

M. Slaying 701

Chapter 701: Life and Death

"You were looking for me?"

Qi Lin'er arrived at Mirage Mountain, where Yang Shenlong's pavilion was located. His forehead was creased in slight displeasure as he looked at the man in front of him with an intensely hostile gaze.

Although Qi Lin'er had participated in the Assembly of Immortal Sects alongside Yang Shenlong six years ago, he had never really been on good terms with the Yang brothers. Consequently, they had not kept in touch after the assembly ended.

Furthemore, Qi Lin'er had a deep-seated dislike for people like Yang Shenlong, as well as Chu Liang, who had faces that looked like they were the favored children of the heavens. For some reason, whenever he saw a face like theirs, he wanted to rip it to shreds.

"From now on, I'll be in charge of you. Senior Uncle Xuan Lu will no longer be teaching you," Yang Shenlong said calmly. "For the time being, you will remain on Mirage Mountain. You are not to take a single step off it."

"Tch."

Qi Lin'er looked like a teenager now and had caught up in height to Yang Shenlong quite some time ago. However, he still had the same wild and headstrong demeanor that he had as a child. He showed utter disdain for Yang Shenlong's words.

"And who do you think you are? You want to confine me here?" Qi Lin'er sneered.

He glanced at Daoist Xuan Lu, who was standing to the side.

Nevertheless, Daoist Xuan Lu remained expressionless, showing no reaction.

Whoosh!

Qi Lin'er shot forward, appearing as a mere shadow flitting over. He viciously threw a punch at Yang Shenlong.

Of course, Qi Lin'er had heard the news that Yang Shenlong had established his residence on Mirage Mountain.

But so what? He's a powerful cultivator at the Dao Attainment Realm now, but can he fight? That's something I can only find out by testing him myself.

Wham!

A deafening explosion rang out.

Unfortunately for Qi Lin'er, his punch didn't land on Yang Shenlong. It hit his own back.

This was what happened. Just before Qi Lin'er's incredibly powerful punch was about to land on Yang Shenlong's face, a void barrier suddenly appeared in front of it, intercepting the punch. Qi Lin'er's fist hit the barrier, but it didn't stop his fist there. Instead, his fist vanished.

The part that vanished reappeared behind Qi Lin'er.

Even a casual attack of his carried lethal force, so the blow he struck himself with was no less devastating. He convulsed, and blood gushed up his throat.

However, the pain from his injury only fueled his ferocity. Qi Lin'er resolutely swallowed the blood in his throat. He pivoted backward and unleashed a back roundhouse kick with the force of saber strike.

Yang Shenlong extended a single finger, and there was a brilliant flash of light.

Boom!

Qi Lin'er's roundhouse kick landed on the distant mountain wall, producing a deafening rumble as the mountain trembled.

Meanwhile, Yang Shenlong appeared behind him, grabbing the back of his neck and slamming him against the mountain wall with a thud.

Pinned against the mountain wall, Qi Lin'er lost all ability to resist. Gritting his teeth, he snarled, "You'd better never let your guard down. Because I'll definitely kill you if I get the chance."

"Then you'd better keep looking for that chance instead of provoking the Mount Shu Sect's people," Yang Shenlong said indifferently, totally unbothered by Qi Lin'er's murderous intent. "I don't want you to suddenly die out there."

"Heh," Qi Lin'er sneered. "

As if they would dare kill me?"

"Chu Liang has returned. He's not someone you can provoke without repercussions. You haven't exactly been stealthy with the deeds you've done. While you are on Mirage Mountain, we can keep you safe. But if you leave..."

Killing a disciple of Penglai meant risking a war with the Penglai Supreme Sect, but Yang Shenlong was well aware of Chu Liang's methods. If he wanted to handle things covertly, he had countless ways to do so.

"You're just a coward. Losing to him that one time scared you shitless," Qi Lin'er taunted, even as he remained immobile under Yang Shenlong's grip.

Suddenly, thunderous rumbling rang out in the distant sky, followed by a yell.

"QI LIN'ER!!!"

Qi Lin'er and Yang Shenlong turned to see a garishly colorful airship hovering above Mirage Mountain. Standing on its deck was a man with an enraged expression.

It was none other than Chu Liang.

He was holding up a large flag, looking majestic and imposing. As the flag fluttered in the wind, it revealed glimpses of the huge word it had been embroidered with—"WAR."

"COME MEET YOUR DEATH!"

...

Everyone in the Penglai Supreme Sect was shocked by Chu Liang's sudden appearance. Yang Yuhu was the only exception.

Outside the Penglai Supreme Sect, news that Chu Liang would appear at the Penglai Supreme Sect had already spread like wildfire.

Earlier... when Chu Liang found out that Qi Lin'er was responsible for the deaths of many members of the Four Extremities Hall, Chu Liang contemplated the situation briefly.

After discovering at the Heavenly Peak Banquet that the Penglai Supreme Sect was colluding with Taotie City, Chu Liang braced himself for the minor losses that the Mount Shu Sect might suffer.

After all, the Penglai Supreme Sect was a powerful force. The Mount Shu Sect, on the other hand, did not have a legendary artifact. They would naturally be at a disadvantage if the situation were to escalate, making it difficult for them to compete against the Penglai Supreme Sect.

Yet, the Penglai Supreme Sect had resorted to murder, crossing a line that left no room for reconciliation.

If Chu Liang wanted to punish Qi Lin'er, he could do it either overtly or covertly.

If he were to act covertly, he would need to plan meticulously, and he could never let the Penglai Supreme Sect discover it. However, Qi Lin'er's cultivation power wasn't weak; it would be too difficult to try and kill him quietly like killing a chicken. Moreover, the Penglai Supreme Sect possessed the legendary artifact the East Sea Chrono Wheel, which had the powerful ability to look into the past like the Shadow of Radiance.

Since a covert approach wasn't very feasible, an overt approach would have to do.

Chu Liang sent a message in the Circle of Immortal Friends.

Qi Lin'er of the Penglai Supreme Sect slaughtered the innocent couriers of my sect's Red Cotton Peak and stole our valuable items. However, we, the Mount Shu Sect, believe this to be the personal actions of Qi Lin'er and that they are unrelated to the Penglai Supreme Sect. Personal grudges should be settled privately. I, Chu Liang, will go to Mirage Mountain to challenge Qi Lin'er to a battle to the death and resolve this grudge.

The message caused an uproar in the Circle of Immortal Friends. Nearly a thousand cultivators from various immortal sects had access to the communication network, and they were usually quite active on it. So, when they saw Chu Liang's message, they quickly called their friends and rushed over Mirage Mountain to watch the spectacle.

Along with the Red Cotton Peak staff who accompanied Chu Liang, a vast crowd of people and their mounts from various immortal sects had tagged along behind the Lianglong. The sight left the disciples of the Penglai Supreme Sect stunned, thinking for a moment that these people were launching a raid on Penglai.

Yang Yuhu had been away from Penglai, handling some matters. When he felt the token's repeated vibrations, he thought it was probably a major event involving some immortal sect. However, when he finally checked the messages, he was surprised to find that sect was his own.

He rushed back at lightning speed, arriving just in time to see Chu Liang's airship coming to a stop over Mirage Mountain.

Yang Yuhu hurried forward and exclaimed, "Chu Liang! What are you doing? Get a hold of yourself!"

Chu Liang had just stepped off the airship and was flying down toward the mountain.

Upon seeing Yang Yuhu, Chu Liang didn't forget to politely cup his hands together in greeting. "Brother Yang, I explained the cause and the consequence earlier. I trust you've read my explanation?"

"If Qi Lin'er has indeed done wrong, I will report it to the sect and see that he is punished severely," Yang Yuhu said, glancing at the massive crowd behind Chu Liang. "Are you trying to start a war between the two sects?"

Chu Liang shook his head. "You exaggerate, Brother Yang. These friends who have gathered have nothing to do with the Mount Shu Sect. They're just here to watch."

Then, with a flick of his right hand, he planted the "War" flag firmly before the gates of Mirage Mountain.

Boom!

The hearts of the spectating cultivators shook at this scene. Although it was exactly what they had gone there for, they couldn't help but feel shocked by it.

This was the Penglai Supreme Sect—the leading righteous sect in the world, known for their domineering ways. They were always the ones that provoked others. Who would dare to provoke them?

But today, Chu Liang had boldly planted a war flag right in front of their mountain gate!

As Chu Liang landed, Qi Lin'er was released, and he walked over to Chu Liang. He looked at Chu Liang with an extremely excited gaze.

"I didn't think you'd dare to come here..." Qi Lin'er said, visibly restless and itching for action. His eyes were filled with a bloodthirsty gleam. "I really underestimated you."

"I know you've always harbored resentment toward me, and if this were a normal situation, I would not even bother arguing with you. After all, with the Penglai Supreme Sect supporting you, someone will always protect you no matter how arrogantly you behave. So, I don't mind even if I have to face some injustice," Chu Liang replied.

His smile vanished as he glared at Qi Lin'er. "But you did something you absolutely should never have done—murder. If you are not punished for that, there will be no justice or righteousness left in this world!"

He spoke sonorously, his words resounding through the surrounding land and sky. The Penglai Supreme Sect disciples who were initially confused as to what had happened now understood the full story.

Chu Liang yelled, "Qi Lin'er, you've crossed the line!"

He then threw a scroll toward Qi Lin'er.

Qi Lin'er caught it and unrolled it to find a contract for a battle to the death. In short, the contract stated that the two of them had made a private agreement to settle their grudge in a battle to the death. Regardless of who lived or died in the match, neither of their sects could use it as a pretext for conflict.

Chu Liang had already signed his name at the bottom of the contract.

"HAHAHA..." Qi Lin'er laughed more wildly than before. "So, if I sign this, I won't be held responsible for killing you, right?"

"At least, that's what I mean by it," Chu Liang replied, his face still emotionless.

Qi Lin'er bit his finger and fiercely smeared his blood at the bottom of the contract, leaving a bright red mark on the scroll.

"Then let's fight!"

Chapter 702: Suicide?

"They're fighting? They're fighting!"

"Qi Lin'er ambushed and killed Red Cotton Peak's people, and Chu Liang went straight to Penglai to challenge him in a battle to the death!"

"The Penglai Supreme Sect has always been sinister and domineering. I support Chu Liang!"

"Justice lives on in the hearts of the people. I support Chu Liang!"

"Red Cotton Peak sells cheap but good quality stuff. I support Chu Liang!"

"I like Jiangjiang. I just want to see a fight between two people I dislike!"

"Indeed."

"Seconded!"

Unlike The Seven Stars Gazette, which published about major events that had happened in the month just passed, the Circle of Immortal Friends had the major benefit of immediacy. Chu Liang had shared the news beforehand. So, before the two main characters even took their places, the crowd was ready for the show, and they even called their friends over and dragged their families there too.

"Esteemed teacher! Chu Liang of the Mount Shu Sect is going to fight Qi Lin'er of the Penglai Supreme Sect in a battle to the death. Let's go watch!"

"What? Mount Shu is going to war with Penglai? Let's go watch!"

"What? The Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten are about to throw the world into chaos? Second Aunt, let's go watch!"

"What? The human world is going to be destroyed? Husband, I might as well tell you the truth... The child is the neighbour's..."

News of the battle spread much faster and wider than Chu Liang had expected. His original intention was to use the Circle of Immortal Friends' extensive network to draw interest, ensuring Penglai wouldn't dare overlook the injustice and intervene forcibly. However, he had underestimated the passionate interest that people had in drama. Once these normally ascetic cultivators got interested in something, they exploded with immense energy to join the fray.

By the time Chu Liang and Qi Lin'er took their places on an island near Penglai, thousands of cultivators had gathered around them, resembling a grand assembly of immortals. A small number of them were acquaintances of the two people involved, but most of the cultivators had likely traveled there from near and far after hearing there would be a good show to watch.

Nevertheless, this worked to Chu Liang's advantage; now the Penglai Supreme Sect wouldn't be able to use force to suppress the matter. On the surface, it appeared that only the Yang brothers and a group of the younger Penglai Supreme Sect disciples had come to watch the battle, but it was very likely that many powerful elders were watching from the shadows.

Under the gazes of so many onlookers, Qi Lin'er became even more excited.

His eyes were filled with murderous intent as he glared at Chu Liang. "I'm truly very glad you didn't die. This way, I can return the humiliation you gave me a hundredfold..."

Now that they'd completely shed all pretense of cordiality, Chu Liang was no longer polite.

He said coldly, "Do you have some kind of serious illness? I've always thought there was something wrong with you. As a kid, you were a young psycho, and now that you're older, you're just an older psycho. I heard you emerged from a split stone. Was the saber strike crooked? Did it knock out half your brains? I defeated at least eighty, if not a hundred, people at the Assembly of Immortal Sects. Why are you the only one that feels humiliated? Why are you the only one that has so much crap to say? Are you some demon that was born from a weasel's fart? All I did was step on your face once. Honestly, I think you even looked better afterward. It's like I gave you a free makeover, and yet, instead of thanking me, you're holding a grudge? You're a really ungrateful and vicious person, rotten to the core. No wonder your parents died when you were a fetus..."

"You—" Qi Lin'er uttered, stunned. He had never experienced such a barrage of insults.

"What about me?" Chu Liang raised his chin. "Do you think I look like your father? Let me tell you, I don't have a habit of falling in love with stones. Go find someone else to be your father. I think Daoist Chi Niu from your sect fits the bill pretty well. He looks like someone who sows seeds by the riverside and seems to share a bloodline with you and your missing brain cells. Maybe you two really are related..."

Qi Lin'er's eyes widened in rage. "I—"

At the same time, there was the sound of an almost imperceptible cold snort in midair.

Chu Liang raised his eyebrows. "What about you? Even if I were the result of twenty generations of cow and horse crossbreeding, I wouldn't devolve into someone like you. If you kneel and beg me, maybe I'll be merciful enough to step on your face again. It might make you look less hideous..."

"Aaaarghhhh!!" Qi Lin'er roared, his chest heaving. "I'll kill you!"

Before he was even done talking, he lunged at Chu Liang.

A cold glint flashed in Chu Liang's eyes. He took half a step back and swiftly dodged Qi Lin'er's attack.

Swoosh.

Considering Chu Liang's personality, he wouldn't usually waste time saying that much nonsense in a battle to the death. The main reason for his verbal tirade was to provoke his opponent. Against a foe with a not-so-great brain, this was the perfect way to throw them into disarray.

Chu Liang could now use minimal movements to control Qi Lin'er's movements. He had obviously gained the upper hand.

Qi Lin'er missed his target and landed with a loud crash, smashing a deep pit into the ground. Meanwhile, Chu Liang moved past Qi Lin'er in a flash, appearing behind him.

Chu Liang unleashed his heaviest punch. His fist was imbued with Divine Dragon Fire and surrounded by crackling violet lightning, carrying the full might of a killing blow.

However, Qi Lin'er reacted quickly. After his failed attack, he swiftly turned around to defend. He crossed his arms to block Chu Liang's powerful punch. The collision produced a thunderous boom.

Qi Lin'er successfully blocked the punch, but the impact caused him to tremble badly, and his feet sank uncontrollably into the ground.

Chu Liang had the advantage, but he did not show Qi Lin'er any leniency. As he pulled his right fist back, he threw out his left fist. Wrapped in lightning and fire, Chu Liang punched downward with a devastating Lightning-Fire Killing Strike!

Boom!

Qi Lin'er blocked again, but Chu Liang immediately followed up with another punch. His fists rained down, forming an unrelenting string of attacks!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Qi Lin'er was driven lower and lower into the ground with each strike until only his torso remained above ground.

The scene, reminiscent of Di Nufeng's brutal combat style, was an excellent display of Chu Liang's offensive power. The Penglai Supreme Sect disciples that Qi Lin'er had offended couldn't help but feel a sense of satisfaction, wishing Chu Liang would smash this troublemaker to bits.

In the clouds above, Chu Liang's brothers in the Great Astral Sect cheered loudly. "Brother Chu, hit him in the middle!"

In terms of popularity, Chu Liang held an overwhelming advantage in this battle to the death. If the outcome were decided by audience votes, Chu Liang would wipe the floor with Qi Lin'er a thousand times over—back and forth, and around corners.

But it's not that easy... Chu Liang thought, gritting his teeth.

He often mocked his teacher, inwardly and outwardly, about how she transformed into a phoenix, but in serious battles like these, he hated that he couldn't do the same.

His teacher could rely on the indiscriminate destructive power of the Samadhi True Fire. His Lightning-Fire Killing Strike simply couldn't compare.

Qi Lin'er had been born with bronze skin and iron bones. After years of tempering, he had the strength to rival the top prodigies of the various immortal sects. He had only been twelve years old then, so there was no doubt he was much more powerful now.

Although Chu Liang's relentless strikes appeared imposing, he didn't actually inflict that much damage on Qi Lin'er. Despite his arrogant demeanor, Qi Lin'er was indeed extremely experienced in combat. When Chu Liang had the upper hand, Qi Lin'er didn't counterattack. Instead, he focused on defense, waiting for Chu Liang to exhaust his strength.

Seeing that, Chu Liang deliberately showed a slight opening. He smashed down with his left fist and then hung his right fist in midair.

Noticing there was an opportunity to attack, Qi Lin'er swung his arms wide in a stable, open stance. He launched an explosive counterattack, punching with both hands like an overlord lifting a cauldron![1]

Nevertheless, Chu Liang was very ready for Qi Lin'er's attack. Instead of clashing directly, Chu Liang retreated a few steps and flung out three orbs of light with his right hand.

They were Bewildering Beads!

Whoosh.

The Bewildering Beads could affect anyone, including Qi Lin'er. Caught off guard, he fell victim to the enchanted tool. His senses were instantly thrown into disarray.

The Bewildering Beads were a game changer. With Qi Lin'er's defenses down, Chu Liang couldn't let this opportunity to attack slip away. His right arm transformed into a dragon claw, and he ruthlessly slashed Qi Lin'er!

Squelch.

Blood splattered everywhere!

The dragon claw had ripped Qi Lin'er's belly open, and the force of the attack hurled him back into the deep pit. When he regained his senses, an excruciating pain overwhelmed him!

"Raaaaar!!!"

The agony made him let out a beast-like roar, fully awakening his feral nature. There was a flash of azure light, and then he became covered in scales like he had put on armor, forcibly sealing his gaping wound.

However, before Qi Lin'er could get back on his feet, Chu Liang descended from the sky, stomping down hard.

Boom!

With Chu Liang's foot on his chest, Qi Lin'er was once again driven into the earth by Chu Liang. Qi Lin'er summoned all of his strength to resist but found that the power of the Dragon Soul he had activated was ineffective against Chu Liang.

Every time he had the impulse to kill Chu Liang, the power of the Dragon Soul resisted his will.

Qi Lin'er realized, He's protected by the Dragon God!

"Aaaaaahhhh!!!!" Qi Lin'er cried out angrily.

He broke into a fit of rage and radiated azure light all over.

Seeing that Qi Lin'er was about to explode, Chu Liang leaped back at once.

Boom!

It was just as Chu Liang had expected. In the next instant, there was an explosion in the deep pit. Countless beams of azure light shot out like a barrage of arrows. Chu Liang leaped hurriedly, dodging them just in time.

Qi Lin'er climbed out of the pit, dripping wet with blood. He resembled an evil spirit that had crawled out from the depths of the netherworld.

Even Chu Liang was quite startled by the sight. He actually detonated the power of the Dragon Soul within him! From now on, he won't have even a trace of that power—just to ensure that his duel with me today wouldn't be negatively affected by it.

Devoid of the power of the Dragon Soul, Qi Lin'er looked utterly pitiful, but his gaze grew even fiercer. He gritted his teeth, raised his hand, and then stuck just his index and middle finger out, folding the rest. Treating his fingers like a saber, he swung his hand swiftly.

However, his attack wasn't aimed at Chu Liang but himself!

The same question arose in everyone's mind. "He's trying to kill himself?"

Only Yang Shenlong narrowed his eyes and muttered, "What nonsense!"

Squelch!

Qi Lin'er slashed his neck with his hand-saber, actually severing it. Blood sprayed everywhere... He died on the spot?!

Chapter 703: Just Who Do You Think You Are?

Did he really kill himself?

Everyone who saw this scene, including Chu Liang, felt astonished.

Chu Liang had scolded Qi Lin'er and then beaten him... but that shouldn't have been enough to drive him to end his own life, right? Was his personality really that extreme?

However, Chu Liang felt something was off. Someone inherently evil like that couldn't possibly end their life so easily. After all, Qi Lin'er was always doing bad things. How could he suddenly do something so noble?

Chu Liang was right.

A while later, a ball of dazzling azure light emerged from Qi Lin'er's body, enveloping him and lifting him into the air. As the brilliant light swirled around him, the fatal wound at his neck healed rapidly. The light then receded into Qi Lin'er, making his muscular figure glow with divine light.

Chu Liang muttered, "This is..."

He realized that some powerful force seemed to have descended, preventing Qi Lin'er's death.

In midair, Yang Yuhu looked at his elder brother and asked, "Is this the sect leader's doing?"

"That's right," Yang Shenlong said with a grim expression. "The sect leader implanted the Pure Jade Divine Power in Qi Lin'er, allowing him to defy death once. Upon getting killed, the divine power sustains his life force and immediately injects him with immense power, ensuring he can escape any situation. However, this wretch actually forced the divine power to activate just to make him more powerful..."

Hearing that, Yang Yuhu understood what had happened.

In short, this was a life-saving measure that Daoist Cangsheng had set up for Qi Lin'er. The purpose was to give him a fighting chance to survive when he was on the verge of death.

No one could have expected that Qi Lin'er would forcibly trigger it himself!

"If he suffers another fatal injury now, there will be nothing left to save him," Yang Shenlong said.

Qi Lin'er initially had two life-saving measures—the Azure Dragon's Dragon Soul Protection and Daoist Cangsheng's Pure Jade Divine Power as dual life-saving measures. Yet, he destroyed both of them just so he could defeat Chu Liang.

"So, this is the power that old man gave me? It really is formidable..." Qi Lin'er muttered as he opened his eyes.

The golden flames in his irises had turned into Pure Jade Divine Light.

He let out a sinister laugh, "Kekekekekeke..."

Chu Liang examined Qi Lin'er with a cautious gaze, unable to determine just how strong his new power was.

That means... he's much more powerful than me now.

Whoosh!

Qi Lin'er suddenly transformed into a beam of azure light, flying over to Chu Liang in a flash. He shot down like a meteor, making it impossible for Chu Liang to evade.

With his extraordinary talent, Qi Lin'er had been able to rival the top prodigies of the other immortal sects when he was just twelve years old. He had thought that six years later, he would be able to get revenge by crushing Chu Liang effortlessly. Yet, to his dismay, Chu Liang had continued to progress at lightning speed, maintaining the difference in power between them.

The feelings of shame Qi Lin'er had felt from when Chu Liang stepped on his head six years ago erupted once more. No matter what happened, he was determined to kill Chu Liang today! He had to stomp on Chu Liang's head and return the humiliation a hundredfold!

Boom!

Chu Liang activated his Mystical Winged Divine Dragon Transcendent Form, his dragon wings closed around him to shield him from the beam of divine light with all his might. The explosive impact of the collision knocked him off his feet.

It was too powerful. That Pure Jade Divine Power was undoubtedly the power of a seventh-realm cultivator.

With no means of defending against it, Chu Liang was sent flying with just one punch. The moment Chu Liang hit the ground, Qi Lin'er leaped high into the air, preparing to stomp on Chu Liang's head.

In that moment, Chu Liang caught a glimpse of Qi Lin'er before he struck. Yet, Chu Liang didn't dodge. Instead, he shifted his body upward, causing Qi Lin'er's foot to stomp on his chest instead of his head.

Boom!

That stomp caused the ground beneath Chu Liang's feet to crack, splitting into numerous chunks! The heavy blow forced Chu Liang to spit out a mouthful of blood, his radiant golden blood spraying high into the air.

As Qi Lin'er watched Chu Liang cough up blood under his foot, the emotions he had suppressed for the past six years erupted in an instant, giving him an incredible high.

Everyone who dared to offend me must suffer a painful death!

Swish!

Right then, the blood that Chu Liang had spat out suddenly transformed into a sharp sword made of golden divine light, heading straight for Qi Lin'er's heart!

If Qi Lin'er had studied Chu Liang's battles carefully, he would have known that Chu Liang always had a trump card for the final stage of the battle. This time, it was a technique he had cultivated day and night—the Blood-Refinement Technique: Divine Light.

Just like the life-saving divine power that Daoist Changsheng had given Qi Lin'er, which could only activate when he was at the brink of death, Chu Liang's blood-refinement technique could only be used at the very last moment.

When the enemy believed Chu Liang to be gravely injured, that was usually the moment they were least vigilant. That was when the blood essence that Chu Liang had refined over the years would leave his body, transforming into the sharpest legendary sword!

"Ugh..."

The sword of golden light pierced through Qi Lin'er's heart! The force of the strike threw him violently into the air!

If Qi Lin'er had an ordinary corporeal body, this strike would have undoubtedly been fatal. However, he had the Pure Jade Divine Power to protect him. The radiant azure light condensed at his chest and desperately protected his heart, barely keeping him alive.

Nevertheless, that didn't matter, as Chu Liang was ready to strike again! He had suffered a heavy blow, but he still had enough strength to deal another lethal attack.

Leaping high into the air, he transformed his right hand into a dragon claw!

Just as Chu Liang's final strike was about to land, someone shouted from above, "Stop!"

Boom!

Chu Liang completed the strike anyway, but all he struck was empty space.

Qi Lin'er's battered form was several dozen zhang away. Someone had descended and moved Qi Lin'er to safety.

"Yang Shenlong..." Chu Liang stared at him, his gaze heavy. "We signed an agreement that it would be a battle to the death. Is the Penglai Supreme Sect going to interfere?"

Yang Shenlong remained silent for a moment.

It was indeed dishonorable for him to interfere, but the Penglai Supreme Sect couldn't just stand by and watch Qi Lin'er perish there. The elders behind the scenes couldn't make their presence known, while other members of the sect might fail to save Qi Lin'er and even endanger themselves in the process. Yang Shenlong, on the other hand, was part of the younger generation and a seventh-realm Eminent One. He was the most suitable person to take action.

After some thought, Yang Shenlong said, "Regarding the Red Cotton Peak incident, we will provide a resolution that you can accept. I also understand that it is improper to interfere with a battle to the death. You are undoubtedly the victor today, but... Qi Lin'er cannot die."

A wave of boos erupted from the crowd. This was supposed to be a battle to the death. Yang Shenlong's interference was clearly a violation of the rules, blatantly showing the Penglai Supreme Sect's arrogance.

Yet, no one dared to step forward and challenge Yang Shenlong, a seventh-realm Eminent One and the best of the Penglai Supreme Sect's younger disciples. It seemed that Qi Lin'er's destined defeat and death had been overturned by Yang Shenlong, at the cost of his own reputation.

"Is that so?" Chu Liang asked, looking at Yang Shenlong. Then he suddenly smiled. "You're already at the seventh realm now. I can't do anything to you anyway. Go ahead and take him away."

Yang Shenlong gazed at Chu Liang's calm expression and gave a slight nod. "Thank you."

Then he turned to leave with Qi Lin'er.

However, the moment he tried to fly, he felt an incredibly threatening aura rising from below.

No, it can't be Chu Liang. He's only at the pinnacle of the fifth realm. He shouldn't be exuding such a threatening presence.

Who is this Eminent One?

Yang Shenlong abruptly turned back, but the only person he saw was Chu Liang!

Yang Shenlong was astonished. Chu Liang's aura was indeed of the fifth realm moments ago, but it suddenly rose to the sixth realm. Then in the blink of an eye, it seems to have risen again, this time to the seventh realm. Just what is going on?

The tens of thousands of cultivators watching were equally wide-eyed.

What is going on? Could it be that Chu Liang has been suppressing his cultivation power all along?

The truth was that he hadn't. Chu Liang had never deliberately suppressed his cultivation power. He had indeed been at the pinnacle of the fifth realm just moments ago, but he had already fully developed his transcendent form.

So, once he accumulated enough cultivation energy, he could breakthrough straight into the higher levels of the sixth realm. Furthermore, he already had a complete understanding of a Great Dao. Once he reached the pinnacle of the sixth realm, he could use his understanding of the Great Dao of Severing the Void to break through to the seventh realm!

However, it was extremely important to choose the right main Great Dao. The Great Dao of Severing the Void had always been a cultivation legacy of the Endless Sword Sect, so Chu Liang had been undecided as to whether he wanted to use this Great Dao to break through to the seventh realm. Additionally, his transcendent form still needed further tempering, so he had been waiting for the right time.

And Chu Liang felt that this was it. The right time had come.

He had a perfected transcendent form, a complete understanding of a Great Dao, and a formidable foe before him. If Chu Liang didn't break through to the seventh realm now, then when would he?

Chu Liang's aura grew explosively, reaching unimaginable heights. This was something no one could have foreseen. Even though Yang Shenlong had been on guard against a sudden outburst from Chu Liang, he hadn't anticipated it would be this powerful.

Whoosh.

Chu Liang vanished and instantly reappeared before Yang Shenlong.

Just moments ago, he had been at the fifth realm, but now he had become a seventh-realm Eminent One, placing him on equal footing with Yang Shenlong. Things were moving too quickly for anyone to react.

Moreover, the Demon-Slaying Sword was in Chu Liang's hand.

Whoosh!

With a swing of his sword, a fountain of blood sprayed out as a human head flew into the air.

Qi Lin'er's head soared skyward, his expression frozen in shock and disbelief. It was likely that, even as he died, he didn't understand how Chu Liang had suddenly gained such incredible cultivation power.

Yang Shenlong's pupils dilated, reflecting Chu Liang's fierce sword light in his eyes.

"Did you really think that you could save a person I wanted to kill just because you said so?" Chu Liang asked in a low, steady voice. "Just who do you think you are?"

Chapter 704: Was This Your Doing?

Qi Lin'er left the world peacefully.

...

When Qi Lin'er's head flew into the air, the indignation on the faces of the spectators turned into shock and disbelief. If there was a freeze frame of this moment, it would show how vivid and varied their expressions were.

Qi Lin'er was indeed a menace to society—loathed by humans and disliked even by dogs. He rarely appeared in the world of immortality cultivators, yet he had managed to attract a great deal of animosity. Nevertheless, he was a disciple of the Penglai Supreme Sect. Even a chicken from Penglai would strut around arrogantly when it ventured outside Penglai—let alone someone like Qi Lin'er, who had the support and protection of Daoist Cangsheng.

The spectators had thoughts like these.

Despite that, Chu Liang actually dared to kill him?

And he had to do it like that...

After Chu Liang won the battle, Yang Shenlong stepped in and saved Qi Lin'er. Then Chu Liang broke through two realms, went after them, and decapitated Qi Lin'er in public. That was excessively vicious...

Hang on.

Isn't there something weird about what happened?

Who leaps straight from the fifth realm to the seventh? Wouldn't they feel as though something was missing in their cultivation journey?

Do they just not like the number six?

Skipping stages was a rare phenomenon, especially in the earlier realms of cultivation. This was because the first five realms required steady, step-by-step progress, with no shortcuts.

The only exception was the sixth realm. There were quite a few cultivators who had developed a transcendent form in the fifth realm and advanced straight to the middle or later stages of the sixth realm upon breaking through. There had even been historical precedents of cultivators advancing straight to the pinnacle of the sixth realm.

However, jumping from the fifth to the seventh realm was a phenomenon that had never even been heard of.

This was because fully developing a transcendent form was far more difficult than achieving Major Perfection when circulating the foundational qi of the five elements at the fifth realm. With the time needed to fully develop a transcendent form, they would have already advanced to the sixth realm by cultivating normally.

What kind of strange fifth-realm cultivator would intensely learn and practice techniques for sixth-realm cultivators before the ones for fifth-realm cultivators? Even if they were talented, progressing from one realm to the next one up in a consecutive manner would surely be faster than trying to skip a realm.

To advance straight to the pinnacle of the sixth realm, they would need the perfect combination of the right timing, location, and people. It was exceedingly rare that anyone could achieve such a feat.

Furthermore, to advance to the seventh realm, they would also need to have a complete understanding of a Great Dao...

Fifth-realm cultivators were usually not even part of the conversation at this point. This was something that sixth-realm and seventh-realm cultivators had to deal with. Completely comprehending a Great Dao was as difficult as ascending to the heavens for seventh-realm cultivators, let alone the numerous cultivators stuck at the pinnacle of the sixth realm, the threshold of the Heavenly Gate.

There were quite a few cultivators at the pinnacle of the sixth realm present among the spectators.

In their minds, it was like they had been stuck in front of a city's gates for years, desperately seeking entry without success. Hearing footsteps behind them, they were just about to turn around and jokingly tell the young man approaching them to queue up.

However, that young man then leaped high into the air, stepped on their heads, and jumped onto the city wall... That was when they saw the young man even had dog poop stuck to the sole of his shoes.

If they knew the truth about Chu Liang's cultivation journey, it would crush them even more.

Chu Liang had completely comprehended a Great Dao at the level of the seventh realm a little before he fully developed his transcendent form. If his comprehension of that Great Dao were split into a hundred parts, each part would still be enough for him to reach the seventh realm.

During the Assembly of Immortal Sects, Chu Liang had used the Sword Strike of Severing the Void, displaying excessive might. Nevertheless, few would imagine that the truth was actually this insane... especially not the cultivators stuck at the pinnacle of the sixth realm. It would be best if they never found out for the rest of their lives.

There was something that would devastate them further—Chu Liang was actually unsatisfied with his sudden progress.

For a seventh-realm cultivator, the main Great Dao that they cultivated was of utmost importance.

Many seventh-realm cultivators comprehended multiple Great Daos, and this was an important measure of strength among the seventh-realm cultivators. There were rare monsters who could be overwhelmingly powerful with just one Great Dao, but generally, the more Great Daos a seventh-realm cultivator comprehended, the stronger they became.

However, the main Great Dao that they relied on to ascend to the seventh realm was usually their strongest. If they wanted to break through to the eighth realm, it was almost certain that relying on their main Great Dao would give them the highest odds of success.

For example, Daoist Yan could easily comprehend other Great Daos. Yet, she insisted on walking the arduous path of contending for a Great Dao from the Sword Emperor, which spoke volumes about her determination.

There were others who were content just to reach the seventh realm and didn't think too far ahead, as advancing to the eighth realm required much more than just hard work. On the other hand, young geniuses at the sixth realm would already be selecting their Great Dao.

Thus, the challenging Great Dao of Severing the Void had not been Chu Liang's first choice. He had originally planned to slowly comprehend a new Great Dao, leaving the Great Dao of Severing the Void for after he reached the pinnacle of the sixth realm.

However, Chu Liang had reached a boiling point at the end of the battle to the death. If he didn't kill Qi Lin'er right there and then, he would have emotional and financial issues. It would be difficult

for him to calm his rage, and Red Cotton Peak's future development would be hindered. No matter what, Qi Lin'er had to die today.

Everyone had thought that Chu Liang was simply venting his anger and wouldn't truly dare to kill Qi Lin'er.

Chu Liang was the only one who knew the truth.

He had gone there with the sole intent to kill!

And if he didn't kill Qi Lin'er, he absolutely wouldn't leave!

...

Swish.

To Chu Liang's surprise, a golden phantom visible only to him floated out from Qi Lin'er's corpse.

This... is an imprint—the kind that the White Pagoda collects?

So, this kid wasn't even human!

No wonder he was born with such an extraordinary physique like that of a demon. His origins must be far from ordinary.

Chu Liang had also noticed Yang Shenlong's pupils dilate when Qi Lin'er died. That was when he realized that Qi Lin'er's might be even more important than he thought. If Qi Lin'er were merely the illegitimate child of someone like Daoist Cangsheng, it wouldn't warrant such concern from someone like Yang Shenlong.

Before Yang Shenlong could respond, thunderclaps suddenly ripped through the air. Azure clouds surged across the sky, blocking out the sun. Above the clouds, there was a figure exuding divine might.

This man had thick eyebrows and narrow phoenix-like eyes, a pale complexion framed by long hair. He wore a stern, solemn expression that radiated authority.

At this moment, his eyes burned with rage, and the turbulent clouds around him reflected his roiling emotions.

He was Daoist Cangsheng!

Daoist Changsheng was the sect leader of the Penglai Supreme Sect. It was rare for someone at his level to get emotionally involved, let alone lose his composure like this. The onlookers quickly realized that Chu Liang had caused a monumental disaster.

The seventh-realm elders on Mirage Mountain might occasionally take an interest in the matters of their juniors, but those at the eighth realm typically wouldn't bother with such minor conflicts.

Daoist Cangsheng had been comprehending the Dao in closed-door cultivation when Qi Lin'er activated the protective divine power Daoist Cangsheng had implanted in him. That was when Daoist Cangsheng finally sensed something and opened his eyes.

Afterward, Qi Lin'er had the upper hand over Chu Liang, only to be severely injured by him. Then Yang Shenlong intervened to save him, but Chu Liang launched a sudden and ruthless attack. Everything happened so quickly. By the time Daoist Cangsheng sensed Qi Lin'er's impending death, it was already too late.

When he arrived, his first action wasn't to look at Chu Liang. Instead, he raised his hand and retrieved Qi Lin'er's remains, including his head and spilled blood.

Simultaneously, the azure clouds above his head dispersed, revealing what seemed to be half of a massive dark bronze wheel. The other half remained hidden beyond the horizon.

"The East Sea Chrono Wheel!" the crowd exclaimed in shock.

"He wouldn't be thinking of..." someone muttered. He had figured out Daoist Cangsheng's intentions but found it hard to believe.

The power of the East Sea Chrono Wheel lay in its ability to manipulate time. It could even reverse past events for short periods of time. However, using the East Sea Chrono Wheel consumed immense spiritual qi. There had rarely been any matter important enough that warranted using this precious legendary artifact. Even when prodigious disciples of the Penglai Supreme Sect fell in the past, none of them had ever justified using this legendary artifact.

Was Daoist Cangsheng really willing to pay such a heavy price for Qi Lin'er?

Boom, boom, boom!

There was no pointless exchange of words. An enormous amount of spiritual qi was being consumed with every passing moment. Daoist Cangsheng wasted no time in activating the East Sea Chrono Wheel. Amidst the billowing azure clouds, the mountain-sized wheel rotated with a thunderous roar, and Qi Lin'er's body began to undergo a mystical transformation.

First, an azure radiance enveloped him, countless rays of light converging on his form. The light flowed down as the wheel turned, reattaching Qi Lin'er's head and sticking broken bones back together.

When the azure light faded, Qi Lin'er's broken form was made anew again, without any trace of injury. In the blink of an eye, Qi Lin'er's appearance had been restored before the battle.

But his eyes remained closed.

Despite looking like he was alive, Qi Lin'er exuded an unparalleled sense of peace.

After a brief pause, Daoist Cangsheng let out a soft murmur of surprise. He placed his hand on Qi Lin'er's body and narrowed his gaze, finally turning his attention to Chu Liang.

Daoist Cangsheng spoke without a note of anger in his voice. "His life essence has been taken. Even the East Sea Chrono Wheel cannot bring it back... Was this your doing?"

Chapter 705: A Day Full of Unexpected Events.

"I don't know," Chu Liang said, appearing very much baffled.

Naturally, he wasn't denying about killing Qi Lin'er, but he truly had no idea about this so-called "life essence."

However, after a moment of thought, he guessed it might have been the golden imprint that the White Pagoda extracted, which had nothing to do with the divine sense or soul. It turned out that the golden imprint was the most fundamental essence of a being's life—both the soul and corporeal body stemmed from this tiny fragment of spiritual energy in the world.

In fact, he had long been curious about what the golden imprint used for rewards in the White Pagoda really was. In this world, spiritual energy followed the principle of conservation. Whether it was the soul, the corporeal body, or foundational qi, nothing could appear out of thin air.

It turned out to be something even more fundamental.

Currently, the White Pagoda contained numerous imprints from demonic beasts he had hunted and killed in the Sea of Demons. The imprint locked up at the innermost area was the one he had just obtained from Qi Lin'er. It was round and plump, resembling a stubborn stone.

The East Sea Chrono Wheel had the power to reverse time, but it required Qi Lin'er's life essence to be present. However, the life essence had already been taken by the White Pagoda and could not be reclaimed by the Chrono Wheel in its attempt to reverse time.

At this point, Chu Liang couldn't help but wonder, Does this mean that the White Pagoda is ranked above the East Sea Chrono Wheel?

In the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures, the East Sea Chrono Wheel was ranked fourth, with only three items ranked higher...

These thoughts flashed through his mind, but there was no time to dwell on them. Gazing up at the sky, Chu Liang could already sense Daoist Cangsheng's murderous intent!

Daoist Cangsheng's gaze was icy, and from the clouds above, a chilling aura swept down, pressing in like an unstoppable force.

He then spoke, "In that case, you will pay with your life in his place."

Upon finding out Chu Liang had killed Qi Lin'er, Daoist Cangsheng had remained unfazed. But when the East Sea Chrono Wheel failed to bring Qi Lin'er back to life, his killing intent finally stirred.

Although Qi Lin'er's death was enough to infuriate him, it wasn't enough for an Eminent One like Daoist Cangsheng to personally act against a junior like Chu Liang.

It was the fact that Chu Liang had somehow mysteriously taken the life essence that made Daoist Cangsheng wary.

He wanted to uncover the mystical abilities this Chu Liang might possess. If Chu Liang truly had any, he would force him to reveal them.

And if he didn't... Chu Liang would pay dearly for his impulsive actions.

Rumble, rumble, rumble!

The East Sea Chrono Wheel rumbled as it turned. Chu Liang felt the flow of time around him suddenly freeze, making the slightest movement impossible. It wasn't just his body—even his thoughts felt stuck, frozen in that instant.

Daoist Cangsheng's hand came down with overwhelming force, ready to crush him into pulp.

Chu Liang couldn't even retreat into the Blue Dragon's Hidden Realm. All he could do in this moment was await his death!

Chu Liang never expected Daoist Cangsheng to take action for Qi Lin'er.

He had thought that no matter how important Qi Lin'er's identity was, Daoist Cangsheng wouldn't seek revenge due to the agreement Chu Liang had made with Qi Lin'er.

In truth, Chu Liang hadn't been wrong to think that. It was just that the actual reason behind Daoist Cangsheng's actions was simply beyond his understanding.

Among the thousands of cultivators present, none could resist the power of the East Sea Chrono Wheel. They were nearly frozen in place alongside Chu Liang, forced to watch everything unfold.

Bang!

At that critical moment, Chu Liang suddenly appeared dozens of li away, landing on the peak of a distant island.

The vast azure clouds parted, revealing another towering figure emerging from within. It was none other than the leader of the Mount Shu Sect!

Venerable Wen Yuan's voice echoed across the land and sky. "Daoist Cangsheng, it was just a fight of pride between the youngsters. Why are you so angry?"

It was, of course, Venerable Wen Yuan who had acted just now, using the Great Dao of Primordial Chaos to manipulate space and save Chu Liang.

The crowd gasped in shock as the spectacle unfolded, quickly erupting into an uproar.

Heavens...

It was supposed to just be a battle to the death between Chu Liang and Qi Lin'er, but it had unexpectedly turned into a clash between the leaders of the Mount Shu Sect and the Penglai Supreme Sect!

This is so damn exciting!

Such a scene was rare, perhaps only happening once in a century. Despite the risk of being caught in the crossfire, the crowd simply stepped back a bit, unwilling to miss the chance to witness this spectacle.

The spectacle was more important than anything else.

"Wen Yuan..." Daoist Cangsheng's deep voice resonated like thunder. "I knew you were here..."

When Chu Liang first set out for Penglai, Venerable Wen Yuan already knew about it. The Four Guardian Elders of the Mount Shu Sect had sought his advice, as provoking the Penglai Supreme Sect was no small matter, and they needed to know his stance.

Venerable Wen Yuan simply said, "I trust Chu Liang; he knows his limits."

Venerable Wen Yuan gave Chu Liang as much freedom as possible, despite him often representing the Mount Shu Sect.

Although Venerable Wen Yuan seemed to not care at all, he had been observing Chu Liang and Qi Lin'er's fight using the Heavenly Sight and Earthly Hearing technique. When Daoist Cangsheng appeared, he rushed over and arrived just in time to see the attack on Chu Liang.

Facing Venerable Wen Yuan, Daoist Cangsheng's lofty and imposing demeanor softened slightly.

As someone of the same generation as Venerable Wen Yuan, he knew well that Wen Yuan was an exceptionally gifted person with unparalleled talent. He just felt it was a pity that such a person had been born into the Mount Shu Sect during its decline and had no choice but to lay low and bide his time.

The Great Daos of Time and Space had always been among the most profound. As the respective masters of the Great Dao of Primordial Chaos and Great Dao of Infinity, their confrontation was like divine lightning meeting earthly fire.

"Do you intend to fight me?" Daoist Cangsheng asked threateningly as he slowly revealed the East Sea Chrono Wheel.

"I am merely protecting a disciple of my sect," Venerable Wen Yuan replied firmly, showing no sign of retreat. "Qi Lin'er killed our people first, and he signed the agreement, agreeing to battle Chu Liang to the death. Since Penglai did not intervene before the agreement was signed, how can you act now?"

"I want to kill him not because of Qi Lin'er..." Daoist Cangsheng responded, "but because he has colluded with demonic evildoers!"

"What nonsense is this?" Wen Yuan raised an eyebrow. "The world knows Chu Liang as a righteous disciple of Mount Shu, one who has always eradicated evil. How can you make such a claim?"

"Because he possesses the power to take the essence of life. You surely know that the last being who wielded such power..." Daoist Cangsheng said slowly, "was the Demon God."

Suddenly, a thunderclap roared in the distance, as if to echo his words.

Rumble!

A strange gale then whipped through the air, and the waters of the East Sea surged tumultuously.

The anger of an Eminent One was enough to make the heavens and earth tremble.

Venerable Wen Yuan paused briefly before saying, “I will investigate and uncover the truth upon my return to Mount Shu. Regardless of the outcome, Chu Liang is a disciple of my sect and will not be executed here at your whim.”

With a piercing gaze, Daoist Cangsheng met his eyes. In the blink of an eye, he took action, moving swiftly with his long sleeves fluttering behind him!

The Chrono Wheel rumbled, freezing the flow of time around them. Daoist Cangsheng took one step forward and appeared right above Chu Liang, striking down with his hand once more! But because Wen Yuan was present this time, he unleashed his full cultivation power into the attack!

Nevertheless, Venerable Wen Yuan seemed ready for it. In the blink of an eye, Chu Liang vanished, replaced by a towering mountain.

Daoist Cangsheng easily shattered the mountain with a palm strike. However, as the Chrono Wheel spun, Chu Liang reappeared at his original spot, and even the shattered mountain was restored to its original form.

He used the East Sea Chrono Wheel to reverse Wen Yuan's divine skill. Now, this strike seemed destined to land upon Chu Liang!

At that moment, a surge of purple light erupted from the side—massive and serpentine—interposing itself between Daoist Cangsheng and Chu Liang, effectively blocking the palm strike.

Bang!

As the palm struck, it became clear that a giant multicolored serpent had appeared. The scaly creature shielded Chu Liang from the blow! Upon getting hit, the serpent let out a deafening roar as its body was violently torn in half!

This enormous serpent demon was at the eighth realm, yet it was nearly killed in a single strike!

The power of Daoist Cangsheng's palm was truly terrifying!

At the same time, a thick white mist spread across the East Sea, engulfing Chu Liang in an instant.

With a swift motion, Venerable Wen Yuan flipped his hand and pulled Chu Liang from the mist to his side. However, there was a flash of light, and the Chu Liang he had pulled from the mist became a strand of white hair.

This strand of white hair carried the faint scent of a fox.

It was another demon!

The purple serpent crashed into the sea with a deafening rumble, churning up massive waves as it fled in desperation. By the time the mist cleared, it had already disappeared without a trace.

If Daoist Cangsheng or Venerable Wen Yuan had given their full attention to Chu Liang, this would not have been possible. But as they fought, two eighth-realm greater demons seized the opportunity and kidnapped Chu Liang right in front of two major figures among the righteous cultivators!

Daoist Cangsheng's voice thundered, "I told you he was colluding with demonic forces. What do you have to say now?"

"These two demons clearly abducted Chu Liang. If anything happens to him, Daoist Cangsheng, you will bear the responsibility," Wen Yuan roared. At this point, he was clearly angry as well.

With how Venerable Wen Yuan was behaving, it seemed that if Daoist Cangsheng didn't have the East Sea Chrono Wheel, he would have definitely exchanged blows with him. However, without a legendary artifact, Venerable Wen Yuan ultimately didn't dare to engage in direct combat.

For now, his priority was to save Chu Liang. There was no time to waste on arguing.

The waves from the serpent demon's dive into the sea faded along with the mist. Many cultivators with weaker senses didn't even realize what had happened, while those with sharper perception showed expressions of shock. It had been a day full of unexpected events.

Multiple messages popped up in the Circle of Immortal Friends:

Chu Liang has been abducted by two demon kings!

Chapter 706: Cangsheng's Secret

Things were taking a dire turn.

As soon as Daoist Xuan Lu saw the turn of events, he knew his meticulously planned efforts wouldn't bring the rewards he expected. He knew Qi Lin'er was important, but he hadn't expected Qi Lin'er to be so important that Daoist Cangsheng would go as far as using the East Sea Chrono Wheel and attempt to kill someone, disregarding his status.

Even if Qi Lin'er were his son, he wouldn't have done something like this!

When the fight ended and the crowd dispersed, Yang Shenlong returned to the Mirage Mountain and once again stood before Daoist Xuan Lu.

"Senior Uncle Xuan Lu, is this the outcome you wanted?" Yang Shenlong asked.

"I did not foresee this," Daoist Xuan Lu admitted honestly.

"Weren't you trying to spark a war between Penglai and Mount Shu? Well, congratulations, you've succeeded," Yang Shenlong said, bluntly exposing Daoist Xuan Lu's hidden motive.

Within the Penglai Supreme Sect, a significant faction was dissatisfied with the current state of affairs. They believed that, as the most powerful immortal sect in the human world for many years, the Penglai Supreme Sect should be expanding its influence across the nine provinces.

Back when Mount Shu Sect was the top immortal sect, it had a legendary artifact, a celestial beast, as well as many masters of Heavenly Origin. Its influence and power were unparalleled, a glory that even the current Penglai could not match.

Countless ambitious individuals within the Penglai Supreme Sect aspired to attain that level of glory rather than remaining in a mere corner of the East Sea.

However, opinions differed on the way to achieve that level of glory.

Some believed in a gradual approach, slowly taking in the major factions of the nine provinces like they had been doing in the past. Others pushed for direct action, advocating a decisive war against the Celestial King Sect. There were also some that suggested targeting the Yu Dynasty's imperial court first.

Among the differing views, Daoist Xuan Lu's was the most unconventional. He argued that the Mount Shu Sect should be the primary target for the Penglai Supreme Sect.

However, his suggestion was met with ridicule from many of the Eminent Ones in the Penglai Supreme Sect. After all, the Mount Shu Sect had long been seen as the least threatening sect in the Divine Nine due to the loss of their legendary artifact.

Throughout the rise of Red Cotton Peak, these Eminent Ones in the Penglai Supreme Sect had all benefited from its growth. The reason was that Chu Yi had been offering substantial rewards to the sects in the Divine Nine over the past few years. When it came to bribery, Chu Yi was even more adept than Chu Liang.

Yet, precisely because of this, Daoist Xuan Lu viewed the Mount Shu Sect as the greatest threat. He believed their influence would rapidly grow, and in the next generation, their number of powerful cultivators might increase enough to offset the absence of legendary artifacts.

Naturally, that meant provoking a conflict between the Penglai Supreme Sect and the Mount Shu Sect to was a part of his schemes to curb the development of the Mount Shu Sect.

"What is his true origin?" Daoist Xuan Lu asked. "Can you tell me now?"

Yang Shenlong paused for a moment before responding, "There's no harm in revealing it now. Before Hallowed Yang ventured into the Divine Ruins, she left behind a contingency."

Daoist Xuan Lu's expression immediately grew solemn.

When Hallowed Yang was alive, the Penglai Supreme Sect, as it exists today, had yet to fully form and was only in its nascent stages. Strictly speaking, Hallowed Yang's true heirs were her descendants, the Yang Family. However, since the Yang Family had always been an aristocratic family within Penglai, the sect's disciples all considered themselves inheritors of her legacy.

Matters that involved the Hallowed One would never be trivial.

"Hallowed Yang once took a fragment of her divine martial soul," Yang Shenlong explained, "and kept it within the essence of the Great Dao of Infinity. Anyone who masters the Great Dao of Infinity could use the East Sea Chrono Wheel to find a suitable corporeal body to house her divine martial soul. When the right vessel has been found, time could be turned back by four thousand years, and we can then summon Hallowed Yang back to this present world."

Those at the ninth realm often prepared contingencies before their downfall, and Hallowed Yang was no exception.

As a woman who had become the Hallowed One through the cultivation of martial arts, she was incredibly gifted. When her lifespan was nearing its end, she ventured into the Divine Ruins and set such measures in place.

Unlike the completely fallen Hallowed Mother of the South Sea, Hallowed Yang had left her divine martial soul behind, making it much easier to resurrect her. Only a Dao like the Great Dao of Infinity, which pertained to time, could preserve a divine martial soul for such a long time.

Even so, it was extremely difficult for the future generations to fulfill these conditions.

First, someone had to become the Dao Master of the Great Dao of Infinity. The Great Dao of Infinity was incredibly profound and elusive, to the point where it was unlikely that even a single Dao Master would inherit this legacy each generation. A master of this Dao might only arise once every thousand years, and that individual would have to be willing to sacrifice themselves.

In this generation, that master was Daoist Cangsheng.

The second requirement was the legendary artifact associated with the Great Dao of Time—the East Sea Chrono Wheel. Hallowed Yang had once possessed this artifact, and it was passed down

through within the Penglai Supreme Sect. While this seemed straightforward, safeguarding such an artifact for thousands of years without losing it was no easy task.

Finally, there had to be a corporeal body capable of hosting her divine martial soul. This proved to be the most challenging condition of all.

A ninth-realm divine martial soul required the vessel to meet unimaginable demands.

In fact, not even Daoist Cangsheng or the other eighth-realm Eminent Ones, including the eighth-realm martial practitioners from the Great Astral Sect, could meet the requirement of hosting a soul of the ninth-realm existence.

However, if someone already possessed the corporeal body of a ninth realm cultivator, they would be at the ninth realm. So, why would they even bother rewinding time and resurrecting Hallowed Yang?

“Until a century ago, an ancestor of the Yang family somehow discovered something,” Yang Shenlong continued. “Are you aware of the Divine Ruins Monastery?”

“The ancient legacy within the Divine Ruins?” Daoist Xuan Lu asked.

“Indeed.” Yang Shenlong nodded. “An ancestor of ours became the guardian of the monastery, sacrificing centuries of solitude in exchange for a sliver of hope.”

Yang Shenlong explained, “Deep within the Divine Ruins lies a hidden realm where an primordial spiritual embryo that fell from a higher realm has been nurtured. It could develop the corporeal body equivalent to an immortal’s and even ascend to the ninth realm.”

Daoist Xuan Lu suddenly understood the origin of Qi Lin’er.

This was the vessel the Yang Family had spent millennia searching for to house the martial soul of their ancestor!

“Back then, the senior passed this information to the sect leader, who vowed to find it and eventually bring back Hallowed Yang.” Yang Shenlong shook his head. “But today, that hope has been shattered.”

Daoist Xuan Lu looked toward the peak of Mirage Mountain, the highest point of the Penglai Supreme Sect.

Given his age, he wasn't very familiar with the current sect leader. It was hard to imagine that someone who had become the Dao Master of the most profound Great Dao in the world and stood at the pinnacle of the immortal sects in the mortal realm would willingly sacrifice himself to resurrect a legendary ancestor.

No wonder the sect leader had only required Qi Lin'er to grow steadily, focusing on honing his corporeal body without concern for his character. The sect leader had planned to sacrifice both the child and himself for this plan.

And no wonder the sect leader remained indifferent to their plans for expansion into the nine provinces. With the return of the Hallowed One, the entire world would naturally be ruled by the Penglai Supreme Sect.

"The sect leader once said that Qi Lin'er's birth defied Heavenly Law and would inevitably bring calamity. But to comprehend the Dao, one must face trials. If he were shielded from everything, he'd never break through the Heavenly Gate, and his corporeal body would never reach the required level," Yang Shenlong added. "But there was too much evil in his heart, and in the end, he couldn't overcome the tribulations of this world."

"I will go and confess my guilt to the sect leader," Daoist Xuan Lu said resolutely.

Daoist Cangsheng was already so enraged that he wanted to kill Chu Liang. If he later learned that Qi Lin'er's death was also tied to Daoist Xuan Lu's instigation, there was no telling whether he might decide to eliminate Daoist Xuan Lu outright. And so, Daoist Xuan Lu thought that it was better to come clean now than to wait for that day to come.

But just as he was about to move, Daoist Cangsheng's thunderous voice suddenly echoed in his ears.

"You! Leave at once and head to the Far West!"

...

“Ahhhhhh!”

Chu Liang woke up, jolting upright before tumbling to the ground.

The last thing he remembered was the moment when Daoist Cangsheng’s palm was about to crush him. The killing intent of an eighth-realm cultivator was enough to shatter one’s spirit. Everything went dark, and he thought he had died.

When his vision cleared, he found himself in a pitch-black cavern, with a figure in white nearby.

"Chu Liang, you're awake?"

It was the voice of a woman. To his surprise, it was Jiang Yuebai!

"Senior Sister Jiang?" Chu Liang asked, his voice filled with surprise.

“You nearly died just now. Thankfully, my father intervened in time and saved you. I was so worried!” Jiang Yuebai said, suddenly lunging forward to hug him tightly.

A waft of her fragrance filled the air. Chu Liang was momentarily stunned before finally speaking. “Is he...”

“He’s stalling Daoist Cangsheng. Now that you’re awake, we need to get out of here. This place isn’t far from Penglai, so it’s probably not safe.”

As she spoke, she grabbed Chu Liang’s hand and pulled him along. They had barely taken a few steps through the cave when the ground above trembled, followed by a deafening roar.

“Have they found this place?” Jiang Yuebai said, quickening her pace.

The two rushed through the winding cave for a while until a sliver of light appeared ahead. Just as they were about to make their way out, a massive boulder came crashing down with a thunderous boom!

Bam!

A tremendous force surged forward, crushing the rocky walls of the cave to rubble!

Swish!

Jiang Yuebai swung her sword, shattering the falling rocks, but the blocked path ahead refused to open. Chu Liang tried using his Dragon Claw technique to clear the way, but while it could smash falling debris, it was useless against the crushing cave walls.

The force was simply too overwhelming!

It felt as though a massive hand had sealed the area, intending to crush them along with the entire cave!

“This is bad...” Jiang Yuebai muttered anxiously. “It won’t open!”

She turned to Chu Liang, her eyes filled with fear.

“I have an idea! Just hold on for a moment!” Chu Liang said.

Whenever a path remained stubbornly blocked, he always had this trusty assistant by his side, capable of opening a route through.

“Alright!”

Jiang Yuebai sprang into action, her swordlight flashing as it sliced through the falling rocks, buying Chu Liang the time he needed to act.

But just as she turned, a sharp, tearing sound echoed through the air, like fabric being violently ripped apart.

Pierce!

The tip of the Demon-Slaying Sword pierced her chest, and blood immediately soaked through her scarlet robe.

“You...” She turned her head, staring at Chu Liang in stunned disbelief.

“Your illusory technique is simply flawless; I couldn’t detect a single flaw,” Chu Liang said softly.
“But...”

He didn’t finish the second half of his sentence.

But the Crimson Executioner Sword inside of me is vibrating like crazy!

Chapter 707: The Secret of Mount Shu

It was often said that one should treat evil with as much hatred as one has toward an enemy.

Perhaps no form of justice was as pure as that embodied by the Crimson Executioner—it was a sword of unwavering justice.

Whether it was crushing petty villains with ease in the past or facing invincible demonic foes now, the Crimson Executioner always expressed its fighting spirit without hesitation, caring only whether something was evil and not how powerful it was.

Its motto might as well have been, "Just go for it."

When this "Jiang Yuebai" appeared before Chu Liang, the Crimson Executioner vibrated wildly, signaling to him that this person before him had killed countless innocent souls.

If the Crimson Executioner could speak, it would probably say something like, "I can't take it anymore! Just let me give her a little poke! A little stabby stab..."

Even so, Chu Liang took his time observing.

If it had been anyone else, he might have drawn his sword immediately. But this was Jiang Yuebai. He concentrated with all his vitality, qi, and spirit to examine her, but he found there was nothing out of place. He couldn't bring himself to act recklessly against Senior Sister Jiang.

That was until something changed—Jiang Yuebai turned to him for help. That was when Chu Liang became certain that this Jiang Yuebai before him was an imposter.

Senior Sister Jiang appeared gentle, but she had an incredibly strong will. No matter the dire circumstances, she would never show such a helpless expression.

She also knew that he always carried Tuntun with him, and with her intelligence, she would never have asked him for a solution.

The real Jiang Yuebai would have turned away and said, "Take out the Heaven-Devouring Bug, and I'll keep you safe while you work."

The imposter's actions were a bit over the top; they were trying too hard to conceal their intent.

After a moment of thought, Chu Liang realized that despite being capable of rendering him unconscious and casting an illusory technique he couldn't see through, the imposter had not killed him. This meant that they were not after his life but something else. Given the current situation, it wasn't hard to guess what it was.

The imposter wanted the Heaven-Devouring Bug.

The imposter had probably already searched Chu Liang's enchanted storage tools, but Tuntun was in the White Pagoda, cocooned in hibernation. He was the only one who could take her out.

Who would want the Heaven-Devouring Bug...? Chu Liang wondered.

Immediately, an answer came to mind. The demons?

He could easily confirm that theory with a test. If the Demon-Slaying Sword stabbed with exceptional ferocity, it was a demon. If it didn't react as intensely, then it was human.

Either way, a stab was necessary.

And thus came the crisp sound of the sword piercing through the imposter's chest.

When Chu Liang pierced Jiang Yuebai with the sword, she abruptly disappeared and transformed into a white fox hair that fell to the ground. Chu Liang felt his surroundings change with the flickering of light and shadow. The cave was gone. But amidst a deafening rumble, it seemed that even Chu Liang was being transported somewhere.

When he opened his eyes again, he found himself in an empty stone chamber. A black incense stick burned in the corner of the private room, its spiraling smoke curling through the air. As the scent reached his nostrils, his entire body froze. His limbs refused to move, and his qi was completely suppressed.

It turned out that everything he saw earlier, including Jiang Yuebai, had been nothing more than an illusion.

He then saw two people standing before him.

One was a woman dressed in a simple white gown. She had exceptionally long, smooth hair that cascaded down freely. Her gaze was icy, her demeanor refined, yet her naturally seductive features carried an unmistakable hint of allure.

The other was a towering humanoid figure, standing over one zhang tall. He wore a golden mask that concealed his face and a flamboyant robe that billowed around him. In his hand, he held a scepter adorned with feathers and furs from countless demonic beasts, exuding an air of primal dominance.

Chu Liang could see his reflection through the gold mask on that towering humanoid figure. He was lying flat on the ground, with a black stone mask affixed to his face. The mask seemed to carry a powerful seal, suppressing his divine sense and cutting off his connection to the outside world. Together with the effects of the black incense, it created a dual layer of control, leaving him utterly restrained.

At this moment, Chu Liang was just a mortal who could not move at all. His condition was pretty much the same as the current Qi Lin'er[1].

"You certainly are ruthless, striking your beloved with such ferocity," the woman remarked. Her tone wasn't harsh, and her voice sounded soft and gentle.

But Chu Liang knew she was far from a virtuous figure.

He had encountered this person before in the Deep Pool of Dreams. She was none other than Caiyi, the Demon King of the Verdant Foxhills—one of the Seven Great Demon Kings of the demon race.

She was a figure whose name had left a mark in the history of Mount Shu.

The other, with his mysterious and imposing demeanor, was likely the legendary Great High Priest of the Demon God Temple.

Seeing that Chu Liang remained silent, the golden-masked Great High Priest turned away and said, "This one is difficult to deal with. He's strong-willed. You handle him. I'll go check on Changfeng to see if he can still be saved."

"It was just a single palm strike. Surely it's not that serious?" Caiyi replied lightly.

"The palm strike wasn't particularly heavy, yet his lifespan is draining rapidly. He's aged over a thousand years in just moments," the Great High Priest explained with a sigh. "Daoist Cangsheng's palm strike was enhanced by the East Sea Chrono Wheel, so how could it possibly be ordinary?"

As Chu Liang listened to their conversation, he realized that these greater demons had paid a significant price to rescue him from Daoist Cangsheng.

That one palm strike almost killed one of them... Chu Liang remarked inwardly.

At the thought of this, he suddenly realized something else. It was truly impressive that Venerable Wen Yuan managed to fight barehanded against Daoist Cangsheng even though he was wielding a legendary artifact...

The heavy thuds of the Great High Priest's footsteps echoed through the chamber, gradually fading as he left.

Now, only Caiyi remained with Chu Liang.

She sat across from Chu Liang and spoke softly, "You've probably guessed what we want by now, haven't you?"

Chu Liang remained silent.

He knew that the person before him was a master whose skill in illusory techniques had reached the pinnacle of the mortal realm. Any action or response could expose a flaw, so he kept his mind clear and avoided engaging with the outside world.

Caiyi continued, "You can remain silent... But let's not forget. You weren't supposed to survive. We saved you from a strike powered by the East Sea Chrono Wheel, which nearly cost us a Demon King. From a moral and logical perspective, you really shouldn't show such indifference toward your saviors."

Chu Liang still said nothing, closing his eyes slightly and maintaining his silence.

Caiyi added, "There are secrets I've kept for many years—things I can share with you. You're the only one with the chance to learn them... For instance, how the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda of Mount Shu was lost, and... where you need to go to retrieve it."

Chu Liang finally looked at her.

He had to admit, this woman knew exactly how to pique someone's curiosity. She had, without a doubt, struck a nerve.

After thinking for a moment, Chu Liang said, "You are the one holding the knife right now, and I am the fish on the cutting board. Why waste so many words? Just tell me what you want."

"We've already searched your entire body and all your enchanted storage tools, but found nothing," Caiyi said bluntly. "But I know... it's with you."

"You're talking about the Heaven-Devouring Bug, aren't you?" Chu Liang asked.

Caiyi nodded. "Correct."

Back at the Southern Bastion Mountain, Chu Liang had used Tuntun to gnaw through a tunnel and escape right in front of her. It was probably from that moment that she had set her sights on Tuntun.

"What do you want it for?" Chu Liang asked. "Has the Demon God already died? And are you planning to use the Heaven-Devouring Bug as a vessel to resurrect it?"

This was the only possibility he could think of for now.

"I'll give you the chance to ask me three questions..." Caiyi said. "But time is short, and we can't keep wasting time here. After three questions, you'll decide whether to hand over what we want."

"Alright."

After a brief moment of thought, Chu Liang asked, "What's your relationship with Yan Renjie?"

"..." The first question left Caiyi speechless.

After a long pause, she finally said, "You sure know a lot. There probably aren't many on Mount Shu who still remember that name."

"I just so happened to find out about it," Chu Liang replied.

"He was my..." Caiyi deliberated for a long time before saying a single word. "Ex-husband?"

"Huh?" Chu Liang was taken aback by her response. "Do terms and concepts like that even exist for demons?"

"We had a proper wedding ceremony back then..." Caiyi said, a faint smile unconsciously forming at the corner of her mouth, though she quickly suppressed it. "It was held at the Azure Falling Peak on Mount Shu."

Chu Liang couldn't help but say, "So you really have been to Mount Shu. Don't tell me Senior Aunt Yan Zi is actually your great-granddaughter?"

"That's your second question."

"Yes," Chu Liang confirmed.

Though it felt like a waste to ask about such trivial gossip at such a critical moment, his curiosity got the better of him.

"That's correct." Caiyi nodded. "I stayed on Mount Shu for a few years and left behind a child. One of his descendants... is who you now know as Daoist Yan."

"Senior Aunt Yan is like a mother to Senior Sister Jiang, which makes you something like Senior Sister Jiang's great-grandmother," Chu Liang said, a sudden grin spreading across his face. "And her great-grandmother is my great-grandmother. No wonder you saved my life—we're practically family!"

"Don't act like we're close." Caiyi shook her head, amused by his sudden shamelessness. "You only have one question left."

"Then tell me how the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda of Mount Shu was lost. Even the past sect leaders didn't know the truth. I want to understand what really happened."

"Hmm..." Caiyi hesitated for a moment before responding. "More than five hundred years ago, I hadn't yet taken charge of the Verdant Foxhills. I had only just comprehended the Great Dao of Myriad Forms, which allowed me to transform into anything in the world. Then I received a mission from the Demon God Temple. The Great High Priest tasked me with infiltrating Mount Shu to find an opportunity to rescue the Demon God.

"So, I transformed into an ordinary human girl and created a situation where a Mount Shu disciple would save me, allowing me to follow him back to Mount Shu.

"That disciple's name was Yan Renjie."

When she mentioned the name, her eyes glimmered faintly.

It was as if she could see the spirited young man from five hundred years ago—dressed in black, a mischievous smile on his lips, wielding his sword to drive away the lesser demons.

"The potential I displayed was impressive, so I was given the chance to remain on Mount Shu to cultivate. This allowed me to search for a suitable candidate. Coincidentally, the Mount Shu disciple who saved me was of half-demon lineage."

"I approached him and found a way to reveal to him that his mother was being suppressed within the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda and that her life force was on the verge of being extinguished."

"Was seducing him also part of the plan?" Chu Liang asked cheekily.

"Of course not. The original goal was just to get close to him and earn his trust. Somehow, things just... progressed to that point," Caiyi answered truthfully.

She paused for a moment, then glared at him. "There's no need for me to tell you all this anyway."

Chu Liang smiled faintly as his imagination began to run wild.

A demon at the level of an Eminent One disguises herself as a gifted young girl, meets a youth whose mother is of non-human origin and burdened with a tragic fate. The two of them eventually get together...

This storyline seems strangely familiar.

Should the next scene be them joining the Assembly of Immortal Sects, only for her demonic identity to be exposed and hunted by the righteous path?

The youth would then face countless trials to resurrect his lost love.

Obviously, Caiyi had no idea about the imaginative storm brewing in Chu Liang's mind.

She continued, "Following the Great High Priest's instructions, I told him that the Divine Ruins Monastery held the key to unlocking the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda and saving his mother. He truly risked countless dangers to reach the monastery and eventually obtained the key he was searching for."

"The Heaven-Devouring Bug?" Chu Liang asked.

"Indeed. The Demon-Suppressing Pagoda is a legendary artifact that fell from the immortal realm. Only the Heaven-Devouring Bug could possibly destroy it. I ventured with him into the Divine Ruins and found the only other Heaven-Devouring Bug in existence..."

"We used the Heaven-Devouring Bug to burrow into the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda. He went to save his mother while I seized the chance to find the Demon God. By then, the Demon God's essence had already been mostly worn away by the pagoda..."

Hearing this, Chu Liang couldn't help but marvel. Even after nearly three thousand years of suppression, only half of the Demon God's essence had been depleted. A ninth-realm existence is so powerful.

Chu Liang thought he could easily predict what would happen next, but in the end, he was far too naive.

Caiyi continued, "At that time, although my true cultivation level had reached the eighth realm, I still underestimated the power of the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda. I combined my strength with the remaining essence of the Demon God, but even then, we couldn't break open the cage within the pagoda. Just as I was about to fall into despair, an unexpected figure appeared and lent us their aid."

"Hm?" Chu Liang perked up, his curiosity piqued. There is more to the story?

He couldn't help but ask, "Who?"

Caiyi replied, "Baize."

Chapter 708: The Chessboard

Baize?

Chu Liang really didn't expect to hear this.

The Baize of Mount Shu was a pureblooded ancient celestial beast. It was connected to the heavens and earth and knew all things yin and yang. It possessed supreme divine wisdom and had served as Mount Shu Sect's guardian celestial beast since the era of Hallowed Yang.

It would be easier to believe that the leader of the Mount Shu Sect had done things that harmed the sect than to suspect Baize.

Chu Liang's first reaction was that Caiyi was lying to him. After all, a certain renowned foot massage therapist's mother once said, "The prettier the woman, the better the liar.[1]"

However, as he pondered over it, there didn't seem to be any reason for her to lie in this situation.

But why would Baize do such a thing?

Chu Liang immediately thought of a possibility.

Baize had an incredibly long lifespan, spanning thousands of years. It was likely Baize was not much younger than the Golden Dragon that used to suppress the fate of the Yu Dynasty, and that Golden Dragon had already passed away. This meant that Baize was likely nearing the end of its lifespan.

As an eighth-realm existence being on the brink of ascension, it would have to wait for the fall of the ninth-realm existence. Yet, even after being suppressed within the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda for nearly three thousand years, the Demon God had only lost half of its life essence.

The Baize might not have the time to wait another three thousand years...

Chu Liang couldn't help but recall a conversation that had been dismissed as a joke. Someone had suggested that the Mount Shu Sect should release the Demon God, giving all the Eminent Ones of human lineage a chance to ascend to the ninth realm.

Could it be that this wasn't just a joke?

Then Caiyi continued, "After I advanced to the eighth realm, I felt as though the entire world was mine to explore, but in that moment, I realized just how insignificant I was..."

As she spoke, her eyes seemed to reflect those terrifying scenes once more.

Inside an iron cell within the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda, the Demon God's remaining life essence started fighting back against the confines of the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda. Even though she tried

to use all her power to assist the Demon God, her help barely made a difference. Only when the white radiance behind her took action did the Demon God's remaining life essence gain the opportunity to move, its fangs reaching out toward the barriers.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the pagoda, Yan Renjie was desperately trying to save his mother, but nothing seemed to work. After expressing his grief to her through the iron bars, he noticed what was happening deep within the prison and was shocked.

As he looked at Caiyi, his gaze was filled with disappointment and shock. Before she could offer an explanation, the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda suddenly erupted with a deafening roar.

This ancient legendary artifact emitted a dazzling white light amidst the combined internal and external destruction. With a thunderous roar, it rose into the air, seemingly on the verge of exploding at any moment!

If it exploded, the blast would surely be powerful enough to shatter both heaven and earth!

They quickly realized this was likely the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda's self-destruct mechanism. If a demonic entity it contained was about to break free, the pagoda would rather explode, perishing alongside it!

Baize was the first to retreat, with Caiyi close behind. As she fled, her fox tail flashed with white light, trying to pull Yan Renjie along. But he broke free.

In that very moment, Caiyi caught a glimpse of despair in his eyes.

All his efforts to save his mother had been in vain, and the person he loved most turned out to be a greater demon who deceived him. His heart must have shattered, and he likely began to feel as though death was the only escape.

The Demon God's remaining life essence continued to struggle against the iron cell, seemingly on the brink of escape. However, at that moment, the white light erupted.

As a deafening explosion rang out, Mount Shu and the surrounding lands shook that night. The tremor was so powerful that everything within thousands of li felt the earth quaking beneath them.

From that day onward, the Mount Shu Sect was left without the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda.

After recounting this hidden past, Caiyi turned back to Chu Liang. "Are you done with your questions?"

"Yes," Chu Liang replied.

Caiyi asked, "You don't want to know how to retrieve the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda?"

"If you knew how, you would have retrieved it yourself by now. Why wait until now to tell me? And even if you did know, you wouldn't share it for free. You would want me to hand over the Heaven-Devouring Bug in exchange for the information. By then, even if the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda and the Demon God both return, the situation wouldn't change," Chu Liang said with certainty. "So you are clearly baiting me with this information. I won't take it."

Seeing that her long preamble had no effect, Caiyi chuckled in mock annoyance. "So, you never intended to hand over the Heaven-Devouring Bug at all?"

"Absolutely not."

If they truly used Tuntun as a vessel to resurrect the Demon God, not only would Tuntun perish but countless innocent lives would be lost. Other divine beings might show mercy to the innocent, but the Demon God would inevitably devour everything in its path to regain its strength.

Even if Chu Liang were to die here, he would never let that happen.

Of course, Caiyi might not dare to kill him either.

After all, even he didn't know where the things in the White Pagoda would go if he died. And these demonic entities had no idea the White Pagoda even existed.

"I had hoped to negotiate with you, but it seems I'll have to resort to other means," Caiyi said, shaking her head.

As she spoke, a cacophony of thunderous wind and booming explosions erupted from outside!

Rumble!

...

After Chu Liang was taken by the two Demon Kings, the Mount Shu Sect immediately mobilized everyone.

Venerable Wen Yuan followed closely behind. As the master of the Great Dao of Primordial Chaos, he had profound insight into the spatial Dao of Distancelessness. With a single step, he crossed the howling winds and even reached the Far West ahead of the two Demon Kings. However, in the vast wilderness, it was impossible for him to track them down, hence why he failed to intercept them.

With another step, he reached the skies above the dwelling of the demons in the Far West, where he saw a steep mountain range that resembled black iron.

This was the Mountain Range of the Seven Kings.

Before this, he had already sent word to the higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect, urging them to reach out to powerful cultivators from other immortal sects to come and assist him in the Far West.

After all, this was the stronghold of the demon race, home to the seven Demon Kings at the eighth realm, most of whom were ancient greater demons from three thousand years ago. This was not a place he could conquer alone. To rescue Chu Liang, the first thing he needed to do was... call for reinforcements!

But even before the reinforcements arrived, Venerable Wen Yuan did not remain idle.

He sat cross-legged in midair, and beneath him, black-and-white chessboard lines appeared, faintly spreading to cover half the sky. With his eyes slightly closed, his aura dispersed into the heavens and the sea.

This was the Chessboard of the World, an artifact ranked thirty-fourth in the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures.

Faint gridlines spread downward, silently enveloping a range of hundreds of li around the Mountain Range of the Seven Kings. In the unseen depths, a heavy force descended, pulling everything toward him.

However, he didn't rush to act.

After a while, a streak of white swordlight shot through the sky like a shooting star in broad daylight. Close behind it, a burst of fiery light erupted explosively.

"You're here," Venerable Wen Yuan muttered, hovering in midair.

"We came as soon as we got the message," Daoist Yan said as she appeared.

"These filthy demons must have a death wish," Di Nufeng declared fiercely, her phoenix eyes blazing with killing intent. She asked in a very straightforward manner, "How should I attack?"

"Guard me first. I'll set the stage," Venerable Wen Yuan replied calmly as he started forming seals with his hands.

When an eighth-realm master of Heavenly Origin began forming hand seals, it was clear that things were now serious. Even when Daoist Cangsheng activated the East Sea Chrono Wheel earlier, he had done so in an instant.

As his hands formed different seals, the wilderness below began to quake. The earth suddenly split apart, the cracks unnervingly precise, as though they had been measured with a ruler.

The land within several hundred li was carved into a crisscrossing chessboard pattern, with Venerable Wen Yuan hovering in midair, the sole chessmaster overseeing the grand design.

He gently raised his hand and began placing pieces.

Boom!

With a light press of his palm, dozens of barren mountain ranges in the distance and the nearby ground collapsed, leaving only the Mountain Range of the Seven Kings untouched. His power was concentrated entirely there.

With just a slight lift of his hand, this sacred mountain that belonged to the demons would be obliterated, along with the surrounding land within several hundred li.

At this moment, he finally spoke, his thunderous voice booming across the Far West as he shouted at all the demons, "Come out!"

Chapter 709: Severing the Void

In Taotie City, Huyan Bin knelt before his father as he said earnestly, "Chu Liang was taken by the two Demon Kings of the Far West, and Venerable Wen Yuan has already gone after them. Daoist Yan will likely head there too. To rescue Chu Liang, the powerful cultivators of the Mount Shu Sect will probably move out in full force and even rally allies from the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten.

"Father, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!"

Previously, due to a series of disastrous decisions, Huyan Dong had been punished by his father. He was grounded at home and instructed to reflect on his mistakes. Out of sheer boredom, he obtained a Circle of Immortal Friends Token from Red Cotton Peak and soon became captivated by it.

Information from across the nine provinces was instantly shared on the Circle of Immortal Friends as soon as someone posted. Rumor had it that a private messaging feature was in the works, which would make communication even more convenient.

But the excitement was short-lived, quickly replaced by a sense of despair. After all, the item he had marveled at was a product made by their rival.

The more convenience this item offered, the more it highlighted the greatness of Red Cotton Peak. If every cultivator in the immortal realm owned one of these tokens, he couldn't even begin to imagine the consequences.

Red Cotton Peak had invested so much into this item that it couldn't possibly remain just a messaging tool, though even that function alone was already impressive enough.

If cultivators could order things from thousands of li away without ever leaving their homes, who would still bother coming to Taotie City?

Nevertheless, there was no use in panicking. Taotie City had three strategies to consider right now.

The most ideal strategy was to create a better product and win the public's favor back from the Mount Shu Sect. The second-best was to create at least an identical product and compete fairly. The worst option was to kneel and beg Mount Shu to stop bullying them.

Huyan Bin thought the worst strategy was simpler and rather feasible. However, since his father was trying to have a second child to replace him, he had no choice but to work toward the second-best option.

He had made some efforts, gathering intelligence through his subordinates. Although they hadn't uncovered the core formation that made up the Circle of Immortal Friends, they did discover that this divine formation used by the Mount Shu Sect seemed to originate from the Dark King Sect.

Over the past few days, Huyan Bin had spent considerable effort contacting the higher-ups of the Dark King Sect, hoping to acquire the technology directly from the source. Just as he was preparing to meet them today, he heard a piece of news that filled him with glee.

Qi Lin'er from the Penglai Supreme Sect had ambushed the couriers of Red Cotton Peak, and in response, Chu Liang rushed to Penglai to challenge Qi Lin'er to a battle to the death. Chu Liang actually won and killed Qi Lin'er!

Though Daoist Cangshen tried to bring Qi Lin'er back to life with the East Sea Chrono Wheel, he failed. In his fury, he tried to kill Chu Liang, only for the two Demon Kings to intervene and save him.

The events left Huyan Bin stunned, as though everything was part of a strange, unreal fantasy. But upon deeper thought, his eyes filled with tears of happiness.

He exclaimed inwardly, The Penglai Supreme Sect! My real father!

When everyone believed the Penglai Supreme Sect was merely exploiting Taotie, taking money without delivering, they were wrong! It turned out they had been putting in the effort all along!

That Qi Lin'er, who seemed so annoying back then, ended up stepping up when needed—even though it cost him his life in the end.

Huyan Bin was so moved by what Qi Lin'er had done for Taotie City that he almost blurted out, "Good death."

If Qi Lin'er hadn't died, how could the Penglai Supreme Sect and the Mount Shu Sect have turned on each other?

Without wasting a moment, he rushed to Huyan Dong to explain just how rare this opportunity truly was.

"Red Cotton Peak may appear prosperous, but destroying it would take no more than a single night!" Huyan Bin declared confidently. "All of Mount Shu's powerful cultivators have been deployed. If we send a team to demolish Red Cotton Peak now, it will be wiped from existence. Rebuilding it would cost them a great deal of time and money, and that's where our opportunity lies!"

"And who will carry this out?" Huyan Dong asked gravely.

Taotie City had some forces, but it certainly couldn't take action directly. After all, the cultivators of the Mount Shu Sect had left their home base, but they hadn't died. They would surely seek revenge once they returned to Mount Shu.

"I've arranged to meet with a senior member of the Dark King Sect today. They've suffered at the hands of the Mount Shu Sect before, and if we're willing to pay the price, I am sure they won't mind taking revenge," Huyan Bin said with a sinister smile.

"The Dark King Sect..." Huyan Dong thought it over before nodding. "It's certainly feasible."

He thought it over again and added, "But diabolical cultivators are ultimately unreliable. I've recently made contact with another group. They might prove to be a more dependable ally."

Huyan Bin looked up and asked, "Father, are you referring to those... rebels of Mount Mang?"

...

I genuinely admire how resilient you humans are. Still, we did save your life. Yet, you leave no room for negotiation. That's a bit excessive.

"Even if we were to resurrect the Demon God, we wouldn't invade the nine provinces. Our goal is to claim the Western Regions, along with the Far West, as our territory and rebuild the Kingdom of Ten Thousand Demons. The human race can continue to live in the nine provinces, coexisting with us in peace.

"If you still refuse to release the Heaven-Devouring Bug, your death will be inevitable. And after you die, we'll surely find a way to locate the Heaven-Devouring Bug.

"..."

Caiyi's soft voice echoed in his ears, but Chu Liang couldn't respond at all.

At this moment, he was buried a hundred zhang deep underground, surrounded not by ordinary soil but by the impenetrable black meteoric rock of the Mountain Range of the Seven Kings. This very material was used to refine the Black Meteoric Iron, and with enchanted formations, it would become incredibly hard, beyond what anyone could imagine.

His five senses were nearly sealed, and he couldn't breathe in any air. Chu Liang could feel his life slipping away, and the pain was unbearable and intense.

This was the immortal art known as Buried Alive in Dense Earth. Its purpose, beyond simply imprisoning someone, was to make them die in an incredibly terrifying way.

At this moment, it seemed Chu Liang had no option but to give them the Heaven-Devouring Bug, but he didn't.

With the black stone mask still on, he was unable to connect with anything outside. He couldn't release foundational qi or project his divine sense. However, as the scent of the incense in the Demon God Temple faded, he regained the ability to circulate his qi internally and attune himself to the Great Dao.

He focused on the Great Dao of Severing the Void, which he had only recently comprehended.

The best time to let understanding sink in was always right after advancing to the next realm, but Chu Liang hadn't had the time to let it settle. Now, stuck in the earth, he finally had some "free time."

The Great Dao of Severing the Void was all about the momentum to sever everything in the world with one strike. Though he had comprehended the complete Dao and reached the sixth realm, he still felt his comprehension was incomplete.

For the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination, the sword qi was the most essential. But for the Great Dao of Severing the Void, sword intent held the utmost importance. As Chu Liang thought about this, he recalled the figure he had seen in the Divine Mirror of the Eight Trigrams—one that stood against the world and severed the Vault of Heaven with one strike.

Can I do it too? Must I have a sword to execute the Great Dao of Severing the Void? Could this strike truly sever all things?

Whoosh!

With this thought, a strong and resolute sword intent surged within Chu Liang's heart.

He felt an abyss behind him. And now, he would either die here or achieve a breakthrough.

This is the best time to strike! If not now, then when?

In that moment of enlightenment, his divine sense sparked to life. He felt this supreme sword intent in his heart, and as he focused his energy, he released it explosively.

Shiiing!

Chu Liang couldn't move his limbs, but with just the flash of his gaze, an overwhelming sword intent at the seventh realm erupted like a celestial river crashing to the earth!

With a single strike, he tore a crack in the earth imprisoning him underground!

Aboveground, Caiyi was astonished. He has just ascended to the seventh realm, and he can already break my immortal art?

All Chu Liang needed was a single crack. Seizing the opportunity, he quickly raised his hand to shatter the mask on his face. Then, with a single thought, distant winds appeared, pulling him away.

Boom!

In an instant, he vanished and reappeared atop the familiar throne of the Dragon God!

The Blue Dragon's Hidden Realm!

Bam!

Chu Liang crashed heavily to the ground. Breaking out of that earth prison had drained every bit of his spiritual energy, and he couldn't get up.

Yet, as he rolled onto his back, he let out a long sigh of relief.

Is this really the power of the seventh realm? This isn't bad at all.