

Cultivating 401

Chapter 401: The World Watches, The Three Saints Present Treasures

The Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint descended the mountain and departed.

But the disciples of the True Martial Sect were still immersed in the shock of the previous battle.

Their admiration for Ning Qi was beyond measure.

After all.

The Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint was unparalleled, ranking first on the Celestial Being List before the resurgence of spiritual energy, enigmatic and unfathomable. After the spiritual awakening, even the ancient saints could not lift their heads under his pressure.

And now.

Ning Qi was able to hold his ground with the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint. Although it was just one strike, it was significant enough.

Not only the disciples of the True Martial Sect.

This scene was witnessed by many martial artists in True Martial City.

The Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint made no effort to conceal his whereabouts upon arrival, naturally being sensed by some powerful figures within True Martial City. Since the spiritual awakening, the city's reputation had grown considerably, attracting many admirers. These people vaguely harbored intentions of becoming part of the True Martial Sect's external forces, but Luo Wentian was still contemplating the specific management details.

At this moment.

The entire city was in an uproar.

A myriad of astonished and admiring gazes were cast toward the towering True Martial Mountain.

Many resolved to tightly cling to this powerful support of True Martial Mountain.

Everyone wasn't foolish.

With ancient saints manifesting, the resurgence of spiritual energy, and the martial path flourishing as never before, unrest was bound to follow this great prosperity. At such a critical juncture, securing a powerful ally might be more important than anything else.

And then.

The news of the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint ascending True Martial Mountain and engaging the Celestial Sword Martial Saint in an evenly matched duel spread across the world at an astounding pace.

Although the world was now broader, on the day of spiritual awakening, many martial artists in the Primordial Core Realm seized the opportunity to reach the Celestial Human Realm. The overall cultivation level of martial artists had increased by more than a notch. As a result, the speed of information dissemination had not decreased, but rather increased.

For a time.

The world turned its attention.

Countless discussions erupted in various places.

True Martial Mountain became a focal point in a short period, drawing in endless exclamations.

"Was the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint here because of the previous incidents with the Red Sun Martial Saint and Martial Saint Ziyue?"

"I didn't expect the Celestial Sword Martial Saint to be so formidable, even unable to be dealt with by the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint. Does that mean the deaths of the two Red Sun Martial Saints were in vain?"

"It's said that the Celestial Sword Martial Saint wasn't the reincarnation of an ancient saint. Is this true?"

"Impossible... Without being an ancient saint, how could someone have such incredible strength? The current world's people reaching the Martial Saint Realm is already an extraordinary feat, and to compare with ancient saints would be too difficult."

"But there's a rumor that the Celestial Sword Martial Saint is now a Fourth Realm Martial Saint..."

...

The focus of everyone almost converged on Ning Qi.

Some said that the Ancient Saint Tianjian was actually under twenty years old, an individual of the current world, but no one believed it, dismissing it as nonsense.

Some said that the Celestial Sword Martial Saint was merely a Fourth Realm Martial Saint, also ridiculed by some, doubting how such a realm could be so powerful.

Regarding this.

Ning Qi just smiled slightly.

Sometimes, an overly outrageous truth won't be believed by the public, as people only tend to trust things within their knowledge.

A not yet twenty-year-old Ancient Saint Tianjian?

People would just think it was a joke.

That was one of the reasons why, since revealing his identity as the Celestial Sword Martial Saint, Ning Qi no longer deliberately concealed it: one being it was unnecessary, and the other being that others wouldn't believe it anyway.

After learning from the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint about the current situation of the Martial Realm, there was even less necessity to hide it.

As everyone was in the same boat now, anyone with a bit of sense wouldn't choose to oppose Ning Qi.

The world was full of chaos.

Yet due to two battles within a short period, the name of the Celestial Sword Martial Saint reverberated throughout the world.

But three people were more restless than anyone else.

The Thunderstorm Martial Saint, White Cloud Martial Saint, and Martial Saint Heize.

The three of them were already worrying about what to give as an appropriate gift of apology. They hadn't expected to be greeted with such a shocking revelation—that even the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint could face an equal challenge. If the gift was too paltry, it might not be well-received.

The thought of being secretly watched by an influential figure on par with the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint made their scalps tingle.

In the dead of night.

Three sneaky figures gathered in an unnamed valley.

Seeing the worry on each other's faces, they all fell silent.

"What should we do now?" Martial Saint Heize took the initiative to speak.

Thunderstorm Martial Saint's brows furrowed in anger:

"Damned bastards, if it weren't for you saying to wait a few more days, maybe the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint would resolve this matter, and we could have just gone through the motions; would we be in this situation now?"

He wished he could strike down this unfortunate fellow with a bolt of lightning.

White Cloud Martial Saint also nodded in agreement.

Originally, they were ready to offer a gift, but because of those words, they waited a few more days. Now things had turned around; the opponent was even more assured. If they didn't make a substantial offer, they might provoke trouble, something no one dared to gamble on.

The thought that they initially only needed to make a small offering, which now had to become a substantial one, pained them greatly.

Martial Saint Heize spoke in aggrieved anger:

"That day we all made the decision together, how did it become my problem?"

The trio were silent.

Eventually.

Thunderstorm Martial Saint spoke gloomily:

"Enough, enough, talking about it now is pointless. We should rather think about what would be more appropriate to give. The gift must strike the right chord to appease the Celestial Sword Martial Saint's anger. Let's not have any delusions; our hesitation this time was probably noticed."

Martial Saint Heize and White Cloud Martial Saint nodded repeatedly.

"Perhaps... we could offer spiritual treasures rich in Earth Qi!" White Cloud Martial Saint had a sudden insight, his eyes lighting up.

Martial Saint Heize immediately caught on:

"Brilliant! The cultivation displayed by the Celestial Sword Martial Saint that day was a Fourth Realm Martial Saint. If my perception is correct, he lacks the Earth Qi of the spleen. By offering spiritual treasures with earth attributes, we're sure to win the Celestial Sword Martial Saint's favor, and thus he likely won't hold a grudge over this matter."

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The Thunderstorm Martial Saint wholeheartedly agreed, his cultivation was slightly higher than the other two, but in terms of actions, he was not as nimble as the others. After his delight, he frustratingly patted his head, saying:

"I'm doomed. I don't have any decent Earth attribute spiritual treasures in hand right now!"

Martial Saint Heize laughed and said:

"Don't worry, Brother Lei, I have two, just enough to provide both."

The Thunderstorm Martial Saint was overjoyed:

"Good brother, rest assured, I won't take your spiritual objects without giving something in return. I will exchange them for others!"

The three of them all smiled.

They discussed the details of the gift-giving for a long time and as they talked, they found themselves more and more in tune. The Thunderstorm Martial Saint slapped his leg and shouted:

"Both brothers are people of character. If you don't mind a brute like me, why don't we become sworn brothers?"

Martial Saint Heize and White Cloud Martial Saint both revealed excited smiles.

"That is exactly what I was thinking!"

In an unnamed valley, the three of them performed a ritual and became sworn brothers then and there.

"Elder Brother!"

"Second Brother!"

"Third Brother!"

The Thunderstorm Martial Saint was the eldest, White Cloud was the second, and Heize was the third.

The three laughed heartily and then departed into the air with great spirits.

If someone who didn't know the inside story saw them, they might think the three were about to embark on some earth-shattering grand undertaking.

...

The next day.

At True Martial Mountain.

The three Thunderstorm Martial Saints arrived together, their demeanor extremely respectful. The Thunderstorm Martial Saint stood in front of his two sworn brothers, showing great loyalty, and cautiously said:

"Taoist Brother Tianjian, I have often offended you in the past. This is a small token of our sincerity. Please forgive us."

Opposite him was Ning Qi, holding a Taoist Scripture. His ethereal demeanor was like that of an immortal exile, sitting beneath the Enlightenment Tea Tree, which made the three Thunderstorm Martial Saints even more restrained.

Ning Qi glanced at the three items brought over, then lifted his eyes casually:

"Enough, let's put this behind us."

After learning the ins and outs from the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint, he was more lenient toward the other Martial Saints. Besides, even without this incident, he had no intention of doing anything against the three Thunderstorm Saints. He wasn't the type who enjoyed killing.

As the other party had paid the price and shown their attitude and sincerity, that was sufficient.

However, deep down, Ning Qi was a bit surprised that these three were once strangers, having suddenly grown so close.

The three Thunderstorm Martial Saints exchanged glances, feeling immense relief as if they had been pardoned.

"Thank you, Taoist Brother!"

The three bowed respectfully, then prepared to leave.

"Wait." Ning Qi's calm voice halted their delighted steps simultaneously.

The Thunderstorm Martial Saint turned his head with a forced smile:

"Taoist Brother Tianjian, do you have any further advice?"

Ning Qi chuckled gently and said:

"As guests, would you not stay for a cup of tea before you go, lest others say I don't know how to entertain?"

As he spoke, three cups of rich and fragrant Enlightenment Tea floated before the three. Ning Qi chuckled lightly, and the three were initially stunned, then their faces blossomed with smiles:

"Thank you, Taoist Brother Tianjian!"

This time, their thanks were more heartfelt.

After finishing the Enlightenment Tea in one go, the three entered a state of enlightenment, emerging from it only after a stick of incense had burned. The three had gained much, a trace of gratitude and respect surfacing in their eyes. This time, they didn't speak, merely bowed slightly to Ning Qi before leaving slowly.

Ning Qi shook his head with a smile.

He had done it effortlessly.

Turning his gaze towards the items the three Thunderstorm Saints brought once more, a smile crept onto his lips.

"They were thoughtful."

He could naturally see that the three spiritual treasures were Earth attribute spiritual objects.

Two of them, a Molten Rock Crystal Core and an Earth Marrow, were similar to the Earth Vein Essence Stone given by the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint before. They would be beneficial to Ning Qi's cultivation and could help him quickly break through to the Fifth Realm Martial Saint.

The other spiritual object was a Spirit Fruit.

An Earth Essence Fruit.

Extending his hand, Ning Qi summoned the fist-sized, pale yellow Spirit Fruit into his palm, his brows lifting at the intense Earth attribute spiritual power.

Immediately.

He turned his gaze towards the True Martial Peach Tree outside the courtyard.

On the day of Spiritual Awakening, thanks to the transformation of the Enlightenment Tea Tree, the True Martial Peach Tree also advanced considerably, but Ning Qi wanted it to progress further.

"With this Earth Essence Fruit, I can experiment with some formations to enhance the True Martial Peach Tree's cultivation, transforming it into a true Spirit Tree!"

Even though the threat of the Mountain and Sea Realm was looming.

Ning Qi believed that one day it would be resolved, so he didn't plan to abandon some long-term plans.

Furthermore.

Nowadays, the environmental conditions were far better than before, especially with the emergence of certain spiritual objects giving martial artists hope for rapid advancement. He also planned to gather a batch of treasure and spirit medicines to refine suitable pills to help Luo Wentian and the others enhance their strength, giving them a means of self-preservation in the upcoming great battle.

For example, the Heaven-Reaching Pill, Ning Qi had them gathering materials for it before.

Of course.

All of this was left to Luo Wentian and the others to accomplish. Ning Qi only needed to devote a bit of time to deduction and refining without hindering himself.

He was very clear-headed.

His current strength was the priority because, even if Luo Wentian and others were forcibly raised to the Martial Saint Realm, it wouldn't make much of a difference.

Collecting the three spiritual objects.

Ning Qi took to the skies.

His target.

Was directly High Heaven.

This was the first time Ning Qi ventured to High Heaven after entering the Martial Saint Realm, having not been here for quite a while since reaching Celestial Being Perfection, as there was no longer any need for cultivation here.

Now revisiting this place, he immediately sensed something extraordinary.

Spiritual Qi also permeated this place, not as intensely as below, but still decent. Hence, visible to the naked eye, the originally terrifying Thunderous Forbidden Zone now became even more formidable, with bolts of thunder seemingly coming alive, unleashing their power recklessly.

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Fortunately, Ning Qi's advancement was even greater.

The Wood Qi flowed around his body, and after the elevation of the Cyan Profound Body Protection Technique he originally created, it became even more resilient. In these past few days, he was not idle; all the past secret techniques were being elevated, and moreover, he was constantly deepening his foundation.

At this moment.

He stood with hands behind his back, and stepped into the Thunderous Forbidden Zone alone.

Boom!!

Lightning shone like rain, and the endless booming sounds continuously echoed in Ning Qi's ears, as bolts of thunder crashed down and engulfed him.

Yet Ning Qi's expression remained unchanged.

The purple lightning bolts could not approach him at all.

Ning Qi lifted his gaze, and golden light swirled in his eyes as he once again saw the scene he had seen before.

Deeper within the Thunderous Forbidden Zone, there were lightning bolts of various colors densely packed.

Purple-black lightning, black lightning, black-red lightning, blood-red lightning...

The deeper he went, the more terrifying it became.

Ning Qi strolled calmly.

Ultimately, he stopped in the area of black lightning; he could still proceed forward, but the blood-red lightning caused him apprehension, even a strong sense of crisis. For refining spiritual energy, the best effect was still the black-red lightning.

He did not plan to probe the deepest depths but instead chose to sit cross-legged.

Bolt after bolt of black lightning came crashing in, but they merely shattered into streaks of lightning.

Ning Qi summoned the True Martial Sword, and a startling sharpness burst forth, immediately forming a safe vacuum area. Following this, the Earth Vein Essence Stone, Molten Rock Crystal Core, and Earth Marrow—all three spiritual objects—rushed out, spinning around Ning Qi continuously, transforming into a triad formation, infusing him with Earth Qi.

Then, bursts of spiritual energy erupted, guiding the black-red lightning to descend.

Boom!

In an instant.

A strong lightning force flowed across Ning Qi's body, even making his hair dance with lightning snakes.

Within Ning Qi's body, the Five Organs were glowing, with the power of the other four organs resonating with the spleen.

He was in good spirits, clearly sensing the increased pace of cultivation.

If this trend continues, perhaps there is hope of reaching the Fifth Realm Martial Saint Realm before the Martial Saint meeting; by then, Ning Qi's strength will be even greater.

...

Ning Qi did not stay on True Martial Mountain to cultivate indefinitely.

After stabilizing his realm and once the turmoil of spiritual awakening gradually settled, he descended the mountain.

On the way.

He was rather amazed.

The influence of spiritual awakening on the world was indeed significant; many places became unfamiliar, where once rare thousand-foot tall mountains now appeared everywhere, like small dirt mounds scattered randomly, and even ten-thousand-foot peaks could be occasionally seen.

The ecology among them had obviously changed significantly.

Black Sand Sea.

Was no longer what it used to be.

In just a short period, this near-sea had become much wider and deeper, with island upon island appearing out of thin air. He sighed emotionally, yet without hesitation, followed the pulse of the True Martial Seal.

Soon.

Ning Qi stopped in a completely unfamiliar sea area, took a deep breath, and sent his voice out with the help of spiritual power:

"Profound Turtle Senior, Ning Qi pays respect!"

Waves surged, and calm prevailed.

Ning Qi waited silently for a moment, then his eyes lit up as he sensed a mighty wave coming from the seabed, followed by columns of water shooting skyward. A colossal entity emerged from the sea surface, streams of water cascading from its edges like falling waterfalls.

Seeing the Profound Turtle, whose size had evidently grown significantly, Ning Qi was inwardly astonished.

As for on the back of the Profound Turtle, it was still shrouded by the White Mist-enveloped True Martial Hall.

"Long time no see, Ning."

Profound Turtle Senior's large pupils carried a gentle smile as he sized up Ning Qi, clearly with admiration in his eyes.

"Crossing four realms at a step, you're impressive, kid."

Ning Qi smiled and said:

"Just lucky."

Profound Turtle Senior chuckled and said:

"Come up."

The White Mist scattered, and Ning Qi once again saw the True Martial Hall like an Immortal Palace. He initially thought it extraordinary, and with his current perspective, he felt even more unfathomable, stirring a ripple in his heart.

He stepped into the True Martial Hall, where a familiar hunched old man was already waiting.

Ning Qi was not surprised; he had once created a secret technique known as Wuxiang Gang Body, which was now further elevated, able to construct avatars with spiritual energy, far stronger than before and much more flexible. The current scenario was likely a similar secret technique.

"Greetings, Profound Turtle Senior." He saluted respectfully.

He was still very grateful to Profound Turtle Senior; back in Black Sand Sea, had it not been for him stopping the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint, he would have only watched as the Red Sun Martial Saint left.

Of course, the current Red Sun Martial Saint was already a corpse.

Profound Turtle Senior waved his hand, marveling at Ning Qi:

"You certainly did not disappoint me."

Up-close scrutiny of Ning Qi further revealed the strength of the young Taoist before him, far exceeding his earlier expectations.

It stirred an unprecedented hope within him.

Ning Qi said earnestly:

"I've come here as agreed to seek clarity from the senior."

Last time after obtaining the True Martial heritage, Profound Turtle Senior had told him to revisit once he had reached the Martial Saint Realm.

He originally wanted to learn everything behind this, yet unexpectedly, the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint divulged everything beforehand. However, he believed that Profound Turtle Senior might know something different.

The two strolled slowly among the palace group.

Cranes occasionally sang, and when Ning Qi looked, he realized that they were real Immortal Cranes and not mere illusions. His pupils constricted, clearly sensing a Martial Saint Realm-like aura from those cranes.

In the outside world, that would be the Beast Emperor!

And not just one, but seven or eight of them.

Besides those, there were several spirit beasts, unknown to Ning Qi, hidden with extremely powerful strength, quietly observing him before vanishing into the White Mist.

Ning Qi's heart was not calm; re-entering the True Martial Hall this time, the sights and sounds were even more startling than before.

This kind of foundation seemed beyond what this realm should possess.

"No need to marvel; they cannot leave this True Martial Hall." Profound Turtle Senior said calmly, "I know you have many doubts in your heart. Now that you've stepped into the Martial Saint Realm, I know what I can tell you, and I won't hide it."

Ning Qi nodded, then asked:

"Do you know the Mountain and Sea Realm, Senior?"

Profound Turtle Senior was slightly surprised:

"It seems you already know much."

"A few days ago, the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint told me." Ning Qi did not hold back, recounting everything the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint had shared with him. Instinctively, he felt a greater trust in Profound Turtle Senior.

Profound Turtle Senior nodded slowly:

"What he said was correct, but do you know, from where did the core Dharma Method, which conceals spiritual energy, awaken the world's will?"

Ning Qi's heart skipped, gazing at the hall in front of him.

Profound Turtle Senior laughed:

"It originated from the True Martial Hall."

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This sentence contains too many meanings.

Ning Qi had some vague doubts before. The remaining people in the Martial Realm were able to so quickly explore Dharma Methods related to world consciousness, which seemed a bit too fast. Now it seems somewhat understandable, as many thoughts began to emerge in his mind.

Before Ning Qi could think further.

The old Profound Turtle continued:

"With your Martial Realm's foundation, trying to revive the world consciousness is too difficult."

Ning Qi's eyes instantly sharpened:

"Your Martial Realm?"

He seized on the key words.

The old Profound Turtle chuckled and said:

"That's right, strictly speaking, although I've lived in the Martial Realm for so long, I'm not from your Martial Realm. Let me formally introduce myself, I come from the True Martial Realm, and am the heir of the True Martial Immortal Sect's fire seed."

Ning Qi's breathing unknowingly stalled.

All confusions suddenly became clear.

No wonder he always felt that the True Martial Hall was somewhat out of this world, even somewhat incompatible with the Martial Realm. Everything he saw and heard in the True Martial Hall did not seem to belong to the Martial Realm. It turns out it came from another realm.

"The True Martial Realm, is it an Upper Realm like the Mountain and Sea Realm?" Ning Qi asked.

The old Profound Turtle's gaze held a sense of melancholy:

"That's right, but to be precise, the True Martial Realm and the Mountain and Sea Realm are Spirit Realms with perfected world rules, while your Martial Realm is a small world with incomplete rules. The Mountain and Sea World is your Upper Realm, but the True Martial Realm is not your Upper Realm."

Such a short sentence contained far too much information.

Ning Qi only felt that the world suddenly broadened, realizing the world he lived in was just a small world?

His mind was turbulent, quietly waiting for the old Profound Turtle's explanation.

The old Profound Turtle continued:

"The Sea of Realms is so vast that no one can know. Countless Spirit Realms float within it, their numbers immense. The rules of Spirit Realms are complete, with cultivators as numerous as clouds. The strongest can defy the heavens and ascend to immortality. Below each Spirit Realm are unknown numbers of small worlds, each with varying degrees of imperfect rules. Once they reach their limit, they can break through the world and ascend, reaching the corresponding Upper Realm."

Ning Qi's eyes suddenly brightened.

"Immortal?! Is there an even stronger world above the Spirit Realm?"

His pursuit of immortality now seemed to unveil a long scroll of immortality before his eyes, making him involuntarily excited.

The old Profound Turtle's eyes also held a longing:

"Immortal Realm! Above the Spirit Realm is named the Immortal Realm. The goal of countless Spirit Realm cultivators is to ascend to the Immortal Realm and achieve the status of a True Immortal! But..."

He changed his tone, regretting:

"Unknown epochs ago, the Immortal Realm already became lost, and from then on, no one has ascended to immortality."

Saying this, he added another explanation:

"An epoch is one million years."

Ning Qi remained silent.

One million years, what an eternity, the ancient saints of the Martial Realm have schemes that only span tens of thousands of years. In front of an epoch, it seems so short, and the Immortal Realm that was lost countless epochs ago, what a truly immortal existence it is.

He felt a craving in his heart, as well as regret:

"Immortal Realm... why did it become lost?"

The old Profound Turtle clicked his tongue and said:

"No one knows. Perhaps only a very few truly formidable ancient creatures from epochs might know a little. After the Immortal Realm became lost, the Flying Immortal Era came to an end, followed by..."

"The Spirit Realm Contending for Immortality Era!"

Ning Qi's spirit was shaken.

No matter how good the Immortal Realm is, it still seemed distant to him now. The immediate concern was the threat of the Mountain and Sea Realm. He had a feeling that the Spirit Realm Contending for Immortality Era was related to the current situation of the Martial Realm.

A few short words made him feel the taste of bloody conflict.

The old Profound Turtle sighed and said:

"With the Immortal Realm lost, no one can become a True Immortal anymore. Even the strongest can at most live past one epoch. For us, one epoch is naturally extremely long, but for those great powers with the ambition to become immortals, a hopeless future is more painful than death."

"But ultimately, someone came up with a way, which is to raise the world's limit. If the Spirit Realm can't accommodate a True Immortal, then increase the Spirit Realm's limit until it can accommodate a True Immortal or even stronger! There might even be a day when it becomes another supreme Immortal Realm!"

"And how to raise the world's limit?"

"That would be by devouring the origins of other worlds!"

Ning Qi's expression gradually calmed.

Devouring the world's origins sounds simple, but it's surely accompanied by countless slaughter. This is the invasion of worlds. He understood now; this is the fundamental reason for the Mountain and Sea Realm's invasion of the Martial Realm. They want to devour the origins of the Martial Realm; to them, the native people of the Martial Realm are as insignificant as ants.

It's not about right or wrong.

It's just the law of the jungle.

Ning Qi frowned and said:

"How much can the origins of a small world like the Martial Realm help in raising the Spirit Realm's limit?"

Although he didn't know how much stronger the Spirit Realm is compared to a small world, he estimated the gap wouldn't be small. The Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint once said that outside the Martial Realm's sky are strong beings even more terrifying than the Martial Realm's world consciousness.

The old Profound Turtle chuckled:

"Even the smallest mosquito meat is still meat. Quantitative changes can lead to qualitative change. After all, trying to devour other Spirit Realms isn't easy. Not to mention whether you can find the world's coordinates, even if you find them, who is stronger is uncertain; a single misstep could overturn the boat."

"And devouring Lower Realms is much easier. Ascenders from the Lower Realms come with coordinates, and then you release Life Poison and wait to harvest. It doesn't take much time, and you can simultaneously set up in many Lower Realms, very safe and efficient."

There was a hint of mockery in his laughter.

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This feeling is like cutting leeks, one crop after another.

As for those Ascenders, I'm afraid their fate won't be much better.

Ning Qi paused:

"Since the Spirit Realm is so strong, and you know the coordinates of the Lower Realm, why not just send an Absolute Strong Person to sweep through it, why go through all this trouble."

The Profound Turtle shook its head and said:

"Naturally, there are restrictions. Ascending from a Lower Realm to an Upper Realm only requires one's cultivation to reach a certain level to open a world passage, but even if an Upper Realm knows the coordinates of a Lower Realm, it cannot easily descend. This is the rule of the Sea of Realms to protect small worlds."

"And the Life Poison is one of their methods. The Life Poison is integrated into the spiritual qi of the Lower Realm, which can weaken the Lower Realm's resistance and also form anchors. When merged with a Martial Saint-level strong person, it can form a Tao Mark. Thus, combining inside and outside, a world passage can be opened."

"Although this world passage only allows cultivators below the strongest combat powers of the small world to pass through, it is still quite terrifying."

"Think about it, hundreds or thousands of cultivators equivalent to the Martial Saint Realm, each wielding stronger magical artifacts, cultivating stronger magic, sweeping through like locusts, which world could withstand it? Basically, they would soon be slaughtered completely, turning into nutrients for the Spirit Realm along with the small world."

He spoke in a melancholic tone, as if he was already accustomed to it.

In Ning Qi's mind, a horrifying scene of blood rain appearing in the sky emerged:

"But the Martial Realm has endured for tens of thousands of years..."

The Profound Turtle chuckled:

"You don't think your Martial Realm is very weak, do you?"

"Let me tell you, the Martial Realm is actually among the strongest tier of small worlds. Its strongest already equivalent to the Magic Realm in the Spirit Realm, which you refer to as the Martial Saint Realm, and furthermore, the world will has awakened, which is extremely rare. In a million small worlds, there may not be one like yours."

"You must understand that in many small worlds, the strongest is only at the level of your Celestial Human Realm martial artist, and some only reach the Primordial Core Realm. Their world rules are terrifyingly incomplete, even with spiritual qi, strong individuals cannot emerge, and some small worlds are spiritual qi deserts."

Ning Qi was somewhat stunned.

This is too weak, I could suppress a large area with a wave of my hand.

Thinking like this, it seems lucky to have reincarnated in the Martial Realm?

The two walked through the grand gate, a garden appeared before them, filled with various Spirit Herbs and Exotic Flowers, exuding an enticing aroma that any single one would drive martial artists in the outside world to madness.

The Profound Turtle continued to smile:

"Of course, another reason the Martial Realm has been able to endure for tens of thousands of years is the existence of the True Martial Hall."

"Otherwise, just the Life Poison would be enough to make you drink a pot, let alone surviving the subsequent invasion and following plans."

Ning Qi nodded.

He has now sorted out the cause and effect.

But he also has more questions.

"I have a few questions I'd like to ask, senior."

"Ask away."

An expectant look appeared in Ning Qi's eyes:

"I previously heard senior mention the Magic Realm, may I ask, is this part of the Spirit Realm's cultivation system?"

The old Profound Turtle thought for a moment and said:

"Alright, your temperament is exceptional, so telling you is no harm."

"After countless eras, almost all Spirit Realms have popularized this Immortal Path Cultivation System, which is the Four Steps and Eight Realms of Immortal Ascension!"

Ning Qi held his breath.

The old Profound Turtle continued:

"The so-called Four Steps are Refining Spirit into Qi, Refining Qi to Spirit, Refining Spirit and Returning to Void, and Refining Void and Harmonization; a further step leads to the realm of Immortal True Immortal!"

"And if subdivided further, it splits into Eight Realms."

"Refining Spirit into Qi comprises the Postnatal and Perception realms; the former refines the essence of the body, while the latter perceives the qi of heaven and earth. Corresponding to your Martial Realm's

cultivation system, the Postnatal Realm corresponds to the cultivation before the Primordial Core Realm, and the Perception Realm is similar to the Celestial Human Realm."

"Refining Qi to Spirit includes the Magic and Purple Mansion realms. The Magic Realm refines spiritual qi into magical power, corresponding to your Martial Saint Realm, while the Purple Mansion Realm involves condensing Innate Divine Techniques to open, corresponding to your Divine Power Realm for breaking through realms, but strictly speaking, the Divine Power Realm is not a complete Purple Mansion Realm and needs further improvement."

Ning Qi listened very intently, feeling as if a door to a new world was opening before him.

"Refining Spirit and Returning to Void includes the Primordial Spirit and Void Path realms."

"Refining Void and Harmonization includes the Integration and Harmonization realms."

"Cultivators of the Unity Realm are the strongest that the Spirit Realm can accommodate, living for an era! Though that was in the past, there must now be powerful Spirit Realms breaking the limit, with True Immortals born."

Ning Qi's heart rippled.

Even though the Immortal Realm has declined, this is a path to longevity and becoming a True Immortal.

He had for the first time such a clear direction.

He suppressed the turmoil in his heart.

Ning Qi took a deep breath and asked again:

"Since senior and the True Martial Hall come from the True Martial Realm, why did you come to the Martial Realm?"

The old man's figure slightly paused, and after a moment he slowly began to speak:

"Because the True Martial Realm is no more."

In Ning Qi's eyes was a slight trace of apology, but before he could speak, the old man waved it off:

"It's okay, this was a long time ago. The True Martial Realm's strongest dominator was the True Martial Immortal Sect, and I came from there; at that time I was merely an egg, with only a vague consciousness, faintly feeling an astonishing battle erupt."

"Afterwards, a mark told me, from then onwards, I was the flame inheritor of the True Martial Immortal Sect. Wandering in the Sea of Realms for an unknown length of time, the True Martial Hall's power nearly exhausted, it finally fell into the Martial Realm to avoid pursuit, and I was born here. In a way, I am also half a person of the Martial Realm."

He spoke with a hint of bitterness and resignation to fate:

"Later, I received some memory infusion and came to know, the True Martial Realm was destroyed by the Mountain and Sea Realm."

If born normally in the True Martial Realm, his strength would be much more than it is now.

But destiny toys with people.

Now, he is trapped in this cage, unable to break free.

Unable to ascend, and with the True Martial Hall damaged, it lost the ability to traverse worlds.

He is now bound to the fate of the Martial Realm; if eaten by the Mountain and Sea Realm's essence, the True Martial Heritage will be wholly severed.

"At first, they were also eggs like me, later coming into the world one after another, but they are different from me. I am the flame inheritor of the True Martial Immortal Sect and can set foot in the True Martial Hall, whereas they cannot even step out of the True Martial Hall, lacking freedom."

The old Profound Turtle gazed at the Spirit Beasts faintly visible in the White Mist with some pity and regret.

To lack freedom is indeed frightening.

Ning Qi respectfully saluted:

"Thank you for enlightening me, senior."

At this point, he fully understood the events of the Ancient Era.

He processed the information learned today, encompassing vast matters, greatly expanding his vision. Although the crisis is presently approaching, at least he knows the cause and effect and won't spin around like a headless fly.

The two walked on, finally stopping in front of the majestic True Martial Hall. Seeing it again, Ning Qi's heart was still as shocked as ever, especially now knowing the True Martial Hall's origin, making it even more so. If he guessed right, the True Martial Hall was originally an extremely powerful treasure.

The hall doors opened automatically, light engulfing both of them.

When the light faded, only a lone golden door stood, while the previous silver and bronze doors were nowhere to be seen.

"The other two doors were my tests, but this one is the true test of the True Martial Inheritance. Now, you should understand why I told you to reach the Martial Saint Realm before coming here again."

Ning Qi nodded.

He had already guessed.

The hunchbacked old man's sentimental voice echoed in the True Martial Hall:

"Since being born, the True Martial Hall selected one after another of exceptionally talented martial artists in your Martial Realm to take the test, but without exception, all failed. Your appearance, however, is the last hope I see."

"Ning, your talent and comprehension are unlike anything I've ever heard of, achieving such accomplishments at only thirteen years old; across ancient and modern times, no one can match you."

He looked with deep expectation and hope:

"Perhaps, you can successfully pass the test of the True Martial Hall and receive the inheritance of the True Martial Immortal Sect!"

"By then, perhaps a method to break the impasse may be found."

...

Chapter 406: Inheriting the Immortal Artifact, Stars as Chess

Inside the great hall.

Profound Turtle Senior looked at Ning Qi with eyes full of hope.

He had awakened a portion of the inheritance memory and knew how glorious the True Martial Realm once was. But precisely because of this, he felt even more distressed. If he hadn't known, it would have been fine, but after knowing about the vastness of the world, he could only be trapped in the Martial Realm awaiting his demise, a feeling difficult to describe.

Again and again, he watched hopefully as people from the Martial Realm entered the test, but without exception, they all failed.

He had already despaired.

This time, opening the True Martial Hall was just a symbolic act. Yet he didn't expect to meet someone like Ning Qi, a surprising source of joy.

Ning Qi nodded solemnly.

He already understood the cause and effect, knowing that the enemy he faced was as colossal as the Mountain and Sea Realm. Even though he had confidence in himself, he hoped to seek any possible help. If he could obtain the True Martial Immortal Sect's inheritance before him, his hope of breaking the situation would naturally increase greatly.

He asked:

"Profound Turtle Senior, what is the specific content of this inheritance test?"

Old Profound Turtle slowly shook his head:

"I don't know the specific content either."

Ning Qi was stunned.

Wasn't there many testers from the Martial Realm who entered it?

Old Profound Turtle explained:

"Anyone who enters the test and fails will have all related memories erased."

Ning Qi's heart shook.

Then he heard the old Profound Turtle continue:

"The specific content is unknown, but the inheritance test is nothing more than a few items: comprehension, combat power, and willpower. These are the evaluation criteria for many Spirit Realm Immortal Sects when selecting inheritors, and the True Martial Immortal Sect is no exception."

Ning Qi breathed a sigh of relief.

If it's truly like this, his confidence greatly increased.

"Ning, you must give it your all and strive to get the best evaluation in the test. This determines how much control you will have over the True Martial Hall in the end! The True Martial Hall is the inheritanced Immortal Artifact of the True Martial Sect!" This was the hope of the old Profound Turtle.

As the words fell.

Ning Qi's pupils constricted sharply.

Immortal Artifact!

Anything connected to immortals is definitely not simple.

He never imagined that the True Martial Hall was actually an Immortal Artifact. Even though the old Profound Turtle had said before that the True Martial Hall is now broken, even a broken Immortal Artifact greatly exceeded Ning Qi's imagination and undoubtedly possessed extraordinary power.

At the same time.

He also grasped another piece of information in the old Profound Turtle's words.

The test evaluation is related to authority.

"So, if I can't fully control the True Martial Hall, there will continue to be selection of inheritors in the future?" Ning Qi asked.

Old Profound Turtle nodded:

"Naturally. The True Martial Immortal Sect wants the most excellent inheritor. For instance, if you only obtain a grade B evaluation, you might only gain two or three parts of authority, and afterwards you will also shoulder the burden of selecting inheritors for the True Martial Immortal Sect until someone is fully recognized by the True Martial Hall."

Ning Qi immediately understood.

This is the spark of the True Martial Immortal Sect.

The old Profound Turtle before him, as the inheritor of the spark, must also have very limited control over the True Martial Hall. Some Secret Techniques regarding Life Poison and world will from the ancient era of the Martial Realm probably leaked from here, otherwise relying solely on the old Profound Turtle who is considered 'native' to the Martial Realm might not be able to produce such Secret Techniques.

Ning Qi was rarely moved.

A Spirit Realm's overlord-level Immortal Sect inheritance along with an Immortal Artifact, even within the Spirit Realm, is enough to make countless cultivators envious and fervent. Even those powerful beings in the Integration Realm or Unity Realm would take action.

Fortunately, this is currently in the Martial Realm.

The Mountain and Sea Realm does not know that the inheritance of the True Martial Immortal Sect is hidden within.

Taking a deep breath, Ning Qi adjusted his mood.

Under the encouraging gaze of the old Profound Turtle, he took a step forward, already walking into the Light Door.

"You must succeed."

Old Profound Turtle silently prayed, watching the golden portal intently, not daring to relax for a moment.

...

Ning Qi felt a powerful force surging around him, seemingly detecting something, and then the surroundings fell into darkness.

When he opened his eyes again.

He heard deafening sounds of battle cries, terrifying auras making Ning Qi's soul tremble. He had no doubt that the owners of those auras could reincarnate him several hundred times with just a casual breath.

Ning Qi looked.

A series of Immortal Mountains thousands of times more majestic than True Martial Mountain stretched endlessly. Within them, celestial mist shrouded, spirit waterfalls hung like star rivers, spirit herbs and exotic flowers were everywhere to be seen, and countless spirit beasts and immortal animals soared among them. He could even vaguely see the figures of True Dragons and Celestial Phoenixes.

His breath tightened.

Yet, such a sacred land of immortals was now witnessing an incredibly fierce unprecedented battle.

"True Martial Ancestor, surrender without delay!" Two incomparably terrifying figures descended, and everything around distorted. Ning Qi couldn't even look at their figures directly.

Among the myriad Immortal Mountains.

A similarly frightful figure stepped forth.

Ning Qi also couldn't clearly see his figure, vaguely feeling it was an imposing old man. The old man said nothing, and in an instant, moved the heavens and earth, sweeping those two away, opening another secret realm to fight them alone, overwhelming in momentum.

With these three gone.

The remaining strong ones were equally terrifying.

Ning Qi saw a powerful being grabbing stars with a single hand and furiously smashing them within the Immortal Mountains, causing the heaven and earth to shake; cultivators manifested Supreme Divine Techniques, transforming into heaven-reaching three-headed six-armed giants, tearing apart True Dragons alive; there were also Absolute Strong Persons setting up shocking formations, summoning countless heavenly fires, burning Immortal Mountains to ashes...

His mind shuddered.

Everything before him was overwhelmingly terrifying.

This was an incredibly fierce cultivator battle, Spirit Realm warfare!

One after another, powerful beings made their moves, their methods heaven-reaching, far beyond what Ning Qi could aspire to now, and the sheer number of cultivators was mind-numbing, even the most inconspicuous little minion was stronger than Ning Qi.

Chapter 407: Inheriting the Immortal Artifact, Stars as Chess_2

He understood that the invaders in the spiritual realm war were feared to be at least of the Purple Mansion Realm in cultivation.

And from the terrifying whispers around him, Ning Qi discerned the identities of the two people from before.

"Mountain Ancestor, Sea Ancestor."

His spirits were shaken, and he already understood what the scene before him was.

"This is... a memory playback of the Mountain and Sea Realm's invasion of the True Martial Realm back then."

Ning Qi's emotions surged.

Hearing it from the old Profound Turtle was one thing, but seeing it himself was quite another.

Tragic, grand, ferocious.

This was Ning Qi's impression of the spiritual realm war.

"This is a battle for the path, progress or retreat; if the True Martial Realm doesn't want to devour others, it will be devoured by others."

A thought emerged in Ning Qi's mind.

The war scene before him gradually calmed down.

He then realized he was standing amidst a starry sky.

A majestic voice echoed throughout the starry sky:

"As my True Martial inheritor, you must face this as an adversary. Do you wish to undergo the assessment?"

Ning Qi understood at once.

This was vaguely the first invisible assessment—courage. After witnessing such a powerful enemy, continuing to participate in the assessment would qualify one as an extraordinary individual. But let's not think this choice is simple. The previous memory replay was not a simple projection; it had a soul impact, and the terrifying presence almost felt substantial, enough to easily induce fear in a Martial Saint.

In fact.

Ning Qi didn't know that among the many Martial Saints from the Martial Realm who saw this scene, 90% didn't even have the courage to participate in the assessment.

Fortunately, this was not difficult for Ning Qi.

"Begin the assessment." His mind was already completely calm.

Power didn't instill fear in him; it only gave him more motivation.

Given enough time, what harm is there in being an immortal?

At Ning Qi's words.

The starry sky before him began to change.

He felt his vision be lifted infinitely, as if he had become a giant spanning the heavens and earth. The once vast stars appeared minuscule in an instant, like... chess pieces.

And across the distant star river, a vague figure seemed to stand with hands held behind its back.

Ning Qi was shocked.

"Is this to play chess with the starry sky as the board and stars as the pieces, winning against the person opposite to pass this level? Or is it just about surviving long enough?"

What grandeur!

Yet the vague figure opposite was more shocking to Ning Qi. He vaguely felt that this figure resembled the True Martial Ancestor seen in the earlier scene.

Meanwhile, he also noticed a massive star hourglass.

"Those who pass the three levels may obtain True Martial Hall privileges and inheritance based on performance. The first level begins now."

A majestic voice reminded once before completely vanishing.

Ning Qi gazed at the 'chess pieces' of stars beneath him, pondering how to break this board without any hints, relying solely on his exploration.

"Could it be testing chess skills?"

As he mused.

The vague figure on the opposite side waved, and a star roared to life. In Ning Qi's astonished gaze, the star transformed into a Heaven-Reaching Divine Sword enveloped in frost, slashing with terrifying power, instantly obliterating several stars on Ning Qi's side.

"Within these stars... are all kinds of immortal arts or divine techniques?" He immediately discerned the mystery within.

Without the slightest hesitation.

His consciousness delved into one of the stars, and Ning Qi perceived a type of immortal art named Golden Flame Spirit Blade within that star. As long as he comprehended it successfully, he could wield it with Star Power to unleash supreme power.

"In other words, what this level actually assesses is comprehension? As long as you comprehend the spells and divine techniques within a short time, you can annihilate the opponent's stars, rather than playing chess as I previously thought. So... to achieve good results, I just need to hold on longer."

"Even... if I could defeat the person opposite, I should be able to achieve the best result."

With this realization, Ning Qi smiled.

In terms of comprehension, he wasn't afraid of anyone.

After stepping into the Martial Saint Realm, his comprehension had made a qualitative leap.

He had just perceived that the spells and divine techniques within these stars had not surpassed the Martial Saint Realm's range, enhanced by Star Power to become so terrifying. Given this, he was even less fearful.

Boom!

A star from the opposite side exploded, becoming a massive finger pressing forward, simultaneously blasting several stars on Ning Qi's side.

Ning Qi clearly saw.

The opposite star river was advancing toward him, and when close enough, it would instantly overwhelm him.

He even vaguely perceived the indifferent gaze of the vague figure opposite.

But he felt no panic.

His thoughts dived into the Golden Flame Spirit Blade star, and in his mind, waves of inspiration surged like a spring. After a dozen breaths, that star exploded, and a spirit blade glowing with golden flames soared into the sky, slicing through four stars across the way.

The person on the opposite seemed slightly surprised.

A dozen breaths later, another finger sent a star transforming into a flaming giant palm toward Ning Qi's side. But Ning Qi was undaunted, as one of his stars turned into a golden armored giant, tearing apart the flaming giant palm.

He grew increasingly adept.

Martial Saint-level immortal arts posed no difficulty to him, especially after comprehending more, he became increasingly fast through analogy.

The two clashed.

One star after another was annihilated, and a series of divine techniques manifested. Ning Qi did not fall behind, even vaguely gaining the upper hand. From the initial oversight that led to the destruction of several stars, Ning Qi now gradually turned the tables.

The smile on his lips widened.

The vague figure opposite was visibly shocked.

He seemed incapable of imagining such a monstrous prodigy could actually clash with him, as the Star Comprehension level was originally never intended for a Magic Realm cultivator to pass, typically judged based on how long they could hold out.

It was the whimsical idea of a certain Ancestor back then.

But now.

Ning Qi completely defied convention.

One star magic after another clashed, and the stars in front of the opposite figure were decreasing at a slow pace, leaving him astonished.

But Ning Qi was not satisfied.

"Too slow, too slow!"

In the next moment.

Ning Qi split his mind three ways, simultaneously comprehending the magic within three stars—a Heavenly Demon Sword Qi, a Spirit Armor Tao Soldier, and a pitch-black Fist Seal. They appeared almost at the same time, leaving the opposite figure dumbstruck.

The three spells clashed, extinguishing one of the opponent's spells before sweeping away more than a dozen stars.

This speed was more than ten times faster than before!

Ning Qi nodded in satisfaction.

"I can be even faster!"

He didn't know what level of evaluation was required for complete control of the True Martial Hall, but he could only put forth his best effort.

Stars shone one after another.

Spells exploded in the starry sky.

Ning Qi fully indulged, experiencing powers he couldn't yet command, now indulging through this method in advance.

Not only that.

Every spell here was extremely precious and powerful, making his foundation terrifyingly strong at an unprecedented pace.

Mind split four ways!

Mind split seven ways!

Mind split ten ways!

As ten stars simultaneously exploded one after another, the vague figure opposite was completely stunned, even forgetting to activate his stars.

What kind of monster is this!

The vague figure was shocked and rarely excited as he thought to himself, could there really be hope this time?

The star hourglass dripped slowly.

Ning Qi felt more and more exhilarated.

Unknowingly.

The stars opposite had been completely wiped out by him, while on Ning Qi's side, there were still vast star rivers surrounding him.

"Senior, apologies." Ning Qi bowed, then called the star river to crush forward. In astonishment, the vague figure was crushed into fragments by the star river, never imagining that he would experience such a sensation since the setup of this assessment.

Ning Qi saw.

The vague figure seemed to smile, as laughter gradually arose, lowly resounding in this starry sky.

Then the majestic voice reappeared:

"First level passed, evaluation... exceeding top grade, cannot be assessed."

Chapter 408: Nine Great Taoists

"Beyond Grade A?"

Ning Qi was a bit stunned.

He had heard the old Profound Turtle mention before that the assessment evaluation was divided into four grades: A, B, C, and D, each with upper, middle, and lower levels, totaling twelve levels in all. And now, he had actually surpassed Grade A?

The corners of his mouth curved slightly.

At least for this first challenge, no one could match his performance.

Probably, past assessors couldn't even hold the upper hand—they could merely endure for a while, and perhaps the person who set this assessment never imagined someone could win against the opponent, with the evaluation standard fundamentally based on how long one could hold out.

Thinking over it carefully, Ning Qi increasingly felt it was indeed the case.

To comprehend an immortal path magic in just over ten breaths, who else could manage that besides him?

Unless it's some ancient monster with heaven-reaching cultivation coming in disguise, then perhaps it's slightly possible.

But immediately.

He ceased to think much more; as long as he passed the tests, it was good enough.

Now he had already cleared the first challenge, as long as the evaluations for the remaining two challenges were good, he could smoothly pass the assessment.

He felt a bit of anticipation.

What kind of mighty power would the Immortal Artifact possess?

As he pondered.

The surrounding starry sky was gradually dimming; Ning Qi held his breath and focused, using the Golden Pupil of Illusion-breaking, attempting to glimpse the truth within these changes, but regretfully, the power was too advanced for him to touch.

In a moment.

Ning Qi found himself in another realm.

Within the Immortal Mountain, there was an incredibly vast Tao Field bustling with voices; numerous excited gazes were directed at the high platform floating among the clouds, each platform having a phantom, precisely nine of them.

"These are the marks left by the nine strongest True Martial Taoists of our True Martial Immortal Sect throughout history, considered the strongest in the Magic Realm! Even being able to withstand one or half of their moves would be a point of pride!" Many similar voices rang out.

Ning Qi saw.

Those cultivators, ethereal and agile in their aura, crowded the Tao Field, gazing up at one True Martial Immortal Sect prodigy after another stepping forward to challenge.

Some of these people had just stepped into the Magic Realm, while others had already reached Magic Realm Perfection.

And when they stepped onto the high platform, the phantoms would activate, becoming beings of the same realm as them.

Various techniques were unleashed, making Ning Qi a bit amazed.

Even without counting those nine strongest Taoists, the prodigies who came to challenge were extremely powerful; being in the Magic Realm, they were much stronger than the Martial Saints of the Martial Realm. He felt that the likes of Red Sun Martial Saint and Martial Saint Ziyue, these unparalleled geniuses of the Martial Realm, would probably only be considered average here.

As his thoughts turned.

Everything around him instantly faded away like fleeting light and shadows; in just the blink of an eye, the previously bustling noise disappeared entirely, leaving only Ning Qi in place, evoking a sense of desolation.

He immediately understood.

"This is the challenge scene of True Martial Immortal Sect disciples from back then."

He had already grasped the challenge content of this second test.

"Second challenge, begin!" A grand voice resounded once more.

Ning Qi directed his gaze towards the phantoms atop the nine high platforms, his eyes serious.

Admittedly.

The combat power of these Taoists at the same realm was somewhat terrifying; some even possessed special physiques with various unique techniques. Even for him, it required careful attention. Ning Qi never underestimated himself but also never became conceited.

He indeed possessed full-level enlightenment, but growing up in the Martial Realm, his experience and foundation were lacking. Compared to these Taoists enjoying the various precious resources of the True Martial Immortal Sect, this was a disadvantage.

But he had no fear.

He stepped onto the high platform among the clouds; this was the weakest among the nine Taoists.

The phantom opposite him was activated, revealing an exceptionally beautiful woman, ethereal as an immortal, dressed in a flowing white palace dress, her indifferent voice rang out:

"Fourth-grade Magic Realm, you are given ten breaths to adjust."

Her aura immediately transformed, stabilizing at the same realm as Ning Qi's, which he had already noticed during his previous observations.

After ten breaths passed.

The woman opposite vanished instantly from the spot.

Raging spiritual power surged forward, transforming into a sword energy as cold as moonlight; the sword energy was extremely powerful, easily capable of instantly killing Red Sun Martial Saint.

Ning Qi's expression did not change.

His Golden Pupil of Illusion-breaking had long since glimpsed the truth within; this woman had a certain special physique, enabling her to transform into moonlight and travel unseen.

At this moment, facing the oncoming sword energy, Ning Qi's surging spiritual power erupted as well; the woman seemed a bit surprised because this spiritual power was clearly more massive than hers.

Ning Qi clenched his fist, shattering the sword energy.

However, the woman suddenly appeared on another side, with moonlight sword energy attacking once more.

Ning Qi found himself in passive defense, with green light swirling over his body, resisting the mystical sword energy.

He raised an eyebrow, and strands of spiritual light began to rise in his mind.

"Using spatial fluctuations to shuttle, is it? I see."

He smirked, simultaneously marveling internally that this woman was only in the Magic Realm; her physique must not yet be fully developed. Reaching higher realms, she would likely be able to blend with space, becoming frighteningly powerful.

The next moment.

The woman in the palace dress appeared above Ning Qi, with sword energy descending from the sky.

Ning Qi was well-prepared.

He pointed his left fist toward the sky and his right fist to the ground.

The fist seal merged with mysterious suppression, locking the void, and while shattering the sword energy, it arrested the slightest spatial fluctuations; the woman's shuttling immediately became not as easy; although the speed remained incredibly fast, under Ning Qi's Golden Pupil of Illusion-breaking, it was already without hiding place.

Without this signature move, the threat the woman posed to Ning Qi greatly reduced.

Spiritual power gathered, transforming into a Celestial Sword, which was an advanced form of the Heavenly Sword Technique, with equally unparalleled power.

The woman, in astonishment, was pierced through the chest, slowly dissipating and reverting into a phantom sitting on the other side of the high platform.

Chapter 409: Nine Great Taoist_2

"Really strong." Ning Qi praised.

This woman's ability to traverse space is extraordinary, unseen in the Martial Realm. The Martial Saints pale in comparison; even those he knows may only surpass this woman by reaching the Heaven-Slaying Martial Saint Realm, while other Fifth Realm Martial Saints would still be defeated by her.

"The vastness of the Spirit Realm holds many wonders. It seems only someone like Shi, with an Innate Sword Bone, can become a champion."

Ning Qi looked at the remaining eight high platforms, fearing that each of these nine Taoists possessed exceptional constitutions.

He calmed his breath slightly, then stepped toward the second high platform.

For the first time in a long while, battle spirit ignited in his eyes.

The nine Taoists helped him acknowledge his shortcomings. The previous battle yielded plentiful insights into the subtleties of spatial fluctuations. Although he cannot yet traverse space invisibly like the woman, his speed has vastly increased, especially when merged with Sword Qi, making the Sword Qi unpredictable.

This made Ning Qi even more eager to obtain the True Martial inheritance after passing the examination.

What he lacked was foundation, but if he could acquire the foundation from the massive Immortal Sect of the Spirit Realm, given some time to digest it, these so-called strongest Taoists would be easily suppressed by him.

On the second high platform stood a young man with hair and beard both crimson.

As before, his realm was stably at the Fourth Realm Martial Saint level.

Then, with a boom, boundless scarlet flames erupted into the sky.

"This man's constitution is related to fire! Such terrifying flames." Ning Qi exclaimed.

He grew through combat, continuously comprehending the scarlet flames, and the Bing Fire Divine Sword Qi also progressed significantly.

Finally.

Ning Qi used the Ren Water Divine Sword Qi, slicing off the crimson-haired youth's head amidst his astonished gaze.

Ning Qi's fighting spirit became even fiercer.

To seek the path of immortality, to battle the heavens, the earth, and people, is endlessly delightful.

Since cultivation began.

Few have been able to engage with him so intensely.

Yet now, there were a full nine.

In his mind, spiritual light surged like a tsunami, thought processes unprecedentedly active.

Ning Qi ascended one high platform after another.

One formidable opponent after another emerged.

Various mysterious techniques and unique constitutions broadened his horizons.

Someone could divide into three with identical power as the original; someone could transform into lightning each time; another gathered Spiritual Sword Qi, its edge made Ning Qi exceedingly wary...

Strictly speaking, the nine Taoists were invincible at their level, with little disparity between them, but the further he went, the stronger the Taoists became.

At first, he was quite relaxed.

But against the later opponents, Ning Qi had to exhaust all means.

Ning Qi was merely of mortal constitution, relying solely on his solid foundation, which made his magical power stand out amongst even these Taoists. Additionally, his heaven-defying comprehension allowed his Secret Techniques to rival the Taoists' unique constitutions, and he could continuously grow through combat.

It's no exaggeration to say, after several battles, Ning Qi had already become even stronger than before.

"Buzz!"

A strand of Sword Qi traversed and fused within the spatial waves, severing the head of the bald youth opposite.

This was the Taoist of the eighth high platform, his defense unparalleled, enduring numerous Sword Qi from Ning Qi without injury, but eventually, he succumbed as Ning Qi used his formidable Spiritual Power to exhaust him to death.

"Really sturdy." Ning Qi marveled.

He learned much from this Taoist, the impenetrable golden light further elevated his Cyan Profound Body Protection Technique, increasing defensive power significantly and allowing for fierce counterattacks—a move once hindering him.

He took a deep breath.

Looking toward the last high platform.

This eighth Taoist nearly made him use all his measures, and now, there was still the strongest Taoist.

"In the next test, my performance should not be as dazzling as the first, but if I can pass the nine Taoists, attaining an 'A' rating should not be difficult."

Ning Qi is very clear about himself.

The first test was an 'inhuman level' performance, unprecedented aside from himself; there's typically no one else performing as such. In the current second test, although he considers his performance decent, across the boundless Spirit Realm, there are still a few who can achieve it.

For the same reason, born in the Martial Realm he suffered disadvantages. If he had been born in the True Martial Immortal Sect, combined with such comprehension, the so-called nine Great Taoists would likely be effortlessly defeated should they confront him simultaneously.

Stepping forward.

Ning Qi appeared on the ninth Taoist platform.

"I never imagined the examiner this time could be so powerful, truly rare." The initial words made Ning Qi pause.

The image transformed, revealing a small-statured girl with a youthful face, smiling at Ning Qi.

"You're alive?" Ning Qi instinctively asked.

The girl appeared underage, heard what Ning Qi said, frowned immediately:

"Ignorant, at my peak I was in the Unity Realm, though I have fallen, leaving a trace of imprint poses no difficulty does it? Seems you little fellow come from a lowly background, perhaps from a minor realm?"

Her tone possessed some an old-fashioned air.

Ning Qi was a bit surprised, then nodded, but the Unity Realm was incredibly strong, even in death able to leave such an intelligent imprint; in some respects, this amounted to 'immortality'.

The girl widened her eyes:

"Born from a minor realm yet capable of defeating the previous eight fellows, you lad are indeed remarkable, such a pity, if you were born in the Spirit Realm, your achievements would be greater."

Chapter 410: Nine Great Taoist_3

Ning Qi remained silent.

For him, there was no big issue.

It's just a matter of time to make up for it in the future.

The young girl's voice carried a hint of disdain:

"Do not assume I'll go easy on you, the True Martial Hall's assessment allows for no falsehoods."

Ning Qi replied earnestly:

"Bring it on."

As his words fell.

The youthful-looking girl across from him suddenly changed her expression, her previous playful demeanor transformed into indifference, and in the next instant, an immense pressure weighed down, as if boundless magical power filled the heavens and earth, causing Ning Qi to widen his eyes in surprise.

The magical power was even several times stronger than his own.

"What kind of special constitution is this?" Ning Qi felt an unprecedented pressure.

As if sensing Ning Qi's thoughts, the girl's indifferent voice echoed:

"I am the Immortal Yuan Body, my magical power is a hundred times that of others at the same level."

This vast magical power could turn the most ordinary Immortal Path Techniques into something miraculous in her hands, let alone the assurance that she knew more than just the simplest techniques.

Boom!

A massive golden palm descended with unbelievable, frightening power.

Ning Qi also unleashed his magical power, a Celestial Sword soared skyward, but it was shattered with a single slap.

For the first time, Ning Qi experienced the feeling of his past opponents, discovering how humiliating it was to be overpowered by sheer force.

His eyelids twitched, but his gaze towards the youthful girl became increasingly fervent, thinking, if he could research the principles of this girl's Immortal Yuan Body and create a Secret Technique to emulate it, his power would be unfathomable.

Rumble!

One massive palm after another came crashing down.

Ning Qi could only dodge, but fortunately, he had comprehended some spatial mysteries from the first Dao Platform's woman, and after several battles, had a touch of the aura of blending into the void.

The young girl showed slight surprise in her eyes:

"You have surprisingly learned the mysteries of the Moon Shadow Spirit Body, truly extraordinary, but you must realize, this move is even less effective against me."

The immense magical power pressed down, the surrounding void instantly solidified, identical to the move Ning Qi used to deal with the palace-gowned woman earlier.

Ning Qi felt helpless.

He could only keep using Sword Qi to counterattack.

His various Secret Techniques were peerlessly exquisite, which was his advantage, but the opponent's magical power was overwhelmingly fearsome, requiring him to expend extra magical power to match with each clash.

Both sides were engaged in a stalemate, but the girl opposite was clearly much more at ease.

At this rate.

Ning Qi's magical power would be depleted, and defeat would be inevitable.

Upon this realization, he hesitated no more.

"Though it's still imperfect, I have no other choice but to try it."

In the next instant.

A green light gathered on Ning Qi's body, fully defensive, while an astounding sharpness condensed on his body surface.

"Geng Metal Divine Sword Qi!"

"Jia Wood Divine Sword Qi!"

"Ren Water Divine Sword Qi!"

"Bing Fire Divine Sword Qi!"

Four Sword Qi with different traits but equally unparalleled sharpness condensed and hovered beside Ning Qi, then he lightly whispered in his heart:

"Wu Soil God Sword Qi!"

Another earth-yellow Sword Qi condensed, as heavy as a mountain, yet extremely sharp.

Yet if one carefully perceived, one could notice that this Sword Qi was slightly inferior to the other four; essentially, it was because Ning Qi was only a Fourth Realm Martial Saint, lacking the complete Earth Qi condensation.

Nevertheless.

It could barely be used.

"Gathering Five Elements Divine Sword Qi!" Ning Qi shouted fiercely, and all his magical power surged forth.

Five-Colored Sword Qi shot skyward, then formed into a Sword Array that enveloped the youthful girl, everything happening in a flash; by the time the young girl reacted, the space around her was already locked by the Five Elements Sword Array.

This was the Sword Array Ning Qi had comprehended from the True Martial Sword.

The Five Elements Divine Sword Qi combined with the Five Elements Sword Array was his strongest killing move, yet at present, his Five Elements were not perfected, the power not reaching its maximum potential, and there were flaws in the Wu Soil God Sword Qi.

However, now he could only attempt it.

Buzz!

An unending buzzing sounded, a rain of Five-Colored Sword Qi fell, each possessing power comparable to Innate Divine Sword Qi, and collectively embodying the Five Elements' mysteries.

The youthful girl's expression was extremely serious.

Her magical power was overwhelming, a series of terrifying Fist Seals surged skyward, with boundless magical power erupting, ceaseless booming reverberations occurring.

Ning Qi's face turned slightly pale.

He could feel his magical power depleting at an alarming pace, but the girl inside couldn't be faring well either.

At present.

It was merely a test of endurance.

It was unclear how much time passed.

Ning Qi felt himself nearly exhausted, the booming finally ceased.

The Five Elements Sword Array dissipated.

The youthful girl looked at her body with some astonishment, pouted, and said:

"I concede; if it were my true self, it wouldn't have been so easy."

She let out a proud snort, then completely transformed into a motionless shadow.

Yet it was clear from her eyes that there was a deep admiration, clearly not expecting her own defeat.

Ning Qi's expression became slightly complex, and after standing in a daze for a moment, he heard a grand voice arise:

"Second test passed, rated Grade A-Plus."