticed that there seemed... to be another person. I didn't recognize that person, so I called out," the one who had shouted said; he was from the Lion race. His face was deathly pale, and he was even shaking a bit as he spoke.

After they entered the fog, even though the cultivators had all looked as if they were going to be temporary allies, there was no way they would really be all that close. In order to guard against unknown dangers, they all stuck to others from their race or people they were close to. That was why the lion had been so frightened when he saw an extra person next to him.

"It is just one more person; do you have to look that scared?" Shi Ling replied with a snort. This really was making the Lion race look bad! Once we go back, I'm going to send this guy to the front lines to fight the Hyena race.

"Young master, he... He..." The subordinate suddenly pointed at a companion next to him, his teeth chattering loudly.

The other princes exchanged a look. Their expressions changed as well.

The Lion Race expert looked fine from the front, but several cuts had opened up on his back. His internal organs had been eaten cleanly. What was strange was that he still retained his appearance from when he had been alive, standing perfectly straight. There was even a mysterious smile on his face, as if he hadn't felt the pain at all.

"What the hell is this?!" the bear brothers exclaimed. Even they, who had nerves of steel, felt their throats turn dry.

"Is there some kind of beast hidden in here?" the Peacock race's Princess Changning wondered. She was deathly pale, and had clearly also been scared quite badly. Just the thought of having all of her internal organs completely eaten from behind was terrifying.

"No, it seemed to be a humanoid thing," the Peng race's Jin Shi answered, shaking his head. His race was known for their sharp eyes. Unfortunately, the fog was just too strange, so even he hadn't seen the creature's appearance too clearly. However, he was certain that it was humanoid.

The Lion race subordinate added, "Indeed, it looked like a person, but they were so fast that I didn't see what they looked like. I remember that their entire body was an unnatural gray."

"Trash! He was so close to you, and yet you could not see clearly?" Shi Ling cursed angrily. Then, he raised his head and looked around, but he didn't notice anything strange at all.

In the distance, Yun Jianyue sneered. "That little lion is quite fierce, no? He isn't that old, but his temper isn't long at all."

Yu Yanluo said, "The fiend races care about the purity of their lineage, and they worship the strong. They don't care about methods of conciliation at all. That's why, as long as he's strong enough, no matter how terrible his attitude is, his subordinates still won't dare to show the slightest thought of rebellion."

Yun Jianyue said coldly, "As expected of a group of savage beasts. Uh... I wasn't talking about you."

Yu Yanluo was speechless.

Zu An was starting to get really curious. Judging from the disdain Yun Jianyue showed the fiend races, did that mean she really didn't have any fiend race blood inside her? In that case, what was her relationship with Yun Yuqing?

"Could it be that it was one of the ones who came in with us that secretly attacked us?" Qiao Heng wondered, glancing toward Duan Tiande, who was resting under a large tree's shadow.

Duan Tiande sneered, "Don't try to stir everyone up to avenge your personal grudges. We dark elves have never had a habit of scooping out internal organs."

Off to one side, Ma Huang also quickly expressed his innocence. "This isn't a habit of the Blood race either."

A small fatty suggested weakly, "It'll be dangerous for us to remain here, so why don't we continue inside?"

"Sure, but do you even know where we should be going?" the others said disdainfully. Many people wondered, Whose subordinate is this fella? He doesn't even understand the basic rules.

"Why don't we try the southwestern direction?" The little fatty pointed toward some of the nearby trees.

"You know the way?" Princess Suolun asked, sizing him up curiously.

The little fatty shook his head and replied, "I don't, but last night, I had a dream that there was a stuffed bun stand to the southwest, so I thought, maybe this direction might be better..."

The others had thought that he might have actually had some useful ideas. None of them had expected it to just be that kind of reason! They all began to curse.

"Beat it! You have no right to speak in this kind of place!"

"Which clan is he from? Hurry and take your kid back; it's disgraceful."

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Zu An gave the little fatty a look out of curiosity. He had clearly never seen that person before, so why did he have a sense of familiarity?

At the same time, Yan Xuehen quietly said, "I have managed to obtain some clues. We should head in the southwest direction for now."

Yun Jianyue said mockingly, "Stone cold woman, your skills seem to be getting worse. Even some short fatty deduced that faster than you."

"Ah, is that so? I was not paying attention," Yan Xuehen said, looking in that direction with shock. Unfortunately, the little fatty was already nowhere to be seen.

Zu An couldn't help but speak up for Yan Xuehen's sake, saying, "Big Sis Yan clearly came to that conclusion at the same time."

Yun Jianyue didn't seem as if she intended to change her attitude at all. "What kind of identity does she have? Is it not embarrassing enough for her to reach the result at the same time as someone else?"

Zu An sensibly chose to close his mouth. He decided that it was better for them to look in the southwestern direction first.

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When the others saw that, Shi Ling voiced his surprise. "They even believe the words of an idiot?" He didn't know that Yan Xuehen had reached the same conclusion on her own and just thought that they had been listening to the words of the fatty from earlier.

Qiao Heng said, "Either way, we have no idea what to do either. Why don't we just follow them and give it a try?" Since Zu An had saved him before, he subconsciously felt a degree of closeness.

Shi Ling said proudly, "Proceeding recklessly for some random reason is truly unwise. Why not just let them scout out the situation to see how it goes?"

Princess Suolun frowned slightly and said, "This fog is too strange. If enough distance forms between us, we will lose track of each other. Even if they really did discover something, we would not know of it." She took the initiative to follow Zu An's group after speaking. Prince Yin Sha, who was at her beck and call, naturally stuck to her.

With someone taking the lead, one after another, people all began to follow Zu An's group. Only Shi Ling and his subordinates stood in place, all alone.

"Young master, are we going to stay here?" a subordinate asked.

"Do you even have a brain? Everyone else has already left, if we stay here, won't we just be waiting for that weird monster to ambush us?" Shi Ling shot back, smacking his subordinate with a palm. Then, he followed as well, albeit unhappily.

Chapter 1254: Fiend Races' Crown Princess?

"It really is annoying to be followed like this," Yun Jianyue remarked. She had noticed that quite a few people were following them and felt unhappy. She had an eager look on her face, as if she wanted to get rid of some of them and throw them off.

Zu An chuckled. He hadn't expected his group to really end up being the ones leading the way. He said, "Forget it; just let them follow. They aren't a threat to us either way. Rather, this fog forest is too strange. It's better if we don't let side issues keep growing."

When she heard that, Yun Jianyue let out a muffled snort, but didn't object.

Yan Xuehen was surprised. This witch normally did whatever she wanted, and yet she actually listened to what someone else had said? Still, now wasn't the time for her to be distracted. She looked around her while calculating the nearby formation.

The others seemed to be scared of disturbing her, so they all had their mouths shut tightly. They all moved in single file, resembling a long snake as they moved silently through the fog. This kind of

atmosphere, paired with the fact that there was a monster that fished out one's innards lurking around, made most of the cultivators feel a mix of fear, restlessness, and bewilderment.

After walking for a while, Yan Xuehen suddenly stopped. She exclaimed, "Huh?"

"What is it?" Zu An asked.

"Something is not right," Yan Xuehen said, frowning slightly. There seemed to be something she couldn't figure out.

Not too far away, the fiend race cultivators were all alarmed. What kind of a background did this woman have? Not only did she seem to know about this great ancient formation, but also... even her frown was so pretty?

Zu An was just about to ask something when he suddenly caught a shadow out of the corner of his eye. He exclaimed, "Hm? What's that?"

The others followed his gaze and saw that there was something dark crawling on the ground not too far away. They immediately felt goosebumps. Was it that monster that had attacked them? They all clenched their weapons and went on high alert. There were even some who couldn't hold back and attacked, throwing their weapons at the thing.

The other strong cultivators were alarmed. What are you angering this unknown creature for? Who knows what kind of retribution it might bring onto everyone!

However, they didn't speak their curses out loud. They were surprised to discover that it hadn't reacted to the weapons at all.

"Huh?" The cultivators were bewildered. Could it be that this thing was deliberately enticing them to come closer? None of them dared to continue forward.

However, Zu An was confident because of his many skills. He walked straight over and finally saw what the dark thing was. Wasn't it just the subordinate from the Lion Race who had had his innards scooped out?!

When the others saw that he was still fine, they also went over. Their expressions all turned awful when they saw the corpse.

"Why did we end up returning to the same place again after all this time?!" Shi Ling harrumphed in dissatisfaction.

The others had been starting to admire Yan Xuehen a bit, but now, they couldn't help but have complaints. Still, since she was pretty, they all subconsciously chose not to curse her, instead cursing the fatty from before brutally.

"Why is this happening?" Zu An asked. He obviously knew that Yan Xuehen had her reasons for coming here. There was no way she was making them go in circles on purpose.

"This formation is even more complex than I imagined. The problem probably lies in this fog," Yan Xuehen said. She observed the fog around them and added with a frown, "I only calculated the tree

formation. However, this fog is joined to the ley lines, and it seems to be capable of twisting time and space. That is why we have been going around completely lost.”

Twisting time and space? Zu An thought, shocked. Just what level were these methods at?!

That meant it looked as if they were moving forward, but they might actually have been walking backward! One might think one had walked for a long time, but actually, only an instant had passed. One might think that an instant had passed, but several days might have passed.

“Then what do we do?” Yun Jianyue sneered. “Don’t tell me this place is too difficult for you?”

“If this fog did not exist, I could naturally make my way around it. Or if I were not injured, I would have a way. But right now...” Yan Xuehen trailed off, feeling a bit troubled. “Let me think about this a bit more.”

Yun Jianyue reflexively wanted to mock her a bit, but in the end, she was able to discern what was important and what wasn’t. In the end, she didn’t choose to disturb Yan Xuehen.

The fiend race cultivators started another endless debate. All kinds of suggestions were thrown out, but in the end, they were quickly refuted by the others.

At that instant, no one dared to continue moving recklessly for fear of getting even more lost. However, staying there without moving wasn’t a solution either. There was still the unknown, innard-eating creature hiding in the fog.

The little fatty hesitated for a while, but in the end, he gritted his teeth and offered, “How about I give it a try?”

“You still want to keep going? Wasn’t it your fault that we were all misled just now?”

“Exactly! Do you have no sense of shame?”

All of the others were quite upset, so they immediately vented their resentment.

However, the fatty didn’t get angry and instead said with a smile, “It’s not as if there are any other solutions. We might as well try everything since the situation is desperate.”

The others rolled their eyes. Why were this guy’s words so ominous-sounding?

Just then, Princess Suolun spoke up and said, “Let him give it a try.”

She was one of those with the most respected status among those present, and had quite a bit of prestige. Since she had spoken up, the others couldn’t really say anything else, and they all allowed the fatty to give it a try.

The fatty rubbed his hands and said with a chuckle, “What I need to do requires a large amount of ki stones. I’m embarrassingly short on money, so I can only trouble all of you.”

Princess Suolun and the others were left speechless. Many people were itching to beat the crap out of the fatty.

In the end, however, Princess Suolun stopped them and tossed over a bag. She asked, “Are these enough?”

When the fatty opened the pouch, rich ki scattered out. The others got on their tiptoes to look inside. There were all sorts of sparkling and translucent ki stones, and they weren't small at all. They were clearly all heaven-grade ki stones!

Ki stones were divided into the five grades of mortal, earth, heaven, immortal, and deity, like weapons. However, unlike heaven-grade weapons which were extremely rare, most of the greater powers had a good amount of heaven-grade ki stones. However, immortal and deity-grade stones were much rarer.

The onlookers sighed in amazement. As expected of Princess Suolun, she had been able to give out a pouch of heaven grade ki stones just like that.

The fatty looked troubled and said, "It's still not enough."

Someone cursed, "You damn fatty, how is even a hundred heaven-grade ki stones not enough? Just how much more do you need?"

Everyone present was a respectable cultivator in their own right. They were able to roughly calculate the amount from just a single look.

"We're still quite far off. This is only enough for a tenth..." the fatty said, sounding wronged.

"I have a hundred and fifty here. Take it," Princess Changning said, also tossing over a delicate pouch.

Seeing that the amount was even bigger than what she had given earlier, Princess Suolun raised her eyebrows, but she didn't say anything.

The others were incredibly shocked. That amount of ki stones wasn't too much for great clans like them, but their quality was so high. For independent cultivators, that would already be an incredible amount of wealth!

Many people said in praise, "As expected of the Peacock race's Princess Changning, she is able to spend so lavishly."

"But of course! I heard that during the Fiend Emperor's gathering this time, he will choose an outstanding woman from the Peacock race to serve as the crown princess during the great meeting. Princess Changning is precisely one of the most popular candidates."

"What do you mean, most popular candidates? She is clearly a future crown princess; do you not have eyes?"

Princess Changning raised her chin when she heard that, just like a proud little peacock. She actually knew quite well that when it came to the crown princess candidacy, her clan sister Kong Nanwu had a greater chance than her. Whether it was the purity of her bloodline or her appearance, she couldn't compare to Kong Nanwu.

However, Kong Nanwu didn't seem too interested in the position of crown princess and had already taken refuge in the human world. That had made Princess Changning interested in the position of crown princess.

Ever since she was little, she hadn't been able to compare to Kong Nanwu at all, and was always beneath her. That had made her extremely unhappy; she had always wanted to surpass Kong Nanwu.

How could she give up on such a golden opportunity? That was why she had often shown herself in different places to increase her favor with the people, as well as to increase her own prestige.

As long as she became the crown princess, she would become the Fiend Empress in the future. At that point, even Kong Nanwu would have no choice but to obediently show her respect. She grinned when she thought about that possibility.

Kong Nanwu had always won against her, but if she lost the most important battle, what did everything before that matter?

She had heard that the Golden Crow Crown Prince had set out as an ambassador to the various races, so that was why she had secretly followed along as well. She had initially planned to create an 'accidental meeting' and increase her favor with the Golden Crow Crown Prince ahead of time to improve her chances of being chosen. However, something unexpected seemed to have happened to the Golden Crow Crown Prince a few days prior, and he had hastily returned to the Fiend King Court, making all of her plans fail.

That hateful human!

You have successfully trolled Kong Nanjing for +444 +444 +444...

...

In the distance, Zu An was confused. No wonder she's getting upset at me; so she was the future crown princess!

When he thought about the gamble he had made with the Golden Crow Crown Prince last time, he suddenly felt as if he were being cheated somehow. Even though this woman had some looks, she was still lacking compared to the beauties at his side.

Sigh, the fiend races really aren't any good. Even the glorious crown princess is just barely passable.

A cold voice next to him suddenly cried. "Who says the crown princess will definitely come from the Peacock race? Our Elf race's Princess Snow is the most likely crown princess candidate!"

Chapter 1255: What Lies Behind the Thick Fog

The one who had spoken was the Elf race's Qiao Heng. At first, he had planned to fight alongside Princess Changning, but now that the pride of their races had been brought into the picture, he couldn't just pretend that he hadn't heard anything.

In the distance, Zu An's eyes widened. That Princess Snow he's talking about... It's not actually Snow, is it?

When Qiao Heng spoke, the smiles on the faces of those who had been flattering and fawning over Princess Changning immediately froze. They quickly felt regret.

How could we forget something like that? If Princess Snow ends up rising up to that position, then won't we have offended her?

Still, they were in front of Princess Changning, so they couldn't say anything. They all froze in place, not knowing what to do.

Princess Changning's expression became unpleasant. She actually had many things to say about the subject, but she was directly involved, so speaking of it was beneath her dignity. If news of that got out, it would be greatly unfavorable for her reputation.

Fortunately, another voice helped her out of her predicament. "Hah, Princess Snow? I heard that she ended up being the maid of some human! How could someone like that become the crown princess? Wouldn't that turn all the fiend races into a laughingstock?"

Zu An was stupefied. It really was the Snow he knew!

Qiao Heng's face turned entirely red. He retorted, "How ridiculous. Princess Snow suffered in the human territory for so many years, but then in the end, she successfully rescued many of our clansmen. That's what it means to think on behalf of the fiend races! If even someone like that is deserving of mockery, who would even want to do anything for the fiend races anymore?"

"That's its own matter. The fact that she rescued those fiend race clansmen is something the Fiend Emperor has already rewarded her for. She was granted numerous resources, and there was even an exception made to raise her status to princess. What we're talking about right now is the status of crown princess, which is something entirely different. In order to become the crown princess, one naturally needs to be completely flawless." Duan Tiande, the dark elf, paused after saying all of that. Then, he chuckled and added, "After serving as a maid in human society for so long, to put it bluntly, she might not even be a virgin anymore. How can the Fiend Emperor bloodline be tainted in the slightest?"

Qiao Heng erupted into rage. "You actually dare to insult and slander Princess Snow? Die!"

He had even endured the fact that he had almost lost his life in the swamp due to the dark elf's ambush; this time, however, he could no longer endure it. He drew his bow and fired it at Duan Tiande.

However, Duan Tiande had already been prepared for something like that. He deflected the arrow with his sword. He was just about to retaliate when the others stopped them.

Jin Shi said, "Everyone, please calm down. We are in a dangerous situation right now. If we do not band together and instead start engaging in internal conflict, we might all die here."

The others all spoke up as well. Even Princess Changning said, "It is all my fault that this misunderstanding was created. I do not want to hurt anyone. If any of you are hurt, I will regret it for the rest of my life. The most important thing right now is to work together to leave this place; if there are any problems, we can slowly solve them later..."

She was still rather pretty. When she put on such a pitiful appearance, everyone else immediately began to console and praise her.

In the distance, Yun Jianyue sneered. "This woman is surprisingly good at scheming. Little An, don't lose your head now just because she's a little pretty."

Yan Xuehen frowned. She cultivated the Unshakable Daoist Manual, so she was quite sensitive toward such things. She subconsciously felt dislike toward Princess Changning, but because of her nature, she didn't show it.

Yu Yanluo instead had a smile on her face, because she trusted in her ability to pick her man.

Sure enough, Zu An couldn't help but laugh, remarking "This kind of green tea attitude is something I can still discern."

"Green tea attitude?" Even though it was the first time the women had heard that term, they strangely felt that it was quite fitting.

...

Meanwhile, Qiao Heng put his bow away and snapped, "We'll settle things once we leave this place!"

Duan Tiande held his sword close and said with a sneer, "You make it sound as if I'm scared or something."

Just then, the bear brothers stepped forward to smooth things over. They waved their large hands, patting the other two's shoulders, and said, "Alright, alright. It's not often that we work together, and I refuse to believe that we can't deal with some formation. Let's try to get enough ki stones first."

Xiong Second reluctantly took out a small pouch of ki stones while muttering, "It's a pity that Hu Xin didn't come. He's the richest out of all of us."

Shi Ling's expression became a bit unpleasant. He said, "That guy probably avoided me on purpose because he was scared of running into me."

Just as the Dark Elves had a natural grudge against the Elves, the Lion race and Tiger race also disliked each other. There was almost always conflict as soon as they met each other.

Hu Xin was the child of the Tiger King, Hu Qianxiao. He was often praised as a cultivation genius. Because his age was close to Shi Ling's, the two were often compared to each other. Shi Ling had long been eager for a fight, wanting to defeat Hu Xin and become famous. However, Hu Xin had actually avoided him!

Off to the side, Jin Shi said with a smile, "From what I know, he did plan on coming, but something happened and he ended up going to Bluefield Country."

"Oh? Did he go to meet his stepmom?"

"I wonder if he went over to suck on some milk."

Quite a few people roared with laughter. There were clearly many people among the fiend races who thought Tushan Yu was Hu Qianxiao's lover.

"I've heard that Bluefield Country's Tushan Yu is an exceptional beauty. I'll have to pay her a visit myself after this matter."

"Do you think the lord of a country would meet someone like you?"

"I can just sneak into the palace, right? What, if Hu Qianxiao can play around with her, do you think I can't?"

...

Meanwhile, Yan Xuehen's expression was cold as she spat, "These guys are all filthy; it truly is disgusting."

Yun Jianyue sneered. "Don't worry; this place is so dangerous, anyway. I doubt many of them will be able to make it out alive."

Zu An's expression was completely cold. He was about to teach them a lesson when several bitter cries rang out.

Several gray figures rushed forward, seizing the ones who had been laughing the most wantonly. Their cultivation ranks clearly weren't low, but after they were caught, they didn't seem to be able to resist at all before disappearing into the fog.

The others' expressions quickly changed. They wanted to rescue those people, but they were also scared of the thick, labyrinthine fog. None of them were brave enough to step forward.

Then, several more miserable screams rang out, and everything became silent once more.

"What in the world was that just now?" the bear brothers wondered, scratching their heads.

"I could not see them too clearly. Their appearances seem to be extremely blurry," Jin Shi replied, his expression unpleasant. Everything had happened too suddenly just then; they hadn't been able to react at all.

Zu An's group frowned as well. If too much distance formed, the fog would cover everything. They hadn't been able to see clearly at all.

"We should get out of this place first," someone suggested. After that attack, many people approved of that decision.

"Moving recklessly in the fog will only make it easier for us to get ambushed," Princess Suolun said. She looked at the fatty and asked, "Do you have enough ki stones now?"

Before he replied, those who had still been reluctant just then began to contribute generously. A large pile of ki stones piled up in front of the fatty.

"It's enough, it's enough," the fatty replied, wiping the sweat off his forehead. He took out forty-nine banners and began to derive the mysteries of the heavens.

The others had initially only taken out the ki stones out of respect for the Demon Race Princess Suolun; they hadn't really thought the fatty had a solution. However, when they saw that, they all felt a sense of respect.

Looks like this guy really does have a bit of skill.

...

When he saw those banners that seemed familiar, just a bit smaller in scale, Zu An chuckled and said, "So it was that good-for-nothing."

Yu Yanluo frowned and replied, "That fat divining daoist? He keeps changing his appearance and acting sneakily; he's clearly up to no good."

"He put on a mask to change his appearance, and also dragged so many people here. Now, he's even about to set up some kind of formation. He's not about to refine all of them, is he?" Yun Jianyue wondered. She came from the Devil Sect, so her first thoughts naturally went in a sinister direction.

Yan Xuehen shook her head and said, "That is probably not it. There are no traces of bloodiness coming from those flags." Despite that, she still paid close attention to what the fatty was doing to make sure he wasn't arranging some mad slaughter formation.

The fatty quickly drew all kinds of complicated formation runes. Then, with a wave of his hands, the forty-nine banners immediately disappeared into the fog around them. After that, he placed all the ki stones in the eye of the formation. The formation runes he carved gradually lit up.

Then, the fog suddenly emanated waves of golden light. They were coming from the forty-nine banners!

At the same time, the fog around them began to quickly scatter at a visible pace.

Then, those present finally saw what kinds of things were hiding in the fog and attacking them.

Chapter 1256: Terrifying Existence

Several gray figures were squatting in the distance, their eyes burning fiercely as they looked at the cultivators, as if they were just prey.

Now that the mist had scattered, the cultivators could finally see them clearly. What people? They were clearly the stone memorial statues that had been on the path! There were several beast and human-shaped statues among them. They were no longer stone statues, but had become capable of moving. No wonder no one had been able to recognize them!

The cultivators still felt lingering fear. They hadn't expected so many of the stone statues to have already come so close. If not for the fog scattering, who knew how many more people would have died from their attacks?

Although those present were all strong, their thoughts had been dominated by the fear of the unknown. These enemies had appeared and disappeared mysteriously, not giving them any chance to retaliate. Now that they could finally see what the enemy was, why would they hold back at all? They immediately attacked with all kinds of techniques.

The stone statues also sensed danger. They tried to hide in the fog behind them again, but there were so many fiend race cultivators present. How could they give the statues that chance? The experts immediately cut off the statues' retreat, surrounding them.

Seeing that they couldn't escape, the stone statues revealed their true ferocity. They turned around to fight the fiend race experts.

Soon afterward, some experts made contact with them; however, for some reason, their bodies immediately froze. Then, they either had half their heads chewed off, or their hearts clawed out in a single strike. The others shivered. Were these things devils or something?

“Be careful; they seem to be able to rob their target of the ability to move on contact. Everyone, do not fight them bare-handed!” Princess Suolun immediately pinpointed what was happening and quickly reminded the others.

In the distance, Yun Jianyue nodded approvingly and remarked, “That girl isn’t just a busty bimbo. She seems to know some stuff.”

Perhaps because the stone statues thought Zu An’s party weren’t easy targets, they stayed some distance away. As such, the group could just watch from the sidelines.

Zu An was puzzled. Is Princess Suolun’s chest that big? He subconsciously gave Yun Jianyue a look.

Yun Jianyue’s brows shot up when she sensed his gaze. Her face heated up a bit as she snapped, “Do you want to die?! What are you looking at me for?”

Yan Xuehen couldn’t help but look at her chest, then lowered her head to look at herself. She mumbled to herself, They’re not bigger than mine, anyway. Who knows, that might even be due to the help of those clothes.

Meanwhile, Yu Yanluo was secretly watching the two of them. She thought to herself, The world really is unfair. It was one thing that their cultivation was formidable, but their bodies were completely flawless too!

...

Eventually, the battle concluded.

Even though the stone statues were strange, all of the fiend race cultivators were powerful experts. Furthermore, they had the advantage of numbers. The stone statues were quickly smashed into fragments.

“These things are finally dead!” Xiong Second said, breathing heavily as he brandished his hammer. It had taken quite a bit of energy for him to completely smash through the stone creatures.

Off to the side, Jin Shi said with a frown, “I recall there being more memorial statues than the ones we see here when we first entered.”

The others were alarmed when they heard that. Right, doesn’t that mean there are still some of these guys hiding?

Just then, golden light shone brightly in the distance. The radiance continued swaying from side to side.

At the center of the formation, the fatty cried out, “No! Something is destroying my flag!”

The others’ expressions changed. As expected, it was definitely those remaining stone statues that were destroying the formation.

They wanted to protect the banner, but there was fog over there. If they entered the fog again, they would once more be on the defensive. As long as those stone statues touched them, they would lose their ability to move. That was why no one dared to take the risk.

The fog that had been pushed back gradually began closing in again. The cultivators knew that if the stone statues destroyed the surrounding flags, they would then be surrounded by the fog again, and be forced onto the defensive once more.

Just then, the fatty took out a compass. He initially wanted to do some calculations, but the needle began to spin randomly; it had clearly already been affected by this place, becoming useless. He thought of something and looked toward Yan Xuehen, asking, "This lady over here, if I can make the surrounding mist disperse, can you discern the correct route?"

The others followed his gaze, and were surprised. They had initially thought that this dainty woman had just been walking where she pleased. But judging from what the fatty was saying, she seemed to be proficient in disarming formations.

Yan Xuehen was a bit surprised, not expecting him to ask her. After remaining silent for a moment, she said, "I can." There was a calm sort of confidence in her voice.

Princess Suolun, Shi Ling, and the other princes and princesses sized the woman up curiously, wondering just what kind of background she had.

The fatty nodded and stood up. His chubby hands moved through the air quickly, forming complex formation runes in the air. He then shouted, "Rise!"

The ki stones in the formation were rapidly consumed at a visible rate. Then, the banners that flickered with golden light within the fog rose into the air. Afterward, they seemingly erupted into raging flames.

The forty-nine flags began to spin rapidly while firing streaks of golden light, making the center of the fog scatter completely.

Low and muffled growls emerged from deep within the fog, as if the stone sculptures were trying to find a way to attack the golden flags, but had been burned by their blazing flames. At that instant, they didn't know what to do.

The fiend race cultivators were shocked. This fatty didn't look all that special, but he actually had such formidable methods? Just which race was he from?

Many people from the great clans were already starting to think of roping him in when they had a chance.

...

The fatty was covered in fine sweat; what he had done was definitely not as easy as it looked on the surface. He looked at Yan Xuehen nervously. If the flags completely burned up, there was nothing else he could do then.

Fortunately, Yan Xuehen didn't disappoint. She quickly examined the surrounding trees' layout and terrain, and her slender fingers began to carry out calculations. Soon afterward, she took a step in a certain direction.

Zu An's group didn't hesitate at all and followed her. The fatty also quickly followed them. As he moved, the burning flags went with him. Wherever they went, the fog dispersed, and the area they had just left was filled up by thick fog again.

The others had been doubting the delicate and pretty woman, but after seeing that, who would still hesitate? They all quickly followed.

Yan Xuehen moved at the very front, while everyone else followed behind her. Her shoulders looked as if they had been sculpted, her waist soft like silk. Her neck was slender and graceful; her features were just too stunning. Her beauty was clearly incredibly captivating, and yet the way she carried herself seemed calm and peaceful.

The cultivators all wondered which race this woman was from. Even the Bluefield Country Lord, who was known for her beauty, could only be on the same level at best, right?

Yan Xuehen wound around left and right, sometimes only taking a few steps forward before taking more steps back. It almost felt as if she were moving backward. The others were confused at first, but when they saw how calm her expression was, it gave them a strange sense of confidence.

Furthermore, her white clothes were purer than snow; as her long hair fluttered around, she looked just like a moon peeking through scattered clouds, like soft snow scattering amid a winter breeze. Many of the cultivators' eyes began to burn with passion.

Yun Jianyue felt somewhat moved too. As expected, this stone cold woman's temperament was popular wherever she went. In the human territories, she was worshiped like a goddess, and now, it was the same in the fiend race territories. Should I change the way I carry myself too, to not always look so fierce...

Pah! Why would I ever copy someone like her?

...

Some time later, the fatty was completely soaked in sweat. When he saw that the golden lights were constantly flickering, he knew that the flags would completely burn up soon. He said, "I can't hold on much longer; how much more time do you need?"

Yan Xuehen said with a cold and clear voice, "It is finished."

She took a step forward, and everything before her eyes opened up. The fog from before vanished, and the forest also returned to normal. It was just like what they had seen earlier in the swamp. Zu An stood behind her quietly. There wasn't any fog at all, and even the stone statues rested quietly at the sides of the forest path.

The fatty sat down on the ground, muttering to himself, "Screw this! I almost lost my life here! I really am losing out big this time." He felt heartbroken when he recalled that he had to burn up those forty-nine dao banners.

The cultivators cheered when they saw that they had finally left that strange forest. They actually felt as if they had returned from death's door.

However, Yan Xuehen frowned slightly. Yun Jianyue asked quietly, "You guys can sense it too?"

Zu An said seriously, "Yeah. There seems to be an extremely terrifying existence that's been watching us. But why didn't it come out to stop us?"

Chapter 1257: Making Things Difficult

When they had just been fumbling through the fog, all of them had keenly sensed a sinister presence that made them feel a chill throughout their entire bodies. Zu An had been prepared for a fight at any time, but the other party had never done anything the entire time. Instead, they had been able to successfully leave the formation.

"I sensed danger too, but I'm not sure what the other party's strength is like," Yu Yanluo said. She was a clan leader and had the Medusa's bloodline within her, so she was a bit more sensitive than the other youngsters present.

"At least grandmaster rank," Zu An said gravely.

"Grandmaster?" Yu Yanluo replied, jumping in fright. Considering their strength, they had thought that this would be a cakewalk. They hadn't expected there to actually be a grandmaster present!

"What's so special about a grandmaster?" Yun Jianyue said with a sneer. "My injuries have already gotten a bit better. Together with Little An's strength and the Medusa's ability, it's not as if we won't stand a chance if we really have to face one."

"What about me?" Yan Xuehen's forehead darkened. This woman had ignored her on purpose, clearly to shame her.

Yun Jianyue laughed proudly, saying, "Putting you in charge of cheerleading is already enough."

Yan Xuehen was speechless. This witch is so annoying!

Yun Jianyue spoke up again. "I didn't really have many expectations about the so-called treasury here, but now, it seems there really might be something good inside."

Whether it was the strange mist from before or the powerful existence in the shadows, everything pointed at the fact that the place was extraordinary.

Just then, cries of alarm rang out from the other group. Several people had run forward. It turned out there was a mountain up ahead, and they could sense the richness of its ki even from far away, as well as surging life force.

There were all sorts of unique flowers scattering their fragrance up ahead, as well as fresh and juicy fruits hanging from many unusual trees. They were definitely all exceptional.

The fiend race cultivators seemed to have gone mad. They all ran forward, striving to outdo each other.

Boom!

A golden fist slammed down in front of them, sending smoke and dust in all directions. When the dust settled, it revealed Shi Ling standing in front of the others.

All the other fiend race cultivators' expressions became unpleasant. They protested, "Shi Ling, what is the meaning of this? Are you trying to hog everything for yourself?"

Even though Shi Ling was young, he stood there with his arms behind him, a proud smile on his face. He replied, "Nothing, really. It is just that treasures belong to the capable."

The others were angered. They protested, "What a joke! Shi Ling, do you think you're the Fiend Emperor or something? That you can single-handedly take on everyone?"

Shi Ling replied, "Of course not. But we all went through such hardships to finally get here. How can those who did not contribute have the right to these things?"

After he spoke up, Princess Suolun, Prince Yin Sha, Jin Shi, Princess Changning, Qiao Heng, the bear brothers, Ma Huang, Duan Tiande, and the other powerful cultivators silently stood by his side, clearly sharing his thoughts.

They were the ones who had fought head-on in the swamp, and yet many people slipped through the openings to get here. They had been unhappy about that the whole time.

Shi Ling made sure to tell the exhausted Wu Liang, "Fatty, don't worry. You helped us a lot, so you will have a share too later."

It wasn't because he was kind-hearted, but rather that this place was too strange. Meanwhile, this fatty's methods were quite shocking; they were enough to prove his worth. Who knew, they might still need him later, so there was obviously no need to chase him away right then and there.

Wu Liang chuckled, naturally accepting those 'good intentions'.

Meanwhile, Yan Xuehen frowned. "They were fighting together just a moment ago, yet now, they've immediately become hostile. These fiend races really are cold-blooded."

Yun Jianyue disagreed, saying, "I actually approve of the way they do things. Stone cold woman, you come from a noble and extravagant background, and have lived an easy and comfortable life. People always praise you as some goddess, so of course those you encounter are all good people. Unfortunately, this cultivation world has always been a cruel one, where the strong prey on the weak. That's the law of nature!

"Besides, there aren't too many spiritual medicines here. If we split it evenly with everyone, there wouldn't be much at all. If I weren't injured, I might have immediately wiped them all out and wouldn't keep more people around to split it with."

Yu Yanluo harrumphed inwardly. These two had always been fighting like little girls for so long, she had almost forgotten that Yun Jianyue was a great devil who left all those who heard her name shaking in fear.

The independent cultivators' expressions changed when they saw the disciples from the big clans band together. They knew that once the others allied together, they wouldn't be a match at all. They immediately lost a bit of confidence.

Someone couldn't help but protest, "If you force us back now, isn't that the same as telling us to throw our lives away in the fog?"

Shi Ling said indifferently, "You can all make a detour off to the side. The forest does not seem that ridiculously big. As long as you do not activate the formation, circling back from the side should not be

completely impossible. Or, you guys can just wait here. Once we come back, out of consideration of the fact that we are all from the fiend races, we will bring you all back alive.”

The independent cultivators snorted. There wasn't much they could do about the situation. If they really got into conflict, they might die here before they even get to see any treasure.

They didn't continue to argue with Shi Ling, and all circled back around the forest.

They obviously wouldn't choose to stay put and wait for the disciples of the major clans to return; instead, they tried some other routes to see if that would bring them any luck.

...

Soon afterward, most of them dispersed, leaving behind just a dozen people or so. Apart from the influential races' disciples, the remainder were just their guards and servants.

Then, Shi Ling's gaze swept toward Zu An and the others. Yan Xuehen asked coldly, “What, do we not have the right to stay either?”

“That is not it.” Shi Ling smiled toward her and said, “It was thanks to the lady's divine skills that we were able to leave the formation. The lady naturally has the right to stay, but this one...”

Zu An wanted to laugh. He replied, “So in the end, you wanted to chase me away?”

Shi Ling's expression changed. He said, “So what if that is the case? You have not done a thing this entire time; you are a complete good-for-nothing. If you do not leave, who else would it be?”

“Then what about us?” Yun Jianyue asked with a chuckle. Her expression was a bit dangerous.

Shi Ling replied, “The two women can obviously stay behind. This prince can offer you better protection.”

Qiao Heng snorted and added, “Shi Ling, aren't you going too far? You're clearly trying to steal someone else's women.” He owed Zu An a favor, so he obviously had to speak up.

Shi Ling said proudly, “A fine bird chooses the tree it nests in. Women should naturally seek the strong too. This guy only knows how to rely on women for protection and has no prospects. If they get stolen, then they get stolen.”

Ma Huang had a wretched smile as he remarked, “Kid, you're still so young, and yet you already have such thoughts. Isn't a little donkey like you scared of breaking your back from pulling too heavy a cart?”

Shi Ling was only thirteen or fourteen years old. Saying such things really did seem a bit off.

Qiao Heng wanted to say something else, but Duan Tiande sneered. He remarked, “What does his business have to do with you? There are too many of you sympathetic pushovers among the Elf race; that's why it's only going from bad to worse.”

Princess Suolun frowned and said, “We do not know what lies ahead. Are we going to start engaging in internal conflict so soon?” For some reason, she sensed a profound and mysterious air about Zu An, so she stepped forward to smooth things over.

Shi Ling replied coldly, "Then is the princess planning to share your own portion with him?"

Why the hell does this guy have such good affinity with women? Even Princess Suolun is speaking out for him!

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +110 +110 +110...

Princess Suolun became a bit unhappy when she heard that, but she didn't say anything else. She still had to consider her own subordinates' interests. Zu An was a complete stranger who hadn't exchanged many words with her, so she obviously didn't want to get into conflict with the Lion race because of a stranger.

The others just watched with the cool gazes of bystanders. There were some who wanted to split the loot with one less person, while there were others who wanted to see Shi Ling test this mysterious guy out. All of them were waiting to see how Zu An would respond.

Chapter 1258: Whose Mouth Is More Formidable, Really?

Yu Yanluo took a step forward, her expression cold. She said, "Little lion, there is always someone above you in this world. If you are too arrogant, you will easily bring disaster upon yourself."

After how rudely he had spoken and how he had insulted her lover, she felt extremely unhappy. She was a clan leader, after all, and even in the human world, she had occupied a high position. How could she tolerate a kid shooting his mouth off like this in front of her?

However, Shi Ling's status was a bit sensitive. The fact that Zu An had been dragged into the fiend race territories because of her was already something she felt guilty about. If he made many enemies among the fiend races because of her, he might end up in more danger. As such, her aura immediately surged, releasing pressure in all directions to make Shi Ling step down.

Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue both voiced their surprise when they saw that. They exchanged a look and both saw confusion in each other's eyes. Just how much time has passed? And yet, Yu Yanluo has already risen from the eighth rank to the ninth rank?

They had almost always been together as of late. Yu Yanluo didn't really seem to have encountered any special experiences! Furthermore, she had even been injured so badly. Based on her normal cultivation speed, it would already have been quite excellent if she at least recovered her fighting strength, and yet she had actually risen by an entire cultivation rank?

Both of them had extraordinary experience and knowledge. They quickly realized the most likely possibility. Zu An's transcendent aptitude!

There was an old saying that transcendent aptitude cultivators' blood essence was extremely nourishing, and it would allow a cultivator to achieve twice the effect with half the effort. They had previously assumed that was a myth, but now, it seemed as if transcendent aptitude blood essence really might have extraordinary uses!

Yu Yanluo had also only broken through recently. Back then, the two had consummated a physical relationship when Zu An saved her.

No wonder even though Yu Yanluo is normally so dignified and composed, she still snuck over to visit Zu An yesterday when they were in Bluefield Country! Turns out she already knew what was good for her!

The two of them were suddenly dazed. They thought to themselves that they had been stuck at the grandmaster level for so many years already. If they obtained Zu An's help, wouldn't that mean they could have hope of breaking through to the earth immortal rank?

The two both blushed as soon as that thought emerged, their hearts beating crazily. What sort of nonsensical thoughts are we having? There's no way that can happen!

While the two of them were letting their imagination run wild, the other fiend race experts' expressions changed as well. Yu Yanluo had always kept a low-profile until then, but she was actually a ninth ranked expert. Furthermore, judging from the pressure she was giving off, she was definitely not just an ordinary ninth rank. Even they felt a sense of fear. She definitely had something that could threaten them!

Now that these sudden developments had happened, the others began to look at Shi Ling with amusement, trying to see how he would get out of this awkward situation.

Shi Ling's expression also changed. At first, he had thought that she was just a woman who served that guy with her beauty. How could he have known that she was actually a hidden expert? And yet, he had always been a prideful person. How could he just back down while everyone else was watching?

Of course, he wasn't stupid either. Fighting against a ninth ranked expert head on was a stupid decision. If he got injured here, it would instead benefit the others he was competing over the treasure with. As such, he said with a sneer, "Hmph, why would a real man like me fight with a woman? That would just be embarrassing."

He looked towards Zu An afterward and said provocatively, "You over there, do you only know how to hide and mooch off women?"

Yu Yanluo's brows stood up. She was now truly angry. She was just about to act when Zu An patted her shoulder, gesturing to just leave it to him. Yu Yanluo was good at understanding others, and knew that acting in his place here would instead be detrimental to him. As such, she silently withdrew.

Princess Suolun, who had always been watching from the sidelines, revealed an expression of shock. This woman's cultivation was already so high, and yet she actually listened to that man's opinion! Was this man really someone who relied purely on his appearance?

"A real man?" Zu An replied with a laugh. "How old are you? Pull down your pants, and let's see if you've even grown any hair down there yet."

Pwah ha ha!

Uncontrollable laughter immediately broke out. However, as the cultivators started to laugh, they realized they would be offending Shi Ling that way, so they all struggled to hold it in.

Princess Suolun blushed a bit and muttered to herself, "Hmph, just a rascal."

Shi Ling's expression turned cold. He snapped, "You dare show this prince disrespect? Come here and kowtow to me immediately in apology, and this prince might consider sparing your life!"

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +444 +444 +444...

Zu An chuckled out of amusement when he saw the other party raise his head in an arrogant and despotic manner. He retorted, "Do you point that nose of yours at the sky when you're sucking on milk back home too?"

Ha ha ha!

The others really couldn't hold themselves back anymore and all roared with laughter. Their statuses weren't all that inferior to Shi Ling's anyway, and they were older too. They hadn't felt that happy seeing a kid like this acting so arrogant to begin with.

Shi Ling's face turned completely red. He spat, "Damn brat, I was going to spare you your life as a favor for your female companions, but it is a pity that your mouth is so filthy. Not even a deity from the heavens above can save you today, I mean it!"

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +711 +711 +711...

His aura surged powerfully, accompanied by a faint lion's roar. This was his Lion race's special ability. Even though it wasn't a domain, to a certain degree, it had some characteristics of one

If they were subjected to the roar's intimidating aura, even similarly-ranked experts would lose some of their fighting spirit. It would have an even greater overwhelming effect against those of lower ranks.

The others' expressions became grave. Now that things had reached this level, it was already a battle of life and death. Shi Ling was young but accomplished, and known for his fiery temper. That guy might have been able to keep his life if he yielded; why did he have to say those things instead?

Princess Changning thought to herself, This guy really cares too much about face. If something does happen to him, he deserves it.

Princess Suolun sized up Zu An with a curious expression. She thought to herself, Is this man relying on the women behind him, or does he truly have some skill?

"Not even a deity from the heavens above can save me?" Even under such pressure, Zu An seemed completely fine. He said with a sigh, "In the distant future, when later generations find your tomb and open it, they'll find that there's nothing left but a mouth, and quite a tough one."

The others were a bit stunned when they heard that. Why was he talking about some tomb? However, as they kept listening, they realized what was happening. They could no longer hold on and laughed until their stomachs were about to hurt.

Princess Suolun couldn't hold back a smile either. This guy, really...

Shi Ling was initially a bit stunned. When he heard the others' laughter, he finally realized what was happening. He was utterly furious! He yelled, "I am going to skin you alive and pull out your tendons, and then burn you at the stake day after day. Only then will I be able to vent out my hatred!"

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +999 +999 +999...

Zu An gave him an indifferent look and replied, "Looks like I was right after all. Your most formidable part really is your mouth."

The others all had strange expressions. Your mouth is clearly the tougher one here...

However, Shi Ling calmed down. He was a genius, after all, and knew that Zu An was provoking him on purpose. He had the expression of someone looking at a corpse. He said, "Good. Since you have said that my mouth is formidable, I will use my mouth to make you wish you were dead rather than alive."

The fat daoist's mung bean-sized eyes widened. Huh? Why does that sound a bit dirty? Fortunately, Shi Ling didn't know what he was thinking, or else he might have just given up on Zu An to deal with the fatty first.

The other fiend race experts realized what he meant. Shi Ling was clearly planning to use the Lion's Roar Technique.

The Lion's Roar Technique was the Lion race's extreme art, able to turn a target into an imbecile on the spot. If the target's cultivation happened to be too low, they might just explode into bloody mist instantly.

A group of people moved behind Shi Ling. The Lion's Roar Technique was an area of effect skill. They didn't want to be caught up in its blast radius.

Princess Suolun gave Zu An a worried look, thinking that even if this guy had some skills, wasn't the situation getting a bit out of hand? Shi Ling was already furious, so just how shocking would the Lion's Roar Technique be? That guy might be finished instantly!

Qiao Heng couldn't help but warn Zu An, "Be careful!"

However, it was already too late. A low but terrifying sound emerged from Shi Ling's throat. Then, he opened his mouth wide, sending out a tremendous wave of energy.

Just then, however, a mocking voice called out, "What you lookin' at?!"

Shi Ling felt a powerful urge in his very soul, and he reflexively replied, "I'm looking at you, shithead!"

He was stunned as soon as he spoke. Why had he said that at such a crucial juncture? However, he didn't have time to react. The energy he stored up for the Lion's Roar Technique had already reached his lips, and yet wasn't released, so he was forced to swallow it all back down. His internal energies surged chaotically and inflicted some injuries on him.

The dark elf Duan Tiande, who had just been watching with amusement, narrowed his eyes. Previously, he had been just about to successfully attack Qiao Heng, but he was interrupted precisely by that thing. At the time, he had just thought that it was a coincidence, but now, it seemed that wasn't the case at all!

Qiao Heng was surprised and happy to see what had happened. He gave Zu An a look, realizing that Zu An really had saved him. However, he didn't recall ever having met Zu An before, so why would this guy save him? Forget it, I don't care anymore. If he really is in danger, I'll have to save him even if I end up offending the Lion Race.

The other disciples weren't stupid either. They remembered what had happened previously by the marsh and immediately knew what was happening.

Princess Suolun smiled. As expected, there is more to this guy than meets the eye.

Shi Ling swallowed the blood that had rushed up his throat back down. He cursed, "What kind of damned skill did you use?!"

The Lion race was tough and strong. Even though the Lion's Roar Technique had made him suffer injuries from the rebound, he circulated his ki and quickly suppressed those injuries. However, when he recalled his bold and confident words, and how he had suffered the very next moment, he was filled with rage.

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +399 +399 +399...

Zu An remarked with a chuckle, "Isn't your mouth pretty tough? Why don't you continue?"

Shi Ling choked. He instinctively wanted to use the Lion's Roar Technique to kill Zu An, but his reason told him to give up on the thought. Zu An's skill clearly countered his Lion's Roar Technique. Using it again would just be utterly stupid.

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +411 +411 +411...

"Very good..." Shi Ling began, taking a deep breath. His expression was cold and grim as he continued, "I will trample you under my feet soon and pull out your tongue. I will chop it up into small pieces to feed to my dogs!"

Afterward, he brandished both hands. Two golden fists flew through the air, then quickly turned into two ferocious lions that released deafening roars. They were sinister and ferocious, opening their vicious, bloody mouths to attack Zu An. The paws of the two golden lion projections crushed the giant boulders along the way into powder and smashed the trees to splinters.

"As expected, the Lion Race's extreme art, Mad Lion's Hegemon Fist, is incredibly ferocious. It is difficult to face head on," Princess Suolun couldn't help but say with a sigh.

Yun Jianyue was a bit surprised. She couldn't help but nudge Yu Yanluo with her elbow, remarking, "Why is your lover so good at getting the attention of girls? That Devil Race princess seems to be praising that lion boy on the surface, but actually, she's warning Zu An!"

Chapter 1259: Fiend Races' Five Great Experts

Yu Yanluo smiled and replied, "Isn't that even better? The greater Ah Zu's charm is, the more it proves that I chose the right man."

Yun Jianyue was speechless. She had been planning to make Yu Yanluo a bit jealous, and it would be even better if she started fighting with Zu An, since then she'd have something interesting to watch. To her surprise, however, Yu Yanluo instead took the chance to show more of her affection for him, leaving her feeling extremely annoyed.

In the other group, however, their reactions were different. A hint of jealousy appeared in Prince Yin Sha's eyes when he saw that Princess Suolun was warning Zu An. He had been following Princess Suolun

everywhere the entire time. Even though she treated him rather well, it wasn't too different from how she treated everyone else.

What the hell is up with this guy, and how did he gain the princess' favor?

You have successfully trolled Prince Yin Sha for +233 +233 +233...

Princess Changning also gave Princess Suolun a strange look. She didn't know why the woman would suddenly favor a stranger. Apart from being a bit good-looking, this guy didn't seem to have any good points at all. A grown man chattering away like that really wasn't that attractive.

When she saw Princess Suolun's beautiful hair and graceful brows, as well as her other pretty features, she suddenly thought of Kong Nanwu, who had always been better than her at everything. A feeling of hatred and disgust immediately welled up within her.

Meanwhile, Zu An gave the roaring lion projections rushing at him a look. He clenched his fists, and the air around them visibly compressed. Two large fist projections then smashed into the lions!

The cultivators watching cried out in alarm. This guy actually had some skill; no wonder he dared to offend Shi Ling!

Fatty Wu Liang sat down on the ground, watching the scene before him with a smile as he listened to the others' discussions. You guys don't know jack; I'll probably have to rely on that guy for my treasure this time!

A hint of disappointment flashed through Princess Suolun's eyes. Even though the man's attack was impressive, that alone likely wouldn't be enough to defeat Shi Ling. She had clearly even warned him not to face this attack head on, and yet he wasn't convinced and hadn't listened to her advice. She didn't know why she would feel that way, however. Could it be that my expectations were too high?

Zu An's fists collided with the lion projections, causing a huge explosion. The golden lions dimmed a bit, but they weren't scattered. Instead, they charged at Zu An with even greater ferocity.

Shi Ling said with a sneer, "As expected, you do have some skill. No wonder you dared to say those things to me! However, there have been quite a few geniuses who died at my hand in the last few years. Before a true genius, people like you only exist to serve as stepping stones for my unrivaled glory."

The other fiend race experts' expressions changed. This Shi Ling did act a bit too wild, but he had the right to be that way. The power of his fist wasn't something they could easily face head-on.

"Shi Ling's talent really is shocking. He is only thirteen years old too, and yet he has already reached this level. Once he grows up, who can be his match among his peers?" Jin Shi remarked with a sigh. If it were an independent cultivator who had Shi Ling's talent, they would have already been killed a long time ago. However, he had the Lion race behind him, which was a powerful force among the fiend races. No one dared to make the Lion race their enemy like that.

"Not only is his talent shocking, he had extraordinary opportunities too. I heard that when he was young, one day, he went out to play and accidentally fell off a cliff. In the end, he found a secret cultivation manual left behind by a great senior," someone remarked.

"I also heard that when he was young, he almost drowned while he went swimming, but he instead fell into a spiritual spring that cleansed his muscles and purified his bone marrow. That's why his body became so strong," Duan Tiande added, his eyes sparkling. Both the Elves and Dark Elves had weak bodies. He thought to himself, how great would it be if he had that kind of opportunity?

"And yet, even with such aptitude, he could still only be second in the Lion race. I have heard that the Lion race's great prince is even more of a monster. I wonder just what kind of an existence that is..." Princess Changning added with an excited expression. Women always naturally adored the strong. She even began to wonder to herself, how did the Lion race's great prince compare to the Golden Crow Crown Prince? Of course, my own big brother crown prince is definitely more formidable.

Princess Suolun said, "I have had the chance to meet him before. The Lion race's great prince indeed has extraordinary talent. When he was twelve, he already dominated the Lion race's younger generation. Not counting the older generation, he was already unrivaled in the west. Among the fiend races' younger generation, the Western Lion, Northern Tiger, Southern Demon, Eastern Dragon, and Central Emperor are known as the five great experts. They are all individuals publicly acknowledged to have a chance of reaching the earth immortal level."

Qiao Heng frowned and replied, "But I heard that the Central Emperor, the Golden Crow Crown Prince, was defeated a few days ago, and it seemed to even be at the hands of a human."

The others fell silent. Even though there were many factions among the fiend races with their own hatreds and grudges, the humans were their shared enemy. For the face of the fiend races to be defeated by a human really wasn't all that glorious of a fact.

Princess Changning harrumphed and said, "That human probably used some kind of crafty scheme, some kind of despicable method, to win. He might have also been some older generation expert."

Princess Suolun said hesitantly, "From what I know, however, he seems to be a young man, and his cultivation seemed to only be at the ninth rank."

"A young man? Only the ninth rank?" Princess Changning laughed exaggeratedly. She replied, "What kind of cultivation does the Golden Crow Crown Prince have? He is almost at the grandmaster rank. He has been undefeated among his peers in recent years, and he even has a deity-grade divine weapon. How could he possibly be defeated by a ninth rank human race cultivator? It was definitely someone with ulterior motives who deliberately wanted to smear the Golden Crow Crown Prince's name and made up such a ridiculous rumor."

The others all praised Princess Changning for making sense. After all, in their opinion, there was indeed no chance of the Golden Crow Crown Prince losing to a human youth, and furthermore one who was only at the ninth rank. This matter was too fishy; there had to be other things they didn't know.

After receiving the others' praise and compliments, Princess Changning gave Princess Suolun a proud look.

Princess Suolun frowned, but she didn't say anything else.

...

Meanwhile, the battle had already changed. The two lion projections arrived in front of Zu An, one biting down toward his shoulder and one aiming for his legs. Shi Ling clearly didn't intend to kill Zu An that quickly, but rather planned to cripple him first, before slowly torturing him afterward.

However, who would have thought that Zu An would only calmly raise his fingers, then lightly prod in the direction of the two lions' heads?

Shining Finger!

Poof~

There was a light puff, and the intimidating lions deflated like balloons, instantly vanishing into the air. The fiend race experts watching were completely stupefied. Princess Suolun's eyes lit up. How had he done that? After all, the Mad Lion's Hegemon Fist was so powerful that none of them would dare to face it directly, and yet Zu An had destroyed it with just a single finger!

Shi Ling's expression also changed. He no longer looked down on his opponent. He roared and leaped high into the air. He executed a complicated and mysterious hand technique, and nine lion projections appeared. They attacked Zu An from several different directions. He shouted coldly, "You brat, I am going to crush you underneath my feet and make you understand what it means to offend someone you should not have offended!"

Qiao Heng said in surprise, "It's rumored that the greater one's achievements with the Mad Lion's Hegemon Fist are, the more lions will appear. The more lions appear, the greater its power becomes. He can already create nine lions at his age! Many Lion Race elders can only produce seven or eight at once; nine is already enough to kill someone at a higher cultivation realm than his own!"

The others all sighed in amazement as well. Someone remarked, "The Lion race has both the Western Lion and a monster like Shi Ling. Their rise is already inevitable."

Zu An obviously knew that Qiao Heng was warning him. However, he didn't really care. Instead, he raised his hand, producing a several-dozen-meter long flame blade, dicing the lion projections into pieces.

The others' jaws immediately dropped. They had thought that Shi Ling was careless earlier, but if that still happened when he was attacking at full strength, didn't it mean he was being completely crushed?

Just what is this guy's cultivation level?

They all immediately felt as if they were witnessing a great enemy. After all, their strength wasn't too far off from Shi Ling's. Even if they were a bit more powerful, that was because they were older. If this person could crush Shi Ling, didn't it mean he could similarly crush all of them?

Princess Suolun didn't panic at all, however. Her eyes flickered with a different light, and her thoughts were indiscernible.

Even Princess Changning changed her previous attitude. Her gaze now had a hint of eagerness as she looked at Zu An.

Shi Ling was shocked and furious. He quickly formed another hand seal, trying to condense a new fist imprint. However, why would Zu An give him the chance? He rushed into the sky like a streak of

lightning, then stomped down in midair. With a loud boom, he smashed open a huge crater in the ground. Smoke and dust flew everywhere.

Zu An stepped right on Shi Ling's head while asking with a smile, "What did you say just now? I didn't hear you too clearly."

Chapter 1260: Then Do You Know Who I Am?

The expressions of the other fiend race experts became conflicted. Shi Ling had been so arrogant just a moment before, hollering about how he was going to trample on his opponent. And yet now, he was the one being stepped on instead! How could he tolerate such a humiliation?

A defeat in a normal competition might not be that much of a psychological blow; it might even motivate him to work harder. But for his head to be stepped on like this in front of so many people... If he couldn't escape from this trauma, his future might be ruined forever.

Of course, they all belonged to different races. When they saw the incredibly arrogant Shi Ling end up that way, they were still rather happy. After all, if the Lion race had two incredible talents, they would become huge threats to the other races once they grew up.

Princess Suolun was the only one who frowned a bit. If this guy humiliated Shi Ling so deeply, it would be tantamount to completely offending the Lion race. Even though this young man's cultivation was surprising, he definitely wasn't a match for the Lion race's older generation. Furthermore, Shi Ling still had an older brother who was one of the five great experts, who would definitely come for revenge. She wondered which race he was from, and whether his clan background was enough to protect him.

"Let go of our prince!" Shi Ling's guards exclaimed in shock and fury. They all brandished their weapons while charging at Zu An.

These people's cultivations weren't as high as Shi Ling's, but when so many seventh and eighth rank cultivators were added up together, they were still quite imposing.

Zu An gave them an indifferent glance. With a sweep of his sleeves, a wave of scorching flames swept outward, forcing all of those people back.

Meanwhile, Yun Jianyue laughed in satisfaction and remarked, "This brat is starting to act more and more like a proper master."

Yan Xuehen nodded in deep sympathy. She had met her fair share of stunning youngsters over the years, but compared to those geniuses, Zu An was far superior. She said, "With his current strength, he is already capable of fighting against those of the previous generation."

She was starting to regret going against his marriage with her disciple Chuyan. When it came to someone so outstanding, those old freaks might frantically sell out Chuyan if they found out.

She suddenly remembered the things that had happened between her and Zu An recently. Her cheeks couldn't help but heat up. How could she still have the shamelessness or right to stop the two anymore?

When she heard two grandmasters praise her lover like this, even though Yu Yanluo was normally calm and graceful, she still couldn't help but smile.

Shi Ling finally realized what was happening. He was actually being stepped on by someone else!

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +999 +999 +999...

A powerful burst of energy erupted. Zu An sensed that something was happening under him. His expression changed and he quickly evaded to one side.

Roar!

A golden lion appeared around Shi Ling, protecting him. The lion radiated golden light, and even seemed almost tangible. Whether it was the aura or the pressure it gave off, it was much stronger than the projections previously created by Shi Ling's fist imprints.

"This is... the aura of a heaven-grade weapon!" the fiend race cultivators cried out in alarm. Their gazes were all filled with jealousy.

Heaven-grade weapons were all extremely precious. Even though the fiend race cultivators all came from great clans, none of them were from their clans' direct bloodlines. It would be truly difficult for any of them to ever obtain a heaven-grade weapon. They might never even get one of their own their entire lives, and yet Shi Ling already had one at the age of thirteen!

A shining golden glove appeared on Shi Ling's right hand, carved with profound and complex runes that radiated power. He stood back up again. His hair was disheveled, and his nose was bloody and swollen, with a still-trickling stream of blood. His eyes were burning with rage as he yelled, "You will die today!"

His entire life had been smooth sailing ever since he was little, and he had enjoyed victory and praise wherever he went. When had he ever suffered like this before?

His eyes turned completely red, and his hair burst outward in all directions. The veins on his forehead throbbed as he stared at Zu An like a beast that had already chosen the prey it would devour. He didn't waste a moment on words this time and instead sent his fist smashing toward Zu An.

The Golden Glove was from the fortuitous encounter he had experienced when he fell off a cliff while he was young and landed in an ancient ancestor's cave. Previously, his older brother had instructed him to not rely on the weapon normally, as it would affect his future growth. With the way things had gone so far, however, he couldn't be bothered with that.

As his fist smashed outward, it let out a wave of destructive energy; together with the support of the Golden Glove, the lions produced by his Mad Lion's Hegemon Fist became nearly tangible.

However, Zu An kicked off the ground, evading to one side. The power of the fist crashed into the cliff behind him. With a loud crash, half of the cliff collapsed.

While the onlookers were amazed by the power of the heaven-grade weapon, they suddenly realized something and cursed, "You destroyed all of those precious medicines too!"

There had been all kinds of extraordinary medicinal herbs beneath the cliff that made even these disciples from influential clans drool. Unfortunately, under the power of Shi Ling's fist, almost all of them had been destroyed.

Shi Ling suddenly turned around, his eyes entirely red. He growled, "What, do I hear complaints?"

Those who had protested choked. When they saw the heaven-grade weapon in his hand, they realized that confronting the enraged Shi Ling wasn't a wise decision. They all swallowed their complaints back down, saying, "We don't dare, we don't. Please carry on!"

Shi Ling's expression was fierce and ruthless as he turned back around to look at Zu An. His hands continued to form seals, the Mad Lion's Hegemon Fist continuing to bombard his opponent like a bomber aircraft.

As she watched the fight, Princess Suolun started to become worried. The glove not only had great power on its own, but also seemed to endlessly replenish Shi Ling's ki. Otherwise, with the ki consumption of Mad Lion's Hegemon Fist, and at full power no less, Shi Ling shouldn't have been able to last for so long with his current cultivation.

However, Zu An just gently kicked off the ground, leisurely strolling around. Despite that, he always managed to somehow barely avoid the terrifying lions. Dirt and dust flew everywhere, and yet not a single leaf landed on him after each explosion.

Even Princess Changning's eyes shone. This man is pretty handsome, hm?

Shi Ling's efforts were completely useless. He was already beyond furious. He spat, "Do you only know how to hide?"

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +444 +444 +444...

Zu An chuckled and replied, "I'm doing this out of consideration for you, you know? Otherwise, it really won't look good if your face hits the ground a second later, like earlier."

Shi Ling erupted with rage, yelling, "You only have that tough mouth of yours! I have a heaven-grade weapon, so let's see just how long you'll continue to run!"

Zu An sighed and replied, "Are heaven-grade weapons all that amazing? I have some too." He took out the Universe Ring as he spoke.

The onlookers's breath caught in their throats when they sensed the pressure coming from it. Another heaven grade weapon?

Although Princess Changning had initially looked down on Zu An a bit, she now looked at him with a burning gaze. She thought to herself that later, if there was a chance, she had to get closer to him. At the same time, she thought to herself that Princess Suolun really was sly. She had to have known something, and that was why she had expressed goodwill earlier.

This woman really does know how to scheme!

...

The Universe Ring instantly smashed into Shi Ling's golden glove.

Boooooom!

An enormous shockwave forced all the onlookers back.

Shi Ling, who had been caught in the middle of the collision, even felt his head start to ring. He vaguely noticed something rushing at him. He instinctively brandished his fist to protect himself, but Zu An's Universe Ring smashed into his elbow instead.

Crack!

His arm hung powerlessly as his bones were broken.

Bang!

He felt a painful sensation on his face. Once again, his head had been stepped on! Shi Ling struggled frantically, but unfortunately, how could his strength be a match for Zu An? The humiliation made him completely break down. He couldn't help but become teary-eyed.

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +999 +999 +999...

When he saw the rapidly rising Rage points in the backend, Zu An remarked with a chuckle, "Honestly, why are you in such a rush to be stepped on again? Maybe... you like this kind of feeling?"

"Just kill me already!" Shi Ling cried. He felt as if his heart had already turned to ashes. He could already imagine how he'd become the laughingstock of all the fiend races.

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +888 +888 +888...

Princess Suolun jumped in fright. She was scared that Zu An might make a rash decision and quickly stepped forward, pleading, "Young master, please be lenient! He is the Lion King's most doted on youngest son, and his identity is special! If you kill him, that might bring about a huge disaster! How about we go by the fiend races' tradition and have him ransom for his own life?"

Zu An's eyes lit up. He remembered his harvest from Chi Wen earlier, replying, "That's not a bad idea!" As such, he removed the glove from Shi Ling's hand.

Shi Ling struggled frantically, protesting, "Noooo!" Unfortunately, he still couldn't stop his previous lucky encounter from becoming another man's fortune.

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +999 +999 +999...

The other fiend race cultivators were incredibly envious. This guy had just outright robbed Shi Ling! They actually coveted Shi Ling's heaven-grade weapon too, but they only dared to think about it. There was no way they would actually have acted on those thoughts.

Zu An then searched Shi Ling and found his storage pouch, barking, "Open it up!"

The storage pouch had its owner's imprint, so normally, others couldn't open it.

"Don't even think about it!" Shi Ling said through gritted teeth. "Either way, you wouldn't dare to kill me anyway. You know who my father and my big brother are! I advise you to return the Golden Glove to me too, or else my dad and my brother will definitely grind your bones to ashes, even if they have to go up into heaven or down into hell!"

You have successfully trolled Shi Ling for +799 +799 +799...

“Your dad and big brother?” Zu An sneered. “Then do you know who I am?”