

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 551[1,116 words]

The palace hall fell silent as Duke Christoph played the live feed.

On the massive screen, Alex's aircraft was swallowed by blinding white light. The light bomb detonated. The image shook violently, then dissolved into static and fire. Nothing remained. No wreckage. No escape.

The King stared at the screen, his face draining of color. Sofina felt the blood leave her lips. Her fingers clenched without her noticing.

Duke Christoph turned, already smiling.

"Your Majesty," he said smoothly, "the last heir of Saint-Claire is confirmed dead. The obstacle is gone. I request that you revoke Princess Sofina's five-year promise. With that condition removed, she may be married at once-to a man of your choosing."

He did not hide his intent. Everyone in the hall knew whose son he meant.

The King did not answer immediately. He turned to Sofina.

"Sofina," he asked quietly, "what do you think?"

She lifted her head. Her eyes were steady, though her chest felt tight.

"Father," she said, "you are the King. You gave me a five-year promise. I intend to hold you to it. I will discuss marriage only after those five years have passed."

Duke Christoph stepped forward at once.

"Your Majesty, this is a waste of time," he said coldly. "The outcome is already decided. Alex is dead. A dead man cannot marry Princess Sofina."

"Father," Sofina said, turning back to the King, her voice steady but burning with resolve, "I still believe Alex is alive. Until I see his body with my own eyes—until there is undeniable proof—I will not abandon this promise."

She lifted her chin, eyes unwavering.

"You gave me your word. And I intend to hold you to it."

The King fell silent.

His fingers drummed slowly against the armrest of the throne, each tap heavy with thought.

The hall seemed to hold its breath.

At last, he spoke.

"Duke Christoph," he said, his tone firm, "I gave my word to Princess Sofina. The agreement stands. Five years."

"But Your Majesty-" the duke pressed on, his voice tight with frustration. "How am I supposed to prove Alex is dead? A light bomb leaves nothing behind. No wreckage. No remains."

"And because nothing was left behind," Sofina shot back instantly, "that is exactly why it's possible he survived."

"That's impossible," the duke snapped, his patience finally breaking.

"Enough," the King cut in coldly. "This audience is over. All of you may leave. I need to rest. Sofina, take me to my room."

"Yes, Your Majesty," Duke Christoph replied stiffly.

He bowed and turned away. The moment he stepped out of the hall, his expression twisted with rage.

"How dare that bastard ruin my plan," he muttered through clenched teeth.

The hall emptied. Only the King and Sofina remained, their footsteps echoing as they walked through the long corridor.

"Come with me," the King said quietly. "To my study. There is something you need to know."

Inside the grand study, the King sat behind his desk. He tapped his fingers against the surface, slow and deliberate, weighing how much truth to reveal.

"Sofina," he began, his voice low, "in politics, there are no eternal enemies—and no eternal friends."

She listened without interrupting.

"Duke Christoph was my ally when I fought for the throne," the King continued. "But once I won it, he became something else. Again and again, he tried to control me. To bend my rule to serve his ambition."

The King leaned back slightly, eyes dark with memory.

"A hero rides a horse to reach his goal," he said. "But once the goal is reached, he finds himself sitting on a tiger. From that moment on, every day becomes a fight. Because the tiger is always trying to devour him."

He looked straight at Sofina.

"Do you understand what that means?"

"Yes, Father," Sofina said.

Her voice was obedient, but her face was pale, drained of color. The sadness in her eyes was impossible to hide.

The King watched her for a moment, then smiled—a calm, knowing smile that did not reach his eyes.

"Don't look so mournful," he said lightly. "Your man is not dead yet."

Sofina froze.

"Really?" she asked, hope and disbelief crashing together in her voice. "How do you know?"

Wilhelm Augustus laughed, deep and confident, as if the answer were obvious.

"I am the King of Prussia," he said proudly. "The smartest man in this country. Do you truly think something happens in Prussia without my knowledge?"

He leaned forward slightly and fixed his gaze on her.

"I know far more about Alex than you ever have."

Sofina frowned, confusion flickering across her face.

"Alex," Wilhelm continued slowly, "is not from Xia. He is from Estoria."

Sofina's eyes widened.

"What?" she blurted out. "But Estoria is the poorest place in the world. A land criminals run to when they have nowhere else to go."

The King nodded calmly.

"Exactly," he said. "Which makes him the king of the poorest—and the criminal— nation."

"The king?" Sofina repeated, stunned.

"He is the King of Estoria," Wilhelm said flatly.

He stood and walked toward the window, hands clasped behind his back.

"Four years ago," he went on, "I

detected every Estorian spy operating inside Prussia. They hide

under the name Kingswell. Their only goal was to find a path to the Earth Empire, bypassing our borders."

He scoffed softly.

"They were insignificant. I didn't bother dealing with them personally. I merely

instructed our Mother AI to keep an eye on them."

Wilhelm turned back toward Sofina.

"Then, three years ago, he appeared using the identity of Marquis Saint-Claire's heir. He knew that to reach the Earth Empire, he needed legal passage. And that meant becoming a Prussian citizen.'

The King's lips curled slightly.

"So he stayed. Three full years. Patient. Calculating. Because he knew it was impossible to reach the Earth Empire without our approval."

"That man," Wilhelm said, his tone dark with memory, "learned like a sponge. He devoured our knowledge. And he had no shame about stealing it—sending everything back to Estoria."

"Then why didn't you stop him?" Sofina asked, her voice trembling.

Wilhelm laughed again, this time cold and dismissive.

"Why should I?" he said. "Estoria is poor. Its people are stupid beyond belief. I need nothing from them. A few light bombs would be enough to erase the entire country."

Sofina stiffened.

"But," the King continued casually, "if that clever bastard could educate his people— make them slightly more useful—we could turn them all into excellent slaves."

He gestured lazily with one hand.

"So I let them study. A farmer lets fruit ripen before harvest. Cutting it too early would be a waste."

"Then..... Father..." Sofina whispered, horror creeping into her voice. "You're going to attack Estoria?"

"That is the plan," Wilhelm replied

calmly. "In the past, they were

useless. Now they are

intelligent and that makes them perfect slaves They believe they are preparing to attack us, without realizing we have had them in our sights for a very long time."

He smiled faintly.

"They think they are smart," he said coldly. "But we are smarter."

Disaster is born in pride, and good fortune in humility.

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"So, Father-do you really plan to turn them into slaves?" Sofina asked. Her face made her opposition unmistakably clear.

The king let out a slow sigh. "That was the original plan," he said. "The one we agreed on last year-before everything changed."

"What changed?" Sofina pressed.

The king waved his hand dismissively.

The wall screen flickered to life.

Footage from Bella's laboratory filled the room-cold, sterile, and ominous. Inside, several people worked at their stations, moving with precision. Some of them laughed. Others talked casually.

"Last year," the King said, his voice rising with barely contained excitement, "they finally reached Prussia's technological level. It was the perfect time to harvest them as slaves. And from that moment on-"

His expression shifted into something close to ecstasy.

"—they stepped beyond us. They abandoned Prussia's old path and broke free from its chains."

Sofina stared at him, struggling to follow.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Prussia," Wilhelm said, "has been stagnant for decades. Advanced, yes-but unmoving. Then Alex and Bella appeared. Two supergeniuses no one in Prussia could rival."

He leaned forward, eyes burning.

"They took a single step forward—and that step dragged technology out of Prussia's stagnant waters and revealed heights we wouldn't have reached in a hundred years."

His lips trembled with exhilaration.

"Three years," he said softly. "They did it all in just three years. While we erased emotion from our lives, they kept it. They moved forward through emotion. Their technology grew with emotion. Ours stripped it away. And the result?"

He smiled thinly.

"They surpassed us."

Sofina's breath caught.

"They even created a Mother AI," the King continued, "named Gaia. An intelligence equal to Prussia's Mother AI-and in several areas, superior. From military systems to security networks, they began outperforming every Prussian installation."

"Father," Sofina said sharply, shock breaking through her composure, "you let them do all this?"

Wilhelm laughed, unconcerned.

"Oh, come now," he said. "Prussians worship genius and knowledge. They stole our technology at first. Now I'm stealing theirs. Call it repayment."

He shrugged casually.

"So I let them grow. I watched them for years."

Sofina swallowed hard.

"Then... Alex meeting me," she asked quickly. "Did you arrange that too?"

The King sighed and leaned back.

"No," he said honestly. "No matter how advanced technology becomes, fate still slips beyond our grasp. Your meeting with Alex—and your marriage-I never predicted that."

He shook his head.

"It wasn't a plan. It simply happened. Pure coincidence."

"Then how do you know Alex is still alive?" Sofina asked.

Wilhelm tapped his fingers against the table again, slow and deliberate.

"At the Winchester Tournament," he said, "when he drained Prussia of its money and became the richest man in the nation-I knew then."

His eyes narrowed.

"I had to bind him to me. The only way was to make him my son-in-law. Through you."

A smile spread across his face as he looked at Sofina.

"And it was easy," he said. "He was already married to you. And despite everything, Alex is loyal."

Sofina felt a chill.

"So I gave him a dowry gift."

"You gave him what?" Sofina blurted out, stunned.

"A dowry—since he married you," the King repeated, laughing. "The finest gift possible. Something only the royal family is allowed to possess."

Her heart pounded.

"What did you give him?" Sofina asked.

"VÖXEN Lucifer," the King said, smiling faintly. "That monster was created by your grandfather. A machine only royal blood-our blood-can control."

Sofina's confusion deepened.

"Father, if the VÖXEN Lucifer can only be driven by royal blood like ours, how could Alex-someone from Estoria-use it?"

Wilhelm tapped his fingers against the desk again, slow and deliberate.

"What I am about to tell you is a secret," he said quietly. "A truth you must carry to

your grave. Promise me you will never tell anyone."

"Yes, Father," Sofina said without hesitation.

"This story has been passed down from ancestor to heir," Wilhelm continued. "From one King of Prussia to the next."

He leaned back, eyes distant.

"In the beginning, there was only the

Earth Empire. Later, the Earth

Empire created six nations, each meant to master a dominant field of technology, cultivation, magic, faith, chaos, and order. They were founded not for the present, but for a future purpose beyond it. From them were born Prussia, devoted to technology; Xia, to cultivation; Estoria, to chaos; and three others."

"All six nations bowed to the Earth Empire as the one true Emperor. And every king

of those nations shared the Emperor's blood. Family. Relatives."

He raised a finger.

"Blood determines royalty. The Emperor of the Earth Empire possesses the purest bloodline of all. And he is, and will always be, the supreme ruler of the six nations."

Wilhelm's voice hardened.

"The VÖXEN Lucifer your grandfather created uses royal blood as its key. The car can detect how much royal blood a person carries—simply by touch."

He glanced at Sofina.

"For reference, your grandfather only had 2.5 percent royal blood. I only have 10 percent. Your generation will have even less, because our blood has been diluted through marriage."

Sofina swallowed.

"Then... what does this have to do with Alex?"

Wilhelm's eyes sharpened.

"Remember," he said, "Alex was

determined to reach the Earth Empire. He is brilliant—far more intelligent than anyone you know. And powerful enough to fight Xia's elites."

He paused.

"So I wondered. Why would he want to return to the Earth Empire? Because only those with royal blood feel that pull."

"And?" Sofina pressed.

"I contacted the VÖXEN dealer," Wilhelm said calmly. "I arranged for Alex to obtain the VÖXEN Lucifer."

His lips curled slightly.

"It was a test. If he had no royal blood, the VÖXEN staff could simply claim the vehicle was malfunctioning."

Suddenly, Wilhelm's expression turned grim.

With a sharp gesture, he snapped his fingers. The screen behind him lit up.

"This," he said coldly, "is Alex's royal blood percentage."

Sofina stared at the display. Her breath caught.

"No way," she whispered. "That's impossible."

Wilhelm looked at the screen again, his face dark and unreadable.

"Yes," he said quietly. "That was my reaction as well."

"This... should be impossible."

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The front screen froze at 100%.

"Father," Sofina said quietly. "Doesn't that mean Alex is pure-blood from the Earth Empire?"

Wilhelm leaned back in his chair, the weight of centuries settling into his posture. "I checked the records left by our ancestors. There are only a few lines that speak of total pure blood."

"And what do they say?" Sofina asked.

Wilhelm's eyes hardened. "If he is not the Emperor of the Earth Empire, then he is at least a prince—a legitimate claimant to the throne."

"Someone with pure Royal blood like that—wherever he stands among the six nations—will inevitably become king. His authority is carried in his veins."

Sofina swallowed. Then she looked straight at him. "Father... tell me how you know Alex survived the light bomb."

Wilhelm raised his hand. Two holographic screens bloomed into existence.

On the first screen, a blinding sphere of light expanded—Alex's ship caught in the instant the light bomb detonated. The moment of supposed annihilation.

Wilhelm moved his hand again. The second screen shifted.

"This," he said, "is the exact same moment."

Sofina leaned forward. Her breath caught.

On the second screen, a familiar symbol ignited. The lights of VÖXEN Lucifer flared to life.

She could clearly see it now—the activation record. The system log showed the vehicle powering up few seconds before the explosion.

"What does this mean?" Sofina whispered.

Wilhelm's voice was calm. "Sofina, this screen is directly linked to the VÖXEN Lucifer. As long as the vehicle is active, this system confirms it. If the VÖXEN were destroyed, the signal would disappear completely."

He paused, then added, "This feature was installed by your grandfather. A safeguard. A way to ensure that when he drove the VÖXEN, there would always be proof that he was still alive."

Sofina clenched her fists. "Can we track where it is? Can we find him?"

Wilhelm shook his head. "No. The VÖXEN Lucifer is capable of transmitting its position—but right now, the signal is deliberately locked."

He met her eyes. "That means Alex doesn't want us to know where he is."

Sofina exhaled slowly.

"But understand this," Wilhelm continued. "He is alive. He is safe. And he is still driving the VÖXEN Lucifer. Your grandfather built that machine to survive anything— including a light bomb."

He leaned forward slightly. "If Alex returns to Estoria, we will know. Our eyes are everywhere."

Then his expression changed.

"But this," Wilhelm said, looking directly at Sofina, "is what matters now."

He straightened. "I will not help you in the throne succession."

Sofina stiffened.

"It will begin soon," he went on. "Within the next five years. You must win the throne on your own. You must gain the approval of all eight dukes."

"And you must defeat your brothers."

Wilhelm held her gaze without mercy.

"Can you do it?"

Sofina smiled faintly. "I don't know," she said. "But with this much money, I think I could even buy the devil. Everyone has a price."

Wilhelm shook his head. "Not every duke can be bought. Take Duke Christoph von Dornwald."

Sofina's smile twisted into a sneer. "He dared to try to kill Alex in front of me. So I'll buy anyone who dares to kill him instead. At any price."

Her eyes sharpened. "That's cheaper than buying him, isn't it?"

Wilhelm tapped his fingers against the throne, slow and deliberate. "You have twenty brothers. Every one of them wants the throne." His gaze stayed on her. "May the best among you win. I'll be rooting for you, Sofina."

"Thank you, Father," she said, then turned and walked out.

The study fell silent.

Alone, Wilhelm leaned back and spoke softly into the air. "Royal Mother Al."

"Yes, my king," the voice replied.

"What will happen," Wilhelm asked, "if Sofina becomes Queen of Prussia while Alex remains alive?"

The Mother AI answered without hesitation. "The highest probability outcome is this: Estoria and Prussia will fall under Alexander's command. With Xia positioned between the two nations, and given current technological levels, if Estoria and Prussia move against Xia together, Xia will have no viable response."

Wilhelm's fingers stilled.

"They will be forced to surrender," the AI continued. "Directly into Alexander's hands. This would make him ruler of three nations."

Wilhelm frowned, his mind racing. "If he controls three countries... wouldn't that mean he could take down any nation among the remaining six? Wouldn't that make him master of all six?" His voice dropped. "And possibly... the King of the Earth Empire?"

"Yes, my king."

Wilhelm fell silent, then suddenly looked up. "Mother AI-what would happen if you fought Gaia? The Mother AI Alex created?"

There was a brief pause.

"At this moment, sire," the Royal Mother AI said, "Gaia is actively probing my systems. Attempting infiltrate my data and security layers. On average she attacks approximately one million times per hour."

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Wilhelm's eyes widened. "And you can handle all of that?"

"No, sire," the Royal Mother AI replied calmly. "Gaia is always one step ahead of me."

Wilhelm's jaw tightened.

"But after each engagement," the AI continued, "Gaia withdraws. And before retreating, she informs me of every weakness she has discovered in my system."

The room felt colder than before.

"She always gives me half a day to patch every weakness in my security," the Royal Mother AI said her voice calm and precise. "After

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then tells me exactly how to strike back."

Wilhelm narrowed his eyes. "Both of you?" he asked sharply. "Don't tell me Gaia is using you to sharpen her attack power and advance her technology."

"Yes, my king," the Royal Mother AI replied without hesitation. "We are refining each other. Gaia is a good friend of mine."

Wilhelm said nothing.

"Gaia has stated her goal clearly,"

the Royal Mother AI continued. "She seeks to improve herself enough to breach Earth Empire security and confront the Earth Empire Mother AI directly. of the to seize control entire Earth Empire system."

Wilhelm slammed his hand against the table. The sound cracked through the room.

"Good," he said coldly. "Very good. A young man should dream big."

His eyes burned with ambition. "Mother AI-help Gaia. And perhaps one day, the two of you will bring down the Earth Empire Mother AI together."

"With pleasure, my king."

Back with Alex.

The moment his aircraft was locked by targeting systems, he knew there was no escape.

He reached into his storage ring and pulled out the VÖXEN Lucifer.

He remembered what it was built for.

Survival-even against a light bomb.

Alex entered the VÖXEN, activated every defensive system, and engaged transparent mode. The vehicle slipped free, bursting straight through the aircraft's glass window.

At that exact moment, the light bomb detonated.

The explosion struck the VÖXEN at full force while it was still in transparent mode.

The impact was brutal-violent enough to hurl the vehicle across the sky like debris.

It was launched far away, deep into Xia territory.

Everything happened in an instant.

The next thing Alex remembered, he was being thrown like a bullet through the air—
then the ground slammed into him.

Hard.

The world went black.

His inner power was completely gone. Without it, he was fragile—pain came easily this time.

When he woke again, pain flooded his body. Still locked into the VÖXEN Lucifer's seat, he saw what remained of it—half destroyed, its once-perfect frame torn apart and split by the impact.

Groaning, Alex forced himself to move. He tried to step out—

And stopped.

He wasn't outside.

He was inside a wooden room.

Confused, he looked up.

The VÖXEN Lucifer had fallen straight through the roof of a house.

Alex's gaze dropped to the floor below the vehicle.

Blood.

Too much of it.

His heart tightened as he looked closer.

A man lay crushed beneath the wreckage.

Dead.

An innocent-killed by the falling VÖXEN.

Alex stared in disbelief, his breath shallow.

“.....Damn,” he muttered. “Out of all the places I could've fallen... it had to be here.

Damn. He must've been unbelievably unlucky.”

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 554[1,368 words]

Alex stood inside a wooden house, the air thick with the smell of timber and dust.

He had seen this kind of place many times before. Xia architecture. Old, stubborn, rooted in tradition.

They refused to trade wood for steel, refused to raise glass towers into the sky like Prussia.

They believed living close to nature strengthened their cultivation, that wood and earth fed the body with natural power.

Alex slowly turned his head.

There was a massive hole torn through the roof.

Sunlight poured through it in a harsh beam, illuminating the wreckage beneath.

The VÖXEN Lucifer lay half-destroyed in the middle of the room, its once flawless frame split open like a wounded animal.

The vehicle was filled with nanobots. Given the right materials, they could rebuild it atom by atom, following the original blueprint stored in its core.

With enough time and resources, the VÖXEN could return to perfect form.

But that would take time.

Time he wasn't sure he had.

With slow, painful movements, Alex activated his space-storage ring and stored the wrecked vehicle away.

Only then did he notice the body.

A man lay sprawled across the wooden floor.

Dismembered.

Blood soaked into the planks.

"Gaia," Alex whispered, speaking to the nanobots embedded beneath his skin. "Where are we?"

A calm voice answered directly inside his mind.

"Sir. We are currently outside any communication coverage. Xia forbids all external transmissions. They hold deep hostility toward both Prussia and Estoria."

"We are in enemy territory. If they find you, you will be executed without question. Especially because you have killed one of their people."

Alex's face drained of color.

"So what are we supposed to do?"

He was not in his normal condition.

His inner power was gone completely destroyed. He couldn't fly. Couldn't fight. Couldn't defend himself.

Right now, he was no different from an ordinary human.

And in Xia, an ordinary citizen was as strong as ten trained men from Prussia or Estoria.

They had trained in natural cultivation since childhood. Strength was simply part of daily life here.

"Sir," Gaia continued, "place me on the corpse's head. Within five minutes after death, I can still retrieve partial memory traces. After ten minutes, nothing remains. Approximately four minutes have passed. I can attempt extraction. The copying process will require ten minutes."

Alex swallowed.

Time was running.

Alex pulled the nano strip from behind his ear and pressed it gently against the dead man's bleeding head.

The nanobots slid inward, burrowing into the skull and threading into the brain, mapping and extracting what information they could before it faded.

He lifted his gaze and scanned the room.

It looked like the inside of a wrecked ship-splintered wood, shattered furniture,

debris scattered everywhere. Then a sharp thought hit him.

He and his pursuers had crossed into Xia's border during the crash.

Normally, Xia cultivators would have already been dispatched to investigate. There was a strong chance people were still tracking whatever had fallen from the sky. Alex moved fast.

He took out ten repair drones from his storage ring and released them into the air. "Repair everything. Restore this place exactly as it was."

The small glide drones hummed to life. They scattered across the room and began working with terrifying precision.

Broken wood was lifted, aligned, and fused at the nano level. Cracks disappeared as if they had never existed.

Table legs reformed. Chairs reshaped themselves. Even the shattered vase rebuilt piece by piece.

Flawless.

This was Gaia's newest technology.

And then Alex felt it.

A wave of force.

Heavy. Oppressive. Powerful enough to make the entire wooden house tremble.

"I felt something fall across the border after the explosion. It should be somewhere in this direction."

A woman in a blue robe hovered roughly ten meters above the roof, suspended in the air with effortless control.

"But there is nothing unusual here," said another voice—a woman in yellow robes. "That's what makes it strange," the woman in blue replied. "I cannot be mistaken." "Let's question the people nearby and find out what happened," the yellow-robed woman said.

Hearing their voices from inside the room, Alex felt a cold sweat break across his skin.

They descended from the sky and stepped onto the ground.

Then they began walking toward the house.

The roof finished repairing itself at the last possible second. A narrow miracle.

But if they forced their way inside, there was no chance he could survive even one strike from them.

A knock sounded at the door.

"Excuse me," the woman in yellow called out.

Alex hurried to the corpse and examined the man's face and body.

"Damn it... I have to do this."

He pulled the VÖXEN Lucifer back out and issued a command. "All nanobots-gather."

A cluster of nanobots, no larger than a pill, floated up from the vehicle's core.

"This is the central AI nanobot core," he muttered to himself. "The one that handles repair, reconstruction, programming. The heart of the VÖXEN."

This was a risk.

A serious one.

Alex swallowed the pill-sized cluster and gave a mental command.

Restructure my bones and body to match this man.

"Excuse me. I know you're inside. We need to ask you something," the woman in yellow called again from outside.

Inside Alex's body, the nanobots went to work.

They flooded through his blood vessels, mapping his skeletal frame, comparing it to the corpse beside him.

His bones began to shift. Muscles tightened and moved. His face tingled as the structure beneath the skin subtly reshaped itself to match the dead man's features.

He glanced down and realized he was still wearing Prussian clothes.

He quickly stored both the clothes and the corpse inside his space ring.

"I am asking politely, and you still refuse to answer?" the woman snapped.

A split second later, the door exploded inward, splintering like it had been hit by a blast.

The two cultivators stepped inside.

They stopped when they saw Alex standing there, naked, still mid-transformation.

"What are you doing naked here?" the woman in yellow demanded.

Alex's heart hammered.

He wasn't fluent in Xia's spoken

language. He could understand in et

but his pronunciation was rough. He forced his voice low and hoarse as if he had just been coughing.

"I just finished bathing. You could have waited a moment."

The yellow-robed cultivator frowned at him with visible irritation.

"Go put on your clothes. There's nothing worth seeing there anyway."

Alex glanced at the woman in yellow. She had a sharp, intimidating presence, but

she was undeniably beautiful, with striking features and a confident posture.

At that moment, the nanobots were still adjusting his body beneath the his manhood's skin.

Unfortunately, his body reacted at the worst possible time. When he looked at the yellow-robed woman, the involuntary response was very obvious.

It stood there with ridiculous

confidence, like it had its own personality silently protesting the insult, as if to say, "Excuse me? Which part of me is not worth seeing? Would you like a closer inspection?"

Her face immediately flushed red with embarrassment.

"Do you want to die?" the woman in blue snapped sharply. "Go put on some clothes.

Now."

Alex didn't argue. He turned quickly, walked to the wardrobe, and grabbed a loose

robe, pulling it over himself as fast as he could.

The woman in blue watched him closely.

"Who are you?" she asked. "Did you see anything fall here from the sky?"

"I... I..." Alex stalled, his mind racing.

He didn't know the dead man's name yet. If he said the wrong one, suspicion would

explode instantly.

"I didn't see anything."

"Why are you stuttering?" the woman in blue asked, narrowing her eyes.

Alex forced himself to stumble over his words again.

"I... I've never seen women as beautiful as you two before. I get nervous when I speak to beautiful women."

It was complete nonsense, but he delivered it with just enough awkwardness to sell it.

The woman in yellow smiled faintly. "You certainly know how to flatter."

Before anyone could say more, a furious shout echoed from outside.

"Bai Xiaochun! Where are you hiding?! After what you did to my sister, today is the day you die, you piece of trash!"

A violent kick shattered the wooden gate outside.

Heavy footsteps thundered toward the house.

Within seconds, nearly twenty townspeople stormed into the yard behind a furious man at the front. All of them were glaring at Alex with open hatred.

"That's him one of them shouted. "That's the scum who's terrorized this city for decades! He raped whoever he wanted and did whatever he liked because his parents were powerful!"

"His parents are dead now!" another yelled. "He's just a useless parasite living off their name! This monster deserves to die!"

The woman in yellow and the woman in blue slowly turned to look at Alex.

Their expressions changed.

"Are you the man named Bai Xiaochun?"

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Alex had no idea what was happening.

People kept shouting a name at him-Bai Xiaochun.

In the Xia language, he understood the words clearly. Bai meant white, pure, clean. Xiao meant small. Chun meant innocent, simple, genuine.

Together, it meant "the small and innocently pure one." Harmless. Gentle. Naive.

So how in the world was that name being tied to the word rapist?

"Bai Xiaochun!" one of the villagers screamed at him. "Admit what you've done!"

Alex's eyes snapped toward the two women staring at him with fury and disgust. A cold realization slid down his spine. If he handled this wrong, he wouldn't live another minute.

"All of you!" Alex shouted back. "Just because my father is dead, you start blaming me for everything? I'm telling you—I did not rape anyone!"

"Bai Xiaochun!" one of the women shrieked. "How can you be this shameless? You raped me—and twenty-two others—and now you dare say you didn't do it?!"

Alex stepped forward, anger blazing through him. This time, he shouted because he knew he was right.

"I am not a rapist! I did not touch you! If I did what you accuse me of, may I die on the spot right now!"

The entire village fell silent.

A wave of hesitation rippled through the crowd. Bai Xiaochun was known as a troublemaker, a rascal, a nuisance-but there had never been proof that he was a rapist.

"I'm telling all of you," Alex said, "we will go to the judge and prove the truth. Whether I'm guilty or not."

"How dare you say that!" an old man roared, slamming his cane against the ground. "The judge of this city is your uncle! He has always sided with you! Never with us villagers!"

"How dare you accuse the judge!" Alex fired back.

"He is the most righteous man in this city. It's not because I'm his nephew, and it's not because you're villagers. He sides with truth. If the truth is with you, he will side with you."

"You cannot scream 'justice' and expect it to bend your way just because you shout the loudest! He sees justice for what it is!"

The villagers stared at him in disgust, some looking like they might actually gag at his words.

"Our judge! Our judge!" the old man cried out in grief and rage. "He is the most corrupt man in this entire city!"

"Yeah!" someone else shouted. "Everyone knows that if you pay him enough money, black turns white right in front of everyone!"

Alex didn't know whether the judge was truly that rotten.

But he knew one thing he had to stay alive long enough to find out.

"Say whatever you want," Alex shot back. "The judge is the most honest man I know in this city!"

The villagers were beyond reason now. Their anger had passed the point of argument.

Finally, one of them screamed, "We have to take this city back from the corrupt clan! We're done being treated like scapegoats! It's time to kill the Bai clan!"

"Yes!" others joined in, voices rising, spreading like wildfire through the crowd.

Alex stepped forward and shouted over the chaos. "You're traitors! Hiding among villagers and stirring them up to rebel against the Empire! Do you know what happens because of this?"

"The Empire will send soldiers here and slaughter every one of you! You can try to kill the Bai family—but the Empire will never let you live after this! This is rebellion!"

In Xia, there were two great powers that ruled the land.

The Empire.

And the Murim.

They existed within the same country, side by side, and never interfered with each other.

Villagers paid two kinds of taxes—one to the Empire, and one to the Murim for the protection of their daily lives. The Murim functioned like a legalized mafia within the system, filled with powerful people who could easily kill ordinary villagers if they wished.

Within the Murim, there were three great forces that balanced one another. The Orthodox sect, which existed to uphold justice. The Unorthodox sect, which operated in the gray areas. And the Demonic sect, which used power without restraint.

From what Alex could see, these two women clearly belonged to the Orthodox side. They were the kind who protected people and delivered justice.

Which meant one thing.

He had to make absolutely sure they did not judge him guilty.

Or they would kill him. Then again, even these villagers were strong-trained from birth. Any one of them could end his life right now without effort.

Listening to Alex, the villagers had to admit one hard truth they all knew.

The Empire chose the ruling clans of each city. To rebel against the clan was the same as rebelling against the Empire itself. And rebellion meant only one ending.

Eradication.

Still, some of them hated Bai Xiaochun too deeply to care about the consequences.

Alex saw it in their faces. This was dangerous. If he pushed them any further, they might snap and forget everything-law, fear, reason. They would tear him apart before anyone could stop them.

He had to end this quickly.

"All of you," Alex said, raising his

voice again swear under the watch of the Sky-I am Bai Xiaochun, Just like my game says, am pure and innocent. If you don't believe me, I will prove it to now."

you right

The villagers stared at him as if he had gone insane.

This was the man they considered worse than any criminal.

A disgrace so notorious that even children knew his name as an insult. And now he dared to speak of innocence in front of them?

Alex turned and walked back into the house.

A murmur rippled through the crowd.

"Is he trying to run away?"

"No. He said he would prove he's innocent."

"He's the worst bastard in this city. Even the kids know that. How could he possibly clear his name?"

"I'm telling you, he's trying to escape."

"Impossible," another villager said. "We've surrounded the place. He can't run this time."

"Hey," someone suddenly shouted. "He's coming out!"

Alex stepped back outside, carrying a large wooden box in both hands.

He walked straight to the center of the crowd and set it down in front of them. There were about twenty villagers watching him, their expressions tight with suspicion.

He opened the box slowly.

Inside were a lot of gold ingots.

"Now," Alex said calmly, "whoever believes that I, Bai Xiaochun, am innocent and pure just like my name says may take these two gold ingots as my heartfelt thanks for honoring the truth."

Twenty pairs of eyes widened at once, locked onto the gold.

"And you," Bai Xiaochun said, turning to the pitiful woman who had accused him, "feel sorry for you. If you say I'm innocent, I'll give you ten gold ingots. The rest of you will only get two each."

Every eye in the crowd locked onto the gold.

Some of them had never touched gold in their entire lives.

Alex knew how Xia worked. People traded in copper coins called wen, then silver, and only rarely gold. One gold ingot like this was worth a fortune-around ten thousand dollars by common measure.

What he was really saying was simple: Call me innocent, and I'll hand you twenty thousand dollars. You, the accuser, will get a hundred thousand.

The villagers stared at the money with trembling hands and dry mouths.

Suddenly, one man stepped forward.

"All of you!" he shouted. "This isn't about money. This is about justice! How dare you accuse Bai Xiaochun like this? I told you from the beginning-it's impossible for him to be the bad guy. He's the purest, most innocent person I've ever known!"

He stepped even closer to Alex, chest out, voice loud and righteous.

"I declare from the bottom of my heart-this has nothing to do with the gold. Bai Xiaochun, you are the most innocent man I have ever seen!"

"Good," Alex nodded calmly. "You can take five gold ingots. Since you are so honest and a real man, consider it my thanks for your justice."

"Thank you, Young Master!" the man said without hesitation. He grabbed five gold ingots and hurried away.

The rest of the villagers stood frozen, stunned by what they had just seen.

"Well, everyone," Alex said casually, "the gold is limited. If you don't take it now, I might run out before the last person gets the chance to uphold justice."

Their eyes lit up all at once.

"Bai Xiaochun, you are the purest and most innocent man under the sky!"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 556[960 words]

Alex was the King of Estoria and the richest man in Prussia.

He owned five storage rings, each one crammed full of gold, jewels, rare herbs, and treasures worth more than entire cities.

And yet, in love and friendship, he was bankrupt.

The climb to the top was always lonely. Brutal. Silent.

He had become so poor that money was the only thing he had left.

Taking out a box of gold ingots—the kind Xia people adored—was nothing to him. A scratch.

A barely noticeable dent in his coffers.

"Young Master Bai!" the old man who had been the loudest to accuse Alex earlier suddenly shouted, his voice trembling with theatrical emotion.

"I told them before they even came here! It is impossible! Absolutely impossible for Young Master Bai Xiaochun—the purest man in this city, no, in this entire world—to ever rape a poor and ugly woman like this!"

Every pair of eyes turned toward the old man.

Because everyone knew the truth.

Bai Xiaochun was notorious. Insane. Wild.

if he were in the mood, even a skinny grandmother with one foot already in the grave would not be safe from him—let alone a young, beautiful woman like the one standing there now.

"But alas, they refuse to believe me!" the old man cried, thumping his chest as if his heart were breaking.

"Look at Young Master Bai! Handsome, pure, a true gentleman! How could he possibly do such a thing? Even if a woman were raped by a young master this handsome, she should consider herself lucky to be touched by the City Lord's heir!"

Alex stared at the old man—the same man who had been shouting the loudest accusations minutes ago.

He clapped his hands once, delighted.

"Good. Very, very good speech. You deserve ten gold ingots."

The crowd gasped. Eyes widened. Mouths hung open.

"Thank you, Young Master!" the old man squealed. He rushed forward, grabbed the ten heavy ingots, stuffed them under his tattered clothes, and ran off as if the crowd might rob him at any second.

A strange understanding settled over the people.

A few flattering words were worth two gold ingots.

If someone raised their praise a little higher—made it sound like poetry—it could earn even more.

In Xia, two things mattered above all else: cultivation... and culture.

And when it came to poetry and song, they were unmatched.

If twisting words out of thin air could turn into gold, they would squeeze their long- unused brains dry to find better phrases.

"Young Master Bai Xiaochun," a large man stepped forward, cracking his knuckles.

"I'm not good with words. But I'm good with my fists. I, Kang Wi, have lived in this city my whole life. From this moment on, if I hear anyone dare call Young Master Bai Xiaochun impure, trash or a criminal, I swear on my ancestors—I will break their noses."

The city was small. Everyone knew everyone. Through marriages and bloodlines, half the city was related.

And Kang Wi was well known.

He was the local brute. A man who made his living by hitting people. A small-time street bandit that nobody wanted to provoke.

Alex looked at Kang Wi and returned a respectful palm-and-fist salute.

"I honor the great hero Kang Wi for defending the justice of my pure name. Take ten gold ingots."

Kang Wi's face split into a grin so wide it looked painful.

"Thank you, Young Master Bai!"

The crowd gasped again.

Ten gold ingots was no small amount. Nearly a hundred thousand dollars For villagers in this small city, that kind of money could feed. family for five years without lifting finger.

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"Young Master Bai!" an elder shouted emotionally. "The heavens themselves know your innocence!"

Alex looked up. "Did the heavens speak to you?"

The elder hesitated. "Well... no."

Alex nodded. "Then who did?"

The elder glanced at the gold box. "The heavens... spoke through that."

Alex smiled. "Ah. Divine revelation. Very reliable these days. Take two gold ingots then."

The woman who had been staring nervously at the wooden box of gold suddenly panicked. She was afraid it would run out before her turn.

She rushed forward.

"Young Master Bai, I am Meng Hua... the woman you raped," she said quickly.

Then she slapped her own mouth.

"I'm sorry. You are pure. Innocent. I don't know what I was saying." Another slap.

"I am a woman who was raped by

some man. But because I admire you so much, Young Master

Bai,

nappent-

noble,

imagined that man was you. That is clearly my mistake."

Her voice trembled as she bowed again and again, struggling to twist her tongue

carefully so she wouldn't say the wrong thing and lose her gold ingots.

"You are the man every woman dreams of. I came here without realizing that you have always been innocent."

She wiped her eyes dramatically.

"But I truly cannot control my feelings. came here, dreamed of being married to you, the City Lord's

young master, the pure and honorable one. Please forgive me for loving you too much."

Alex nodded with solemn grace.

"It is my sin to be handsome and make women dream of me. But since you admit your mistake, I cannot hold any grudge. Please take twenty gold ingots for clearing my name."

The woman burst into tears.

"Young Master Bai, you are truly heaven-sent. I truly love you. I am so happy to be touched by you... I mean by the thought of you."

She hurriedly scooped the gold into her arms. Before leaving, she stepped close and wrapped her arms around Alex, leaning in to whisper seductively into his ear. "Young Master Bai... whenever you wish to come, just come. I won't lock my door at night—you won't have to struggle with it anymore. I'll be waiting for you." Cold sweat prickled across Alex's back. He leaned in and whispered urgently,

"Please lock your door-and add more locks. It's safer that way."

She giggled, ran a finger lightly across his chest, and winked.

"Don't be shy, Young Master Bai."

She blew him a kiss and walked away.

"This time it's me!"

"No, it's me next!" others shouted.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 557[1,105 words]

Some of the people who had already received gold returned with their relatives. More villagers kept arriving. What started as twenty people had grown into nearly fifty, and the crowd was still swelling.

Alex's eyes shifted to the side.

The two cultivator women in blue and yellow robes were still there.

They were the real danger.

He prayed silently that these two unwelcome guests would lose interest and leave without investigating him further.

But they were still scanning the surroundings carefully, as if searching for something important.

They paid no attention to Alex because he appeared too busy dealing with the crowd.

And Alex understood.

He had to keep looking busy. Very busy. Until they left.

"All of you, stop!"

A sharp voice cut through the noise.

The crowd turned.

A man in tattered clothes stepped forward, but his eyes were bright and intelligent. He dragged a wooden chair from somewhere and placed it beside Alex.

"Young Master Bai, please sit while you inspect them. This will take time. You should not stand too long. It would be a pity to tire your legs."

Truthfully, Alex's body was in terrible condition. He had just survived a light bomb, crashed in a broken VÖXEN, and barely held himself together. The offer of a chair felt like a blessing.

He sat down without hesitation.

Moments later, two women hurried over and placed a table in front of him.

One quickly served him tea.

Another, a pretty young woman, stepped behind him and began gently massaging his back.

Alex let out a slow breath and relaxed into the massage. He had to admit it felt incredible.

"You," Alex said, looking at the man who had brought the chair.

"I am Zhuge Liang. Awaiting your orders, Young Master," the man replied with a respectful bow.

"You may take thirty gold ingots," Alex announced loudly so everyone could hear. Zhuge Liang shook his head at once.

"Young Master Bai, you are the purest and most innocent man here. How can I speak of admiration and honor in terms of money? I serve you because I admire you. Please, allow me to serve you without reward."

Alex studied him and smirked.

This one was clever.

He wasn't trying to pluck golden eggs. He was trying to catch the goose itself.

"As you wish," Alex said.

"Thank you, Young Master," Zhuge Liang replied, straightening up.

He turned to face the villagers and raised his voice.

"From now on, each person will receive only one gold ingot. Form a line. The person

at the front may begin praising the truth about our Young Master Bai.”

Murmurs of protest broke out.

"This isn't fair!"

"I want five gold ingots!"

"Yes! Five!"

Zhuge Liang stepped forward calmly.

"Whether it is fair or not is decided entirely by Young Master Bai."

He leaned toward Alex and bowed slightly.

"Young Master, for villagers like us, one gold ingot is already life-changing. Giving more will only empty your coffers quickly and benefit fewer people. With one ingot each, you can win the voices of the entire village—and secure the City Lord's position firmly in your hands."

Alex looked at him and nodded slowly.

Smart. Very smart.

"Proceed. One gold ingot each.”

"Thank you, Young Master!" Zhuge Liang said loudly, then turned back to the crowd.

"One gold ingot. If you don't want it, go home now. Don't block the people who do." He gestured toward the wooden box.

"There are only about three hundred ingots here. Those who hesitate will lose their chance."

"I want it!"

"Me too!"

Villagers rushed to the entrance, scrambling to form a line.

The first man rushed forward, chest heaving, eyes blazing with exaggerated loyalty.

"Young Master Bai! My in-laws

always curse you, calling you

useless trash. I went home and

slapped both my mother-in-law and

father in law for you told them to

stop speaking nonsense about your name!"

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He pointed proudly at the line behind him.

"As proof, the two people standing there are my mother-in-law and father-in-law. You can ask them if I slapped them or not!"

A middle-aged woman in the line raised her hand timidly.

"He's telling the truth," she said. "He slapped me very hard. My face is still swollen."

The old man beside her nodded quickly.

"Yes. It is our mistake for not understanding you, Young Master. We were wrong."

"One gold ingot for this warrior of truth," Zhuge Liang said calmly, placing the heavy piece of gold into the man's hands.

"Thank you, Young Master Bai—the purest and most innocent man alive!"

An old woman pushed her way to the front, her voice shrill and fierce.

"Young Master Bai! If anyone dares slander you again, I will curse their family for three generations!"

"Excellent," Zhuge Liang replied smoothly, placing a gold ingot into her hands. "Just make sure you curse louder next time."

The line grew longer. People began

presenting their poetry, their songs,

their finest performances of

flattery twisting the truth into

whatever shape could be exchanged

for gold.

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Zhuce Liang stood beside the box, calmly handing out one ingot at a time, smiling

as if this were a well-rehearsed ceremony.

Then an elderly couple stepped forward.

They didn't shout. They didn't perform.

They simply looked at Alex in silence.

Their eyes were deep, heavy with

something that made the noise met

the crowd fade into nothing. Tears gathered at the edges as the old man let out a long, tired sigh.

"We forgive you."

That was all.

And yet the entire place fell quiet.

Alex slowly rose from the chair.

He walked to the box, took ten gold ingots, and placed them gently into the

trembling hands of the old man.

"Thank you," Alex said softly.

He knew he had done nothing. But he also knew the real Bai Xiaochun must have

hurt these two deeply for them to carry such sorrow in their eyes.

He watched the old couple walk away and exhaled a long breath.

Zhuge Liang understood that sigh immediately. He stepped forward at once.

"Anyone who wishes only to say 'forgive' may form a separate line on the other side!"

Alex nodded. This man could practically read minds.

Soon, many parents and women stood quietly in the forgiveness line.

Alex stood there, greeting them one by one. Some whispered forgiveness. Some

said nothing at all. Alex simply placed ten gold ingots into their hands.

Ten gold ingots for each of them.

They both knew what this was.

This was compensation for the sins Bai Xiaochun had committed in the past.

He was cleaning up the past with money.

As the real culprit was already dead, crushed by a flying car.

"Wait!"

A sharp voice rang out from the back of the entrance.

"Stop this at once! All this money belongs to the Empire!"

About twenty soldiers rode in on horses, pushing through the crowd.

"Damn," someone muttered. "The corrupted judge is coming. He must want to seize all the gold."

Zhuge Liang glanced at the approaching soldiers, then shot Alex a quick look for silent approval.

In the next heartbeat, he seized the wooden box and hurled it forward.

Gold ingots scattered across the ground at the villagers' feet, rolling in every direction for them to scramble and grab.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 558[1,458 words]

The first soldier arrived at a gallop, his horse skidding to a halt as he shouted, "No one take that money! It belongs to City Lord Bai Xi!"

Everyone there knew the name. Bai Xi-the city judge, the magistrate—was infamous.

Corrupt to the bone. He was the younger brother of Bai Xu, the late City Lord, and the uncle of Bai Xiaochun.

Zhuge Liang and the other citizens reacted instantly the moment the soldier barked his command.

They snatched up the gold ingots and scattered in all directions, disappearing into alleys and side streets.

The soldiers charged after them, shouting, trying to seize the gold by force-but the crowd moved too fast. Only a handful of unlucky people were caught.

When everything finally settled, the twenty soldiers had recovered only fifteen gold ingots. Around ten citizens were seized and dragged away in chains.

"You," one of the head soldiers barked, pointing straight at Alex. "How dare you give gold to the people?"

The man's eyes were full of contempt.

Just pure disdain—as if Alex were nothing more than street trash.

Alex stayed silent.

He still didn't understand the full situation yet. Instead of reacting, he discreetly slid a transparent strip from his storage ring.

Gaia's nano-device.

He pressed it gently against the back of his neck.

Information flooded his mind-it was Bai Xiaochun's memories, everything the nanobots had managed to extract from the dead man's brain.

"You bastard!" the head soldier shouted again. "I'm talking to you! Are you mute?" Alex frowned as Bai Xiaochun's memories slowly poured in.

Even if Bai Xiaochun was a complete jerk—an absolute disaster of a person-from everything Alex knew, he was still the City Lord's legitimate son.

And in Xia, power like this was inherited.

Bai Xiaochun was, in name and law, the next City Lord the moment his father died.

So how dare this lowly head soldier mock him to his face?

If he still had his former power, he would have smashed the man's skull with a single strike and sent him crawling straight to hell. But now-right now-his body was no stronger than that of a ten-year-old child in Xia.

Alex stepped back at once.

"Hold it right there," a fat man on horseback said as he rode forward. "How can you treat Young Master Bai with such disrespect?"

The head soldier stiffened and bowed deeply. "City Lord Bai, this young man is causing danger to the villagers."

"Head soldier," Bai Xi said calmly, lifting a hand. "I am not the City Lord. I am merely acting in the role. Do not speak incorrectly."

"Sir," the head soldier said, bowing even lower, "all citizens already wish for you to become the City Lord. You are the only one fit for the position."

"Enough."

Bai Xi dismounted and walked toward Alex, his expression gentle, almost kind.

"My nephew," he said warmly, "please forgive this head soldier. He only wishes to ensure your safety. Tell me—what happened here? Did someone rob you? And where did this money come from?"

Alex watched him closely.

Classic.

Good cop. Bad cop.

At that exact moment, the flood of Bai Xiaochun's memories pouring into Alex's mind from Gaia's nanobots finally completed their transfer.

In an instant, Alex understood the full picture.

After Bai Xu's death, Bai Xiaochun was the rightful City Lord. By law. By blood.

But his uncle had coveted the position for a long time. Bai Xi manipulated merchants, elders, clans, and disciples-buying loyalty with money, favors, and exclusive privileges, bending the law whenever it suited him.

For years, he convinced everyone that Bai Xiaochun was unworthy.

Then, after the City Lord's death, the show began. Merchants, elders, and influential citizens stepped forward, publicly pleading for Bai Xi to take temporary control of the city as the acting City Lord.

They claimed Bai Xiaochun was unfit to rule.

That was how Bai Xi became the so-called "acting" City Lord-supposedly for the protection of the people.

And it didn't stop there.

He had tried to kill Bai Xiaochun more than once.

Then the final memory surfaced.

Alex felt cold sweat soak his back.

Bai Xiaochun had not died because of the VÖXEN incident.

He had already been poisoned.

Slowly.

Deliberately.

The wine Bai Xi had given Bai Xiaochun was never meant to kill quickly. Taken over the course of months, it would slowly rot him from the inside.

By the time the VÖXEN crashed into him, Bai Xiaochun had already been half-dead.

Now his uncle had arrived with twenty soldiers in tow.

They weren't here to protect him.

They were here to finish the job.

All Bai Xi needed was for Bai Xiaochun to die quietly, before he could ever reclaim the City Lord's position.

Alex understood this instantly.

"Uncle Bai!" Alex rushed forward and grabbed Bai Xi's sleeve, his hands trembling. "Thank the heavens you finally came. I was terrified they were about to kill me!"

"My good nephew," Bai Xi said gently, looking down at him. "Tell me what happened here."

"Those ungrateful bastards," Alex sobbed loudly, his voice breaking. "They smashed my wooden gate, accused me of raping a woman, and said they wanted my head!"

As he cried, he silently ordered the nanobots to assist. His breathing shook. His eyes reddened.

Tears streamed down his face so convincingly that everyone watching believed him without question.

"But I saw you handing out gold ingots," Bai Xi said calmly, his eyes sharp. He was certain he had already stripped this nephew of every last coin. "Where did the money come from?"

"Uncle," Alex said desperately, "yesterday I found my late father's hidden stash. Two hundred gold ingots. I thought I could use it to survive."

His voice cracked.

"But when those people came to kill me, I had no choice. I had to bribe them to save my life."

He wiped his face, looking utterly broken.

"Thanks to you, my life is saved... but all my money is gone."

Bai Xi studied him closely. "Are you certain your father left no other funds behind?"

"Yes, Uncle," Alex replied immediately. "You can search my entire house. You won't find a single coin."

Bai Xi glanced sideways.

A silent signal.

The head soldier stepped forward at

once and cupped his fists. "City Lord, the late City Lord's funds were meant for the people, not for personal

use What this bastard did

is completely unacceptable.

He turned toward Alex, his eyes full of cruelty.

"The money belongs to the citizens. I demand we search this house thoroughly—
and that he be imprisoned for misusing public funds."

The trap closed in.

Alex stared at the head soldier and felt a violent urge to smash the man's skull.

But he couldn't.

He was weak. And Bai Xi could twist any excuse into a charge that would throw him into prison or worse.

"He makes a solid argument," Bai Xi said calmly. "As the acting City Lord, I must proceed according to the law for the citizen."

He turned to Alex, his face filled with false regret. "Nephew, I'm sorry. But I have to take you to court for proper judgment."

"Wait, Uncle," Alex said quickly. "If that money belongs to the City Lord for the people's prosperity-didn't you just see me give it to the people?"

Silence fell.

"And since I gave that money to the people," Alex continued, his voice firm, "you have no right to put them in chains. The law protects them. You should free them." The citizens who had been caught spoke up at once.

"Yes! Young Master Bai gave it to us," one of them said desperately. "You have no right to arrest us. We did nothing wrong."

"That's right!" another chained citizen shouted in agreement.

Bai Xi didn't respond.

The head soldier glanced at him, waiting for instruction.

Bai Xi gave a subtle signal.

The next instant, the head soldier slapped Alex hard across the face. "Who do you think you are, making your own interpretations?" he snarled.

"You're not the city magistrate. I accuse you of stealing City Lord funds and distributing them without authorization."

"Yes," Bai Xi added lightly. "You were not permitted to use that money."

Alex looked at both of them and understood.

They weren't arguing law.

They were asserting power.

"By law," Alex said coldly, forcing himself upright, "I am the City Lord. You, Uncle, are only acting in my

place. And use City Lord funds for the people.

www.bam allowed to

That is my own money."

"Yes!" one of the citizens added

quickly. "Bai Xiaochun is the only City Lord we accept. You're just the acting City Lord. You have no fight to arrest us when our City Lord chose to give us money."

"He's right!" another citizen shouted. "Bai Xiaochun is the City Lord!"

Voices rose from farther back in the crowd.

"Bai Xiaochun is our City Lord!"

"Bai Xi, you pig who stole the throne-return the City Lord's seat!"

Bai Xi looked around. His face darkened, flushing red with rage. He gave a sharp signal to the head soldier.

The head soldier kicked Alex with full force.

Alex's body flew backward more than ten meters and slammed into the ground. A

sharp crack rang out as ribs shattered.

Pain tore through his chest and abdomen. Blood surged up his throat and spilled

from his mouth.

The head soldier drew his sword, eyes burning with intent.

"You should just die here."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 559[1,420 words]

Alex locked eyes with the head soldier and felt it clearly-the man wanted him dead.

Not as a threat. Not as intimidation. Real killing intent.

Alex hadn't felt that sensation in a long time.

The fear of death.

In the past few days, he had brushed against death again and again.

Each close call dragged him back to an older memory—back to when he was young, powerless, hunted, when people tried to kill him as casually as swatting a fly. Those were things he had long forgotten, buried the moment he became king.

"Everyone!" a voice suddenly roared through the square. "Magistrate Bai Xi wants to kill City Lord Bai Xiaochun so he can steal the City Lord's position permanently!"

The shout was loud enough to tear through the chaos.

People who had fled earlier but hadn't gone far froze. Heads turned. Bodies leaned out from alleys and behind stalls.

One by one, citizens gathered at the edge of the square, watching from what they thought was a safe distance.

At the entrance, the head soldier had already swung his sword toward Alex.

The blade stopped halfway through the air.

"The corrupt judge wants to seize power!" another voice cried.

"Where is the justice?!"

The head soldier stiffened. He glanced around and realized dozens—then hundreds—of eyes were fixed on him. Unease crept into his expression. He turned toward Bai Xi, waiting for orders.

Bai Xi's heart pounded.

He had waited half a year for Bai Xiaochun to die. He had schemed, manipulated, set traps—each one failing at the last moment. This time, he couldn't afford hesitation.

If Bai Xiaochun died now, the problem would disappear forever.

A dead man couldn't accuse him.

A dead man couldn't reclaim anything.

Bai Xi's lips tightened. He gave a subtle nod.

The head soldier's hesitation vanished. He swung his sword down at Alex with brutal speed.

Then—

Clang!

Something struck the blade.

The sword jerked violently off course and flew from the soldier's hand, spinning through the air before crashing to the ground.

Silence slammed into the square.

A single copper coin bounced once, twice, then rolled to a stop on the stone floor.

"Who dares!" the head soldier shouted.

A woman in flowing blue robes stepped forward. Her posture was calm, her gaze icy as it swept over the head soldier and then settled on Bai Xi.

Bai Xi's face changed instantly. He rushed forward and bowed deeply. "Pure Snow Sword Maiden, immortal Li Qingxue of the Wudang Sect."

The moment the name left his mouth, the entire square reacted.

Citizens dropped to their knees in unison, heads lowered, bodies trembling.

Among the people of Xia, there were two kinds of figures they feared. First were the officials who served directly under the king-men who controlled law, punishment, and life itself.

Second were martial artists, warriors of the wuxia world, who could kill ordinary people as easily as breathing.

But both of those groups feared a third.

Cultivators.

Those who had shattered the mortal realm and stepped onto the path of immortality.

Anyone who could live beyond a hundred years had already crossed that threshold. To common people, cultivators were no longer human they are immortals.

And Li Qingxue was no ordinary cultivator.

She was one of the Ten Most Beautiful immortals in all of Xia-famous not just for her beauty, but for the cold sword in her hand and the blood she had spilled.

Before anyone could see the woman in yellow robes stepped forward, her voice sharp and mocking.

"You fat pig," she snapped at the Bai Xi. "We were standing right here. We clearly saw you trying to kill this man simply because he gave his money to the poor."

Bai Xi's heart sank.

He had no idea these two immortal maidens were present.

He hurriedly bowed again. "Wind-Piercing Sword Fairy, immortal Sun Muran. This young man was not distributing his own money. We were only trying to arrest him."

"Not his money?" Sun Muran echoed, tilting her head slightly. "Then whose money was he giving out? Yours?"

"N-no, Young Miss Sun," Bai Xi said quickly, bowing once more. "He was distributing the City Lord's funds."

Sun Muran's eyes narrowed into thin slits. "Then tell me who is the City Lord? Him? Or you?"

Bai Xi swallowed and bowed again, sweat forming at his temples. "Young Miss Sun, the previous City Lord was my elder brother. Before his death, he named Bai Xiaochun as his heir."

"However, Bai Xiaochun proved incompetent and caused repeated harm to the citizens. Because of this, the people raised me as Acting City Lord-until the central authorities grant formal approval."

"Honorable Miss Sun Muran," Zhuge Liang said, stepping forward and bowing deeply.

"The citizens of Qingshui City never

5 of

asked Bai Xi to become Acting City Lord. He appointed himself. We, the people of Qingshui, recognize on the rightful City Lord-chosen by inheritance and confirmed by the king. By that law, Young Master Bai Xiaochun is our City Lord?"

"Yes!" someone shouted.

Then another.

Soon, more than thirty voices rose together in agreement.

Everyone here knew the truth.

Bai Xiaochun was no saint. He was crude, arrogant, and shameless a small-time tyrant with too much power and too little discipline. But compared to Bai Xi, he was a lesser evil.

Bai Xi was rotten to the bone.

In public, he smiled and spoke of order and prosperity. In the shadows, he drained the city dry.

If Bai Xiaochun assaulted a woman and walked away, it was already unforgivable—

but Bai Xi took women and made them disappear.

No one ever saw them again. No one dared to ask. Anyone who did vanished as well.

So the people chose survival.

They would rather have Bai Xiaochun as City Lord. They would rather have a dog on the throne-anything, as long as it wasn't Bai Xi.

"Immortal Sun. Immortal Li." Zhuge Liang bowed again, even deeper this time.

"We beg you to grant justice to the tens of thousands of citizens of Qingshui City. We ask only to follow the imperial edict Let Bai Xiaochun assume his rightful position as City Lord Stop Bai Xi from illegally raising himself as Acting City Lord."

Bai Xi snapped.

"You ingrates!" roared. did all this for your own good! Open your eyes-can you not see what kind of useless trash Bai Xiaochun is?"

"He can barely read. He knows nothing of governance. If the city falls into his hands, all of you will suffer. The city will rot and move backward. I am the one protecting your future!"

The crowd trembled.

Many wanted to scream that Bai Xi was a demon wearing human skin. That he sucked the poor dry and crushed anyone who resisted him. But their mouths stayed shut.

Because in Qingshui City, Bai Xi was the law.

And the law could kill.

"It is human nature to follow the will of Heaven," Zhuge Liang said clearly, his voice steady and unshaken. "And by Heaven's will, Bai Xiaochun is the City Lord. Chosen by Heaven itself."

He lifted his head, eyes firm.

"We are ordinary citizens. We worship Heaven, and we follow Heaven's will. We do not follow human greed."

He bowed deeply.

"Immortal Sun. Immortal Li. Please grant us justice so we may obey Heaven's will. If we abandon it and follow human ambition instead, Heaven will answer with disaster."

Alex watched quietly.

He had already sensed it—the people of Xia believed Heaven was the source of all creation. To them, the natural order mattered above all else.

Cultivators sought immortality by aligning themselves with that order. Anyone who defied Heaven's will did not walk the immortal path—they walked the demonic one. Sun Muran, dressed in yellow robes, turned her gaze to Bai Xi.

"I order you to return the City Lord's position to Bai Xiaochun," she said. "In accordance with Heaven's will."

"But-Young Miss Sun-" Bai Xi tried to speak.

Sun Muran's eyes flicked toward him.

Bai Xi's body jerked violently. He opened his mouth and spat out a mouthful of blood, stumbling backward.

"Please forgive me, Young Miss Sun," Bai Xi said hastily, panic flooding his face. "I will return the City Lord's seal at once."

He straightened his robes and walked toward Alex, forcing a weak, fatherly smile. In his hand was the black gold seal engraved with the words Qingshui City.

"Xiaochun he said gently, lifting the seal as if it were a gift. "I am your uncles the only family you have left.

The only one who truly loves you Everything I have done was for your own good."

Alex said nothing. He simply looked at him.

Bai Xi stepped closer, close enough that it almost looked like he was about to embrace him. His voice dropped into a poisonous whisper meant for Alex alone.

"Don't you dare take the City Lord's seat," he hissed. "Or I will kill you. Never forget who you really are, you bastard."

He truly believed it, as he always had that the timid Bai Xiaochun would return, bow his head, and step back into the shadows where he belonged.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 560[1,629 words]

This time, Bai Xi made a fatal mistake.

He had forgotten one thing.

He was facing Alex.

Alex shouted without hesitation, "Immortal Lu. Immortal Sun. My uncle said that if I dared to take the seal, he would kill me. He clearly has no respect for the two of you."

Bai Xi's face drained of color. His brain shut down completely.

He never imagined Alex would pull a move like this-dropping the ultimate snitch card and hauling the immortals straight into the fight like it was nothing.

Sun Muran's expression turned cold. She took one step forward.

"So, Bai Xi, you little pig" she said calmly, "do you truly have no regard for us? Do you want me to remove your head before you are willing to hand over the position?"

The pressure hit Bai Xi like a mountain collapsing.

His legs buckled. His body slammed into the ground, kneeling against his will.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" Bai Xi cried, panic breaking through his composure. "Immortal Sun, this matter is merely a family misunderstanding. I'll give the City Lord's seal right now! Please forgive me!"

This was Bai Xi to the core-cruel to the weak, pitiful before the strong.

He scrambled forward, his voice trembling. "My nephew... I was wrong. Please, just take the seal!"

He practically threw it at Alex.

Alex caught it and lowered his gaze.

The black-gold seal rested in his palm.

It was small-no larger than his hand-yet impossibly heavy. Dragons and clouds were carved into its surface, ancient and imposing. At its center were the words: Qingshui City.

Power, authority, and countless lives were bound to this single object.

Alex allowed a smile to spread across his face.

It looked like joy.

In truth, it was only an act.

Because his next plan was simple-to escape Xia as fast as possible and return to Estoria.

He raised the City Lord's seal high above his head.

"From this moment on," Alex shouted, his voice ringing across the square, "I, Bai Xiaochun, am the one and only City Lord of Qingshui City!"

The crowd erupted.

Cheers burst out from every direction, loud and unrestrained.

Alex stepped forward and met Bai Xi's gaze. He smiled broadly-mocking, sharp,

merciless. He reached out and patted Bai Xi on the shoulder.

"Uncle," Alex said softly, almost kindly, "you may rest now. From this moment forward, the burden of Qingshui City belongs to me."

Bai Xi's smile stiffened. "Xiaochun... you—"

"Everyone," Alex said loudly, cutting him off.

"I know this city has suffered under a false City Lord. I know you all carry grievances that were buried and ignored."

He swept his gaze across the crowd.

"Starting today, as the true City Lord, you may come to me. Tell me your injustices. Together, we will settle what has been delayed for far too long."

His eyes hardened.

"Under the heavens, justice must stand upright. We will no longer allow rats and pigs to trample the people of this city."

The square fell silent for a heartbeat.

Then the cheers rose again-louder than before.

A roar of cheers exploded across the square.

Men slammed their fists against their chests. Women wiped tears from their faces.

Children screamed and laughed, jumping in place.

"Did he just call Bai Xi a pig?" someone whispered.

"He did!" another muttered, barely holding back laughter. "Even his insults don't hold back."

Alex slowly lowered the seal. His gaze dropped deliberately to Bai Xi, sharp and cold.

"Uncle," Alex said evenly, "I promise I won't disappoint you. I will investigate every act of corruption, every crime you committed against the people—and I will make sure you live the rest of your life in misery."

Bai Xi finally snapped.

"How dare you!" he roared. "I am the law here! Who dares to judge me?"

Alex didn't flinch.

"The law of Heaven comes first," he said calmly. "The law of the people comes second-because laws exist to protect the people. Without the people, there is no country. Without a country, there is no king. You are nothing but a minor city judge- how dare you place yourself above the people? Even if you call yourself the law, you still have to bend, bow, and kneel before them."

The crowd erupted. Applause thundered through the square. Voices rose in fierce agreement, shouts overlapping as people slammed their hands together and cried out their support.

Alex continued, "And you you have hurt the people for far too long. I will gather every one of your crimes and let Immortal Lu and Immortal Sun deliver Heaven's judgment upon you."

Bai Xi's face flushed red.

Fear flashed through his eyes. He understood immediately-Alex was dangerous. He was trying to use Immortal Sun's authority to crush him completely.

Alex understood something too.

If Bai Xi survived this moment, if he lived long enough for the immortals to leave, he would have countless ways to strike back. Bai Xi would never stop until Alex was dead.

So the only option was clear.

Kill him before he could be killed.

Bai Xi sensed the danger instantly. One wrong move, and he would die here.

In a heartbeat, Bai Xi transformed.

He smiled gently, the calm smile of a seasoned actor. He bowed deeply, his posture humble and respectful.

"Nephew," he said smoothly, "you haven't seen the full picture. You cannot pass judgment without evidence. Of course, if mistakes were made, then they should be judged properly."

He straightened and turned toward the crowd, spreading his arms.

"Citizens of Qingshui City, our city is finally back in the hands of its rightful lord. May Heaven bless us all."

Then his voice sharpened, just enough to carry a warning.

"But I must caution everyone-accusing people without proof is dangerous. Some may take offense. Some may seek revenge."

The smile never left his face.

But the threat beneath it was clear to everyone who listened.

Everyone knew what Bai Xi was doing.

It was a threat.

He had ties to the city's underworld-black-market groups, powerful merchants, even so-called unorthodox sects. Any one of them could make people disappear. Any one of them could kill without consequence.

No one dared to speak first.

"I still hold the position of magistrate," Bai Xi said coldly. "Do not make a mistake, or you will fall into my hands."

Then he turned and bowed toward the immortals.

"Immortal Lu. Immortal Sun. Thank you for upholding Heaven's will. Please allow me to take my leave."

Li Qingxue nodded once and turned away, uninterested.

Sun Muran let out a mocking laugh. "Try not to let me see you again, little pig."

Bai Xi's face burned red.

He was fifty-five years old and yet he was being called "little pig" by someone who looked barely twenty.

He forced a laugh and bowed again. He knew better than to show anger. Immortals could appear young even after living for hundreds of years.

Without another word, Bai Xi waved his hand. His soldiers closed ranks around him, and together they marched out through the gate.

The moment they were gone, the square erupted.

Cheers, laughter, and shouting filled the air.

But as the noise slowly faded, a hoarse voice shouted from the back of the crowd.

"City Lord Bai Xiaochun! We have grievances!"

The atmosphere changed instantly.

The laughter died. The joy drained away.

Dozens of villagers stepped forward. They clutched rolled-up petitions, stained letters, even scraps of cloth covered in shaky ink.

"My husband disappeared last month," a woman cried, tears streaming down her face. "He refused to pay a bribe!"

Another voice followed, raw with grief. "My daughter was taken to the magistrate's office two months ago. She never came back!"

"Our farmland was seized without explanation," an old man shouted. "The next day, a rich merchant owned it. We have no food left. Our children are starving!"

A restaurant owner pushed forward, shaking with rage. "For four months, Bai Xi and his soldiers ate at my shop and never paid a single coin! When demanded what they owed, they threw my son and daughter into jail for no reason!"

The crowd surged.

Voices overlapped. Tears, anger, and desperation spilled out all at once.

It was as if a dam had finally burst.

Stories poured out one after another—corruption laid bare, sons and daughters vanishing without a trace, cruel punishments handed down for nothing, homes and land seized by greedy officials.

Alex felt his thoughts spin.

No wonder they hated Bai Xi.

He lifted his gaze toward Li Qingxue and Sun Muran. Both immortal maidens were watching him closely. Their expressions were calm, distant, the untouched by the

suffer.

around them. There was no warmth in their eyes—only indifference.

To them, mortals were beneath notice. Troubles like this were usually not worth their time.

"City Lord of Qingshui," Sun Muran called.

Alex immediately stepped forward and bowed deeply. "I, Bai Xiaochun, await your command. Please instruct me."

Li Qingxue looked at him coldly. "Something—or someone may be already entering this city. If you or your people notice anything unusual, contact us immediately."

She flicked her wrist and tossed a sheet of talisman paper toward Alex.

"If you find anything out of the ordinary, activate this talisman. We will come."

Alex caught it with both hands and bowed again. "Thank you, Immortal. I will report anything suspicious at once."

Without another word, Li Qingxue and Sun Muran rose into the air. Their figures blurred, then vanished into the sky, leaving Alex alone with the crowd.

The square felt heavier without them.

Zhuge Liang stepped forward at just the right moment, his voice steady and

confident. "Young Master Bai," he said loudly, "the people of Qingshui do not ask for miracles. We ask only for justice."

He swept his gaze across the crowd.

"There are honest officials in this

city-men who refused to kneel to

corruption and to Bai Xi. They were dismissed, imprisoned, or destroyed by him Release them. Restore Restore them to their posts and let them serve

you. They will help stabilize the city and strengthen your position as City Lord in your fight against Bai Xi's remaining power."

Alex looked at him carefully.

This man wasn't just clever. He understood power.

The surrounding citizens bowed in unison. "Please give us justice, City Lord."

Alex let out a slow sigh.

"Fine," he said quietly.

'Let's play the part of a good City Lord-for now, while I recover from my injuries.

And when everything finally calms down, I'll disappear from this place without a trace.'

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 561[1,064 words]

Alex scanned the square. Citizens were already gathering, their voices rising, their faces tight with anger and hope.

Someone shouted for justice. Then another. The sound spread like fire.

He turned his gaze to Zhuge Liang.

The man was around forty, a familiar presence in the city—someone who seemed to know everyone, and in turn was known by everyone.

His eyes were sharp and alive, burning with expectation. Alex could see it clearly- this man wanted him to act, to shoulder responsibility, to change things for the people.

It would be troublesome. Very troublesome.

Alex raised his hand.

The City Lord's seal caught the light.

"People of Qingshui City," Alex said.

Silence crashed down instantly, as if the entire square had been frozen by an invisible hand.

"This is my first command as City Lord."

Everyone recognized the authority in his voice, the weight of the seal.

Zhuge Liang dropped to one knee without hesitation.

A heartbeat later, the entire crowd followed, kneeling in unison.

"I, Bai Xiaochun, City Lord of Qingshui City, hereby declare-" Alex paused and looked directly at Zhuge Liang. "Zhuge Liang is appointed Vice City Lord."

The square erupted-not in noise, but in shock.

Zhuge Liang froze, disbelief flashing across his face.

Alex watched the crowd instead. Faces broke into wide smiles.

Some people openly wiped tears from their eyes. It was obvious this man was deeply connected to the people.

Trusted. Loved.

"Zhuge Liang," Alex said calmly. "What is your answer?"

Zhuge Liang snapped back to himself. He rose quickly and stepped forward, stopping before Alex.

"I, Zhuge Liang, humbly accept the position."

"Good," Alex replied. His tone hardened slightly as he continued.

"As Bai Xiaochun, I am still recovering from serious injuries. Until I am fully healed, I cannot perform my duties as City Lord. Therefore, Vice City Lord Zhuge Liang will act on my behalf during my absence."

This time, the shock was even greater.

Then the smiles grew wider.

Hope spread across the square like sunlight after a storm.

"Zhuge Liang," Alex said, lifting the seal again. "I will entrust you with the City Lord's authority. You will act in my place and do whatever is necessary for the good of the people. Can you do it?"

Zhuge Liang's eyes sharpened. His spine straightened. He bowed deeply, confidence and resolve blazing in his voice.

"I, Zhuge Liang, swear my loyalty to Qingshui City."

Alex raised an eyebrow. "Only the city?"

Zhuge Liang paused. "You wish me to swear loyalty to you as well?"

Alex waved his hand dismissively. "No need."

"No need?"

"If you're loyal to me, you'll betray the city someday."

Zhuge Liang stiffened. "That is a grave accusation."

Alex smiled thinly. "Exactly why I trust you. Please, take the City Lord's seal."

Zhuge Liang remained kneeling. He raised both hands respectfully and accepted it, his movements steady, his expression solemn.

Alex lifted his gaze and swept it across the crowd. "From this moment on, Zhuge Liang is the Acting City Lord. You will obey his orders as you would mine. Do you understand?"

"Yes!" the citizens shouted in unison, their voices shaking the courtyard.

"Good," Alex said again, his tone firm. "Now leave. I need to rest."

With those final words, he dismissed everyone.

The gates closed behind them.

Outside, cheers erupted. Laughter, sobs, and urgent voices blended together as people swarmed toward Zhuge Liang.

"Vice City Lord, please help us!"

"Sir Zhuge Liang, give us justice!"

Alex could still hear the noise through the thick doors. He let out a slow breath.

"Good. Work hard," he muttered quietly, a sense of relief washing over him, as if he had just escaped a mountain of responsibilities.

Now, at last, he had time to look around.

He was standing in a large front courtyard, but it was poorly maintained. Weeds pushed through cracked stone. Tools lay abandoned. The place clearly lacked servants or workers.

Beyond the yard stood a large wooden building.

Only one floor high, but sprawling—nearly ten rooms by the look of it. The structure was old, weathered, and silent, like a house that hadn't been lived in for years.

His eyes drifted to the largest building at the center. It looked like the main residence.

A strange unease crept into his chest.

Before he could stop himself, Alex walked up to the double doors and pushed them open.

"Welcome, big brother."

The voice rang out suddenly.

Alex jumped back on instinct.

What he saw made his blood run cold.

A young woman was kneeling inside. Beside her knelt an elderly woman. The young woman's face was pale and hollow, her eyes sunken, her posture stiff—like a ghost forced into human shape.

"Who... who are you?" Alex asked, his voice tight.

The young woman lifted her head. Her eyes were red, burning with anger and resentment.

"I am your younger sister," she said coldly. "First, let me congratulate you—for finally fulfilling Father's will and becoming City Lord."

"No—no need," Alex said quickly, instinctively stepping back.

He wanted this over as soon as possible. Something about her gaze made his skin crawl, as if she were staring straight through him.

"Big Brother," the young woman said. Her voice trembled, but her eyes burned. "I want to ask you two things. Please enlighten me."

"Go ahead," Alex replied quickly. He couldn't look away from her face—the fury there was sharp enough to cut.

"First," she said, her voice tightening,

"we don't even have money to buy food anymore. We sold everything.

Thee. The valuables.

Anything that could be sold is
already gone."

"What?" Alex blurted out. His face drained of color. "How is that possible?"

Her hands clenched into fists so hard they shook, as if her skin might split open.

"Because you wasted the money chasing women and visiting pleasure houses every single day. You spent it like trash. Meanwhile, many of our people haven't even been paid their salaries."

Alex froze.

The words hit him like a slap.

He couldn't speak.

"Second," she continued, her voice rising, sharp and bitter, "why did you appoint Zhuge Liang as Acting City Lord? Why didn't you take the position yourself? If you had, we could have used the power. You

could reclaim your fiancée. We could rebuild our family and this house."

Her composure shattered.

Tears streamed down her face as she cried out, "Now the money is gone! And Zhuge Liang will become the greatest City Lord-because everyone loves him! And you she pointed at Alex, her whole body trembling, you are useless big brother. You ruined everything this family had!"

She suddenly pulled out a short blade.

"I'm telling you," she screamed through her sobs, "I'm going to meet Father and

Mother in the afterlife and tell them everything you've done!"

Before Alex could move, she drove the blade into her own neck.

Blood sprayed.

The world seemed to stop.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 562[1,361 words]

Being powerless was not a sin. But falling from the height of absolute power into total helplessness—that was when life turned from heaven into hell without warning.

Alex had no strength left, no hidden force, nothing at all to stop her.

None at all.

So he lunged forward on instinct and caught the blade with his bare hand.

The knife sliced through his fingers. Flesh split open.

Blood spilled instantly.

The blade slipped from her grip. Alex snatched it away and flung it aside, where it clattered across the floor.

"Stop it," Alex said.

"Why?" the young woman screamed. Tears streamed down her face. Desperation burned in her eyes—raw, hopeless, and broken. "My whole life is already ruined because of you. Why shouldn't I die now?"

Alex stared at her.

She was small. Too small. Barely fifteen, at most. A child forced to grow up too fast because fate had saddled her with a monster like Bai Xiaochun as her brother.

Her eyes locked onto Alex's, demanding an answer.

"Why won't you let me die?"

Why push me this far, then refuse to end it?

Why keep torturing me?

"You ruined my life," she said through clenched teeth.

Alex nodded. "That's fair."

Her anger stalled. "That's it? No denial?"

"I'm not stupid," he said calmly. "If I deny it, you'll stab yourself again. If I admit it, you'll just glare at me."

Bai Yuhan did exactly that she only glared at Alex.

"First," Alex said slowly, "our father left behind a box of gold. I still have it. I'll give it to you."

Her eyes flew open in disbelief.

"Liar."

"Wait here," Alex said. "I'll bring the box."

He turned and walked out, blood dripping from his hand.

Inside his body, nanobots were already stitching torn flesh back together.

A few steps past the door, he slipped a hand into his storage ring and took out another wooden box.

Inside were nearly four hundred gold ingots.

Alex grabbed the handle and tried to lift it.

It didn't budge.

He tried again, straining. Nothing.

The box was enormous—at least a hundred kilograms. Far too heavy for one person in his condition.

Grinding his teeth, Alex gave up and dragged himself back to the main room empty-handed.

"Where is the gold?" the young woman snapped, her voice sharp with accusation. "You lied to me."

"No," Alex said quickly. "It's just too heavy. I can't lift it alone. I can't bring it here."

He met her gaze.

"So we have to go to it."

"Just say you don't have it," the young woman said, her voice thick with disbelief.

“Bai Yuhan,” Alex called out, using the name he had pulled from Bai Xiaochun's memories. “If there's no gold outside, you can go kill yourself. I won't stop you. But what if there is gold out there?”

Bai Yuhan shouted back without hesitation, "If there really is gold, I'll be your slave." "Good," Alex said flatly. "Follow me."

He didn't care about promises. He didn't care about oaths. He just wanted her to stop trying to die—and to stop wasting his time.

Alex walked out first. Bai Yuhan followed, with the old woman trailing behind them.

"This is the box," Alex said, pointing at the wooden chest.

Bai Yuhan stepped forward slowly, staring at it. Even now, she was certain her bastard of a brother had lied again. That this was another cruel joke.

Then she lifted the lid.

Her breath caught.

Gold ingots filled the box—stacked, solid, unmistakable.

The old woman gasped. Her eyes turned red instantly.

"Thank Heaven," she cried. "My wages... my wages can finally be paid."

She looked at Alex as if seeing him for the first time. "I thought I would never receive my salary in this lifetime. But Heaven truly has eyes. That disaster Bai Xiaochun... he's finally turned over a new leaf."

Bai Yuhan tore her gaze away from the gold and looked straight at Alex. "Where did you get this?"

Alex clearly didn't want to answer. "Family treasure," he said shortly. "Father only told me where it was."

Bai Yuhan's eyes narrowed into thin slits. "I remember you spending all the family fortune at pleasure houses."

Alex spoke quickly, afraid she wouldn't listen. "I had to pretend I wasted it. I kept this part hidden."

“Why?” Bai Yuhan pressed.

"Our uncle, Bai Xi," Alex said, forcing the words out. "He wanted me dead. All of us dead. I had to pretend to be a useless bastard so he'd lower his guard."

Her gaze didn't soften. "Then why did you give the City Lord position to Zhuge Liang?"

Alex let out a sharp breath. "Come on, sister. If became City Lord, our uncle would never stop sending assassins. The citizens would hate us too. But with Zhuge Liang as Acting City Lord, he has to protect me. Because if I fall, he falls with me."

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"So you mean you want them to tear each other apart so you can survive," Bai Yuhan said slowly.

"Exactly," Alex replied.

"Let them fight. Zhuge Liang will use everything he has to suppress Bai Xi. Bai Xi will strike back with everything he has. They'll bleed each other dry. We stand aside, recover, and wait until one of them falls."

"Brilliant move, Young Master," the old woman said, clapping her hands. Her eyes sparkled with mockery. "Who would have thought the most useless rascal in all of Qingshui City could suddenly grow a brain?"

"I've always been smart," Alex protested.

"No," Bai Yuhan cut in sharply. "You're the biggest asshole I've ever known. I even heard that when you go to pleasure houses, only the lowest women are willing to serve you."

"Why?" Alex blurted out, genuinely shocked. "Aren't pleasure houses all about money?"

"They said even the high-ranked women there refuse you," Bai Yuhan said flatly. "They have standards."

"What?" Alex was stunned. Even prostitutes had standards now? And Bai Xiaochun

didn't meet them? Just how low had this body's reputation sunk?

The old woman smirked. "They also say you're a one-minute man."

Alex stared at her. "...Why do you know that?"

She smiled. "The servants gossip."

Bai Yuhan crossed her arms. "They weren't gossiping. They were laughing."

Alex pressed a hand to his chest. "I was framed."

"By who?" Bai Yuhan asked coldly. "Time itself?"

"Even the lowest women refuse you," Bai Yuhan continued mercilessly. "They say you're bad for morale."

Alex frowned. "That doesn't make sense. I pay on time."

"They said," she went on, "that no amount of money is worth emotional damage."

Alex inhaled slowly. "So my reputation is dead."

The old woman nodded. "Buried. Mourned. Occasionally spit on."

Alex choked on his breath.

So bad that he might need to personally visit a pleasure house just to restore Bai Xiaochun's reputation.

He wanted to drown them in a night so excessive it became unbearable—pleasure pushed past all limits, driven until bodies broke down and voices begged for mercy,

until even desire turned into pain.

And even then, he wouldn't stop.

How could a prostitute dare look down on a man?

As part of the brotherhood of men, he had to defend the dignity of man itself. A man could be broken, ruined, even destroyed—but never reduced to something that could be sneered at by a prostitute.

He had to visit the pleasure house for the greater good for the dignity of all men.

A necessary sacrifice. A righteous cause.

"Big Brother," Bai Yuhan said, carrying the hundred-kilogram gold box with one arm

as if it weighed nothing. "How could you not lift something this light?"

Alex could only stare.

Then again... maybe not.

The women in this place were built like bulls. At this rate, he might not survive a

single night in the pleasure house.

"Big Broth servants. They haven't been paid for months. We need to bring them back."

er," Bai Yuhan called. "How do we divide the gold? We need it to pay the

"What's there to divide?" Alex said casually. "Take it all."

"Are you serious?" Bai Yuhan's face lit up with joy.

Then her expression darkened. She stared at him sharply. "Don't tell me you still

have more gold hidden."

"No!" Alex replied immediately. "How

rich do you think our father was?

Two boxes, that's all. One box

already went to the citizens, for our Safety This is the last one. You handle it. I'm going back to my room

to cultivate."

Both Bai Yuhan and the old woman froze.

"Young Master... wants to cultivate?" the old woman asked in disbelief.

Bai Yuhan's eyes hardened as she stared at Alex.

She suddenly grabbed Alex's arm, her grip so fierce it nearly crushed the bones.

"Who are you?" she demanded. "You're not my brother. Tell me who are you

really?"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 563[2,187 words]

Alex looked straight at Bai Yuhan.

"So I'm not your real big brother. Is that it?"

Bai Yuhan lifted her chin. Her face was serious, almost stubborn. "No. You're not."

"Good." Alex didn't hesitate. "Then that gold isn't real either. Give it back."

Bai Yuhan froze.

For a split second, her fingers tightened around the wooden box in her hands.

"No," she said again, more firmly this time. "The gold is real. You're not."

A sharp smile touched Alex's lips, but there was no warmth in it.

"Since I'm not your brother, and you're not my little sister, I'll just take my gold back." He stepped toward her.

Bai Yuhan immediately retreated, clutching the box to her chest. "No! This gold is mine."

"But you're not my little sister," Alex said flatly.

"I am your little sister," she shot back.

"You just said I'm not your big brother." His voice hardened. "So how exactly are you my little sister? Give me back my gold."

The tension snapped.

"Big Brother!" Bai Yuhan blurted out at last, her pride collapsing. "You are my best big brother. I was wrong. I shouldn't have doubted you. It was my mistake. Please forgive me. Don't take the gold away from me."

Her voice softened, almost pleading.

Alex waved a dismissive hand. "Whatever. Don't bother me."

He turned and walked toward his room without looking back.

"Yes, Big Brother," Bai Yuhan said, bowing deeply. "I won't bother you for a thousand years. As long as you let me keep our money, you can stay in your room forever for all I care."

"Good sister," Alex replied lazily. "You're the best little sister."

With that, he entered his room and shut the door behind him.

The moment he was alone, his expression shattered.

He staggered two steps-

and then vomited violently onto the floor.

Everything in his stomach came up in a single, brutal surge.

A faint mechanical hum filled the air.

From his mouth, a tiny swarm of nanobots drifted out, gathering midair. They merged together, forming a small metallic sphere that hovered quietly in front of him.

Alex's vision blurred.

His knees buckled.

He collapsed onto the floor.

The nanobots could repair flesh. They could reshape tissue and close wounds.

But they weren't natural. They forced the body to operate beyond its limits. Every cell had been driven into overdrive.

His brain chemistry was destabilized. His muscles were locked in constant tension.

He had been holding it together by sheer will.

Now that will was gone.

Darkness swallowed him.

When Alex finally woke, he was lying in bed.

His clothes had been changed.

His body still felt wrong—off-balance, as if gravity itself had shifted. His head throbbed. His muscles trembled faintly, refusing to fully relax.

He pushed himself up slowly.

The door creaked open.

A young maid stepped inside.

The moment she saw him sitting upright, her eyes widened. She spun around and ran out, shouting down the hallway, "Young Mistress! The Young Master is awake!"

Footsteps pounded.

The door burst open.

Bai Yuhan rushed in.

Her face was pale. Her eyes were red and swollen, as if she hadn't slept. Worry clung to her like a shadow.

When she saw Alex conscious and sitting there, relief flooded her expression.

Her shoulders sagged.

Her eyes glistened.

For a heartbeat, she looked like she wanted to cry.

Then her lips moved.

"Why didn't you just go die?"

Alex lifted his eyes slowly.

He studied Bai Yuhan's face.

Every part of her body betrayed her—her stiff shoulders, her trembling fingers, the faint redness around her eyes. She had clearly been worried sick.

And yet her mouth? Sharp as a blade.

"Fine. Fine," Alex muttered, his voice dry. "How long was I out?"

"Two weeks," Bai Yuhan said.

Alex jerked upright. "What?"

"Two weeks," she repeated. "You slept like a corpse. Even if someone had slit your throat, you wouldn't have twitched."

"Two weeks?" Alex felt a chill crawl down his spine.

"That's not even the worst part," Bai Yuhan added coldly. "Assassins came for you. Three of them. And you didn't move a muscle."

"Assassins?" Alex's mind went blank. He didn't remember anything.

The last thing he remembered was the brutal fight with the Prussian warrior.

The blinding flash of the light bomb.

The car crashes.

The chaos.

And through all of it, forcing the nanobots to tear through his body reshaping bone, rewiring muscle, rebuilding him from the inside out to become Bai Xiaochun.

Every cell in his body had been pushed past its limit. His internal force had been drained dry.

He hadn't expected the recovery to take two full weeks.

It must have been because his inner force was exhausted.

"How did I survive?" Alex asked quietly.

"The second day after you locked yourself in the room, Zhuge Liang sent men to protect you from Bai Xi," Bai Yuhan explained. "We knocked on your door. No response. We forced it open. You were lying on the floor."

Her jaw tightened as she remembered it.

"The men guarding you are mercenaries. High-level cultivators. Professionals. When three assassins broke in, they killed one on the spot and injured the other two. The remaining ones fled."

Alex nodded slowly. "Zhuge Liang did well."

"Yes," Bai Yuhan admitted, though she sounded almost irritated by her own praise. "He and Uncle have split Qinshui City in half. It's practically a civil war now."

"Oh?" Alex leaned back slightly. "Who's winning?"

Bai Yuhan exhaled.

"Zhuge Liang has the citizens and most of the common people. Uncle has the wealthy elites and several corrupt officials backing him. They're locked in a stalemate. Neither side can break through."

Alex absorbed the information in silence.

A knock came at the door.

"Miss," a maid said respectfully as she entered. "Sir Zhuge Liang requests permission to visit the Young Master."

Bai Yuhan glanced at Alex.

"He's been waiting for news about your recovery every single day since you collapsed," she said quietly. "His bodyguards must have already reported that you're awake. That's why he's here."

"Let him in," Alex said calmly. Then his stomach growled loudly, breaking the tension. He winced faintly. "And... could I get something to eat? I'm starving."

Bai Yuhan's expression softened for a fraction of a second.

"Of course," she said. "I'll prepare it myself."

She turned and left the room without another word.

"No," Alex said suddenly.

Fragments of Bai Xiaochun's old memories were still lodged in his mind like broken glass. He knew exactly what kind of disaster Bai Yuhan's cooking could be. "Call the chef," he added quickly. "Or anyone else. Just not you. If you cook, I'll be unconscious for another three weeks."

Bai Yuhan froze.

Then her face exploded with fury.

"You bastard!" she snapped, stomping her foot so hard the floorboards creaked. "I'm being kind to you and this is how you repay me? Why don't you just die already!" With that, she stormed out and slammed the door so hard the walls shook.

Alex exhaled slowly and leaned back against the bed.

A moment later, the door opened again.

Zhuge Liang stepped inside with measured, controlled steps. He bowed properly, posture straight, expression respectful.

"Sir. City Lord."

"No," Alex cut him off immediately. "I don't want to hear anything. Not one word. I'm still sick. So say nothing."

Zhuge Liang paused mid-breath and closed his mouth.

They stared at each other.

"We're both smart," Alex continued calmly. "So don't waste time pretending. I know why you're here."

Zhuge Liang said nothing.

"Look down at the foot of my bed," Alex instructed.

Zhuge Liang had clearly come prepared with reports, updates, strategies-but he swallowed them all. Without a word, he lowered his gaze.

At the foot of the bed sat two wooden boxes.

Zhuge Liang's eyes sharpened instantly.

He looked back at Alex, shock flickering across his usually composed face.

"Say nothing," Alex warned quietly. "Take those boxes and leave. It would be best if

Bai Yuhan doesn't see them."

Zhuge Liang stepped forward and opened the lids.

Gold gleamed inside.

His lips curved into a wide, satisfied smile.

He closed the boxes carefully, then bowed deeply. "Understood. I will follow your order."

"Good. Now get out."

Zhuge Liang bowed again. This time, instead of walking to the door, he moved to the window. He pushed it open and made a subtle hand signal.

Two bodyguards appeared instantly outside the open window, landing silently on the ledge like shadows.

"Take these two boxes," Zhuge Liang ordered in a low voice. "Transport them to my office. Discreetly."

"Yes, sir," the two guards responded in unison.

They wrapped the boxes in a large cloth, secured them tightly to their backs, and vanished through the window without another sound.

Zhuge Liang turned back toward Alex.

Before he could speak-

"Bai Xiaochun!" A loud, arrogant voice thundered from outside the residence. It echoed through the courtyard and carried all the way into the room. "Get out here and kneel before Immortal Murong!"

Alex and Zhuge Liang exchanged a look.

"Who is Murong?" Alex asked calmly.

Zhuge Liang's expression tightened, the faintest crease forming between his brows.

"City Lord," he said carefully, "I believe it is Murong Yue. Your fiancée. From the sound of it, she intends to publicly annul the engagement."

Alex frowned. "Why does she need to make a spectacle of it?"

Zhuge Liang exhaled slowly, choosing his words with deliberate care. "The Murong family is slightly below the Barfamily in status However, your father and her father

were once very close friends That bond created the engagement."

He paused, then continued bluntly.

"But since your father passed and your reputation has... declined... and she has been accepted into the

Wudang Sect as a cultivator it is not

only natural she would want to sever ties. In her eyes, remaining engaged to you-a pathetic asshole would damage her standing."

Alex turned his head slowly. "I am your City Lord."

"Yes, City Lord," Zhuge Liang said immediately, bowing his head. "I apologize for my frankness. It may be painful, but it remains the truth."

Outside, the female voice rang out again, sharp and proud.

"You pathetic Bai Xiaochun! Come kneel before me, Murong Yue!"

Her voice carried across the entire residence. Citizens had already begun gathering outside the gates.

"He wants me to kneel?" Alex asked.

"Yes." Zhuge Liang replied.

Alex considered this. "Does he know I just woke up?"

"I doubt she cares."

Alex let out a faint sigh, rubbing his temple.

"These people really don't check the calendar before choosing the day they make an enemy."

Zhuge Liang coughed lightly, hiding a smile behind his sleeve. "Perhaps she did check the calendar, City Lord. Perhaps she thought today was an excellent day to create one."

Alex shot him a sideways look, then glanced toward the courtyard where Murong Yue's voice still echoed.

"Does she really have to shout like that?" he said, irritation sharpening his tone.

"Does she need the entire city to hear it? Couldn't she just cancel the engagement quietly and spare everyone this ridiculous spectacle?"

"City Lord," Zhuge Liang replied, lowering his voice, "Murong Yue is

now a First-Level Foundation Establishment cultivator. I have also heard that a Fifth-Level Foundation senior disciple-considered a genius within the Wudang Sect-has taken an interest in her. She likely wishes

to make it publicly clear that there is no longer any connection between

you and her."

Outside, Murong Yue's voice rose again, this time filled with open contempt.

"Bai Xiaochun! Come out and kneel, or I will tear this entire house apart!"

The threat was not empty. A Foundation cultivator had more than enough strength to make good on it.

Alex drew a long, steady breath.

Then he walked to the open window.

Zhuge Liang watched him closely.

Alex inhaled once more, then shouted back with full force, his voice echoing over

the walls and into the crowd beyond.

"You shameless Murong Yue!" Alex's voice crashed through the courtyard like thunder splitting stone. It echoed off

the walls, rang across the street, and cut through every whisper in the crowd.

"You strut around here like some celestial queen, but all I see is a spoiled, self-important brat drunk on borrowed status!" Gasps rippled through the gathered citizens.

"Why do you keep crawling back here?" he continued, his tone turning sharper,

colder. "How many times do I have to say it? I don't want to be engaged to you. I

never wanted it. Not once."

His eyes burned with open contempt.

"You shout my name like you're granting me mercy. Mercy? From you? Don't flatter yourself. If there's a man foolish enough to chase after you, then he must be blind, desperate, or completely devoid of taste."

A stunned silence spread across the courtyard.

"You come here pretending you're discarding me? Don't twist the story. I've rejected you a thousand times. You just didn't have the pride to accept it."

His voice grew louder, each word striking like a slap.

"Don't act like you're here to free me. You're here because you can't stand the thought that I don't care. You can't stand that I'm not kneeling. That I'm not begging."

He leaned forward, eyes cold as ice.

"I annul this engagement because you are an embarrassment. Loud. Arrogant.

Desperate for attention. You talk about cultivation and status, but all you've cultivated is vanity."

The crowd stood frozen.

"Get out of my house. Stop pretending you're forcing me into something. I don't want you. I never did. Take your pride, take your noise, and take your delusions with you."

His final words rang clear and merciless.

"And don't ever come back here thinking you're the prize."

Silence fell.

At the front gate, Murong Yue and her companions froze, stunned beyond belief.

She had come here to publicly annul the engagement-to humiliate Bai Xiaochun in

front of the entire city, to put him in his place like a discarded piece of trash.

How had it suddenly turned around?

How had she ended up being the one insulted-branded a shameless woman and

kicked aside by Bai Xiaochun instead?

The gathered citizens gasped. Even the guards stared wide-eyed.

No one had expected Bai Xiaochun to respond like that.

Inside the room, Zhuge Liang's face drained of color.

This... had just escalated beyond control.

"City Lord—she's going to kill you!"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 564[1,706 words]

"Hey, Zhuge Liang." Alex glanced at him lazily. "If that woman kills me, you'll lose your position as Acting City Lord."

He turned back to the bed, dragged the blanket over himself, and lay down as if the world outside no longer existed.

"Handle it yourself," Alex added with a wide yawn. "I'm going to sleep. Tell her to stop screaming at the gate."

"Sir," Zhuge Liang said quickly, his voice tense, "she is an Immortal. We mortals should not provoke Immortals."

Alex opened one eye. "So that means she can provoke mortals instead?" he replied flatly.

"Anyway, speaking of Immortals..... we actually know one, don't we? Li Qingxue. She gave me a communication talisman."

He reached under his pillow, took out a talisman, and tossed it toward Zhuge Liang without even sitting up.

"Use it if you need to," Alex said. Then he turned over and closed his eyes again.

Outside the Bai Family gate.

Murong Yue's face was burning red.

Since joining the Wudang Sect, almost no one had ever dared to look down on her except fellow disciples of Wudang. Everywhere else, she was treated with respect, even awe.

Yet today, she was humiliated.

Bai Xiaochun. The most pathetic mortal in all of Qingshui City.

That trash dared to reject her.

Worse he did it in front of three of her friends, and in front of the senior she admired most.

She had wanted to prove her devotion to that senior. She had even been willing to abandon her fiancé—the City Lord himself—just to show how sincere her feelings

were.

Instead, she was publicly dumped by Bai Xiaochun like worthless garbage.

Shame exploded into rage.

Murong Yue drew her sword, the blade flashing cold light, and stepped toward the gate. Her voice shook with fury.

"I will destroy this place," she declared. "And kill everyone inside."

"We'll help you," several of her friends said immediately, anger flaring on their faces as well.

They raised their weapons and moved forward-

Just as the massive gate suddenly swung open.

Zhuge Liang stepped out, calm and composed, followed by ten armored bodyguards who formed a tight formation behind him.

"I am Zhuge Liang, Vice City Lord of Qingshui," he said, bowing deeply. "It is an honor to meet Immortal Murong Yue."

He straightened and continued evenly, "The City Lord is currently ill and requires time to recuperate. He apologizes for being unable to come out in person."

"Ill?" Murong Yue screamed. "I clearly heard him yelling just now! How is that sick?!"

Zhuge Liang did not argue. Instead, he calmly took out a document and held it forward.

"This is the engagement document signed by your father and the former City Lord," he said calmly. "Please accept it. From this moment on, the engagement is annulled."

"What?!"

Murong Yue froze, shock ripping through her anger as she stared at the document in disbelief.

"Didn't you come here to annul the engagement?" Zhuge Liang said calmly. "This is the document. The engagement has already been canceled."

"But—" Murong Yue felt something deeply wrong, a sharp discomfort twisting in her chest.

"Oh, please," Zhuge Liang cut in smoothly, not raising his voice.

"No 'but.' Once an engagement is canceled, it's canceled. It doesn't matter whether you annul it or the City Lord annuls it. What matters is the result. The goal has been achieved."

He bowed and gently but firmly placed the document into Murong Yue's hand.

"You have accomplished your purpose in coming here," he continued. "If you remain, it will only contradict that purpose. Isn't that correct?"

Murong Yue froze.

Yes. She had come to annul the engagement. That much was true. Yet the way it ended felt unbearably wrong-like she had lost something important without even realizing it.

She turned away instinctively.

Then she saw her senior standing behind her.

In that instant, realization struck.

Her pride.

That was what she had lost.

"My pride," Murong Yue said suddenly, spinning back toward Zhuge Liang, her eyes blazing.

Zhuge Liang bowed again, his posture respectful but unyielding. "You are an Immortal. As such, you should not interfere in mortal affairs. I understand what you want to say that the City Lord should not treat an Immortal this way."

He lifted his gaze slightly, his tone steady and professional.

“But if you treat the City Lord too harshly, your family will suffer. Your father, your mother, everyone in your family still lives in Qingshui City. They are mortals. The City Lord has the authority to make their lives difficult.”

"He wouldn't dare touch my family!" Murong Yue snapped, fury surging again.

Zhuge Liang's expression remained polite. “Miss Murong, I said he has the authority. I did not say he would use it recklessly.”

"You're threatening me."

"I am describing consequences."

"My father is respected in this city!"

“Yes,” Zhuge Liang agreed. “Which is precisely why it would be unfortunate if sudden tax audits began.”

Murong Yue stiffened.

"You wouldn't-"

"City infrastructure inspections," Zhuge Liang continued calmly. "Land reassessments. Merchant licensing reviews. Mortals have so many fragile procedures."

Murong Yue stared at him in disbelief. "You fight like this? With paperwork?"

Zhuge Liang gave a small smile. “Miss Murong... swords are loud.”

He gestured lightly toward the city behind him. "Records are quieter.”

"Miss Murong," Zhuge Liang said evenly, "Immortals do not interfere with mortal lives. If you involve yourself in this matter further, you will be crossing a taboo." He paused, letting the weight of his words sink in.

"I believe the Wudang Sect would view this as a violation of disciple conduct. At best, you would be reprimanded. At worst, you could be expelled from the Wudang Sect."

At once, the faces of all five Immortals present drained of color.

They had received strict orders: Immortals could aid mortals, uphold justice—but never harm mortals or create chaos among them.

Murong Yue's face flushed crimson, humiliation and rage twisting together.

"You dare lecture me about the Wudang Sect?" Murong Yue spat. "You are a mortal!"

"Correct," Zhuge Liang said mildly. "Which is why I have read your sect's discipline handbook very carefully."

Her senior's expression shifted slightly.

"You think you understand our rules?"

"I understand enough," Zhuge Liang replied. "Immortals may uphold justice."

He met her gaze evenly.

"But not create chaos over a rejected proposal."

A ripple of tension passed through her companions.

Murong Yue's jaw tightened. "This is not about a proposal."

"Of course," Zhuge Liang said smoothly. "It is about dignity."

"Yes!"

"And dignity," he continued calmly, "is not improved by slaughtering me and these gate guards."

Murong Yue coughed awkwardly.

"You're twisting things!" she shouted.

"No," Zhuge Liang replied gently. "I am untwisting them."

Murong Yue and her friends fell into stunned silence.

Zhuce Liang bowed deeply once more. "I apologize if I have overstepped."

Then he straightened and calmly took out a talisman.

"This talisman was given to the City Lord by the Pure Snow Sword Maiden Li Qingxue," he said.
"She

made it clear if anyone dares to cause trouble for the City Lord, he is free to inform Immortal Li directly."

All five faces turned deathly pale.

"Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Qingxue? Impossible," Murong Yue said, her voice breaking for the first time.

Li Qingxue was a Core Disciple of the Wudang Sect-legendary for her beauty and her uncompromising sense of justice. Her name alone carried weight.

For people like Murong Yue-mere Outer Disciples-Li Qingxue was untouchable. Someone who existed far above them.

If Li Qingxue ever learned that Murong Yue had been stirring up trouble among mortals...

All five of them could be expelled from the Wudang Sect.

And that wasn't even counting the massive donations their families had poured in just to secure their places in the sect.

"We mortals do not wish to interfere in Immortal affairs," Zhuge Liang said calmly. "You may ask anyone present who placed Bai Xiain the City Lord position. It was Snow Sword Maiden, Li Qingxue.

Ask anyone here."

The five Immortals stiffened, shock flashing across their faces.

Without another word, Zhuge Liang stepped back through the gate. The heavy doors swung shut with a deep, final thud.

Murong Yue stood there, frozen, her mind in chaos.

Then one of her friends spoke, voice tight with disbelief. "No wonder Bai Xiaochun dared to act so arrogant... and dared to reject you. So that's it. He has backing. Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Qingxue."

Her eyes widened. "Damn it. What kind of relationship do they have?"

Another disciple turned sharply toward the nearby crowd. "You come here," he demanded, pointing at a bystander.

"Is it true that Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Qingxue appointed Bai Xiaochun as City Lord?"

The man stepped forward eagerly, eyes gleaming with excitement. "Sir, you've

asked the right person. I know this well."

He lowered his voice, leaning in conspiratorially. "About two weeks ago, I rushed to the City Lord's residence with several others. And

you know what I saw. Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Qingxue, standing right outside the City Lord's private room."

He slapped his chest. "I swear it. They must have a special relationship. Lovers, maybe! That's why Bai Xi was forced to step down, and Bai Xiaochun was restored as City Lord."

"Lovers?" All five of them gasped in unison.

"Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Qingxue," one muttered in disbelief. "The pride of the Wudang Sect. The most beautiful woman in Wudang. One of the eight great beauties of all Xia."

"You're sure?" another asked sharply.

"Of course I'm sure," the man said confidently. "Go ask around. Every tavern and

restaurant is already buzzing with it. Everyone says Pure Snow Sword Maiden is protecting Bai Xiaochun. They are lover!"

He sighed dramatically. "Heaven truly has no eyes. How could trash like Bai Xiaochun have such ridiculous luck? But well, they also maybe already share a room."

None of the five dared to act further.

One by one, they turned and left.

When they returned to the Wudang Sect, they spread the gossip like wildfire—

whispered in halls, murmured in courtyards, repeated over tea and wine.

Until, eventually, it reached the ears of Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Qingxue... and her friends.

"Senior Li ! Urgent news!" one junior disciple rushed into the courtyard.

Li Qingxue did not look up. "If this is about sect rations again, speak to the quartermaster."

"It's not rations. It's romance."

That made three disciples freeze.

"...Explain," someone said flatly.

The junior swallowed. "There are rumors in Qingshui City. They say you personally appointed Bai Xiaochun as City Lord."

Silence.

"And?" one friend asked.

"And... they say you were seen outside his private room."

Another pause.

"And?" Li Qingxue said calmly.

The junior braced himself. "They say you're lovers."

The courtyard went still.

One of her friends blinked slowly. "Lovers."

Another tilted her head. "With Bai Xiaochun."

A third looked genuinely confused. "Which Bai Xiaochun? The one known as 'Most Pathetic Mortal in Qingshui'?"

"The same."

A long silence.

Then one friend sighed. "I see."

The junior swallowed. "You... see?"

"Yes," she said coldly. "He is asking for death."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 565[1,499 words]

Li Qingxue raised her hand. The simple gesture silenced everyone at once.

"Enough," she said calmly. "This is nothing but mortal gossip. Those who seek immortality should not be affected by such petty stories."

"But it will damage your reputation," one of her friends insisted, her brows tightly knit.

Li Qingxue shook her head. "As long as my heart is pure, I don't care what others say."

She turned her gaze toward a junior disciple standing nearby.

"Junior," she said evenly, "go and warn the Outer Disciples. Tell them to stop spreading rumors immediately. I will never tolerate fabricated stories. They are to stop disturbing mortals and focus on their cultivation."

"Yes, Senior," the junior replied without hesitation. He bowed deeply, then turned and left at once.

Those who truly knew Li Qingxue understood her well.

She wanted nothing except cultivation. Cold. Detached. Untouchable.

She had never shown interest in mortal affairs, nor in anyone beneath the heavens.

Yet when the warning reached Murong Yue and the others, it had the opposite effect.

Instead of calming down, they became convinced the rumors were true—that Li Qingxue was personally protecting Bai Xiaochun.

In their minds, it could only mean one thing: the two of them were hiding something they didn't want anyone to see.

The gossip didn't fade.

It exploded.

Back in Qingshui City, Alex was enjoying himself for the first time in a very long while.

He was still confined to bed, recovering, but the best part was the silence.

No one was harassing him. No one was scheming around his bedside.

Zhuge Liang was smart. More importantly, he had the people's support. His only weakness against Bai Xi had always been money.

Bai Xi was ambitious, but he lacked intelligence. What he did have was wealth—and wealthy allies.

Now that Alex had handed Zhuge Liang the funds, the balance had shifted.

Zhuge Liang finally had ammunition.

Enough to fight Bai Xi head-on, on equal ground.

For at least a year, nothing would happen to Alex.

And for now, that was enough.

Alex lay on the bed, the large wooden window thrown wide open. Cool air drifted in as he stared up at the sky.

It had been far too long since he had lived like this.

Free.

With nothing he needed to do.

He realized he wanted this kind of life.

Slow. Empty. Quiet.

Nothing to do.

From a young age, he had already lost his parents. Not long after, he was taken in by his master—and that marked the beginning of the worst years of his life.

Training without pause. Day into night. Night into day. No rest. No mercy.

His master had a single goal: to forge a disciple capable of healing any disease or sickness and powerful enough to fight the old King of Estoria.

By the time Alex turned eighteen, he had already done it.

He fought the old king—and won.

The following two years were even worse in a different way.

He was surrounded by teachers, one after another, drilling him in how to become a "proper" king.

Politics. Economics. Strategy. Public behavior. Even how to perform in front of others—how to speak, how to stand, how to smile.

He learned to wear masks.

Different personas for different rooms.

In front of ministers, he was commanding and sharp. In the palace, he was calm, charismatic, untouchable. Every expression was calculated. Every word measured.

The only time he was ever himself was when he escaped all of it-when he ran away to find Sophia and marry her.

But even then, he already carried a terrifying reputation. The God's Hand. A symbol of overwhelming power.

So the mask never truly came off.

He kept pretending. Kept acting. Kept becoming someone he was expected to be.

It was exhausting.

Now, he had lost everything.

His power. His identity. Even his face-wearing Bai Xiaochun's appearance like a borrowed skin.

And for the first time, he didn't want to be anyone else.

He just wanted to be himself.

He wanted to rot on the bed and do absolutely nothing.

A slow life.

Wake up. Eat. Sleep. Repeat.

Every day felt like heaven.

No one recognized him. No one asked him to cure the sick. No one held him responsible for anyone's life. No one placed a burden on his shoulders. No one wanted to kill him.

For the first time in his life, he was completely free.

"Ah... this life really is heaven," Alex murmured.

A knock sounded at the door.

"Sir," a servant called carefully. "Sir Zhuge Liang wishes to see you."

"Let him in," Alex replied lazily.

Zhuce Liang entered the room-and froze for half a second.

Alex was sprawled across the bed in a disgraceful posture. One leg hung out the open window, his head dangled off the edge of the mattress, and one hand was lazily scratching his stomach.

Not a single trace of the former God's Hand-or the King of Estoria-remained.

"Why are you here?" Alex asked, his voice lazy but sharp. "Wasn't the money supposed to buy you at least a year to deal with Bai Xi?"

Zhuge Liang bowed deeply. "I've already finished dealing with him. Bai Xi will never be a problem again."

Alex's eyes narrowed. "How?"

"Bai Xi is dead," Zhuge Liang said with a faint smile. "And a dead man can't fight me. Can he?"

Alex stared at him. He hadn't expected Zhuge Liang to move this fast. "How did you do it?"

"Money changes everything," Zhuge Liang replied calmly. "Bai Xi had five wives and twenty concubines. The second wife had been neglected for years. No affection. No money. She was aging, desperate to secure something for her later years, but the first wife blocked her at every turn. Bai Xi only rewarded the new women."

Alex understood immediately. "So you paid her to kill him."

Zhuge Liang shook his head slightly. "I never named anyone. I only let a rumor spread. Anyone who killed Bai Xi would receive one hundred kilograms of gold."

Alex exhaled slowly.

That amount of gold—whether in Estoria or Prussia—was worth around twenty million dollars. Enough to buy heaven on earth. Enough to buy betrayal.

Anyone close to Bai Xi would kill for that price.

"So," Zhuge Liang continued evenly, "his wives and concubines began competing with each other. In the end, the second wife won." His smile deepened. She took the antidote, coated her lips with poison, and

kissed him for the last time."

"One hundred kilograms of gold," Alex muttered. "That's an expensive kiss."

Zhuge Liang smiled faintly. "On the contrary. It was quite affordable."

"Affordable?"

"Yes. I did not pay it."

Alex paused.

"... You're telling me you offered twenty million dollars and haven't handed over a

single coin?"

Zhuge Liang's expression remained serene. "The second wife is currently under investigation for murder. She succeeded in killing him, but she failed to escape. so she never received the money."

Alex stared at him.

"You're horrifying."

"I prefer 'budget-conscious.'"

Alex looked at Zhuge Liang in silence.

This man was a monster-not because he was cruel, but because he was terrifyingly intelligent.

Give him a weapon, and there was almost nothing he couldn't destroy. "Don't worry about your position," Alex said at last. "If you want it, you can remain Acting City Lord for the rest of your life. I have no ambition to rule this city."

He shifted slightly on the bed, his tone firm but indifferent. "As long as my family has enough food and enough money to live comfortably, you can keep your seat." "Can I get that agreement in writing?" Zhuge Liang said with a faint smile. "I don't trust words."

"Fine," Alex replied without hesitation. "Draft it yourself. I'll stamp it with my blood seal."

Only a few minutes later, Zhuge Liang walked out of the room, satisfaction written plainly across his face.

Alex understood perfectly. If he had refused to give Zhuge Liang the position, Zhuge Liang might have turned him into the next target.

In any case, the real Bai Xiaochun was already dead. Zhuge Liang had handled the city well, efficiently and ruthlessly. Letting him lead was the correct choice.

For the next few days, Alex did nothing.

VÖXEN Lucifer was undergoing repairs. It would take at least a month before it was fully functional again. Only then could Alex use it to leave Xia Province and head toward Estoria.

Until that day came, Alex had nothing to do except recover.

So he stayed in bed.

For an entire week, he lay there, staring at the blue sky through the open window, letting his body slowly heal.

Then-

A crushing pressure slammed down without warning.

The air itself seemed to collapse.

Alex felt it instantly. All around the house, servants dropped to the floor. Some fainted on the spot. Others lost their grip, plates shattering as they hit the ground.

A thunderous roar followed, shaking the walls.

"Bai Xiaochun!" a voice thundered from above the City Lord's residence. A figure floated in midair—clearly a high-level cultivator.

"If you're a man, come out! I am Wu Bu, the Tiger of Wuhan! I heard you are the Pure Snow Sword Maiden Li Qingxue's lover. I'm here to exchange lessons with you!"

The pressure intensified.

Alex's chest felt like it was being crushed by a mountain. Compared to Normal human of Xia, he was still the weakest someone who had not cultivated since birth.

Blood surged up his throat.

He vomited violently.

Then his vision went black.

Alex collapsed.

The Tiger of Wuhan hadn't even lifted a finger, yet Alex had already fainted in complete humiliation.

"If you don't come out," the Tiger's voice roared again, cold and merciless, "I will destroy this entire place."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 566[1,271 words]

Alex knew at once that he had blacked out.

He had been unable to withstand the invisible pressure released by Wu Bu-the Tiger of Wuhan. Wu Bu had only leaked a trace of his Immortal force, just enough to crush the servants to their knees.

It was meant as a warning. A show of dominance. Not an attempt to harm mortals.

But Wu Bu did not know the truth.

Alex was not from Xia.

His body was far weaker than that of an ordinary Xia citizen. What others could endure with clenched teeth had shattered him.

Bones strained. Organs screamed. Darkness swallowed his vision.

That was why he collapsed.

What shocked him now was what came after.

When Alex opened his eyes, he was no longer in the City Lord's residence.

He was flying.

Cold wind tore past his face as the ground rushed far below. Endless forest stretched beneath him. Beside him—no, holding him—was Li Qingxue.

One of her hands was clenched in Alex's collar, lifting him effortlessly. His body dangled in the air, feet useless, like prey caught by the neck. If his robe tore—if the fabric failed—he would fall and die without even a scream.

They were flying more than a hundred meters above the ground.

They were heading toward the mountains.

Alex's throat tightened.

"Where am I?" he asked, his voice hoarse.

He truly did not understand. One moment he had been unconscious in the City Lord's house. The next, he was suspended in the sky, carried through the heavens by Li Qingxue herself.

She did not answer.

Her expression was cold. Silent. Unreadable.

Ten long minutes passed in suffocating silence.

Then Alex saw it.

Below the mountains stood a massive stone gate, ancient and imposing. Carved into it were two characters that radiated authority and history.

Wudang Sect.

Alex's mind stirred.

He had heard these stories while living in Prussia.

Prussians searched for the meaning of life through technology—through machines, artificial intelligence, and systems built by human hands.

Xia was different.

Xia pursued immortality.

They chased the meaning of life through cultivation, through the refinement of body and soul, through isolation and discipline, and through time measured not in years, but in decades.

Some cultivators locked themselves inside caves for fifty years.

Some for a hundred.

That path was wildly inefficient.

The new generation would need decades—lifetimes—to reach perfection through cultivation alone. It was far easier to put on technology and gain power instantly.

The difference was brutal.

For example, a kung fu master trained for twenty years, hardening his body and sharpening his skills until he was terrifyingly strong. Then someone spent a hundred dollars on a gun and killed him with a bullet that cost one dollar.

That was the greatest weakness of Xia when compared to Prussia.

And Xia knew it.

So they found a way to cover that flaw.

In the distant past, the founders and grandmasters of the great sects had reached what was called the gods Realm. They lived for thousands of years. Space bent under their will.

They could cut open space itself—tear it apart—and create gates. Wormholes that led to distant planets. Worlds where time flowed differently from Earth.

Almost every famous sect in Xia possessed such a gate.

A realm dedicated to cultivation. A place where disciples could chase immortality without being crushed by the limits of time.

Wudang Sect was one of the ten great orthodox sects.

Its space gate led to a planet where time moved a hundred times slower.

One year on Earth meant a hundred years inside that world.

And now, Li Qingxue was carrying Alex straight toward the massive gate of the Wudang Sect.

About twenty guards stood watch before it, their presence sharp and disciplined. The moment they recognized Li Qingxue, they straightened and bowed deeply, not daring to delay her even for a breath.

She passed through without a word.

Alex passed with her.

As they crossed the space gate, Alex felt almost nothing.

No pain. No dizziness.

Just a brief, weightless sensation-like stepping through a shadow and coming out somewhere far, far beyond the world he had known.

The new place looked almost identical to Earth.

Endless forest stretched across the land, broken by towering mountains that pierced the sky. About ten massive peaks dominated the horizon, with the three in the center rising higher than all the rest, like pillars holding up the heavens themselves.

Li Qingxue brought Alex to the first mountain.

At its base stood a tall, imposing building, its structure severe and ancient. At the entrance rested a massive stone slab, polished smooth by time. Three bold characters were carved into it

vel

flamboyant, commanding calligraphy:

Department of Servant Affairs.

The area was crowded. Men and

women moved in disciplined

patterns busy yet orderly The

moment they caught sight of t

Qingxue, every single person

stopped what they were doing. They

rose to their feet at once and

clasped their hands in salute.

"Greetings, Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Qingxue."

Li Qingxue did not respond.

She released her grip and threw Alex to the ground like discarded baggage.

"Send this man to the kitchen," she said coldly.

"Yes, Senior," a fat woman replied, bowing deeply.

But the moment the words the kitchen registered, shock flashed across the woman's face.

Li Qingxue turned her gaze to Alex.

"I saved you from Wu Bu-the Tiger of Wuhan," she said. "He won't be able to harm you here."

Her voice hardened.

"You will stay here forever."

"What?" Alex blurted out.

She ignored him.

Without another word, without even sparing him a second glance, Li Qingxue rose into the air. Her figure streaked across the sky, flying toward one of the distant mountain peaks until she vanished from sight.

Alex stood there alone.

Confused. Disoriented. Still trying to understand what had just happened.

No one paid attention to him.

Heart pounding, Alex reached up and touched the side of his neck, activating the nanobots beneath his skin.

"Gaia," he whispered, keeping his voice low. "Tell me what's happening. How did I get here?"

Even though he had fainted, Gaia was supposed to record everything.

There was a brief pause.

Then Gaia responded.

"Master, you are currently outside the service area. I cannot establish a signal with the Mother AI. All cloud connections where long-term memory is stored have been lost."

Alex's stomach tightened.

"For now, I am unable to connect to cloud storage," Gaia continued calmly. "I will switch system protocols and store all new data locally within the cellular core."

"So you're saying you don't know how I ended up here?" Alex demanded. "How can technology this advanced not have a storage system inside my own body?"

"By default, all long-term memory is uploaded to the Mother AI through cloud systems," Gata replied evenly. "believed our technology could cover all locations on Earth, However, we are no longer on Earth."

"Damn it, you're useless," Alex snapped.

"Master," Gaia said again, her tone subtly shifting.

"What?" Alex shot back.

"You're not wearing your storage ring."

Alex's heart dropped.

He immediately looked down at his hand.

He had forgotten to wear the ring.

The storage ring was from Prussia, not Xia. He had always kept it hidden beneath the bedroom floor. He feared an Immortal might sense it, recognize it, and expose his secret, so he never carried it on his body.

But now he had been dragged here without warning.

No chance to retrieve it.

His escape route from Xia.

The VÖXEN Lucifer.

His wealth.

His leverage.

All of it-gone.

Panic surged through him.

At that moment, the fat woman approached. Without ceremony, she shoved a bag into his hands. Inside was a servant's uniform and a few basic items.

"All servants must wear this," she said flatly.

"I think there's been a mistake," Alex said quickly. "I need to return to Xia."

The fat woman smiled—a slow, knowing smile that carried no warmth.

"Yeah. Everyone says that the first time they arrive," she said. "But servants here only do one thing."

She leaned closer.

"They live here. And they die here."

Her smile widened.

"There's no hope of ever going back to Xia."

Alex fell silent.

"Oh, I almost forgot," the fat woman added with a grin. "You can go back to Xia if you die."

Her eyes glittered with cruel amusement.

"They'll just send your head."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 567[1,742 words]

Alex was too stunned to speak as the fat woman led him away from the building and onto a nearby path, talking the entire time.

Her voice was flat and practiced as she explained the basic rules and customs of the Wudang Sect, as if she had repeated the same words a thousand times before.

The path beneath their feet was paved with smooth green limestone, winding through layers of courtyards and elegant buildings.

Fragrant plants and blooming flowers filled the air, their scent light and intoxicating.

The entire place felt unreal-serene, lofty, almost divine, like a paradise carved out of the mortal world.

Alex felt it immediately.

Once, he had been a cultivator. Even now, his instincts had not dulled.

The natural energy here was astonishingly dense, the kind Xia cultivators called Heaven and Earth Energy. It pressed gently against his skin, seeped into his lungs, and soaked into his bones.

Just breathing here refreshed his cells.

His thoughts sharpened.

On Earth, he had about five years to return to Xia-before the war between Estoria and Prussia began.

In this world, that would be nearly five hundred years. If he could relearn cultivation if he could master the Xia path-then why not stay?

Li Qingxue could already travel freely between this place and Xia. That meant it was possible.

If he became strong enough, he would have a chance to return to Xia.

As long as he didn't die first.

That was the problem.

Here, even a random nobody could kill him with a casual strike. Until he was strong enough, he couldn't afford to draw attention.

He couldn't afford to offend anyone. Survival came first.

Once that resolve settled in his chest, there was no point clinging to the past. This was no longer Earth. This was no longer Estoria or Prussia. This was something entirely different.

Alex lifted his head and looked around.

His heart began to pound-not with fear, but excitement. The lingering anxiety and tension slowly faded, replaced by something hot and electric.

This place is incredible, he thought. Far better than Estoria. Far better than Prussia. Here, he might reclaim the power he had lost.

His eyes gleamed as he followed the fat woman forward. With every step, the scenery grew more breathtaking, more refined, more unreal.

Before long, he spotted what looked like their destination.

At the end of the main path stood a massive five-story wooden building. Towering, ancient, and majestic, it radiated authority and weight. This was the kind of place where real cultivators lived-people with power.

Excitement surged through him.

"Is this where I'll be working?" Alex asked, unable to hold it back.

"Yes," she replied coldly, her face rigid and unreadable.

Then she lifted her hand and pointed—not toward the grand building, but toward a narrow side path.

The path was overgrown with brush, clearly neglected. It looked like hardly anyone ever walked there.

"That's where we're going."

Bai Xiaochun turned to look.

His excitement froze solid.

His entire body stiffened. He rubbed his eyes, convinced he was seeing things, then looked again—closer this time.

Instead of elegance and grandeur, there was a crude gravel path lined with crooked, hastily built huts. The thatched roofs sagged unevenly, as if they might collapse with

a strong gust of wind. The structures looked old, brittle, and barely standing.

A strange, unpleasant smell drifted from the area.

His heart sank.

"Is that the kitchen?"

"No. That big building is the kitchen for cultivators," she replied coolly. "Yours is for producing food for the lesser ones. Still a kitchen, though." Without waiting, she stepped onto the gravel path.

The moment Alex heard her answer, the beauty of the place collapsed in his mind.

The area ahead was packed with massive iron woks—hundreds of them. Inside, herbs boiled endlessly. Steam rose thick and heavy, clinging to the air. Fat men stood around the woks, stirring lazily, their faces slick with sweat.

Sensing someone's presence, the men looked up. When they saw the Big Woman, they straightened. The fattest among them—a walking mountain of flesh—grabbed his ladle and hurried over.

Each step made the ground tremble. His layers of fat bounced violently, jiggling in every direction, so exaggerated that Alex couldn't stop staring.

"Miss Chen!" the fat man called out eagerly. "After you didn't reply to my messages for one year, three months, fourteen days, and five hours, you finally missed me and came to find me! Tell me have you finally realized I'm the only man who truly loves you?"

Miss Chen stared at him with pure disgust, her eyes burning with anger.

"What nonsense are you spewing?" she snapped. "Even if you ignored me for a hundred years, I'd thank the heavens for my good fortune! I'm only here to deliver this kid to the kitchen. Task completed. I'm leaving."

She turned and walked away without another glance.

"Miss Chen, wait!" the fat man chased after her, but after just three steps, she suddenly spun around and kicked him hard. The blow sent his massive body staggering backward.

She didn't even look back as she continued on her way.

"Miss Chen, you are my love! The only light in my life!" the fat man shouted desperately. "I will never give up on you! Just wait-when I become stronger than

you, I'll push you onto my bed!"

"Keep dreaming," Miss Chen shot back, her voice sharp as a blade.

She disappeared down the path.

The fat man turned and lumbered toward Alex.

Alex looked up at the towering young man, at the quivering rolls of flesh that seemed to ripple with every breath, and swallowed hard. This was the first time in his life he had ever seen someone this fat.

"Well, well," the fat man said, smirking. "A newcomer. Too bad we don't really need anyone right now. We're already waiting for another guy."

"Good," Alex said quickly. He bowed deeply. "Then please... can you send me back to Xia?"

"Sure," the fat man said.

From a distance, Miss Chen's voice rang out, sharp and commanding. "Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Qingxue, ordered that man sent to the kitchen. If you dare refuse him, prepare your explanation for her."

The fat man froze.

So did everyone else.

The entire kitchen fell into dead silence. Then, almost in unison, the men forced smiles onto their faces.

"Brother," the fat man said quickly, his tone suddenly friendly, "let's just accept him,

all right? We don't want trouble with Miss Li Qingxue."

It was obvious now. Everyone here feared her.

“Listen,” the fat man continued, lowering his voice. "Our kitchen has ninety-eight workers serving all the immortals here. You'll be number ninety-nine."

He counted on his thick fingers as he spoke. "Out of those ninety-nine, there are fifty outer servants,

fifteen

twenty-five juniorant core

senio servants, and

and Servants. Since you were sent by Pure Snow Sword Maiden Li Qingxue, we'll make you the ninth core servant."

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Alex blinked, stunned. “So... does that mean I'm a core disciple of the Wudang Sect?"

The fat man's expression changed instantly. He lunged forward and clamped a hand over Alex's mouth, eyes darting around in panic to make sure no one else had heard.

"Are you trying to get us killed?" he hissed. "Listen carefully. Everyone in the kitchen is an outer disciple of the Wudang Sect. Everyone. But inside the kitchen, we have our own hierarchy outer junior, senior, core. Still outer disciples. Don't get that twisted."

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Understanding dawned on Alex.

and

This was just another hierarchy layered on top of the lowest rank-a kingdom of peasants pretending to have nobles. Still, putting him at the top meant no one here would dare openly challenge him.

Because Li Qingxue's name stood behind him.

Alex nodded calmly. "Thank you for your consideration."

The fat man grinned, relief flooding his face. "If you can say a few good words about us to Pure Snow Sword Maiden Li Qingxue

well, we'd be grateful. She's a true core disciple of the Wudang Sect. Someone like her isn't to be offended."

So they really thought he was backed by Li Qingxue.

That wasn't bad at all.

The fat man reached out and grabbed Alex's arm, probing carefully, trying to sense his cultivation. His smile slowly faded.

"You don't have any cultivation," he said bluntly. "So your first task is simple. Start cultivating. Once you manage to gather even a little energy, then you can help us with the cooking."

The fat man handed Alex a thin bamboo scroll. "This is the Fire Control Art," he said.

"It lets you control fire in the air. We need it here, so cultivate properly. From now on, you're called Ninth. I'm Number Eight."

Before Alex could respond, Number Eight waved a hand and called over a servant. "This is Number Ninth. Take him to his place."

The kitchen servant bowed deeply and led Alex away, guiding him to a quiet corner of the grounds. There stood a small wooden house, plain and weathered.

"Sir Ninth, this will be your residence," the servant said. Then, without waiting for a reply, he hurried off as if afraid to linger.

Alex stepped inside.

The room was simple to the point of austerity. A narrow bed. A rough wooden table. Outside, a well stood beside a few fruit trees and sparse plants.

It looked like a typical house from a rundown village—functional, forgotten, and barely holding together.

He sat down and opened the Fire Control Art.

The scroll detailed only the first three levels of cultivation. There was nothing beyond that—no guidance, no hints, no promises.

The entire method revolved around disciplined breathing, drawing fire-aligned energy from the air, and refining it within the body.

Pure cultivation. Nothing fancy. Nothing forgiving.

Alex cleared his mind.

This was his first time cultivating the Xia way.

He adjusted his posture, following the illustration in the first image of the bamboo scroll. His breathing slowed.

Deep. Controlled. Measured. After three steady breaths, he began drawing in the fire energy around him.

The world faded.

He sank into meditation.

Then—

A furious shout shattered the silence.

"I'm Wang Junhao! Whoever stole my position as the ninth core disciple of the kitchen-get the hell out here right now!"

Alex startled and instinctively leaned toward the window.

The moment his head appeared, it caught the attention of a sallow-faced young man standing outside. The man's eyes locked onto him, burning with rage.

"So you're the bastard who stole my spot!" Wang Junhao roared. "The position I waited a hundred years for! I worked my way from junior to senior, dreaming that one day I'd become core-and you dare take it from me!" Behind him stood nearly twenty people, all dressed in kitchen servant robes. They

crowded the narrow path, faces twisted with curiosity, envy, and open hostility. "Brother Wang, let's just kill him," one of them said coldly.

"Senior Wang, how dare he come here and steal your spot?" another snarled.

"Kill him," a third added viciously. "Grind him into the dirt and use him as fertilizer."

Alex took them in quietly.

It seemed becoming Ninth had already made him enemies.

And not just one.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 568[1,443 words]

Alex had already done the math in his head. If they rushed him together-him, a nobody with no backing, no allies-he would die.

Not maybe. Not possibly. One hundred percent.

"You're the Ninth, right?" Wang Junhao shouted, pointing straight at him.

Alex immediately forced an innocent look onto his face. "No. You've got the wrong person. You're knocking on the wrong door."

"Liar!" Wang Junhao roared. His hands clenched into fists as he stared at Alex like he wanted to tear him apart. "You're not fat. You're obviously a newbie!"

"Senior Wang Junhao," one of the men behind him said impatiently. "Enough talking. Let's just kill him now!"

"Yes!" another agreed at once.

They started advancing. One of them kicked the door without hesitation. The wooden door exploded inward with a single blow, splintering apart.

Alex could see it clearly now. Every face was twisted with rage. These people weren't bluffing. They looked ready to kill him on the spot.

"Pure Snow Sword Maiden Li Qingxue brought me here!" Alex shouted at the top of his lungs. He made sure everyone heard every word. "If you have a problem, go complain to her! If anything happens to me—Li Qingxue will come looking for all of you!"

The entire group froze.

"Pure Snow Sword Maiden... Li Qingxue?" Wang Junhao said, stunned. "You're lying, right?"

"Why would I lie?" Alex shot back. "Ask the fat woman who brought me to the kitchen. Ask her who brought me here!"

The group exchanged uneasy looks.

The man who had just kicked the door suddenly bent down, picked up the broken wooden slab, and awkwardly leaned it back into place.

He coughed. "Senior... I just remembered I still have work to do."

"Yeah. Me too," another said quickly.

One by one, they scattered, vanishing as if they had never been there.

Soon, only Wang Junhao remained, standing alone in front of Alex.

"I won't accept this," Wang Junhao said coldly. "Next week, I'm supposed to ascend from Senior Servant to Core Servant of the kitchen. When that day comes, I'll challenge you to a death duel. Winner takes the Ninth rank. Loser dies."

"I think I'll pass," Alex replied flatly.

"You-!" Wang Junhao exploded with fury. "Then I'll kill you right here!"

Alex's face went pale.

Before Wang Junhao could strike, a large, slightly fat hand clamped down on his fist.

"I heard from the juniors that you're making things difficult for the Ninth," a calm but dangerous voice said. "Are you looking to die here?"

"Brother Eight!" Wang Junhao exclaimed. "I worked my way up step by step to become a Core Servant! I won't let someone use connections to steal my place!"

"Then tell me," Number Eight said coldly as he seized Wang Junhao's arms and twisted them hard, "do you still think we made a mistake choosing our Ninth?"

Wang Junhao felt as if his arms had been clamped in molten iron. Pain shot through him, sharp and merciless. "I-I'm sorry, Senior!" he cried. "Please forgive me!"

Number Eight released him with a shove. "I'll let this go for now, for the sake of your years serving in the kitchen. But if you try anything stupid again," his eyes narrowed, "don't force me to break your arms."

Wang Junhao bowed deeply, his face drained of color, then turned and ran as fast as he could, not daring to look back.

Number Eight turned to Alex. "Ninth Fatty," he said, "you've been cultivating for a few days now. It's time you started helping out in the kitchen."

"A few days?" Alex frowned inwardly. He tried to recall the passage of time. He remembered sitting down to cultivate fire energy—and then everything had blurred together. Days and nights must have passed without him noticing.

"It looks like it really has been a few days," he murmured.

"That Wang Junhao isn't a good person," Number Eight said flatly. "You'd better stay in the kitchen and not give him any chance to get close to you."

"Thank you for your help," Alex said sincerely, bowing. "But... why was he so desperate to become the Ninth? If it means that much to him, can't you just give him my position?"

Number Eight's lips slowly curled into a wide, knowing smile. His eyes gleamed with something unreadable.

"That," he said calmly, "is exactly why I called you over."

When Alex followed Number Eight into the kitchen, chaos erupted the moment they crossed the threshold.

"Close the gate! Close the doors! Hurry!" someone shouted. "Number Eight and Number Ninth are here!"

"Third Fatty, check for spies!" another barked. "Now!"

Alex blinked in surprise. Everyone suddenly moved with frantic urgency.

Moments later, the main gate and the kitchen doors were sealed tight. The room plunged into darkness, leaving only a single candle burning at the center. Its flickering light cast long warped shadows across the walls, and beneath that din glow, the fat men looked

secretive-almost ominous.

Eight large-bodied fatties gathered together and opened a hidden door leading to the food storage.

"What are you standing around for, Number Ninth?" Number Eight called. "Get over here."

Alex blinked again, then slowly walked over, wearing the most harmless expression he could manage—like someone who wouldn't hurt even an ant.

The moment he reached them, one of the fatties grabbed his arm and pulled him into the circle. Instantly, a strange aroma hit his nose. Warmth surged through his body, spreading from his chest to his limbs.

Alex glanced around. The others all wore intoxicated, euphoric expressions. His own spirit lifted as well, energy stirring inside him for no clear reason. Then he noticed it.

One of the fatties was holding a wooden box—inside it lay rare herbs, their scent rich, deep, and unmistakably powerful.

Alex recognized almost every medicine and herb at a glance. From what he could see, there was no mistake—every single item in that box was genuinely rare.

"This new batch came through our kitchen," the first Fatty said with a crooked grin. "It's supposed to be refined into food pills for about 3000 cultivators."

He paused deliberately, letting the meaning settle in. Around him, the others traded slow, knowing smiles.

He reached into the wooden box and pulled out a piece of five-thousand-year ginseng.

Without hesitation, he took a hard bite, then passed it to the second Fatty. The second bit off a chunk and passed it on.

It moved down the line from one to the next, until it reached Number Eight. By the time Number Eight took his bite, more than half of the ginseng was already gone. He thrust what remained toward Alex. "Your turn, Ninth. Bite it."

"Uh..." Alex hesitated, staring at the five-thousand-year ginseng in his hand.

He glanced around at the eight fat elder brothers surrounding him. Their smiles faded. Impatience flashed in their eyes.

The first Fatty's expression darkened, and the others followed suit. From the looks on their faces, Alex understood clearly—if he didn't eat it, all eight of them would become his enemies for life.

Alex swallowed hard.

Even in his wildest dreams, he had never imagined a situation where people would explode with anger if someone refused to take a bite of a priceless medicinal herb. And yet, that exact nightmare was unfolding, right in front of him.

His heart pounded. He clenched his teeth, accepted the ginseng, and finally opened his mouth. He took a large bite.

The ginseng dissolved instantly. A powerful warmth surged through his body, far stronger than the sensation he had felt earlier when he had only smelled the herbs.

The energy spread through him like fire through dry grass. His face flushed bright red almost at once.

"Excellent," the first Fatty said, clearly satisfied. "The Elder ordered this five-thousand-year ginseng to be used in food pills for the cultivators. But he never said how much we had to put in."

He laughed softly. "Now we've all taken a bite. From this moment on, we sink or swim together."

Looking thoroughly content, he opened the wooden box again, took out another rare herb, bit into it, and tossed it to the next Fatty. One by one, they all began chewing, casual and unashamed.

Now that everyone was eating together, they turned to Alex with friendly, conspiratorial smiles—as if he truly belonged among them.

The rare herbs granted by the Elder had already been bitten by all eight fatties—and now by him as well. Nearly half of the stock still remained, set aside to be refined into food pills.

Only then did he fully realize the truth.

Every single one of these men was a partner in crime.

"Brother," Alex said cautiously, watching them chew through yet another priceless herb. "Won't the Elder notice if half the ingredients are gone?"

The Second Fatty snorted. "Gone? Who said anything about gone?"

"Exactly," the Third added with a

careless laugh. "It's all part of the refining process. The pills will still be ready for three thousand cultivators. Don't worry about it—this tradition has been

from

passed down on generation to generation

thousands of years."

Alex let out a quiet chuckle.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 569[2,111 words]

They kept eating.

Hundred-year ginsengs. Rare spirit mushrooms. Spirit fruits and leaves that glowed faintly under the lantern light. Trays of precious herbs that would have driven ordinary disciples mad with envy.

Alex ate everything they pushed toward him. So did the other fatties.

He swallowed until his vision blurred. The rich spiritual energy surged through his

veins like fire. His head spun. His face flushed red. Heat rolled off his skin, and soon white steam curled from the top of his head as if he were a boiling kettle.

He felt drunk.

No-worse than drunk.

The more he forced himself to eat, the warmer Big Fatty and the others became. Their eyes softened. Their grins widened. They watched him like proud older brothers initiating a new recruit into a secret order.

By the end, they leaned back, slapped their massive stomachs, and burst into booming laughter. The kitchen shook with it.

"Everyone," Big Fatty First announced, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "We follow tradition. The last one to finish cooks. The rest go cultivate while the energy is still fresh in our bodies. Number Eight, it's your job to tell Number Nine what to do."

"Yes, Brother!" Number Eight beamed, his face shining with satisfaction. At last, someone ranked below him. Someone he could order around without being scolded.

One by one, Fatty Number One through Fatty Number Seven filed out of the kitchen. Their heavy footsteps faded down the corridor as they hurried off to cultivate, eager to absorb the surge of spiritual energy in their bodies.

The kitchen grew quiet.

Number Eight waited until the last of them disappeared from sight.

Then he slowly turned toward Alex.

"Number Nine," he said proudly, "other servant departments would kill to send one of their own into the Outer Disciple Sect. But us? We'd kill to make sure we stay right here in this kitchen. Who wants to go there anyway? What's so great about being an Outer Disciple, huh?"

His chest puffed out with pride.

"Ninth Brother, I'll tell you the truth. Our cultivation levels? Strong enough long ago to enter the Outer Sect. Some of us could even step into the Inner Sect if we wanted." He lowered his voice slightly. "But we prefer to hide our real strength."

He picked up a five-hundred-year-old ginseng root and waved it casually.

"Look at this," Number Eight said, holding up the ginseng root like a trophy. "Outer Sect disciples would kill for one bite of this treasure. Just one bite. And here we are, chewing it like it's a common r****h."

He snapped off a thin rootlet with his fingers and tossed it into his mouth. He chewed slowly, deliberately, making sure Alex watched every second. Then he swallowed and thrust the thick root toward him.

"Do we look scared?" His eyes narrowed. "Now go on. Eat it."

Alex's stomach churned. The heat from the herbs was still burning through his veins. His head felt heavy, his body swollen with energy.

"Elder Brother..... I'm full," he said hoarsely, his voice strained. "I really can't eat another bite-"

"Ninth." Number Eight's tone turned firm. "You're too skinny. So skinny the girls in the sect won't even look at you. In our Wudang Sect, they like men like us— stalwart, solid, plump!" He let out a thunderous burp and grinned.

He leaned closer. "You want to know why Wang Junhao wanted to be the core here?" His eyes gleamed. "Because we control the rare herbs. Every disciple is ready to kill for this position."

He tapped the ginseng meaningfully against Alex's chest.

"But not everyone can hold it."

The fatties grinned.

And Alex, sweating, dizzy, and burning from the inside out, realized this kitchen wasn't a joke.

It was power.

"Ninth."

Number Eight handed him a thin, worn book. "Read this. It explains how to refine a Food Pill for cultivators. You can handle it, right?"

Alex took the manual and flipped it open.

The instructions were clear. A Food Pill was designed for cultivators who entered long periods of meditation. Instead of eating daily meals, they could swallow one pill. It contained concentrated spiritual nutrients—refined essence from herbs and spirit plants-enough to sustain the body while the mind focused on cultivation.

For ordinary cooks, this would be complex work.

For Alex, who carried the title God Hand, it was nothing more than a simple trick.

"No problem, Brother Eight," he said calmly. "Before I came here, I worked with high-grade cooking ingredients. Something like this isn't difficult."

Number Eight's face broke into a wide, satisfied grin.

"Good. Then I'll leave it to you. I need to cultivate too."

Without another word, he hurried off toward his room, robes fluttering behind him, leaving Alex alone in the kitchen.

Alex understood exactly why they rushed away. They had just devoured a mountain of rare herbs and century-old ginseng. If they didn't circulate and absorb that energy immediately, it would dissipate into the air and go to waste.

He set the book aside and sat cross-legged on the kitchen floor.

Back in Prussia, he had already studied multiple cultivation arts. With the assistance

of Mother Al helping him analyze and compare ancient techniques, he had

examined countless systems. He had tested their strengths, mapped their weaknesses, and refined their principles.

Among all of them, one stood above the rest.

The Royal Cultivation Arts.

It was the technique he had acquired at auction.

Rare. Restricted. Forbidden to most.

Even if someone managed to obtain the manual, it didn't mean they could practice

it. The method rejected unqualified bodies. It demanded a specific lineage, a specific constitution.

Only royal blood could truly wield it.

That was why the bidding had been ruthless. That was why the price had climbed

into madness. Most buyers believed it was nothing more than a collector's relic-an ancient text no one could activate.

But when Alex practiced it, there was no resistance.

No backlash.

No rejection.

The technique moved through him as naturally as breath, as if his veins had been designed for it.

He inhaled slowly and focused.

The surrounding spiritual energy responded immediately. Not elemental energy tied

to fire or water or metal-but pure, neutral force.

Raw origin energy that could later be shaped into any element he desired.

It flowed toward him without resistance.

The kitchen air trembled faintly. The lingering essence from the rare herbs he had eaten ginseng, spirit fruits, medicinal roots-was drawn out and pulled toward his cells like iron to a magnet.

Origin energy.

Pure. Clean. Untainted.

Alex only needed half an hour.

In that short time, he absorbed every trace of refined spiritual essence that still lingered in his body. Not a single strand was wasted. He pulled it into his cells.

In the past, Alex had been taught to gather all energy into a single core- compressing it tightly at the center of his being.

The Royal Family Cultivation Art was different.

It did not confine energy to one center. It flooded the entire body. Every cell absorbed it. Every vein carried it. Every strand of muscle transformed into a vessel

of pure origin force. The whole body became the core.

And for Alex, the method felt effortless.

Natural.

As if his body had been waiting for it.

When he opened his eyes, his breathing was steady and deep. His limbs felt light.

His mind was clear. The heaviness from overeating was gone. In its place was a sharp, vibrant strength humming beneath his skin.

He stood and turned his attention back to the herbs laid out across the kitchen tables.

Carefully, he reread the manual on how to refine the Food Pill. Every step. Every measurement. Every temperature instruction.

The nano bots at his neck-Gaia-activated quietly. Faint data streams flickered across his vision. Calculations began instantly.

"There are ten optimized processing sequences for these food pills," Gaia's calm voice said inside his mind. "Each method surpasses the book's instructions. We can produce Food Pills with approximately two thousand percent greater efficiency and potency."

Alex wasn't surprised.

He already understood the flaw in the manual. Some herbs neutralized each other if combined improperly.

Others lost most of their essence if heated at the wrong stage. A few required cooling cycles before integration. The book's method was crude—wasteful.

With his own knowledge, combined with Gaia's analysis and the cultivation texts he

had studied in Prussia and Xia, a new formula took shape.

A superior formula.

If followed precisely, each pill would be worth at least twenty times more than the standard version described in the manual.

Alex didn't hesitate.

He divided the ingredients into

precise portions. He adjusted the flame carefully, controlling temperature by instinct and calculation. Some herbs he roasted

slowly. Others he processed with

steam.

A few he chilled before grinding them into fine powder.

Nothing was rushed. Nothing was wasted.

He worked without pause.

Day turned into night.

Night returned to day.

Three days and three nights passed inside that kitchen.

Only when the final batch was sealed did Alex allow himself to sit back. Exhaustion

finally crept in. He leaned against the corner wall and closed his eyes, falling asleep where he sat.

He had no intention of returning to his room.

Not yet.

Wang Junhao was still out there. And Alex had no desire to give that man an easy target.

On the third morning, Big Fatty First slowly opened his eyes after completing his cultivation.

He stretched, rolled his shoulders, and headed toward the kitchen.

The moment he stepped inside, he noticed Alex sleeping in the corner.

He frowned slightly.

Then his gaze shifted to the shelves.

He walked over to inspect the finished Food Pills.

His expression froze.

Based on the maximum yield of the ingredients, they should have produced three thousand pills at most.

Three thousand-that was the limit.

But stacked neatly before him were not three thousand.

There were nearly four thousand.

Big Fatty First stared at them, stunned.

His face darkened as he stared at the mountain of pills.

Too many.

If the output exceeded the ingredient

limit, the quality would drop. The spiritual energy would thin out. The Outer sect disciples would notice immediately. And when they' complained, the blame would land

ve

on the kitchen.

His jaw tightened.

"That damned Eight Fatty," he growled. "How could he let the Ninth work alone? If the quality is ruined, I'll skin him alive."

He snatched one of the Food Pills from the tray and swallowed it without hesitation.

The moment it dissolved on his tongue, his body stiffened.

He froze.

For several seconds, he said nothing.

Then he grabbed a second pill and swallowed it.

His eyes widened further.

Still silent.

He reached out at random, pulling pills from different batches across the shelves.

One after another, he tested them.

Every single time, the result was the same.

No fluctuation. No weakening. No dilution.

The quality remained identical across the entire batch-four thousand pills, each one as potent as the next. The spiritual energy inside them was dense, stable, perfectly balanced. Not a single pill fell below standard.

Big Fatty First's throat went dry.

This wasn't luck. It wasn't an accident.

This was the work of a master.

Shock.

By then, Fatty Number Two and Fatty Number Three had entered the kitchen, rubbing their eyes from cultivation.

Number Two stared at the shelves. "Four thousand? That's impossible. If the quantity increased, the quality must've dropped."

"This is trouble," Number Three added grimly.

"Shut up," Big Fatty First snapped.

He grabbed two pills and shoved one into each of their hands. "Eat before you open your mouths."

They exchanged a look, then swallowed.

The change was instant.

Both men went rigid.

Their eyes snapped wide open.

A heavy, concentrated wave of spiritual energy surged through their meridians, clean and explosive. It was dense. Pure. Far stronger than anything the kitchen had ever produced.

One by one, the other fatties rushed in, drawn by the commotion. Each took a pill.

Each reacted the same way-shock, disbelief, stunned silence.

Finally, Number Eight stumbled in.

He took one look at the shelves and nearly choked. "No way! How could Ninth produce four thousand? This is going to be a disaster!"

Number Eight glanced at Big Fatty First, then immediately bowed deeply, his back nearly parallel to the floor.

"Senior Brother..." His voice trembled despite his attempt to stay steady.

"Ninth said he knew how to refine Food Pills. He did similar work in Xia.

I believed him, to

Followed him

take full responsibility."

He swallowed hard, not daring to lift his head. "It was my responsibility. If there's punishment, I accept it."

Big Fatty First didn't answer.

Instead, he grabbed a pill and shoved it into Number Eight's hand.

"Chew."

Number Eight obeyed.

The second the pill dissolved, his entire expression changed. His body trembled slightly as the energy burst through him.

"This... this energy..." Number Eight's voice trembled as he stared at the pill in his palm. "It's at least ten times stronger than the usual Food Pills."

Big Fatty First stepped forward, his expression grave and controlled.

"It's twenty," he said flatly.

There was no exaggeration in his tone. No excitement. Just certainty.

"Twenty times denser. Twenty times purer. The circulation is cleaner. The absorption rate is higher. There's almost no waste."

He stared at the shelves in disbelief. "How did he do this with the same ingredients?"

It should have been impossible."

Silence fell over the kitchen.

All eight fatties slowly turned their heads.

In the corner, Alex was still asleep, leaning against the wall, his breathing steady and calm.

They looked at him differently now.

Not as a skinny junior.

Not as a new recruit.

They were staring at something else entirely.

A monster in the kitchen.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 570[1,744 words]

When Alex opened his eyes, the ceiling swam above him.

For a moment he didn't remember where he was. Then the faces came into focus- eight round, stunned faces staring down at him as if he had just crawled out of a

grave.

All eight Fattys crowded around the chair he had awkwardly converted into a makeshift bed.

Their bulky frames blocked out the light, their shadows falling over him. Eyes wide, mouths slightly open, they stared down at him as if he had just performed a miracle -or survived one.

Awe. Pure awe.

"Little Brother Ninth," the First Fatty said carefully, like he was handling something fragile. "Tell me the truth. Did you really cook those food pills?"

Alex swallowed. His throat felt dry. "Yes."

A ripple passed through the room.

The First Fatty leaned closer. "Did you change the recipe?"

"Yes."

Alex pushed himself upright. His body still felt weak, but his mind was clear. He glanced around the chairs until he spotted a stack of paper notes on a nearby table. He reached for it.

"This," he said, holding it out, "is the new recipe."

The room went silent.

Eight pairs of eyes dropped to the papers. Then they snapped back to him as if he had just placed a priceless treasure in their hands.

For the Xia people, recipes and cultivation arts were lifelines. They were status. They were power. A chef without secrets was a chef without worth. No one shared such things-not unless blood bound them or death forced them.

And yet Alex had handed it over like it was nothing.

The First Fatty stiffened. He quickly pushed the paper back toward Alex, almost offended.

"No," he said firmly. "That recipe must be something special. You shouldn't share something that important with us."

Alex went quiet.

In Estoria and Prussia, new discoveries were celebrated publicly. Innovation was meant to be shared, improved, debated. Knowledge was a bridge, not a weapon.

But here... here it was different.

He studied their faces—suspicious, touched, confused.

Then a slow smirk curved his lips.

"Brother First," he said calmly, "this recipe was taught to me by my master. My only family."

His voice softened.

"But my master is gone. My only family died long ago."

The room felt smaller suddenly.

"Now I'm here," Alex continued. "And you eight are the only family I have."

He held the paper out again.

"So of course I'll share it."

The First Fatty's lips trembled.

The others looked at Alex as if he had just done something reckless and noble at the same time.

"You... you..." one of the Fattys stammered before suddenly lunging forward and wrapping Alex in a crushing embrace. "From now on, you're my little brother!"

"Yes!" another shouted, charging in.

The rest followed.

Eight heavy bodies collided with Alex at once.

The bones creaked violently. The air vanished from his lungs.

"Please—" Alex gasped, his voice strangled between layers of flesh and fabric.

"Please... don't kill me..."

Spots exploded in his vision.

Then everything went black.

When Alex woke again, he heard animated voices.

He blinked and turned his head.

The eight Fattys were gathered around the table, hunched over the paper like scholars around a forbidden scripture.

"I never realized," one muttered, tapping the sheet, "if we mix this herb with this one, the efficiency doubles and the energy output increases."

"Look here," another said, eyes shining. "If we cook this herb at high temperature, it actually becomes less potent. We've been ruining it for years."

A third Fatty slapped his forehead. "This herb doesn't need to be cooked at all. Just grind it and mix it raw with this one. Maximum energy preserve!"

They spoke over one another, excitement rising.

Each of them was discovering something new.

For men who had spent decades in the kitchen—decades repeating the same methods, the same traditions—finding a breakthrough was like discovering fire for the first time.

Their eyes gleamed.

Their minds burned.

"Ninth Brother—you're awake!"

The Eighth Fatty was the first to notice. He hurried to Alex's side, nearly knocking over a chair.

The others immediately followed, crowding around him again.

"Wait wait!" Alex threw both hands up, genuine panic flashing across his face. "Don't hug me. I'm going to die."

The Fattys froze mid-charge.

"Sorry, sorry!" one of them said, scratching his head awkwardly. "We forgot you're still weak. Hah... we got too excited."

The First Fatty cleared his throat and stepped forward, his tone turning serious.

"Brother Ninth, the Elder gave us herbs for three thousand food pills. You made four thousand." He paused, eyes steady. "I'll report three thousand. The extra one thousand food pills—you keep them. Sell them. That money is yours."

It was a generous offer.

Alex shook his head immediately.

Money was useless if he ended up dead.

Right now, he needed protection. In this sect, any servant could kill him. Someone

like Wang Junhao wouldn't hesitate.

"Brother," Alex said, forcing his warmest smile, "what I have belongs to this family. Let's share the extra thousand pills among us."

The Second Fatty slammed his plump palm against the table so hard the bowls rattled.

"I told you! Our Ninth Brother is different!"

"Thank you, Ninth Brother," the Seventh Fatty said earnestly. "If you ever need anything anything at all-you tell me."

Voices rose around him.

Praise. Laughter. Genuine affection.

"Brother Ninth," the First Fatty said with authority, "you worked three days and three nights without stopping. I'm giving you one full week off. Rest properly."

"Brother," Alex cut in quickly, almost urgently. "Please. I want to work."

The Fattys blinked at him.

"Don't make me rest," Alex insisted. "How can your little brother sleep while his big brothers are working?"

What he didn't say was this: his room was not safe. Alone, he was vulnerable. In the kitchen, surrounded by eight heavy, loyal shields, no one would dare touch him.

"Little Brother Nine..." the First Fatty began.

"No," Alex said firmly. "There's no compromise. I still have many recipes to write. We can make more spare pills. Sell them. Strengthen ourselves."

He would do everything he could to stay in this kitchen.

The words hit them harder than any compliment.

Eight pairs of eyes turned red and glossy.

"You were born for this kitchen!" someone choked out.

And before Alex could brace himself—

They rushed him again.

Eight massive bodies slammed into him in a wave of emotion.

The table shook. The shelves rattled.

"Careful—careful—" Alex wheezed as their combined weight crushed the air from his lungs. His ribs screamed in protest. "I need those bones!"

But it was already too late.

The world tilted. Sound faded into a dull hum. Darkness rushed in like a closing curtain—

And Alex blacked out again.

Time moved forward.

Alex didn't slow down.

He refined more recipes, adjusting proportions, experimenting with heat levels, teaching them how to preserve herbs longer without losing potency.

He showed them how to use scraps and leftovers to create low-rank food pills that could still be sold in the market instead of wasted.

Nothing was thrown away anymore.

Every herb had value.

Every mistake became a lesson.

The Fattys watched him like men witnessing a quiet revolution.

For decades they had cooked by habit. Now they cooked with precision.

Profit increased. Efficiency improved.

And with every shared discovery, their affection for Alex deepened.

They began to guard him without being asked.

They saved him the best portions of herbs.

They stood between him and outsiders during deliveries.

They treated him like a true younger brother.

Meanwhile, Alex continued cultivating in silence.

He consumed herbs when he could, refining energy carefully, building strength piece by piece. He hid his progress well, but his foundation was stabilizing.

Days blurred into weeks.

Weeks slipped into months.

Before he realized it, three months had passed since he first stepped into this kitchen.

Three months of heat, sweat, laughter, bruised ribs, and growing bonds.

And for the first time since arriving here—

Alex no longer felt alone.

It didn't take Alex long to understand the truth.

This wasn't some prestigious spiritual kitchen.

They were the lowest tier-kitchen servants mass-producing basic food pills for

outer disciples and common servants. Their work fed the crowd. It did not impress the elite.

The inner disciples, core disciples, even the Elders-they ate elsewhere.

In a more refined kitchen. A higher one. Where the ingredients were rarer the flavors deeper and the Spiritual energy richer.

Here, they cooked in bulk.

One day, the Fatty brothers were confused by something else entirely.

"Brother Ninth," Number Eight said one afternoon, staring at Alex suspiciously. "You've been with us for three months You eat with s You eat more herbs than anyone. Why aren't you getting fat?"

The others turned, squinting at him like investigators.

"If you're a real man," Number Eight continued proudly, patting his own round stomach, "you should look like us. This is the new model. Women like this now."

Alex blinked.

Apparently, their definition of masculinity came with extra layers.

He scratched the back of his head. "Brother... I don't eat the herbs directly."

Eight eyebrows lifted.

"I refine them into cultivation pills first," Alex explained calmly. "Then I absorb the energy slowly whenever I have time."

Silence.

The Fattys looked at one another.

They had always eaten the herbs the moment they received them. The

supply came with strict limits and tighter deadlines. Once the weekly portion was delivered to their

kitchen it had to be cove

ground into food pills immediately-before the next inspection arrived.

That was the rule.

That was how they had been taught.

No delays. No stockpiling. No experimentation.

Just process it fast, report the numbers, and survive another week.

They knew direct consumption was inefficient-like trying to pour a river into a cup.

The body could only hold so much at once. The rest spilled away as waste.

But that was all they knew.

Now Alex had shown them something different.

Refine the river into pills.

Store it.

Absorb it gradually.

No overflow. No waste.

"Can we see your pill?" the Second Fatty asked carefully.

Alex reached into his sleeve and placed several pills into the man's palm.

Eight heads leaned in.

Eight pairs of eyes widened.

"How..." one of them whispered. "How is this pill more potent than the herb we eat raw?"

Alex shrugged lightly. "That's the art of pill-making. If done correctly, it can produce ten to twenty times the usable energy compared to direct consumption."

The words struck them like thunder.

Ten to twenty times.

The First Fatty slowly looked around at his brothers. No one spoke. But one by one, they nodded.

They had already decided.

“Brother Ninth,” the First Fatty said solemnly, “starting today, you will help us refine all our herb portions into pills. Will you help us?”

Alex smiled.

“Making mine and making yours is the same work,” he said simply. “It's no trouble at all.”

The room exploded.

"Brother Ninth!" they shouted in unison.

And then-

They charged him again.

Eight enormous men crashing forward in emotional gratitude.

"Please!" Alex screamed as they wrapped him up. "Don't kill me!"

His ribs protested. His spine questioned his life choices.

Outside, beyond the warm smoke and clattering pots—

Wang Junhao stood in the shadows.

For three months, he had been waiting.

Three months of watching the kitchen doors.

Three months of swallowing rage.

His eyes were cold as stone.

"The moment you step out of that kitchen," he muttered under his breath, voice low and venomous, "I swear I'll kill you."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 571[2,156 words]

Alex was enjoying his life in the kitchen.

At some point, he stopped worrying about what his future might look like. He stopped thinking about trials, rankings, or status. Most of his days were spent eating and cultivating alongside his Elder Brothers.

They refined Food Pills, cultivation pills, laughed, and stuffed themselves until they could barely stand. It was simple. It was steady.

Life was good.

As the months passed, bits of gossip drifted into the kitchen like smoke from the outer courtyards. News about the Wudang Sect traveled fast, even to the servants' quarters.

He learned the structure piece by piece.

The disciples were divided into three ranks: Core Sect, Inner Sect, and Outer Sect. Servants like him lived in the lowest area, working, cooking, cleaning. But there was a rule—one narrow path upward.

Any servant who cultivated to the fifth level of Chi Condensation—who could truly sense the dantian and draw energy from the air, gathering Chi into their body— could apply for the Outer Sect trial.

Only by becoming an Outer Sect disciple could a person truly claim to be part of Wudang.

Until then, they were just hands that worked.

On one particular morning, trouble came in the most ordinary way.

Eight Fatty was supposed to go down the mountain to purchase supplies. Instead,

he was doubled over in pain, clutching his stomach and cursing yesterday's overcooked mushrooms.

He waved a greasy hand and called out, "Alex!"

Alex looked up from the herbs he was sorting.

The other Fatty Brothers were already out—some reporting their work, others delivering Food Pills. The kitchen, for once, was quiet.

Which meant only one thing.

Alex was the only one available.

He hesitated.

A memory flashed in his mind-Wang Junhao. The humiliation. The danger. The realization that outside the kitchen, swords and fists flew faster than words.

But there was no way to refuse. Supplies had to be purchased. The kitchen couldn't run without ingredients.

He walked closer. "Brother Eight... do we have any weapons?"

Eight Fatty burst into laughter, then groaned as it hurt his stomach. "Weapons? This is a kitchen! You can find every kind of knife here!"

Alex turned and looked at the rows of knives-cleavers, boning knives, long slicing blades. Sharp. Heavy. Deadly.

And that was exactly the problem.

If he stabbed someone—even by accident—the situation would explode. A kitchen servant killing someone? The consequences would crush him.

No. Too dangerous.

For safety, he grabbed the largest iron wok instead. Thick. Heavy. Impossible to cut with. If he swung it, it would hurt-but it wouldn't slice someone open.

Then he paused, thinking harder.

He reached for a round soup pot and placed it upside down on his head.

It sat there like a ridiculous helmet.

Ugly.

Embarrassing.

But practical.

If someone aimed for his skull, at least they wouldn't crack it open in one strike.

With the iron wok in one hand and the pot on his head, Alex looked like a walking kitchen disaster.

But he felt safer.

He adjusted the pot, tightened his grip on the wok, and staggered out of the kitchen. Then he began the descent down the mountain.

The limestone paths of the Wudang Sect stretched beneath his feet, smooth and pale against the green hills. Elegant pavilions rose on either side. Courtyards bloomed with trimmed trees and carved stone lanterns.

As he walked, the iron wok resting against his shoulder and the pot gleaming under the sun, he caught the attention of other servants along the path.

They stared.

Not openly. Not boldly.

From the corners of their eyes.

Their gazes slid over him—over the pot helmet, the oversized wok, the strange, determined stride.

Some looked confused.

Some looked amused.

Alex kept walking.

Ridiculous or not, he was going down the mountain prepared.

A few female Outer Sect disciples were standing near the path when they saw him.

The moment their eyes landed on the iron wok and the upside-down soup pot on his head, they burst out laughing. They covered their mouths, but it didn't help. Their laughter rang out like silver bells—clear, bright, impossible to ignore.

Alex felt heat crawl up his neck. His face flushed.

But he didn't slow down.

He didn't care what they thought.

He had no interest in impressing women. No interest in attention. He wanted one thing—survival. A quiet life. No enemies. No trouble.

If looking ridiculous kept him alive, he would gladly look ridiculous.

By the time he reached the central marketplace, the crowd had already thickened.

This was the busiest area near the servants' district. Stalls lined the open square where servants bought and sold supplies.

Occasionally, Outer Sect disciples would pass through to browse or show off. Off to one side stood a massive open arena-flat, wide, and built for one purpose: fighting. Anyone who wanted to prove themselves could step inside.

Today, something was happening.

Alex noticed clusters of servants rushing in the same direction. Their eyes were bright, their steps quick. More and more of them started running, pushing past one another like hungry dogs chasing thrown meat.

Excitement buzzed in the air.

Curious, Alex reached out and grabbed the sleeve of a scrawny servant who was sprinting by.

"Brother," he asked, voice steady, "what's going on? Why is everyone running?"

The young man spun around, irritation flashing across his face-until he saw the iron wok and the pot helmet.

His expression changed instantly.

Envy replaced anger.

"You're from the kitchen?" he blurted out, eyes flicking to the wok. "Must be nice. So lucky..."

He leaned closer and lowered his voice. "Give me some Food Pills, and I'll tell you."

Alex didn't argue.

He pulled out a small bottle, shook three Food Pills into his palm, and dropped them into the young man's hand.

The servant's face lit up as if he'd just been handed gold. He bowed quickly. "Elder Brother!" he said eagerly. "You should come see this. There are two groups in

the Outer Sect-the Dragon and the White Tiger. They've hated each other for years. Always fighting, always competing."

He glanced over his shoulder to make sure no one was listening too closely.

"Today, each side brought ten people. Ten against ten."

Alex's eyes narrowed slightly.

The servant's voice grew more excited. "Almost all of them are at the seventh to ninth level of Chi Condensation. This is going to be huge. If we watch carefully, we might learn something. Maybe even gain some enlightenment."

He grabbed Alex's arm without waiting for a response.

"Come on! We'll miss it!"

Alex staggered as he was dragged forward, the iron wok clanking against his leg, the soup pot wobbling on his head.

He didn't resist.

The tide of bodies carried them both out of the servants' district and toward the arena.

When they arrived, Alex finally saw it clearly.

The open ground was enormous—at least four times the size of a football field. The earth had been flattened and hardened from countless battles. Dust hung in the air, stirred up by the gathering crowd.

Across the massive field stood ten stone platforms.

Each one was raised waist-high, carved from thick slabs of gray rock. Around every platform, a dense ring of people had gathered—servants packed on the outer edges, and at the front stood the Outer Sect disciples in bright, resplendent robes. Their clothing shimmered with fine embroidery and hidden protective talismans. They looked powerful. Dangerous.

Every platform held a one-on-one duel.

Ten arenas.

Ten fights.

Dragon versus White Tiger.

Alex stepped closer to the nearest platform.

Two young men stood on the stone, both dressed in extravagant robes. Their sleeves snapped in the wind as they clashed. Each strike shook the platform beneath their feet. Every collision exploded with a booming crack that echoed across the field.

A faint glow surrounded them.

Magical items.

Protective charms flickered like thin layers of light over their bodies. Spiritual energy rippled in waves with every movement.

Then Alex saw it.

Their swords left their hands.

The blades rose into the air and began to fly.

They cut through the sky with sharp

whistles, Streaking with light as if they were alive The swords darted twisted, and struck from impossible angles, controlled entirely by the cultivators' will.

Alex inhaled sharply.

In the past, he had been able to manipulate a sword in a similar way. But watching this now-watching the precision, the speed, the lethal control-was something else entirely.

They were so talented.

"Maybe I need to learn this too," Alex muttered under his breath.

His fingers brushed his back neck.

"Gaia," he said quietly, eyes locked on the platform. "Record everything. Their martial arts. Every movement. Every technique."

Data began streaming silently through his vision.

For a while, Alex forgot everything else.

He moved from one platform to another, eyes sharp, absorbing every exchange.

Every slash. Every step. Every shift of spiritual energy. Gaia captured it all.

What shocked him most was that none of them were holding back.

This wasn't sparring.

Killing intent rolled off them like

smoke from a battlefield. Within

minutes, blood splashed across stone Blades pierced flesh. Bones cracked one wrong move and death followed.

On one platform, a sword tore through a man's shoulder, nearly severing his arm.

On another, a blade pierced straight through a chest. The wounded didn't scream

long.

From the ten fights, six had already concluded.

Two were dead.

Four had lost limbs.

The severed arms and shattered legs lay beside the stone platforms, soaking the ground red.

Alex's stomach tightened.

This was his first time seeing cultivators fight with real intent. It was nothing like the stories of noble immortals soaring through the clouds in graceful duels.

This was brutal.

Savage.

They struck to maim. They struck to kill. No hesitation. No mercy.

"Xia cultivators train with real swords," Alex murmured to himself. "And real death."

In that moment, clarity hit him.

The outside world was not a place for carelessness.

One wrong step here cost blood. Sometimes it cost a life.

Alex swallowed hard.

He still had to find his way back to Estoria back to his real life, the world he truly belonged to. That was the goal.

Not glory. Not reputation. Not proving himself in some brutal arena soaked in blood.

There was no reason to show off.

No reason to gamble his life for pride.

If all he wanted was to leave this place in one piece, then survival was the only thing that mattered.

The kitchen suddenly seemed like the safest place in the entire sect.

Hot stoves. Greasy floors. Loud, gluttonous Elder Brothers.

Safe.

He tightened his grip on the iron wok and began edging away from the arena.

He had seen enough.

He needed to get back.

But before he could slip into the crowd, a voice ripped through the noise like a blade.

"You bastard, Number Nine!"

Alex froze.

The crowd parted slightly.

"Get on the platform!" the voice roared. "Fight me to the death!"

Alex turned his head.

Wang Junhao was charging straight at him.

His face was twisted with rage, lips pulled back, eyes burning with vicious hatred. An iron sword floated beside him, glinting with a cold, unnatural light.

The aura around it was sharp and powerful-clearly beyond the first level of Chi Condensation.

The sword moved like it had a mind of its own.

Before Alex could react, it shot forward.

Clang!

The blade slammed into the soup pot on Alex's head. The impact rang out like a struck bell. The pot flew off. The sword wobbled and dropped to the ground.

Alex's head spun. His vision blurred.

For a split second, all he could hear was ringing.

He's going to kill me.

The thought hit him like ice water.

Without hesitation, Alex turned and ran.

"Murder! Murder!" he screamed at the top of his lungs.

His voice tore across the arena.

Every servant nearby froze. Outer Sect disciples turned in shock. Even all duels on the stone platforms faltered as fighters glanced toward the chaos.

The scream was so raw, so panicked, it sounded like someone had already been disemboweled.

Even Wang Junhao hesitated for a heartbeat.

He hadn't intended to kill Alex just now. He had only used the sword to knock the pot off-to shock him, to force him onto the platform.

In the sect, killing outside the arena was forbidden. A life-and-death duel required both parties to sign an agreement before stepping onto the platform. Killing someone in the open courtyard would bring severe punishment.

And yet Alex was screaming as if he'd been stabbed ten times.

Wang Junhao's teeth ground together so hard his gums ached.

"Number Nine!" he roared, chasing after him. "You know how to fight! Why are you running?! Show yourself like a man! Get on the platform! Today either you die or I die!"

The crowd, already drunk on blood from the earlier duels, immediately began chanting. "Fight! Fight! Fight!"

They wanted more.

They wanted another death.

"The hell with fighting!" Alex shouted as he sprinted, clutching the iron

wok. "fight, die! If knew how

to fight, why would be running, you idiot?! Murder! Murder!"

His voice climbed higher, shriller, almost hysterical.

He ran like a panicked rabbit-clumsy, frantic, desperate.

The crowd roared with laughter and excitement.

But before he could escape the field, several Outer Sect disciples stepped in front of him, blocking his path.

Their faces were cold.

"If you are part of Wudang," one of them said sternly, voice carrying authority, "and if you call yourself a man, you do not run from a challenge."

Another crossed his arms. "Better to die on the platform than disgrace yourself running away. Get up there. Fight for your name."

Alex shook his head violently.

"No!"

One of the disciples stepped closer, eyes hard as stone.

"You either step onto that platform," he said flatly, his voice cold as iron, "or we kill you right here."

His gaze cut through Alex without mercy.

"There is no place in Wudang for cowards."

Alex stood there, heart pounding, iron wok shaking in his hand, surrounded by a crowd hungry for blood.

And suddenly, the kitchen felt very far away.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 572[1,522 words]

Alex knew, these people here could kill him and call it justice.

He could die at the hands of Wan Junhao—a servant—or at the hands of the Outer Disciples who watched from the sidelines like vultures.

Either way, death was on the table.

So Alex made his choice.

If he had to die, he would die fighting Wan Junhao on the platform.

At least there, he would have a chance.

The best a servant in Wudang could ever learn were scraps—some Wudang's basic cultivation techniques, a handful of crude sword forms, simple movement arts.

Wan Junhao leapt onto the platform with the confidence of a man who had already won. He pointed at Alex, his finger sharp as a blade.

"Number Nine," he called out coldly. "You're dead. Get up here."

The crowd shifted, hungry.

Alex didn't rush. He bent down, picked up his battered soup pot, and settled it over his head. Then he climbed onto the platform.

He lifted the iron wok in his hand like a sword. The metal caught the light. It looked ridiculous.

For a moment, there was silence.

Then someone burst out laughing.

"He's fighting a life-and-death battle with a kitchen wok!" the man shouted. "I bet he dies in one move!"

The crowd exploded in laughter. Even Wan Junhao smirked, shaking his head.

Alex didn't react.

Instead, he stepped down from the platform and walked straight toward the gambling table at the edge of the arena.

The man running the bets looked up lazily—then froze.

Alex dumped a pile of food pills onto the table. At least a hundred.

"I'm betting all of this," he said calmly, his voice carrying across the square. "On myself."

The murmurs shifted.

He turned and swept his gaze across the crowd. His eyes were steady. Hard.

"I'm betting that I win. If you want to laugh, fine. But put something valuable on the table. Or shut your mouths."

A wave of jeers followed.

"Arrogant trash," one Outer Disciple sneered. He flicked a spiritual stone onto the table. "I'll bet one spiritual stone he dies."

"Me too," another said, untying his sword and slamming it down. "I'll put my blade on

it."

"I'll bet my shoes!"

"Add mine!"

Soon the table was crowded with items-stones, weapons, even clothing. Every single bet was placed on Alex losing.

No one believed he would survive.

Alex's eyes drifted back to Wan Junhao.

He knew the truth.

Wan Junhao intended to kill him. Not cripple him. Not teach him a lesson. Kill him.

And if Alex died, everything he owned would belong to Wan Junhao.

So he had no choice.

If he survived, he would walk away rich.

If he died, he would lose nothing more than his life-which was already on the line.

He reached back and lightly touched the nape of his neck.

"Gaia," he whispered under his breath. "Do you have a way to win this?"

"Yes, Master." A calm voice answered in his mind.

"I have recorded all the combat patterns in this arena. They use repetitive structures. The entire Wudang system here consists of approximately fifteen martial forms."

"Eight basic techniques taught to servants-cultivation, sword arts, and movement skills. The Outer Disciples use seven additional advanced variations."

Alex kept his eyes forward, lips barely moving. "And?"

"They all derive from the same root framework. Their patterns are predictable. Reaction timing, angle shifts, energy circulation—all follow standard sequences. I can calculate probable movements before they execute them."

Alex's pulse steadied. "You're saying you can read him."

"Yes, Master. As long as he uses Wudang forms, his next move will be statistically predictable."

A slow breath left Alex's lungs.

They all trained in the same Wudang martial system.

Different ranks. Different levels. But the same roots.

"Which means what?" Alex asked under his breath.

Gaia answered calmly inside his mind. "Imagine planting a million identical trees. If one disease infects one tree, it can spread and destroy all of them because they share the same structure. It is always safer to plant different species in the same forest."

Alex understood immediately.

Uniform training created uniform weakness.

"For this fight against the Wudang disciple," Gaia continued, "I have mapped all probable movement patterns. There are only fifteen possible core transitions between their techniques. That makes prediction simple. I will activate pilot targeting and highlight the enemy's projected movements during combat."

Alex's pulse slowed.

They were all trained in the same system. Same stances. Same footwork. Same angles of attack. For an artificial intelligence, that wasn't complicated.

That was predictable.

Alex stepped back onto the platform.

Across from him, Wan Junhao rolled his shoulders and cracked his neck, grinning like a butcher sharpening his knife.

"Finished playing gambler?" Wan Junhao mocked. "Good. I don't want to wait too long before I break your bones can cut your neck."

He lunged forward, blade flashing.

"Number Nine!" Wang Junhao roared. "You're dead! I'll take back my position today!"

In that split second, the world shifted.

Gaia linked directly to Alex's vision.

A faint overlay flickered across his sight. Transparent lines traced through the air, projecting Wang Junhao's likely path. A shadow of movement unfolded half a second ahead of reality-exact angles, exact steps.

Wan Junhao followed it perfectly.

Green markers flashed on the ground—precise points where Alex could step safely.

Safe zones outside the predicted arc of the blade.

Alex moved.

He stepped onto the green mark without hesitation.

Wan Junhao executed ten rapid slashes in a tight sequence, his sword hissing

through the air. The strikes were fast, aggressive, meant to overwhelm.

But every cut met empty space.

Alex stood just outside the blade's trajectory.

To the crowd, it looked like luck. Like desperate, last-second dodging.

Gasps rippled through the arena.

"Seems like you've been hiding something!" Wang Junhao growled, irritation flashing across his face. He shifted his footing and launched forward again.

Gaia recalculated instantly.

New lines. New projections.

Alex could already see where the sword would go before it moved.

He pivoted lightly.

Another series of strikes tore through the air, precise and deadly.

Again nothing.

The blade missed by inches.

Color codes flickered across Alex's vision. Green for safe movement. Red for danger. Then, for the first time, yellow appeared a narrow window cutting through Wang Junhao's defense.

Attack opportunity.

Alex felt a strange calm settle over him.

It was like a virtual combat game he used to play back in Prussia-predictive targeting, movement tracking, reaction timing. Only this time, the consequences were real.

"Stop running!" Wang Junhao snarled. "Fight me like a man!"

Alex smirked.

Wan Junhao roared and charged again, pouring force into the next strike.

And then Alex saw it.

A large yellow marker flashed directly in front of Wang Junhao's face.

An opening.

Without hesitation, Alex stepped in.

The iron wok sliced through the air with surprising speed.

And he swung.

Wan Junhao moved.

But in the same instant, his eyes widened in shock.

The iron wok was already there waiting exactly where his head was about to be.

The metal slammed into his face.

The crack rang across the arena.

Alex felt the impact travel up his arm. Solid. Clean. Direct hit.

A new yellow line flashed in his vision.

Ready for combo.

A savage grin spread across Alex's face.

"Hell yeah."

He swung again.

Right. Left. Up. Down.

The iron wok blurred in his hand.

Wan Junhao

tried

to fall, but he couldn't. Every time his body tilted,

the wok struck from the other side

When he staggered left, Alex

smashed him back

When he

started to collapse forward, struck from behind, snapping his

head upright and dragging him back

into range.

It was brutal.

It was relentless.

To the crowd, it looked unreal. Wan Junhao-one of the strongest servants was being battered like a training dummy. His sword never found its mark. His techniques never completed. Every movement he attempted was missed.

Fifteen hits.

Hard. Fast. Precise.

Then Wan Junhao's legs gave out.

He crashed to the platform like a sack of grain.

Silence fell.

The Outer Disciples stared, stunned.

"Did... did he just win with an iron wok?"

"It looks like it..."

Alex didn't waste a second. He jumped down from the platform and strode straight to the gambling table.

"I'm taking my winnings now," he said, smiling openly.

The dealer swallowed and nodded, pushing the pile toward him without argument.

"Wait."

One of the Outer Disciples stepped forward.

Alex turned. "What?"

The disciple studied him carefully. "You've got skill. Real skill. How about you leave the servant quarters and join the Tiger Group?"

Before Alex could respond, another Outer Disciple snorted.

"Tiger Group? Don't insult him. You think a talent like this belongs with that litter of house cats?" He

crossed his arms. "Join the Dragon Group We know how to treat strength properly

The first disciple glared. "Watch your mouth."

The tension between them was sharp enough to cut.

Alex lifted both hands slightly. "Sorry. I just want to go back to my kitchen."

A few disciples frowned.

One from the Tiger Group stepped forward, his expression hardening. "You think you can refuse us? Just because you beat that useless trash?"

He jerked his chin toward the unconscious Wan Junhao. "Get back on the platform.

I'll show you why you should accept my offer when I'm being polite."

"Yeah!" another from the Dragon Group shouted. "Iron wok man, break that weak arrogant bastard first. Then fight me!"

The crowd stirred again, excitement returning.

Alex felt sweat break across his back.

They weren't going to let him walk away.

They were dragging him back to the platform.

His victory had painted a target on his chest.

In his mind, Gaia spoke calmly.

"Master. In a forest of identical trees, you are the disease."

Alex blinked once.

"They are trained under the same system," Gaia continued. "Same forms. Same

reactions. Same limitations. You are their natural predator. You can dismantle any of them. One by one."

There was no arrogance in her tone. Only analysis.

"With my predictive modeling active, you are statistically undefeated in this arena."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 573[1,692 words]

Hearing that, Alex broke into a wide grin.

A thunderous voice ripped through the courtyard.

"Who the hell thinks they can mess with our Number Nine?"

Heads snapped toward the corner. Eight enormous figures pushed through the crowd. The Fatty brothers. Massive bodies. Heavy steps. Faces burning with fury.

They stormed straight toward Alex and formed a tight circle around him, sealing him off from the world.

The outer disciples from the Tiger Group and the Dragon Group froze for a second when they saw who had arrived.

One of the outer disciples sneered. "You bunch of oversized pigs. We're about to teach this kitchen servant a lesson, and you dare stand in our way? Do you all have a death wish?"

The First Fatty stepped forward, his belly shaking with each step, eyes blazing.

"He is our brother," he said coldly. "Touch him, and next time you eat, you might find my shit special mixed into your food pill."

A wave of disgust swept through the crowd. Faces twisted. A few even gagged.

Everyone knew the kitchen staff prepared the food pills. If they wanted to slip something in, no one would ever know. And once swallowed, it was too late.

"You're asking for it!" the outer disciple roared.

Steel flashed. He drew his sword in one smooth motion, blade gleaming under the sun.

The First Fatty didn't back down. He stepped forward again, fists clenched, jaw set. The other seven Fatty brothers moved with him, forming a wall of flesh and loyalty. "We're ready to fight to the death for our Number Nine!" they shouted as one.

The air tightened. Killing intent flooded the courtyard.

"Wait, brothers," Alex said suddenly.

"Don't stop us, Nine," the Third Fatty said, his voice low and serious. "We live together. We die together. If you fall, we fall."

"Yeah!" the others echoed, eyes burning. They looked ready to tear someone apart.

"Please," Alex said firmly. "Listen to me. I'm serious."

The Fatty brothers paused. One by one, they turned to him.

Alex glanced at the outer disciples, then leaned closer to his brothers.

"Form a ring."

They didn't hesitate. They huddled together instantly, blocking him from sight.

The outer disciples frowned. "What are they doing?"

From inside the circle, muffled voices whispered urgently.

"Are you serious?" one of the Fatty brothers blurted out.

"Shhh! Lower your voice," Alex hissed.

More whispers. Low. Intense. Focused.

The outer disciples grew impatient.

"Are you idiots done yet?" one of them shouted.

At last, the Fatty brothers broke their huddle.

Moments ago, their faces were twisted with rage.

Now?

They were smiling.

Wide. Bright. Almost cheerful.

The sudden shift sent a strange chill through the crowd.

Alex stepped onto the empty platform.

The courtyard went quiet.

The eight Fatty brothers moved with surprising coordination. Each one took a side of the platform, claiming it like a fortress. Each one of them threw a large cloth onto the ground at the center, smoothing it out with both hands.

It looked like a battlefield.

Or a gambling table.

The fattest of them all stepped forward and roared, his voice echoing across the courtyard.

"We're from the kitchen! We don't care if you're from the Dragon Group or the Tiger Group. You mess with us, we'll fry you, boil you, and eat you!"

Gasps rippled through the crowd.

A kitchen servant challenging outer disciples?

It had never happened before.

Not here. Not in the Wudang Sect.

"Our Number Nine is our brother," another Fatty bellowed. "He'll duel all of you to the death. One by one. Send them up-Dragon or Tiger, we don't care. Our Number Nine will take you down one at a time!"

Murmurs exploded around the courtyard.

The First Fatty jabbed a thick finger toward the cloth on the ground.

"Listen up! If you think our Number Nine will lose, then bet against him!"

He pointed at the cloth.

"Put your wager down right here. If our brother loses, we'll pay you back ten times!"

He paused, then lifted his chin proudly.

"No. Twenty times!"

The entire courtyard went silent.

Had these kitchen servants lost their minds?

How could a servant fight an outer disciple?

Most of outer disciple were already at the Fifth to Eighth Level of Qi Condensation.

They were real cultivators. Trained. Hardened.

While the servant was, at best, only at the Third Level of Qi Condensation.

That was the ceiling of Servant's strength. Everyone knew it.

The gap between them wasn't small-it was a cliff. In the world of cultivation, a difference of two or three levels was enough to decide life and death.

One of the disciples suddenly stepped forward and tossed something onto the cloth.

"I bet that servant dies," he said sharply.

What hit the cloth wasn't gold or silver.

It was a spirit stone.

In the Wudang Sect, and among cultivators everywhere, money meant nothing. Gold was useless. Silver was worthless.

Only spirit stones mattered.

They looked like chunks of emerald, glowing faintly green. Over countless years, they absorbed the essence of heaven and earth, storing pure spiritual energy inside.

Cultivators could draw that energy directly into their bodies. It strengthened their cultivation. It was life itself.

More disciples stepped forward.

"I'll bet my food pills," another outer disciple said, throwing down a small pouch.

Every month, outer disciples received about thirty food pills. They were packed with condensed nutrients and spiritual essence. They sustained cultivation and, over time, had become a form of currency within the sect.

"My sword," another disciple shouted, tossing it onto the cloth.

"My rare herbs!"

"My ring!"

The crowd surged forward. Disciples shoved and elbowed their way toward the Fatty brothers, eager to place their bets. The pile on the cloth grew higher—spirit stones, weapons, herbs, pills, even personal treasures.

To them, this was easy money.

A kitchen servant fighting an outer disciple?

There was a thousand percent chance the servant would die.

"I'll go first," one of the disciples from the Tiger Group declared, stepping forward with confidence.

"Hold it," the First Fatty said, raising a thick hand. "You want to fight our Number Nine? Then you bet something."

The Tiger disciple hesitated.

Before he could respond, a disciple

from the Dragon Group stepped forward and leapt onto the platform,

brushing past the Tiger disciple

without ever looking at him

"I'll bet my sword," the Dragon disciple said calmly. "If you win, you can take it. If I

win, you pay me twenty times what it's worth."

"Deal," the First Fatty replied instantly.

The Tiger disciple's face darkened with fury. "You bastard! I was first!"

"You talk too much," the Dragon disciple said lazily. "Wait for your turn."

"What turn?" the Tiger disciple snapped. "You'll kill him in one strike. There won't be a next chance."

The Dragon disciple laughed loudly, the sound sharp and mocking. He turned his gaze to Alex.

"You," he said, pointing his sword. "Kneel now. Beg forgiveness. I might spare you. I could even bring you into our group."

Alex lifted his iron wok.

The black metal caught the light. It looked absurd in his hand-like a cook who had wandered into the wrong arena.

"If you can beat me," Alex said calmly, "then sure. But I don't kneel to people weaker than me."

The insult hit like a slap.

"How dare you!" the Dragon disciple roared.

He drew his sword fully and charged, spiritual energy surging around him. His steps were fast precise trained. The blade cut through the air, aimed straight at Alex's throat.

Everyone held their breath.

This was it.

The servant would die.

But something strange happened.

In the blink of an eye, Alex shifted one step to the right.

Just one.

Simple. Clean. Effortless.

The sword sliced through empty air.

At the same time, Alex swung his iron wok.

There was no flashy technique. No dramatic aura.

Just a solid, brutal swing.

The Dragon disciple's momentum carried him forward-straight into the path of the iron wok.

Clang.

The sound rang across the courtyard like a struck bell.

The iron wok smashed into the disciple's head with terrifying force.

His eyes rolled back instantly.

His body went limp.

He dropped to the ground like a sack of grain, unconscious from a single strike.

The courtyard fell into stunned silence.

No one understood what they had just witnessed.

One swing.

One move.

And an outer disciple was down.

"Did that outer disciple just run his face into the iron wok?"

"Yes... it looked like he deliberately smashed himself into it."

The whispers spread fast.

From where they stood, it really did look that way. Alex had swung his iron wok toward the spot where the outer disciple was about to move his head.

It was like two speeding carriages colliding head-on. The disciple charged. Alex adjusted. Impact was inevitable.

The entire arena fell silent.

No one understood what they had just witnessed.

An outer disciple from the Dragon Group-knocked out cold by a kitchen servant with a cooking utensil.

"Thank you, thank you," Alex said cheerfully, as if he had just received a gift instead of winning a duel. "You let me win."

He bent down, picked up the fallen disciple's sword, and tossed it casually to the Eighth Fatty.

"Hold that for me."

The Sixth Fatty climbed onto the platform, grabbed the unconscious disciple by the collar, and dragged him across the wood like a sack of Lise. Without Ceremony, he heaved him off the platform and tossed him

aside.

"Next," Alex said, twirling the iron wok in his hand.

The Tiger Group disciples burst into laughter, pointing at the Dragon Group.

"Your outer disciple lost to a servant!"

"What kind of trash are you sending out?"

Faces in the Dragon Group darkened with humiliation.

A Tiger Group outer disciple stepped forward and climbed onto the platform. His expression was cold and controlled.

"You can take my sword if you win," he said evenly. "But unfortunately for you, I'll be taking your head."

His tone wasn't loud. It didn't need to be. The killing intent around him was sharp and real.

Below the platform, the Fatty brothers started shouting again.

"Anyone who lost before can bet again!"

"If our Number Nine loses this time, you win everything back!"

"Remember! Bet one, get twenty back! This is your second chance!"

The crowd stirred.

Many of the disciples who had lost their first bets were already furious at the fallen

Dragon disciple. Their pride had taken a hit. Their spirit stones were gone.

If they wanted their losses back, they had to bet again.

And bet bigger.

The cloth quickly filled once more—more spirit stones, more food pills, more valuables.

The Fatty brothers were grinning from ear to ear. What they had already won from the first round was enormous.

The First Fatty looked up at the platform and waved his hand.

"You may begin."

The Tiger disciple didn't waste time. He lunged forward, sword flashing.

"You're dead this time," he snarled.

The crowd leaned in.

Steel cut through the air.

And then-

Clang.

The unmistakable sound of iron striking flesh echoed through the courtyard once again.

The iron wok had found another face.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 574[1,976 words]

Everyone could see it.

The Tiger Group's outer disciple staggered backward, his face smashed flat by the iron wok that had just collided with it.

Blood poured from his mouth. His two front teeth were gone. Completely gone.

He swayed for half a second, eyes unfocused, then collapsed onto the stone platform in a heap—humiliated, broken, ugly in defeat.

A ripple of shock ran through the crowd.

Eight Fatty didn't hesitate. He stomped onto the platform, grabbed the fallen disciple by the collar, and dragged him across the stone like a sack of trash. The man's heels scraped uselessly against the ground.

With a final grunt, Eight Fatty hurled him off the edge of the platform. The body rolled and landed hard at the feet of the Tiger Group.

"Take your useless disciple back," Eight Fatty barked.

"You-!" The injured Tiger Group disciple tried to rise, fury blazing in his bloodshot eyes.

"What?" Eight Fatty shot back, folding his arms. His voice boomed across the square. "This platform is sacred. If you can't accept that you're a loser, then send someone up here and prove me wrong. If you still can't win, then shut your mouth."

He leaned forward, sneering.

"Or what? You think Wudang Sect teaches people to fight with their mouths? With empty words?"

The insult hit like a slap.

"Fight me!"

A figure leapt onto the platform in a clean arc, landing with steady precision. His robes fluttered before settling against his tall frame.

"I don't care what tricks you're using," the man said coldly. "You will die on my sword."

The crowd exploded.

"It's Lie Zun!"

"The Top Five of the Dragon Group!"

"He's been an outer disciple for nearly forty years!"

"That kitchen servant is dead!"

Excitement surged like wildfire. Voices rose. Bets shifted. Eyes gleamed with greed.

And above all the noise, one voice roared louder than the rest.

Eight Fatty.

"Oh no! Oh no!" he shouted dramatically, clutching his head as if in despair. "The Dragon Group has unleashed one of their Five Dragons! Our Number Nine is in grave danger!"

He paused—just long enough.

Then his tone flipped.

"Come on! Hurry! Bet your precious items now! Twenty times the return! If you win this round, you can recover everything you lost before!"

The other fatties on the platform joined him, shouting at the top of their lungs.

"Number Nine will lose this time! Don't miss your chance!"

"Look at these treasures! They could all be yours!"

Everyone knew the fatties were manipulating them.

They knew.

But greed was a louder voice than reason.

Twenty times.

The number echoed in their minds like a curse.

One by one, disciples stepped forward, hands trembling as they placed their precious items onto the betting table. Rings. Pills. Spirit stones. Weapons. Family heirlooms.

Some hesitated.

Some swallowed hard.

But they still bet.

Alex stood quietly at the center of the platform, watching the growing pile of

treasures. He scanned the crowd carefully.

More and more people were hesitating now.

The earlier frenzy was fading.

Doubt was creeping in.

If this continued, the betting momentum would die.

He couldn't let that happen.

Alex lowered his voice.

"Gaia," he said calmly, without moving his lips too much. "I have an idea."

"I, Lie Zun, will kill you!" the Dragon group outer disciple roared.

He lunged forward the instant the words left his mouth. His sword flashed in a clean silver arc, sharp and precise.

Alex barely reacted in time. The blade sliced through the air-and through fabric. Cloth tore. A strip of his sleeve fluttered to the ground.

A roar burst from the crowd.

"This time the kitchen servant will lose!"

Lie Zun didn't slow down. He advanced like a storm breaking loose. One cut. Two.

Four. Five. Each strike was clean, ruthless, calculated to kill.

The sword light wrapped around Alex from every angle.

Gasps rippled through the spectators.

The blade came so close it shaved threads from Alex's robe. Cloth split again and again but never flesh.

People held their breath. No one blinked.

Lie Zun's face flushed deep red, anger swelling in his veins. "You!" he snapped. "How long do you plan to run like a coward?"

Alex didn't answer.

Instead, as he stepped back, he flicked his foot. A small stone chipped loose from

the platform's edge. It skidded across the surface to a precise spot-exactly where Gaia had predicted.

Lie Zun inhaled sharply and launched forward again.

"Wudang Thirteen Steps!"

His movement technique exploded into motion. His body blurred. His right foot came down-
On the stone.

It was only half a second.

But half a second was enough.

His balance shifted. His weight tilted.

And in the next heartbeat-

Bang.

The iron wok slammed into his face like a falling hammer.

The sound rang across the square.

Lie Zun's vision shattered into white light. Before he could recover, Alex followed
through, the iron wok crashing down again with brutal force.

Lie Zun hit the ground hard.

Silence.

Then the square erupted.

"That's cheating!"

"He slipped on a stone!"

"That doesn't count!"

"He won by luck! If not, he'd already be dead!"

The protests rolled like thunder.

Before anyone could escalate further, the First Fatty jumped onto the platform. Without ceremony, he grabbed Lie Zun by the leg and dragged him toward the
edge.

"A loss is a loss!" he shouted, voice booming. "Why are you barking like stray dogs?"

With a grunt, he flung Lie Zun off the platform toward the Dragon Group.

The insult landed harder than the fall.

The faces of the Tiger Group and the Dragon Group turned crimson. They were the elite among outer disciples. They were feared. Respected. Never mocked.

And now?

They were being humiliated by a kitchen servant holding a wok.

"If Lie Zun almost killed that kitchen trash," someone from the Dragon Group growled, "then we'll send Number Three. You Huang Po, step up."

But before the Dragon Group could move, the Tiger Group acted first. Another outer disciple leapt onto the platform.

The crowd gasped.

"That's Ma Xiu!"

"Top Three of the Tiger Group!"

Excitement surged again.

"Oh damn," Big Fatty shouted dramatically. "Ma Xiu is even stronger than Lie Zun! If Lie Zun was at the Seventh Level of Qi Condensation, then Ma Xiu is already at the Eighth Level!"

He slapped his thigh for emphasis.

"The kitchen servant has no future now!"

"Come on! Hurry and bet! Maybe this time you'll actually win!"

One of the men in the crowd snapped. His face was red with fury, his eyes bloodshot from frustration.

"Bet? Bet what?" he shouted. "I've already bet everything I own! What do you expect me to wager now? You've taken all my money and valuables!"

First Fatty didn't even blink. He smiled slowly, the kind of smile that belonged to a devil at a marketplace.

"Don't you still have clothes?" he asked lightly. "You can bet your clothes. Maybe you'll win everything back."

The words hung in the air.

For a moment, the man froze. Then something shifted in his eyes—desperation turning into reckless hope.

As if struck by sudden enlightenment, he tore off his outer robe and flung it onto the gambling pile.

A few gasped.

Then others followed.

Robes. Sashes. Jackets. One by one, they were thrown forward, landing in a heap of cloth and greed.

"The fifth match begins!" First Fatty bellowed.

Ma Xiu didn't waste time with speeches. He rushed forward the instant the words

were spoken. His movement was sharper than Lie Zun's—cleaner, faster, heavier with killing intent.

This time, Alex didn't escape so easily.

Steel flashed.

Cloth ripped.

Another slash tore across his sleeve. A second strike shredded the front of his robe.

Threads flew through the air like snow.

Every attack came dangerously close to skin.

The crowd erupted in wild excitement.

"Ma Xiu! You must win this time!"

"Kill him!"

"End that kitchen trash!"

Ma Xiu pressed harder. His cultivation at the Eighth Level of Qi Condensation surged like a rising tide, crushing down on the platform. His blade cut with brutal efficiency forcing Alex back step by step.

Then-

CLANG.

The iron wok rang out.

The sound was loud. Metallic. Final.

Ma Xiu's body stiffened.

And then he collapsed.

He hit the ground hard, eyes rolled back, breath knocked out of him.

Alex stood there, clothes torn, chest rising steadily. The iron wok rested calmly in his hand.

For a second, there was no sound.

Then-

"Nooooo!"

The square exploded.

"You Dragon Group bastards!"

"How can you not win against a servant?!"

"Are you all useless?!"

Insults flew in every direction. Rage turned the air hot.

And then-

The crowd suddenly went silent.

A figure stepped forward.

Huang Jie.

Even before he reached the platform, people began whispering.

"That's Huang Jie..."

"Ninth Level of Qi Condensation..."

"One of the top outer disciples..."

First Fatty swallowed, then quickly recovered his showman's voice.

"Huang Jie has stepped forward!

The Leader of the Tiger Group!" he announced loudly. "Ninth Level Condensation! One of the strongest among all outer disciples! If he's fighting the servant this time..."

He spread his hands dramatically.

"I can say with confidence-our Number Nine will lose."

He leaned toward the crowd, eyes glittering.

"If you want to win everything back, this is your chance."

"Bet! Bet! Bet!" someone screamed.

A man stood there bare-chested, shaking with anger. "I've already bet my clothes!

What more do you want from me? You damn fatty, you're evil!"

First Fatty laughed without shame.

"Don't you still have pants?" he said smoothly. "We accept pants too."

The crowd looked at one another.

They were already half-naked. Already humiliated. Already drowning in sunk cost and stubborn pride.

No one believed the kitchen servant could win again.

Not against Huang Jie.

One by one, they removed their pants.

The gambling pile grew into a mountain of fabric.

Cold air brushed against trembling legs, but greed burned hotter than shame.

And on the platform-

Huang Jie finally lifted his eyes and looked directly at Alex.

"You will die this time."

Huang Jie's voice was cold and steady, but rage burned beneath it like fire under iron.

Alex gave a respectful bow.

It was proper etiquette before a duel. Calm. Disciplined. Controlled.

But Huang Jie was beyond etiquette.

His group had been humiliated again and again—knocked down by a kitchen servant wielding a wok. Their pride had been dragged across the dirt in front of the entire outer court.

He refused to bow back.

Instead, the moment Alex lowered his head, Huang Jie moved.

He burst forward without warning, sword slicing through the air in a vicious downward arc. He believed Alex wouldn't see it coming.

And he was right.

Alex didn't see it.

But Gaia did.

In less than a blink, Gaia seized control. Alex felt his body shift mid-bow, muscles firing before his mind could catch up. He stepped forward as his center of gravity changed. His knees bent. His torso twisted.

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The iron wok shot upward from below.

Huang Jie's chin came down at the exact same instant.

Clang.

The sound cracked across the platform like a hammer striking an anvil.

The wok smashed into Huang Jie's jaw, snapping his head back violently. Blood sprayed from his mouth.

But he didn't fall.

His body was stronger than the others. His bones were hardened through years of cultivation. Even with his head thrown back, he stayed standing.

Gaia didn't hesitate.

Before Huang Jie could regain balance-before he could counterattack-Alex's body pivoted sharply.

The iron wok swung again.

Wide.

Fast.

And this time-

It struck between Huang Jie's legs.

A brutal, unmistakable impact.

Every male disciple in the square felt it instinctively. Faces turned pale. Hands twitched unconsciously.

Huang Jie's expression twisted. His body locked. His knees buckled.

He collapsed.

"That's illegal!" one Tiger Group disciple shouted furiously.

First Fatty crossed his arms and raised an eyebrow. "Illegal?" he said mockingly.

"Since when are there illegal moves in a life-and-death duel?"

No one answered.

All eyes were on Huang Jie—leader of the Tiger Group—sprawled on the ground, unconscious.

Silence swallowed the square.

Especially among those who had bet everything.

Those now standing in nothing but their underwear.

Their faces drained of blood.

Their futures hanging on a single servant holding a wok.

Then-

The true leader of the Dragon Group stepped forward.

The crowd parted instantly.

His presence alone shifted the air.

He climbed onto the platform without hurry. His gaze fell on Huang Jie's motionless body. Without ceremony, he kicked him off the platform like trash.

Huang Jie's body rolled down the stone steps.

The message was clear.

He then lifted his eyes to Alex.

"Now," he said coldly, voice carrying across the square, "I will show you the difference between the Tiger Group and the Dragon Group."

His lips curved slightly.

"The Tiger Group is built on losers. The Dragon Group is strength."

A murmur of fear spread through the crowd.

On the side, First Fatty scanned the disciples who were now nearly naked. He sneered
openly.

"If you have nothing left to bet," he said lazily, "then leave."

No one moved.

One man—bare-chested, wearing only thin undergarments—walked forward slowly.

The crowd stared.

He stepped up to the gambling pile and sat down beside it.

His voice trembled, but his eyes were wild.

"I bet myself."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 575[1,458 words]

More and more people who had already lost everything—stripped down to nothing but their underwear—suddenly chose recklessness over caution.

They sat on the cold stone steps, eyes bloodshot, voices hoarse, and shouted in unison, "I bet my life!"

They knew exactly who Chen Liong was.

The true leader of the Dragon Group.

One of the strongest Outer Disciples.

A man whose name alone was supposed to guarantee victory.

Those who had hesitated before now looked from Alex to Chen Liong, their doubt melting away. In their minds, this fight had only one ending.

They rushed forward, throwing in the last scraps of what they owned rings, tokens, spiritual stones, even the clothes off their backs.

They bet everything.

Chen Liong looked down at Alex as if he were examining dirt on his shoe.

"You, servant," he said coldly, his voice carrying across the platform. "From this moment on, you will serve the Dragon Group."

Alex lifted his chin and met his gaze without flinching.

"No," he replied calmly.

He lifted the iron wok and pointed it straight at Chen Liong's face. The metal edge hovered inches from his nose.

"You," Alex said evenly, voice steady and cold, "are the one who will serve me."

For a split second, Chen Liong froze.

Then he burst into laughter.

"Very well," he said, eyes narrowing. "If you win."

He drew his sword in one smooth motion and flung it forward.

The blade did not fall.

It hung in the air.

"Accept my first attack."

With a sharp hum, the sword shot toward Alex like lightning.

But before it reached him, faint glowing lines traced its path through the air-Gaia's prediction. The trajectory was clear, precise.

Alex stepped aside.

The blade sliced past him, missing by a hair.

Chen Liong's wrist flicked. The sword twisted midair and lunged again. Faster. Sharper.

Alex moved again.

Millimeter by millimeter, he avoided each strike.

No matter how Chen Liong manipulated the blade—left, right, upward, downward— Alex evaded it with impossible precision.

And whenever his reaction lagged by even a fraction of a second, Gaia adjusted him with micro-corrections, shifting his body just enough to survive.

Steel hissed through the air again and again.

In just a few seconds, Alex's clothes were shredded to pieces.

Fabric fell away like torn leaves in a storm, leaving his chest bare, sweat glistening under the harsh arena light. His muscles tightened with every movement, breath steady despite the relentless assault.

Below the platform, a group of women stared upward.

"Don't you think he's handsome?" one whispered, unable to look away.

"Yes," another replied, eyes wide. "He's strong enough to defeat Huang Jie, the Tiger Group Leader."

"I think... I've found my idol."

Soon, their whispers turned into cheers.

"Number Nine, be strong!"

Their voices rang across the arena.

Among the gamblers who had lost everything, faces turned red with fury when they heard the support for Alex.

"You bastard, Chen Liong!" one man screamed, veins bulging in his neck. "How can you not defeat a servant? Are you even the top Outer Disciple?"

"Yeah!" another shouted. "What kind of Outer Disciple can't crush a servant?"

"What a damn Dragon!" a third roared, nearly in tears. "You're nothing but a worm!" He had wagered everything on Chen Liong.

And above them all, the sword continued to flash, slicing the air again and again as Chen Liong's pride began to crack under the eyes of the crowd.

To the crowd, it almost looked like a performance.

Chen Liong stood at the center of the platform, his sword gliding through the air in controlled arcs. The blade darted left and right, slicing the wind with lethal precision. Alex only danced.

He shifted his weight. Tilted his head. Twisted his waist. Raised a leg. Bent an elbow. Every movement was clean, minimal, deliberate.

They were wagering their lives.

And yet it looked like a silly game.

The spectators grew restless. Their fear turned into anger.

"You, Chen Liong!" someone shouted from below. "If you can't win, destroy your

Dragon Group and wear women's clothes!"

"Change your Dragon Group into the Worm Group!"

Laughter exploded from the crowd.

Chen Liong's ears burned red.

His jaw tightened as he stared at Alex, disbelief flickering in his eyes. How could this servant evade every single strike? His sword technique was flawless. His control was absolute.

With one powerful motion, he recalled the sword into his hand.

The blade snapped back into his grip.

Without another word, he lunged.

This time, there was no distance. No elegant display of control.

He swung.

Alex reacted instantly-lifting his leg to avoid a sweeping cut, bending backward as

the blade passed inches from his throat, twisting his torso to escape a diagonal slash aimed at his ribs.

The attacks came fast.

Too fast.

Chen Liong's sword became a storm of steel. Each strike carried killing intent. There was no room for counterattack.

Alex could not strike back.

Not now.

One wrong step.

One delayed breath.

He would die.

The blade was so sharp that even the wind it created sliced into Alex's skin. Thin red lines appeared across his arms and chest. Blood surfaced in narrow streaks.

The crowd leaned forward, eyes wide.

Some could no longer see the movements clearly. Chen Liong had become a blur. Sword and arm fused into a streak of flashing silver.

And yet-

Number Nine still evaded.

With the smallest possible movements.

A half-inch shift. A slight turn of the shoulder. A subtle pivot of the heel.

Nothing wasted.

Chen Liong continued attacking for several minutes. Sweat soaked through his robes. His breathing grew heavier.

Frustration crept into his face.

He was the top Outer Disciple.

And he could not take down a servant.

The humiliation burned hotter than the exertion.

"You!" Chen Liong finally roared, unable to suppress his fury any longer.

That single burst of anger cost him.

“DONGGGG!”

The sound rang out across the arena.

An iron wok slammed directly into his face.

The moment Chen Liong lost control, even for a fraction of a second, Alex moved. In those few milliseconds, he swung the iron wok with everything he had.

But Chen Liong reacted in time.

Inner force surged around his head, hardening his defenses. The iron wok struck with a deafening clang, but the impact did not penetrate.

It only carried about ten percent of its original power.

Chen Liong staggered back one step, more shocked than injured.

"You servant without inner energy!" he snarled, eyes blazing. "All you have is agility to evade!"

His grip tightened around the sword.

He prepared to strike again.

Alex did not give him time to recover.

The iron wok came down again—this time smashing into Chen Liong's fingers.

The blow was heavy enough to crack bone, but Chen Liong had already wrapped his hand in inner energy. The impact sent a violent shock through his arm. His fingers went numb.

The sword slipped from his grasp.

It clattered across the platform.

Alex moved instantly.

He slammed the iron wok into Chen Liong's face. Then his chest. Then his arms.

The metal rang again and again as it struck.

He didn't stop.

He swung lower.

Chen Liong reacted fast. Inner

energy surged across his entire

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body, protis skin shimmer faintly, like iron beneath flesh.

him in a layer of

It was as if he were wearing invisible armor.

From below, the spectators could see Alex raining blows on him, but the top Outer

Disciple remained standing.

Unmoved.

Unbroken.

It looked useless.

It looked like Alex was hammering a statue.

"Master," Gaia's voice echoed in Alex's mind, calm and analytical. "I have scanned his entire body. I believe I have located his only weakness."

"Show me," Alex said under his breath.

A faint targeting line appeared.

Alex swung the iron wok toward Chen Liong's side face.

The impact landed cleanly. It caused a split-second jolt—but still did no real damage.

Because Alex kept striking without pause, Chen Liong had no time to counterattack.

For a moment, all he could do was defend.

Then-

The crowd gasped.

In a blink, Alex vanished from Chen Liong's front.

He reappeared behind him.

The iron wok flipped in his hands, reversed in a single smooth motion.

Alex gripped the round metal body tightly, the long handle now pointing forward like a crude spear.

Before anyone could understand what he was about to do, he dropped low behind Chen Liong.

He aimed at Chen Liong's butt.

With a sudden, explosive surge of strength, he drove upward from below-using the protruding handle to strike at Chen Liong's asshole.

The motion was fast. Brutal. Humiliating.

And the impact landed.

The handle of the iron wok slammed forward. Entering the asshole directly.

The entire arena froze.

Absolute silence fell like a curtain.

And then-

A piercing scream shattered the air.

Chen Liong's voice cracked high and sharp, nothing like the commanding tone he had carried moments before.

Several women stared in disbelief, unable to comprehend what they were seeing.

The handsome Chen Liong.

The idol so many.

Now shrieking in agony.

Faces across the arena drained of color.

Chen Liong collapsed onto the stone platform, his body slamming down with a heavy, broken thud.

The iron wok remained grotesquely lodged behind him at a humiliating angle. The round metal base stuck

out like a cruel banner, while the

Hong handle had been driven deep beneath his asshole.

The arena went dead silent.

The proud leader of the Dragon Group-once untouchable, once revered-now lay face-down on cold stone, his dignity shattered beyond repair.

He writhed once-

Then lay there trembling.

Below the platform, some of the half-naked gamblers broke down.

"I'm sold..." one man whispered, tears streaming down his face. "I'm completely sold out."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 576[1,241 words]

On the platform, after defeating Chen Liong, Alex swayed once then his body gave out.

Every muscle in him had reached its limit. His arms trembled uncontrollably. His chest burned as if it had been torn open from the inside.

Pain screamed through his bones. He had pushed himself far beyond what his body could endure.

Then everything went black.

Eight Fatty reacted instantly. He rushed forward, grabbed Alex before he could collapse to the floor, and supported his weight with both arms.

Carefully—almost urgently—he pulled Alex away from the center, shielding him from the eyes of the crowd.

The other Fatty brothers hurried over and gathered around Eight Fatty and Alex, their faces tight with worry.

"Don't tell me he died dramatically and left us some legendary inheritance," Fourth Fatty blurted out, eyes wide.

"Shut your mouth," Third Fatty snapped, smacking him on the back of the head. "Don't curse him, you idiot. He's not dead."

He leaned closer, listening carefully.

"...He's snoring."

The Fatty brothers froze.

Four Fatty rubbed his face in disbelief. "Unbelievable. The guy nearly tore two factions apart.... and now he's sleeping like he just won a pillow fight."

At the same time, First Fatty stepped onto the platform.

His heavy footsteps thudded against the stone, each step deliberate, commanding attention. The echoes rolled across the courtyard and silenced the murmurs.

"Dear brothers and sisters," he announced. "As you can see, our Ninth Brother has already reached his limit. The fight ends here."

His gaze swept over the crowd-sharp, warning.

"And we don't want any trouble. So I ask every one of you to swear on your Dao Heart that you will never speak a word about this fight to anyone outside this place."

He paused, letting the weight of his words sink in.

"We don't want the outer disciples being humiliated by a servant to become a laughingstock."

Silence fell.

Everyone understood.

This fight had crushed the pride of both the Dragon Group and the Tiger Group. If word spread, their reputations would be destroyed. And if anyone dared to cause trouble for them because of gossip...

They might not live long enough to regret it.

Excitement wasn't worth dying for.

One by one, the spectators stepped forward.

"I swear upon my Dao Heart."

"I swear."

"I will never reveal this matter."

The words echoed solemnly across the platform.

For cultivators like them, the Dao Heart was everything.

A pure heart. A clear mind. Alignment with the will of nature.

To swear upon the Dao Heart was no small thing. If they broke that oath, it would leave a stain—a dark blemish buried deep within their spirit.

That stain would grow into a flaw, and that flaw would become a demon when they tried to break through to higher realms of cultivation.

Once they swore, they could never cross that line.

And so, every single one of them swore.

Meanwhile, far above the platform, at the peak of the highest mountain, a solitary building thrust out into the open air like a blade cutting through the sky.

It clung to the cliff's edge, suspended between earth and clouds, as if it ruled everything below.

Inside stood two figures.

One was an old man.

The other was Li Chingxue.

The old man had a full head of white hair that flowed down his back, yet his complexion was ruddy and vibrant. His eyes glittered with sharp intelligence and quiet power.

He stood at the edge of the structure, hands clasped behind his back, looking down at the scene unfolding below.

His gaze was calm.

But within it flickered unmistakable interest.

"What an interesting child you brought back to the sect, Qingxue." The old man chuckled, low and amused.

Li Chingxue felt a faint headache forming at her temples. She lowered her gaze slightly. "Sect Leader, I only brought him here to protect his life. I never expected him to stir up this kind of trouble inside the sect. If you wish, I can have him expelled immediately."

"Oh? Did he poison the elders?" the old man asked.

"No."

"Did he rob the treasury?"

"...Not that we know of."

"Then what terrible crime did he commit?"

"He defeated two elite disciples and humiliated both factions."

The old man chuckled. "Qingxue, if we expelled everyone competent enough to cause trouble, this sect would be empty."

"Yes, Sect Leader." Li Chingxue bowed.

"That kid is extraordinary," he said calmly. "His cultivation level is very low, yet he dismantled opponents stronger than him by analyzing their weaknesses. He reads people. He calculates. He turns flaws into weapons. That is not talent you see every day."

As he spoke, he pulled out a small cloth pouch and opened it.

"Try this."

Li Chingxue leaned closer and saw a food pill resting inside. She picked it up and swallowed it without hesitation. For cultivators of her level, food pills were common - mere sustenance to replace ordinary meals.

But the moment it dissolved on her tongue, her expression changed.

The energy was pure. Dense. Shockingly refined.

"This... is high quality," she said, unable to hide her surprise.

"Yes," the Sect Leader replied. He flicked one of the pills into his mouth and chewed it as casually as if it were a roasted peanut. The man you brought rewrote the formula. Our food pills are now twenty times more effective than before.

He let that sink in.

"He took a recipe that hasn't been altered in fifty years... and improved it."

Li Chingxue blinked. "So he's a genius?"

"No," the old man corrected calmly. "A genius improves things slightly. This one makes everyone else look unemployed."

The sect Leader laughed hard.

"Chingxue, you have done this sect a great service by bringing him here. The Pill Refinement Department already requested him," the old man said calmly. "They want to take him under their wing."

Li Chingxue straightened. "Yes, Sect Leader."

He glanced at Li Chingxue, his sharp eyes unreadable.

"I stopped them. For now, let that young man enjoy his time in the Wudang Sect.

There's no need to rush."

His tone shifted slightly, firmer this time.

"But if he ever steps into the ranks of the outer disciples, remember this-send him to the Pill Refinement Department immediately."

It was not a suggestion.

It was an order.

The next morning, Alex woke up in his room.

The soreness was still there, buried deep in his muscles. His body felt like it had been beaten with iron rods. But the pain wasn't what bothered him most.

It was regret.

He stared at the ceiling, jaw tight.

He should never have gone out like that. Never should have stepped onto that platform. He had painted a target on his own back. In a place crawling with cultivators stronger than him, showing off was the fastest way to die.

He had wanted to stay hidden. Quiet. Invisible.

He only needed time-time to find a way out of this world and return to Xia, to Estoria, even to Prussia if he had to.

"I came here to live," he muttered bitterly. "Not to die like an idiot."

He knew the truth. He was still weak. This place was full of monsters wearing human faces. People far stronger than him were everywhere. He was supposed to be a shadow no one noticed.

Not a shooting target.

"Fudge!" he snapped, sitting up abruptly.

"I'm not stepping out of the kitchen anymore. Not unless I have to."

His eyes hardened.

"And I'm going to cultivate. I'm going to get stronger. I'll take back my former power."

He clenched his fists.

"When I reach that level again, I don't care who stands in my way. They won't be able to stop me from walking out of here."

He jumped off the bed, grabbed several pills from the kitchen storage, and swallowed them in quick succession. Then he sat cross-legged on the floor, closed

his eyes, and immediately began to cultivate.

This time, there would be no showing off.

Only growth.

Only power.

And the long preparation for escape.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 577[1,018 words]

When the Fatty brothers discovered that Alex had locked himself in cultivation, they made a quiet decision.

They would not disturb him.

They prepared food pills for him every day. They even set aside rare herbs so he could cultivate in peace. Whatever he needed, they supplied it without complaint.

By now, the Fatty brothers had mastered the new recipes for the improved food pills. They could even use the leftovers to refine additional pills on their own. They no longer depended on Alex.

On top of that, they had just won nearly a hundred new servants and a large amount of money. Their days were filled with managing people, counting profits, and

securing their new position. They were busy building their own future.

The least they could do for Alex was give him silence and space.

One month passed.

Inside his room, Alex could feel it clearly-his cultivation rising from the First Level of Qi Condensation to the Second.

The energy inside his body grew denser. Sharper. More controlled.

"Ninth Junior Brother," Eight Fatty said one afternoon, standing at the doorway. "Why don't you take a break? You've been cultivating non-stop for over a month."

The others nodded behind him, concern written all over their faces.

Alex didn't even open his eyes. "No. I won't stop until I know I can survive here."

He had set a clear goal. At the very least, he had to reach the Fourth Level of Qi Condensation. Only then would he have the bare minimum strength to protect himself.

Time moved on.

Three months passed.

Alex cultivated like a man possessed.

"It's been three months," one brother muttered.

"So?"

"So I can't even commit to a cultivation for three weeks."

Another nodded gravely. "I once started cultivating seriously."

"What happened?"

"I remembered snacks exist."

They all glanced toward Alex's room as another pulse of Qi throbbed through the walls.

"...He's built different," someone whispered.

"No," Eight Fatty corrected. "He's built wrong."

For servants like them, the hardest thing in the world was discipline. Most could cultivate for a day or two before boredom swallowed them whole. The better ones lasted a week. Two weeks at most.

After that, they drifted.

But Alex was different.

He had already pushed past every limit of discipline. He treated cultivation like breathing. Like survival. Three months of nonstop practice did not exhaust him mentally. It barely challenged him.

In his past life, he had endured far worse.

To him, three months was nothing.

Then another two more months passed.

Six months of continuous cultivation.

Eight Fatty and the others were no longer impressed. They were afraid.

They whispered among themselves, worried that Alex might truly be driving himself to death. His body looked leaner, sharper. His presence felt heavier.

"He's going to collapse one day," one of them said nervously.

"He hasn't stopped once."

And then-

It happened again.

A violent explosion tore through the air.

The sound blasted outward from Alex's room, shaking the walls and sending a shockwave through the courtyard.

Eight Fatty and the others froze.

They looked up at the same time, eyes wide with shock.

The air itself seemed to tremble.

"Little Junior Brother Ninth has broken through!"

"The Fifth Level of Qi Condensation!"

He hasn't been here for a year,

and

he's already at the fifth level! That's

unheard of! No one in the sects

History has advanced that fast. He's

practically a monster!"

Alex exhaled slowly, almost amused.

"It took me nearly a year to reach the fifth level," he said under his breath.

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Back in Estoria, cultivating had felt like starving. He had scraped energy from the earth like a beggar licking

crumbs from stone

Every breath

brought almost nothing. Every

breakthrough cost blood and sweat.

But here?

The energy of heaven and earth here was so dense it almost felt solid against his

skin.

Back then, he had been surviving on scraps-barely inhaling enough spiritual energy to stay alive.

Here, he wasn't breathing it in. He was devouring it.

Like a man dying of thirst in the desert who suddenly finds an oasis, he drank in the Heaven and Earth Energy in desperate, greedy gulps.

And with the food pills from the kitchen, the effect was ridiculous. He was like a

balloon being pumped full of air without a single leak.

But the true miracle wasn't the environment.

It was the Royal Imperial Cultivation technique.

In the past, even if he drew in one hundred percent of the energy around him, his body could only absorb twenty to twenty-five percent. A technique that could absorb thirty to forty percent was

already considered legendary.

The Royal Imperial method?

It took in almost everything.

Ninety-nine percent entered his body with no waste, no loss, no escape.

That was the real terror.

Alex knew Wang Junhao had been at the Third Level of Qi Condensation. That was why Alex had forced himself to keep going until he felt safe at the Fourth Level.

But he had thought it through carefully.

Wang Junhao was arrogant, but not stupid. After losing once, he wouldn't challenge Alex again unless he believed he could win. He would only come back once he had broken through to the Fourth Level himself.

Only then would he dare.

That was why Alex pushed further.

Fifth Level.

At that stage, even if Wang Junhao reached the Fourth Level, Alex would still have the advantage.

He finally allowed himself to stop.

Inside the kitchen courtyard, Eight Fatty and the others were already rushing toward Alex's room, faces bright with excitement, ready to congratulate him.

Then they froze.

A large group of people stormed into the kitchen.

At the front stood Wang Junhao.

Behind him were twenty others, all wearing the uniform of the Servants' Disciple Department. Their expressions were cold and official.

Wang Junhao's eyes locked onto Alex like a blade.

"Number Ninth!" he shouted, his voice sharp and echoing across the courtyard.

"Last time, you used underhanded tricks to win against me."

He stepped forward, chin lifted in challenge

"I officially declare a rematch!" Wang Junhao announced.

"With the Servants' Disciple Department as witness!"

One Fatty whispered, "Is that good?"

Another whispered back, "It means we can't bury his body quietly."

Alex finally step forward, dusting off his sleeves.

"Don't you dare run," Wang Junhao sneered, his voice dripping with contempt.

"Run?" Alex blinked, feeling insulted.

A faint, dangerous smile curved at the corner of his mouth.

"I've been cultivating in isolation for half a year. I was starting to get bored."

His eyes locked onto Wang Junhao's.

"I've been wanting to stretch my bones... want hit someone. And you just happened to show up."

He tilted his head slightly.

"Looks like it's your lucky day."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 578[1,478 words]

First Fatty stepped forward without hesitation. The other seven fatties moved with him, forming a solid wall in front of Alex.

First Fatty rolled his shoulders and let out a thunderous laugh.

"I was wondering why I heard dogs barking just now," he roared, his voice shaking the rafters. He stood there like a mountain-broad, unmovable, towering over the rest. "Turns out a pack of mutts from the Servants' Discipline Department came to make noise in our Kitchen."

Across from them stood twenty men clustered around Wang Junhao. They wore servant uniforms, but their sleeves were embroidered with a bold character -"Discipline." It gleamed like a badge of authority.

They weren't ordinary servants. They carried themselves with the smug confidence of men used to power.

One of them stepped forward. He was built like a tiger and thick as a bear. The air around him trembled faintly-fifth level of Qi Condensation. His presence pressed down like a stone.

"Other people might fear the Kitchen," he said coldly, eyes locked on First Fatty, "but the Servants' Discipline Department doesn't give a damn about you."

He tilted his chin.

"We received a formal complaint from Wang Junhao regarding an unjust

replacement within the Kitchen," the burly man said coldly, his tone stiff with official authority. "We are acting under the mandate of the Servants' Discipline Department."

His eyes swept across them with open contempt.

"Interfering with this investigation will be treated as direct resistance against departmental enforcement."

He stepped forward, voice turning sharp.

"Now tell me are you really foolish enough to stand in our way?"

Seven Fatty snorted and jabbed a finger toward the burly man.

"You're only at the fifth level of Qi Condensation," he shouted. "And you dare to swagger in here? You really don't know what our Brother Nine is capable of, do you?"

"Capable of what?" the burly man shot back, stepping forward with deliberate confidence. "I'm the highest-ranked servant in this department. You think I'd be afraid of anyone?"

His gaze swept past the fatties and landed on Alex.

There wasn't even a flicker of caution in his eyes.

Either Wang Junhao hadn't told them what happened that day... or they simply didn't believe it. If they had witnessed it themselves, they would never have dared walk into this kitchen so boldly.

Alex stepped forward calmly.

"Big Brother," he said to First Fatty, voice steady, "let me handle them."

"Brother Nine!" First Fatty protested, turning his massive frame slightly. "We rarely get visitors. And it's even rarer someone dares to mock the Kitchen. Let us warm up

a bit first. If we don't move, all this fat will just keep growing!"

The other fatties burst into agreement.

"Yes, Brother!"

Without hesitation, each of them reached behind the stoves and pulled out a massive iron wok. They gripped them like shields, like blunt weapons forged for war. Eight huge iron pans gleamed under the sun..

They stepped forward in unison.

The sight froze the air for a split second.

Then the twenty members of the Servants' Discipline Department exploded in laughter.

The burly man wiped a tear from his eye.

"What are you?" he sneered. "Too poor to afford real weapons?"

With a sharp metallic whisper, he drew his sword. The blade caught the light, thin and deadly.

He lifted it slightly.

"This," he said, voice dripping with contempt, "is what a weapon is supposed to look like."

To tell the truth, after the fight on the platform, the Kitchen had become the richest force in the servant area. They had made a fortune from betting on that battle. Silver flowed into their hands like water.

But when it came to weapons, none of them cared for swords or spears.

They had seen Alex fight with an iron wok that day. The way he moved. The way the metal rang when it struck. It wasn't just effective-it was beautiful.

From that moment on, the Kitchen made a rule.

They would only use iron woks as weapons.

A symbol. A signature. A declaration.

"Brother," Wang Junhao stepped forward, forcing calm into his voice though anger burned in his eyes. "I'm not here to cause chaos. I'm here for justice. Let me fight Number Nine. Win or lose will decide the position. Last time, you agreed that the Number Nine spot would be mine."

First Fatty stared at him, then let out a harsh laugh.

"You bastard surnamed Wang," he said bluntly. "It was my blind eye that even considered choosing you. Now I thank heaven you never became our Number Nine. And listen carefully-even if you win today, we still won't give you a place here."

Wang Junhao's face twisted.

"How dare you!"

His pride couldn't take it.

"If you refuse to give me the Number Nine position," he shouted, voice cracking with rage, "then remember this-my big brother is the leader of the Servants' Discipline Department! I'll have him crush this Kitchen. I'll have him tear it down brick by brick!" "You dare?!" Second Fatty roared, stepping forward with his iron wok raised. "What don't I dare?!" Wang Junhao snapped back. His eyes were bloodshot now. He had lost control.

He spun toward the twenty Discipline members behind him.

"All of you-attack! Beat those fatties down! Make them kneel! Let them beg me to join the Kitchen!"

His voice rose higher, crazed with ambition.

"Once I'm in charge of the Kitchen, I'll reward you all with rare herbs!"

"Attack!"

Wang Junhao charged first, iron sword flashing as he rushed forward with the Servants' Discipline Department behind him like a wave of steel.

"Wang Junhao-face me!" Alex shouted.

He moved at the same instant, iron wok gripped tight in his hand as he lunged forward.

"Gaia," Alex said calmly in his mind. "Give me the path. Break them all."

"Affirmative," Gaia responded.

In an instant, blue lines, green lines, yellow lines flashed across Alex's vision. Trajectories. Weak points. Angles of attack. Every movement laid bare.

Suddenly, everyone in front of him became a target.

He was only at the fifth level of Qi Condensation-but that didn't matter. He could already draw on a portion of his force. Enough.

More than enough.

The burly man from the Servants' Discipline Department let out a cold laugh and charged at the fatties, sword raised high.

The clash was inevitable.

And the Kitchen was ready.

It turned into a twenty-versus-nine fight in the blink of an eye.

Alex could see it clearly-the

Servants' Discipline Department was stronger. They trained every day. They controlled other servants through force fighting was their job. The eight fatties, on the other hand,

spent more time eating snacks and cooking than cultivating.

"Master," Gaia's voice sounded in his mind, calm and analytical. "Based on their

levels, there is a high probability the fatties will be injured."

"Then we won't let them get hurt," Alex replied coldly.

He rushed forward and roared.

"Wang Junhao! You've pushed this too far! If you want a fight, then we'll go all out!"

The air around him exploded.

The moment Wang Junhao heard the shout, his expression twisted.

Without hesitation, he slashed his hand through the air and activated the Art of Flying Sword.

His iron blade shot upward, then streaked forward like a bolt of lightning. It tore through the air with a sharp, murderous whistle, spinning with lethal precision.

Alex unleashed the full power of the fifth level of Qi Condensation. He didn't hide a single ounce of his

cultivatiger. Sprutial energy surged through his body like a flood breaking through a dam. He poured everything into the iron wok in his hand. té FindNovel.net

The moment Wang Junhao's flying sword shot toward him—

Alex swung.

The iron wok smashed into the blade with terrifying force.

A deafening crack split the air.

The sword didn't just deflect.

It exploded.

Metal shattered into dozens of razor-sharp fragments, blasting outward like shrapnel from a bomb. The broken pieces whistled through the air and tore straight toward the Servants' Discipline Department.

"Defend!" someone shouted.

They hurriedly raised spiritual shields and circulated their qi to protect themselves.

Most reacted in time.

Some didn't.

Several screamed as iron fragments pierced their thighs. One clutched his arm as blood sprayed between his fingers. Another staggered backward, a shard embedded deep in his chest.

Before the fight had even truly begun, eight members of the Servants' Discipline Department collapsed to the ground.

Silence fell for half a second.

The eight fatties stared wide-eyed. The remaining discipline members froze in disbelief.

Wang Junhao hadn't even reached Alex yet.

He stood there, pale, heart pounding.

This was not the same Alex he had faced months ago.

"I-It's time to teach them not to mock us!" First Fatty bellowed, recovering from the shock. His confidence returned like a wildfire.

He charged with the other brothers.

This time, the momentum had shifted.

The Servants' Discipline Department was shaken. Their formation was broken. Their morale cracked.

The eight fatties roared and rushed forward, iron woks raised high like war shields. They swung with everything they had.

Clang!

Bang!

The courtyard rang with the metallic thunder of iron striking flesh, bone, and hastily raised weapons.

Alex surged forward as well, moving like a storm at the center of chaos. His wok flashed left and right, each strike backed by solid spiritual power.

The remaining discipline members, already rattled by the shattered sword, began to lose their will to fight. Fear crept into their eyes. Their movements slowed.

And once fear enters a battlefield—

The outcome is already decided.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 579[998 words]

One of the Servants' Discipline members broke and ran away the second the fatties charged.

"You think I'm scared of you?" the burly enforcer roared, barreling forward with reckless confidence.

Alex didn't flinch.

He had already studied the man's stance, his breathing, the slight weakness in his guard. The iron wok in Alex's hand cut through the air and smashed straight into the man's face with a brutal crack.

Even a Ninth Level Qi Condensation expert had once fallen to Alex when he had no inner force at all.

Now?

Now he stood at the Fifth Level of Qi Condensation. With inner force surging through his meridians, he was on an entirely different plane. Against these men, he was practically untouchable.

It took only seconds.

The fatties and the Servants' Discipline members clashed head-on, their strengths nearly equal at first glance. But while they struggled, Alex moved like a blade through water-precise, merciless, unstoppable.

One by one, he took them down.

A wrist shattered.

A knee buckled.

A body slammed into the dirt.

In less than a few minutes, it was over.

Nineteen Servants' Discipline members lay sprawled across the ground, groaning in disbelief. They had come expecting an easy victory. None of them had imagined they would be crushed so completely.

"Fifth Level of Qi Condensation... Impossible! This is impossible!"

Wang Junhao stared at Alex as if he were staring at a ghost risen from the grave. His face drained of color. To release that kind of power so cleanly, so effortlessly-it required the Fifth Level. There was no mistaking it.

But how?

Just months ago, Alex had been nothing.

How could he have transformed so drastically in such a short time?

This wasn't how it was supposed to go.

Wang Junhao had brought twenty men from the Servants' Discipline Department. Twenty. He had been certain it would be more than enough.

Instead, they had been wiped out.

The world felt twisted, unreal-like he had stepped into a living nightmare he couldn't wake from.

He wasn't the only one shaken.

The burly man from the Servants' Discipline Department, now clutching his bleeding face, stared at Alex with raw fear. His companions exchanged stunned looks, their earlier arrogance gone without a trace.

Even Eight Fatty and his crew stood frozen, mouths half open, unable to fully process what they had just witnessed.

From twenty elite members of the Servants' Discipline Department-

Almost all of them had been taken down by Alex alone.

"You... you—" Wang Junhao stammered, scrambling backward on the ground. "You cheated!"

"Cheated?" Alex stepped forward slowly, his shadow falling over Wang Junhao like a sentence being passed. His voice turned cold. "For a long time, you strutted around like a king. You tried to kill me again and again."

He leaned down slightly, eyes sharp as steel.

"Go on. Try it again."

His fist shot out without warning.

It slammed straight into Wang Junhao's eye.

A sickening thud. Then a scream.

Wang Junhao shrieked in agony and collapsed onto the dirt, clutching his face. He

tried to gather his strength, tried to rise, tried to fight back-

But his cultivation was only at the Fourth Level of Qi Condensation.

Against Alex's Fifth Level-refined, explosive, and battle-tempered-he was utterly powerless.

For the first time since he had started targeting Alex, Wang Junhao understood something terrifying.

The prey had become the predator.

"When I tried to avoid you, you kept coming after me," Alex roared, fury tearing through his voice. "Do you think I'm that easy to bully?"

He drove his foot into Wang Junhao's ribs. Then another kick. Then a punch that snapped the man's head sideways.

Wang Junhao screamed.

Alex didn't stop.

Fist. Elbow. Heel.

Each strike landed with a sickening crack that echoed across the courtyard. The burly enforcer and the remaining members of the

Servants' Discipline Depart

ment stared in stunned silence. Even Eight Fatty and the others felt their scalps prickle.

They weren't just watching a fight anymore.

They were watching someone being dismantled.

Wang Junhao's cries turned hoarse. Tears streamed down his face, cutting through the dirt and blood. His chest heaved in panic and disbelief.

How?

How could Alex have changed so much in only a few months?

That kind of transformation took years. Decades. It required talent, guidance, resources.

In Wang Junhao's mind, there was only one explanation.

Someone powerful was backing Alex.

Someone strong enough to reshape him.

The thought crushed what little confidence he had left.

Overwhelmed by pain, humiliation, and fear, Wang Junhao's body went limp. His eyes rolled back. He passed out cold on the ground.

"Stop!"

The burly man's voice boomed across the yard. He stepped forward, face dark with anger. "Do you know who you're beating? He's the younger brother of the leader of the Servants' Discipline

Department. And you attacked us as well. Your entire kitchen will pay for this. None of you will be spared."

Before anyone could respond, heavy footsteps thundered from the entrance.

"Stop fighting!" one of the newly arrived members shouted. "We're from the Servants' Discipline Department!"

Eight Fatty blinked. "Oh? I thought you were from the Flower Appreciation Society."

Around twenty more members of the Servants' Discipline Department stormed into the kitchen courtyard.

One of the men who had fled earlier now returned at their head, face twisted with shame and rage. This time, they came prepared. Steel flashed as swords were drawn in unison.

The air turned sharp and cold.

The man bristled. "This is your last warning!"

"Funny. I didn't hear a warning."

"You're attacking an official department!"

First Fatty swallowed hard but yanked out his iron wok without hesitation. The others followed, gripping their iron wok weapons and charging forward with raw determination.

Alex moved first.

He shot ahead of everyone like a wolf breaking from the pack.

He didn't hesitate. He didn't slow down.

He crashed into their formation before they could fully spread out.

One man's wrist snapped as his sword clattered to the ground. Another was kicked

backward, crashing into two of his own allies. A third took a fist to the throat and dropped instantly.

Alex tore through them like a predator in a flock of chickens.

None of them could stop him.

"You're attacking the Servants' Discipline Department!" the burly man shouted, his voice cracking with outrage, "You think this will end well? You will not be forgiven. All of you will be executed!"

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At those words, several of the fatties went pale.

Execution.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 580[1,172 words]

This was no longer a simple fight.

"We're defending ourselves!" one of the fatties shouted back, voice trembling but defiant. "You were the ones who attacked us first!"

"Doesn't matter," the burly man sneered. "We are the Servants' Discipline Department. No one will listen to your excuses. The elders will stand with us."

His words hung heavy in the air.

Authority. Power. Influence.

They weren't just facing swords.

They were facing the weight of the entire hierarchy.

Alex's iron wok came down one last time.

The final standing member of the second wave from the Servants' Discipline Department crumpled to the ground. Silence followed-broken only by groans and the scrape of bodies shifting in pain.

Alex turned to First Fatty, breathing steady, eyes sharp.

"How many people are there in total in the Servants' Discipline Department?"

First Fatty hesitated, then answered, "About a hundred."

"A hundred?" the burly man barked from the ground, blood running down his mouth as he forced himself up on one elbow. "You ignorant fools. There are nearly three thousand servants in the sect. Two hundred belong to the Servants' Discipline Department alone. And when they hear about this, all of them will come for you."

His voice trembled with fury and promise.

"All of them."

Alex went quiet.

Three hundred was not impossible for him.

But if he crushed them all, he would make enemies of the entire department, even the entire sect. Elders. Supervisors. Every faction that feared losing control.

This would not stay a simple grudge.

He looked at First Fatty. "Brother..... is the Servants' Discipline Department corrupt?"

First Fatty let out a cold laugh. "There's nothing more corrupt in this place than them."

"What do you know about="

The burly man didn't finish his sentence.

Alex's iron wok swung in a tight arc and smashed into his face. The impact knocked

him flat. His body twitched once before going still.

Alex lowered the wok and turned back to the fatties.

"Brothers," he said calmly, "we can't stand here and wait for all three hundred of them to surround us. That would be foolish."

The eight fatties exchanged uneasy looks.

"I'm thinking we go to their headquarters," Alex continued. "We strike first. We take control of the Servants' Discipline building and end this at the root. If we control the headquarters, this problem can be solved cleanly—before it spirals out of control."

"Alex... just to confirm," Third Fatty said cautiously, jogging beside him. "We're attacking their headquarters?"

"Yes."

"The building where all three hundred of them work?"

"Yes."

"The place filled with weapons, records, chains, and torture rooms?"

Alex nodded once. "That one."

Third Fatty ran in silence for three seconds.

"...Good. I was worried we were doing something reckless."

The fatties froze.

"You're serious?" one of them asked.

Eight Fatty was the first to step forward, eyes blazing. "That's a good idea. I've been sick of those bastards for a long time. If we're going to fight them, we might as well

hit them where it hurts. I've always wanted to smash that building at least once."

"I'm in," another fatty said without hesitation.

"Count us in too," the rest chimed in, one after another.

There was no more doubt in their voices.

"Well then," Eight Fatty grinned, lifting his iron wok onto his shoulder. "We're brothers. All for one, and one for all. Let's go pay them a visit."

A slow smile touched Alex's face. "Good. Can someone lead the way?"

"Wait," Fifth Fatty puffed. "Shouldn't we make a plan first?"

"We have a plan," Alex replied.

"We do?"

"Yes."

Eighth Fatty grinned. "Hit them first. Hit them hard."

Fifth Fatty frowned. "That's not a plan. That's a slogan."

Alex's eyes stayed forward.

"It becomes a plan," he said calmly, "if we survive it. Let's go. Don't worry I will handle it!"

"I will lead you," said Sixth Fatty, the smallest and quickest among them. He was known for his speed despite his size. "Just follow me."

He took off at once.

The other fatties thundered after him, their heavy steps shaking the ground. Alex ran alongside them, matching their pace easily.

From a distance, it must have looked ridiculous.

Eight massive, round-bodied men charging down the path with iron woks in hand—

and Alex moving beside them like a calm blade cutting through the wind.

It looked absurd.

It looked unstoppable.

They ran for nearly fifteen minutes before the Servants' Discipline Department headquarters came into view.

It was a large, three-story building made of dark stone, its windows narrow and severe. The place looked less like an office and more like a fortress.

Alex slowed to a stop and studied it.

"I'm going inside," he said calmly. "I'll take control of the building and check their account books. I don't believe for a second that won't find dirt on them. Can you block the front door and make sure no one gets in?"

The eight fatties exchanged looks.

Then they nodded.

Without another word, they marched to the entrance and planted themselves in front

of the massive wooden doors. Their broad bodies formed a living wall.

No one was getting past them.

Alex stepped inside alone.

The moment he crossed the threshold, several Servants' Discipline members spun toward him.

"What are you doing here?" one shouted. "You're not allowed inside!"

"Where is your leader's office?" Alex asked, his tone flat and direct.

"Get out!" the servant barked.

The iron wok flashed.

A loud crack echoed through the hall as it smashed into the man's face. He dropped instantly, unconscious.

Gasps rippled through the room.

Alex lifted the wok slightly, his eyes sweeping across the stunned faces.

"Where is the leader's office?" he asked again.

Silence.

He took a step forward.

"For every person who doesn't answer," he said evenly, "I'll start breaking heads."

The threat was not loud.

It didn't need to be.

One man, trembling, raised his hands. "Third floor! It's on the third floor! Please!"

"Good."

Alex turned and rushed toward the staircase.

"Stop! You can't—"

The iron wok swung again. Another body hit the floor.

Behind him, First Fatty and the others remained at the entrance, blocking the doors like human barricades.

But the commotion had already spread.

More members of the Servants' Discipline Department began returning, and this time they didn't come alone.

An elder arrived with them.

"All of you fatties!" the elder roared

as he stepped forward, robes sweeping behind him. His presence was heavy oppressive. "What are you doing at the Servants' Discipline Department headquarters? Do you have a death wish?"

The fatties glanced at one another, uncertainty flickering across their faces.

"Move away from the door," the elder commanded coldly. "Come here and kneel before I break every bone in your bodies."

First Fatty swallowed. He leaned closer to the others.

"What do we do?"

"Number Nine said to hold the front until he finishes," one whispered.

"But he's not back yet."

"Then what?"

A tense silence passed between them.

"If we move, he'll be trapped inside," another said.

"And if we don't," someone muttered, "the elder might execute us."

They looked at each other again.

Then something hardened in their expressions.

Without another word, they turned

back toward the elder and the approaching Servants' Discipline members. Each fatty lifted his iron wok and held it firmly in front of his chest.

"We're not moving," First Fatty said, voice shaking but resolute. "If you want to execute us, then do it."

The elder's face darkened with fury.

"How dare you!"

He drew his sword in one smooth motion. Steel rang as it left the sheath.

"If I don't cut off each of your arms today," he thundered, "then my name isn't Jun

Sik!"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 581[1,640 words]

Wang Junwei was in his office that morning when the message came.

His younger brother was in trouble again. Asking for help. As usual.

Junwei didn't hesitate. He sent twenty men to handle it.

The plan had been in place for years-decades, really.

His little brother would enter the kitchen as a lowly servant. He would keep his head down. Endure the humiliation. Work harder than everyone else. Climb step by step until he became a numbered servant-someone trusted, someone with direct access to the core herbs.

That was the key.

Once he reached that position, he would control the flow.

Then, little by little, he would begin taking small portions of rare herbs. Nothing obvious. Nothing reckless. Just enough to stay invisible.

Small amounts. Regularly.

Everything had been arranged.

Then Alex appeared.

And in a single move, he took the ninth position in the kitchen.

That was when things began to unravel.

Junwei was still thinking about damage control when his office door exploded inward with a violent crash.

The wood splintered.

"Wang Junwei!"

Alex stepped through the wrecked doorway like a storm breaking into a house.

"Where do you keep your dirty record books?"

The question hit like a blade.

For less than half a second-barely a flicker-Junwei's eyes shifted toward the right side of his bookshelf.

Just a reflex.

Just instinct.

But it was enough.

Gaia recorded it.

The micro-movement. The angle. The tension in his shoulder. The dilation in his pupils.

His body had betrayed him.

Alex didn't hesitate. He followed the trajectory Gaia projected in his mind and walked straight to the bookshelf.

"Get out of my office!" Junwei roared.

He lunged forward, positioning himself between Alex and the shelf. His sword flashed out of its scabbard in one smooth motion.

He was at the Fifth Level of Qi Condensation.

In the sect, that meant power. Authority.

But Alex had Gaia.

Flaws appeared in Junwei's stance like cracks in glass.

Weight imbalance. Guard too high. Shoulder tight.

Alex lifted his iron wok.

And brought it down.

The impact thundered through the room.

Junwei felt a crushing force slam into his shoulder and arm from above. Bone snapped. Muscles tore. Pain detonated through his body.

He crashed to the floor.

The wooden boards cracked beneath him.

"Who-who are you?!" Junwei screamed, clutching his shattered shoulder, his sword clattering uselessly beside him.

Alex didn't even look at him.

"I just want to stay peacefully in the kitchen," he said calmly.

His hands were already moving, pulling books from the shelf one by one.

He flipped them open. Gaia scanned the contents instantly.

Wrong.

Alex tossed it aside.

Next one.

Wrong.

Thrown away.

"But your little brother keeps harassing me," Alex continued, voice steady, almost bored. "I had no choice but to protect my place in the kitchen."

Book after book hit the floor.

With every thud, Wang Junwei's face grew paler.

Sweat slid down his temple.

"Wait wait!" Junwei gasped. "If this is about my brother, I'll stop him. I'll tell him to quit the kitchen. He won't bother you again!"

"Too late."

Alex's voice was flat.

Gaia highlighted something.

At the back of the lowest shelf—barely visible—a hairline crack traced along the wood. So faint no human eye would notice. But Gaia calculated the depth. The hollow space behind it.

Hidden compartment.

Alex stepped forward and knocked on the panel.

The sound was wrong.

Hollow.

He drew back his fist and smashed it forward.

The wooden cover shattered inward, revealing a small concealed door built into the wall.

"Don't!" Wang Junwei shouted, panic flooding his voice.

He staggered to his feet, one arm hanging uselessly, the other reaching out desperately.

But he was too slow.

Alex turned and kicked him.

The strike hit Junwei square in the chest.

The kick landed with brutal force.

Wang Junwei flew backward, smashed through the wooden window frame, and disappeared into open air.

For a split second, there was silence.

Then his body crashed onto the tiled roof below. The impact echoed across the courtyard. Tiles shattered. He rolled helplessly, sliding off the edge, slamming onto the next lower rooftop. Wood splintered. Dust rose.

He kept falling.

By the time he hit the ground, he landed hard at the feet of Elder Jun Sik—who had been moments away from striking the seven fatties.

Junwei lay twisted on the stone pavement, blood at the corner of his mouth, one arm hanging uselessly.

Elder Jun Sik froze.

"Junwei?"

Junwei forced his head up. His voice was weak, shaking.

"He... he took my ledger book."

Elder Jun Sik's face drained of color.

The fatties were forgotten instantly.

Without another word, he activated his light-body technique and shot upward, robes snapping in the air as he flew back toward the third-floor office.

He landed inside.

The room was empty.

Books were scattered across the floor like debris after a storm. Shelves broken. The

hidden compartment smashed open.

The ledger was gone.

"Damn rat... where are you?!" Elder Jun Sik hissed, his voice losing its calm authority.

For the first time, panic crept into his eyes.

There were things in that ledger that could never see daylight. Bribes. Cover-ups.

Names. Transactions. Secrets that would destroy more than one life.

He rushed back out, scanning the courtyard below.

At the same time-

Alex was already on the first floor.

"Brother First!" he called out sharply. "I need your help with this."

First Fatty turned immediately, sensing the urgency in his tone.

Alex strode toward the main entrance and raised the book in his hand.

"All brothers, protect me," he shouted. "I'm going to read this out loud."

The seven fatties reacted instantly.

They moved as one, their large bodies forming a solid wall around Alex. Shoulder to shoulder. Unmovable. Their presence alone was enough to intimidate most servants.

But today, the courtyard was already filling.

Word had spread fast—the kitchen had broken into the Discipline Department. Servants from every corner had gathered, whispering, watching.

Alex opened the ledger.

His voice rang out clear and cold.

"The third day of last autumn," Alex read, his voice cutting through the courtyard, "Wang Junwei accepted one thousand spiritual stones from the Huang Family to bury the case of Huang Jie murdering two servants. Two lives erased. No trial. No punishment. Nine hundred stones were

delivered to Elder Jun Sik One hundred were divided among the enforcers who helped silence the matter."

The courtyard exploded.

Gasps turned into furious murmurs. Murmurs turned into open rage.

Two servants.

Killed.

Sold for money.

Alex didn't pause.

"The seventh day of last autumn," he continued, "a stable worker named Lin Tao lost three fingers in an accident. Instead of compensation, the Discipline Department fined him twenty spiritual stones for 'damaging sect property.' Failure to pay resulted in thirty lashes."

A wave of horror swept the crowd.

Alex's voice grew colder.

"The eleventh day of last autumn.

Xuan Mei was taken to the Discipline Department after injuring the Gu Family's first daughter during sparring. She was detained without formal charges. She was forced to serve Elder Jun Sik in his private quarters in his bed-in exchange for her release."

The word serve poisoned the air.

Faces hardened.

Some turned pale. Others trembled with fury.

They had suspected.

They had whispered.

But now it was written. Recorded. Dated.

Proof.

"How dare you force Xuan Mei to serve you!" someone screamed.

"So it was you! That's why she disappeared!"

"Did you kill her?!"

The accusations hit like stones.

Everyone knew the Servants' Discipline Department was rotten.

But knowing was powerless.

Proof was a weapon.

And now a kitchen servant someone they mocked, someone they thought beneath them—stood in the center of the courtyard holding that weapon and reading it line by line.

"You filthy animals!" someone screamed from the back.

"You call that justice?!" another shouted.

"You're supposed to protect the sect, not prey on us!"

A servant pushed forward, eyes red with rage. "I still haven't gotten revenge! You extorted ten spiritual stones from me just because I spat on the ground!"

Another voice joined in. "You locked my sister up for three days because she didn't bow fast enough!"

"You beat my brother until he couldn't walk!"

"You took our savings!"

"You destroyed our families!"

"You thieves! You parasites!"

The anger that had been buried under fear for years was rising all at once.

And it wasn't going back down.

Voices piled on top of each other.

And Alex kept reading.

Wang Junwei lay on the ground, pale and trembling. People began spitting on him.

One glob landed on his face. Then another. The crowd had swelled to at least three hundred servants.

If they rushed him at once, he would be beaten to death before anyone could stop it.

"Shut up!"

The roar exploded from inside the main hall.

Elder Jun Sik stepped out slowly, his robes flowing, his face dark with fury.

The courtyard fell into tense silence.

All eyes locked onto him.

"You bastard!" Alex shouted, pointing

straight at him. In his other hand, he

held the ledger high and open. "You extort servants. You torture them. You use them for your own filthy pleasure! Does the sect know what you've been doing? have your

records. If hand this to the sect master!"

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"You're lying!" Elder Jun Sik bellowed, his voice shaking the air.

"How can I lie?" Alex shot back. "The proof is right here!"

He raised the book for everyone to see.

For a split second, the courtyard held its breath.

Then Elder Jun Sik moved.

His hand flicked.

A thin sword shot from his sleeve like a streak of lightning. It pierced straight through the ledger, lifting it into the air. Before anyone could react, a burst of qi ignited.

The book exploded into flames.

Paper turned to ash midair.

The evidence vanished in seconds.

Elder Jun Sik stepped forward, eyes blazing.

"You have nothing."

He lunged at Alex, palm striking forward with overwhelming force.

Alex reacted instantly, pulling up his iron wok as a shield.

The collision was brutal.

The wok shattered into fragments.

The force blasted through Alex's defense and slammed into his chest like a charging bull. His body flew backward, crashing into several servants before tumbling across the ground. He rolled nearly fifty meters before finally coming to a stop.

Pain detonated inside him.

It felt like being hit by a truck.

Air wouldn't come into his lungs. His ribs screamed. Bones in multiple places were broken.

Elder Jun Sik walked toward him slowly.

"Now you die," he said coldly. "How dare you slander me."

He raised his fist.

Everyone knew what that meant.

At his level, one strike was enough to crush a skull.

The seven fatties roared and rushed forward, but Elder Jun Sik waved his hand once.

A wave of qi burst outward.

The fatties were thrown aside like leaves in a storm, bodies smashing into walls and pillars.

"Die."

Elder Jun Sik's fist came down toward Alex's head.

Alex couldn't move.

He could barely breathe.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 582[1,813 words]

Elder Jun Sik's fist shot forward like a cannonball, aimed straight at Alex's face. If it landed, there was no doubt about the outcome-Alex would die instantly.

For the briefest moment, regret stabbed through Alex's mind.

"I shouldn't have come here."

The thought barely formed before the strike arrived.

But a split second before Jun Sik's fist reached Alex's face, another hand suddenly appeared and clamped down around his wrist, stopping the blow in midair.

The courtyard froze.

"Jun Sik," a calm voice said. "Is it really necessary for your fist to kill?"

Jun Sik's eyes flared with anger as he turned his head.

"Xie Han," he snapped. "Stay out of this."

Elder Xie Han stood beside Alex, his grip on Jun Sik's fist firm as iron.

"You're trying to kill one of my people," Xie Han said evenly. "How could I not interfere? Did you ask my permission before raising your hand against him?"

Jun Sik's face twisted with fury.

"I am the elder of the Discipline Department!" he barked. "This brat is accusing me of crimes I never committed. For that alone, he deserves death!"

With a roar, Jun Sik twisted his arm free and threw another punch straight at Alex.

But Xie Han moved faster.

He stepped forward and placed himself between Alex and the attack. His fist shot out to meet Jun Sik's, the two blows colliding with a thunderous crack.

The impact sent a shockwave through the courtyard.

In an instant, the two elders clashed again.

Fists struck like lightning.

Kicks tore through the air.

They exchanged nearly ten punches and eight powerful kicks in the span of seconds. Every collision echoed like thunder. Their movements were too fast for most people to follow.

The surrounding servants—already standing far away—were still blasted backward by the violent wind from their strikes. Several stumbled and nearly fell from the pressure alone.

These were elders.

Their level of strength was worlds beyond ordinary disciples.

Jun Sik's face darkened with rage.

“Bastard Xie!” he roared. “Are you trying to die?”

With a sharp metallic sound, he drew his sword.

The blade flashed in the sunlight.

Across from him, Elder Xie Han didn't panic. He calmly drew his own sword, the steel sliding free with a quiet, lethal whisper.

“Jun Sik,” Xie Han said firmly. “If you don't want to make this situation worse, you should stop right now. There's still a chance for you to admit your mistakes and ask forgiveness.”

Jun Sik barked a harsh laugh.

“So you're still protecting your people?” he shouted. “They attacked the Servants' Discipline Department!”

Xie Han's eyes narrowed slightly.

“But the report I received says your department attacked the kitchen first.”

"He's lying!" Jun Sik snapped, pointing furiously at Alex. "That brat is accusing me of crimes I never committed!"

"He has proof," Xie Han replied calmly.

"Proof?"

Jun Sik burst into laughter, loud and mocking.

"What proof could he possibly have?"

"The ledger book," Xie Han said.

Jun Sik laughed even harder.

"A ledger book? That's hilarious," he sneered. "There's no such thing. And if you're talking about that little book he was holding earlier-it's already destroyed. There's nothing left to prove anything."

For a moment, Xie Han simply watched him.

Then, slowly, he lowered his sword.

Instead of attacking, he turned and walked toward Alex.

Alex was still on the ground, pale and unsteady from the earlier beating.

Xie Han bent down and helped him to his feet. As he did, he placed a hand on Alex's shoulder and quietly channeled a stream of inner force into his body.

Warm energy spread through Alex's chest, soothing the pain and stabilizing his breathing.

Only then did Xie Han speak again.

"The ledger book," he said calmly, "is already in the hands of the Elder Discipline Council."

Jun Sik's smile vanished.

"And it's real," Xie Han continued. "I believe it's only a matter of time before the Discipline elders arrive here to investigate."

The courtyard fell into heavy silence.

"Impossible," Jun Sik said coldly. "You have nothing."

"Jun Sik," Elder Xie Han replied with a faint smile. "This kid is smarter than you think."

He glanced at Alex before continuing.

"He gave the real ledger book to First Fatty and told him to meet me."

Jun Sik's eyes narrowed.

"I instructed First Fatty to deliver the ledger directly to the Discipline Council."

Jun Sik shook his head immediately.

"No way."

His gaze swept across the courtyard. Only then did he notice something strange.

There had been eight of the fat servants earlier.

Now there were only seven.

One of them had disappeared.

Jun Sik's expression stiffened.

"That book was already burned," he said sharply.

Alex smiled faintly.

"The book you burned was the daily discipline record book," he said calmly. "I just pretended it was the ledger."

He tilted his head slightly, watching Jun Sik's face darken.

"You panicked because you were afraid it was real," Alex added. "So you destroyed it without thinking."

Jun Sik's chest rose and fell heavily.

He understood the situation instantly.

If the real ledger reached the Discipline Council, every one of his crimes would be exposed. The consequences would be devastating.

His eyes slowly turned toward Alex.

Cold.

Murderous.

"You have to die," Jun Sik said quietly.

"Don't blame everything on me," Alex continued quickly. "This didn't start because of me."

"It started with Wang Junhao trying to take my position in the kitchen."

Then his finger shifted toward the older brother.

"And his brother, Wang Junwei, backing him up. He sent forty Discipline servants to storm the kitchen."

"That's the real reason we're all standing here today. That's why the ledger book came out in the first place."

"If anyone is responsible for this mess, it's Wang Junwei."

Alex gave a small shrug.

"I'm just an innocent passerby who got dragged into it."

"You?" Jun Sik exploded. "An innocent passerby?!"

His fury erupted.

With a roar, Jun Sik rushed forward and swung his sword in a wide, savage arc at Alex.

But before the blade could reach him-

Two figures suddenly rushed into the courtyard.

Both wore black robes marked with the insignia of the Discipline Council.

One of them stepped in instantly, his sword flashing out to parry Jun Sik's attack with a sharp metallic clash.

At the same moment, the second man drove his fist straight into Jun Sik's stomach.

The strike landed like a hammer.

Jun Sik's body folded instantly.

The air blasted from his lungs as he collapsed to the ground, doubled over in pain.

A shocked murmur swept through the crowd.

"The Discipline Elders..."

Everyone in the courtyard recognized the black robes.

The Discipline Council only appeared when an elder had committed serious wrongdoing.

One of the black-robed elders stepped forward and looked down at Jun Sik, his face cold and authoritative.

"Jun Sik," he said firmly. "You were entrusted with authority over the Servants' Discipline Department."

His voice carried clearly across the courtyard.

"Instead, you used that authority for personal gain. From this moment forward, you are under arrest."

The second Discipline elder turned toward Wang Junwei.

His gaze was just as cold.

"Wang Junwei," he said. "For your role in these crimes, you will be sentenced to fifty years of confinement in the Cave Prison."

The crowd gasped.

The Cave Prison was a terrifying punishment.

The prison cell was barely the size of a human

Brody. Once inside, the

prisoner could not move freely. The only thing they could do was sit and meditate

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For fifty years.

If a person's mental strength or cultivation was not strong enough, the endless isolation could slowly drive them insane.

Some prisoners died long before their sentence ended.

Not even waiting for the forty-year sentence to begin, Alex broke into a wide smile.

At last.

Peace.

With Wang Junwei gone and Elder

Jun Sik arrested, the kitchen would finally be quiet again. No enemies. No trouble. Just cooking, surviving, and waiting.

For Alex, that was perfect.

"Number Nine," Elder Xie Han said, looking at him thoughtfully. "You've already reached the fifth level of Qi Condensation. You qualify to apply for the Outer Discipline. I can personally recommend you

Alex reacted instantly.

"No," he bowed slightly and spoke with polite urgency. "I still have many things to learn in the kitchen. I would like to stay."

The truth, of course, was much simpler.

The servant area was safe now.

No rivals. No enemies. No powerful cultivators trying to crush him.

If he stayed here quietly, he could live peacefully while he searched for a way to return home.

Going to the Outer Discipline would only throw him into a nest of stronger fighters.

That was the last thing he wanted.

"Is that so?" Elder Xie Han said.

He studied Alex for a moment, then nodded slowly.

"I won't force you."

"Thank you, Elder," Alex said with another respectful bow.

But before the moment could settle—

A thunderous voice suddenly exploded across the sky.

"There's no need for thanks. You're coming to the Outer Discipline."

The instant the voice reached Alex's ears, his entire body stiffened.

A terrifying force descended from high above the sky.

It wrapped around him like an invisible hand.

Then it began pulling him upward.

Alex's feet left the ground.

"AAAAAH!"

He screamed miserably as his body rose into the air.

"Senior brothers! Save me!" he cried desperately, reaching toward the group of fat servants below.

"Brothers!"

He didn't want to go!

The Outer Discipline was full of cultivators far stronger than him. Life there would be dangerous.

Down below, the fatties reacted in panic.

They rushed forward, trying to grab Alex before he was lifted away.

But everything happened too fast.

Before their hands could reach him, Alex was already floating high above the courtyard.

At that same moment, a figure appeared in the sky.

A beautiful woman in flowing robes descended slowly from the clouds.

Li Qingxue.

The moment the kitchen crew saw her, their faces turned pale.

Without hesitation, they lowered their heads and bowed deeply, not daring to look directly at her.

"Ninth Junior Brother!" one of the fatties shouted from below.

"What?!" Alex yelled while floating helplessly in the air.

"Don't worry! When you become a powerful cultivator, remember us!"

Alex flailed his arms wildly. "Powerful cultivator? I'm being kidnapped!" Another fatty cupped his hands and shouted upward.

"Kidnapped by Senior Sister Li Qingxue! That's an honor!"

Alex stared down at them in disbelief.

"An honor?!"

The fatty nodded seriously.

"Most people would die for that chance."

Alex sighed miserably as he drifted higher.

"Good. Then one of you can take my place."

Up in the air, Li Qingxue stared at Alex with a faint frown.

Just looking at him made her feel a headache coming on.

She had only brought this man into the sect a year ago.

And now look at what had happened.

The entire kitchen crew had clashed with the Servants' Discipline Department.

An elder had been exposed, arrested and punished.

The story had already spread across the sect.

Even the senior elders were talking about it.

From their perspective, the whole incident was almost entertaining.

For cultivators who had spent decades—or centuries—quietly cultivating, this kind of chaos was a rare and amusing distraction.

Some of them even laughed about it.

In fact, nothing like this had happened in the sect for nearly a hundred years.

Because of that, none of the elders were particularly interested in punishing Alex.

Still, the situation couldn't be allowed to continue indefinitely.

Someone had to restore order.

And that responsibility had fallen to Li Qingxue.

So she had personally come to clean up the mess.

"Ninth Junior Brother!" another fatty shouted.

"What now?!" Alex cried.

"Don't forget us!"

"How could I forget you?" Alex yelled.

"You're the only people who tried to save me!"

The fatty nodded proudly.

"Exactly!"

Alex narrowed his eyes. "Although I noticed something strange."

"What?"

"You stopped trying after about two seconds."

The fatty coughed awkwardly.

"Well... once we saw it was Senior Sister Li Qingxue..."

Alex sighed.

"So your loyalty lasts exactly two seconds."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 583[1,031 words]

The Wudang Sect stretched across thirteen mountains.

Each department claimed its own peak, its own territory carved into the vast range. From a distance the mountains looked like a silent army of stone rising into the clouds.

At the very center stood the tallest mountain of them all.

That peak belonged to the sect leader and the elders—the true heart of Wudang.

Li Chingxue soared through the sky with Alex beside her, her robes fluttering like silver wings in the mountain wind. They flew toward one of the surrounding peaks, Thousand Herbs Peak.

Where the Pill Refinement Department was located.

The sect leader had already given Li Chingxue clear instructions.

Once Alex officially entered the Outer Sect, he would be assigned to the Pill Refinement Department.

From afar, the mountain didn't look particularly large. It seemed quiet and ordinary compared to the towering peaks around it.

But the moment they descended onto the mountain path, the illusion vanished. Birdsong echoed through the air.

The scent of herbs drifted everywhere, thick and fragrant.

The entire place looked like a hidden paradise.

The deeper they walked, the clearer it became that the mountain was far larger than it had appeared from the outside. Terraced fields stretched across the hillsides, each one carefully planted with medicinal herbs.

Alex had heard rumors before.

The entire mountain served as a massive plantation for rare herbs. Everything grown here was precious. The herbs that eventually reached the Servant's kitchens were simply the ones considered too ordinary to be used for pill refinement.

Even the leftovers here were treasures elsewhere.

A thin mist rolled through the valleys, carrying waves of medicinal fragrance.

One breath was enough to lift the spirit.

Warmth flowed through the body like gentle fire.

His eyes widened.

His cultivation base suddenly stirred. Energy surged through his meridians as if the air itself carried spiritual power.

This place was extraordinary.

He could feel it immediately.

Ahead of him, Li Chingxue's eyes flickered slightly.

Even she had to admit it.

Alex's cultivation progress over the past year was frightening. Most disciples would need several years to achieve what he had done in one.

She spoke without slowing her pace.

"Now that you are officially an Outer Sect disciple," she said calmly, "you will receive your Wudang sect name."

Alex straightened slightly, listening carefully.

"You belong to the Jun generation," she continued. "And you will keep the same number-Nine."

She paused briefly before finishing.

"From today onward, your sect name will be Jun Jiu."

"The name Jun Jiu means a gentleman. A man of upright character."

She glanced at him sideways.

"So try to act like one."

Her tone carried a faint warning.

"No more causing trouble."

Alex instantly put on the most charming smile he could manage.

He nodded rapidly.

"Of course. Of course. I'm the most well-behaved disciple in the entire sect."

Li Chingxue didn't even bother responding

"Cultivation," she said calmly, "is like rowing a boat against the current."

"If you stop moving forward, you will be pushed backward."

"It requires constant effort."

Alex nodded, wisely kept his mouth shut this time.

Arguing with Li Chingxue was rarely a good idea.

"Sect resources are only part of what helps an Outer Sect disciple grow," she continued.

"You also have to rely on your own efforts."

Her voice carried the calm authority of someone who had walked this path for many years.

"The sect offers missions for its disciples. Completing them earns you resources, experience, and opportunities."

"In a moment," she said, "you can visit the mission hall."

Her eyes settled on Alex again.

"Pick a few tasks."

"Consider them the beginning of your training."

When Alex heard that, his heart gave a sudden, heavy thump.

Not long ago, while flipping through the Wudang Sect rulebook, he had noticed a particular regulation about Outer Sect disciples. Every disciple. er was required to complete missions for the sect on a regular basis.

Fail to complete them...

...and the punishment was simple.

Demotion.

An Outer Sect disciple whoofbel

missions would be stripped of

status and thrown back into the

ranks of servants Content belong

The moment that thought resurfaced in Alex's mind, a wild spark of excitement lit up inside him.

His eyes almost shone.

But Li Chingxue clearly knew him far too well.

Without even looking back, she spoke in a cold, calm voice.

"Don't even think about it."

Alex froze.

Her tone turned sharper.

"Other disciples might get demoted to servant if they fail their missions."

She finally glanced at him, her eyes cool and piercing.

"But if you try something like that...."

Her voice dropped slightly.

"I'll personally throw you into the prison cave."

"And you'll stay there until you die."

Alex nearly jumped out of his skin.

The joy he had just felt evaporated instantly.

He nodded stiffly, forcing out a nervous laugh, but inside he was already cursing his own bad luck.

Soon they arrived at the middle section of Thousand Herbs Peak.

The mist thinned slightly, revealing a building ahead.

It wasn't large, but it carried an

elegant, refined air. The wooden structure blended naturally with the mountain scenery its roof tiles dark and polished from years of

mountain rain.

Through one of the open windows, Alex could see a young man sitting quietly inside.

The man was reading a book.

His posture was relaxed, but disciplined—like someone used to long hours of quiet

work.

As if sensing their presence, the young man suddenly looked up.

The moment he saw Li Chingxue, he immediately stood and walked outside.

He clasped his hands respectfully.

"This disciple greets the Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Chingxue."

Li Chingxue gave a small nod.

"This is disciple Jun Jiu," she said. "Take him and arrange his registration with the Outer Sect."

Her eyes flicked briefly toward Alex one last time.

Then, before he could say anything else, her body transformed into a streak of shimmering, prismatic light.

In the blink of an eye, she shot upward into the mountain mist and disappeared toward the higher peaks.

Alex stood there for a moment.

Then he let out a long breath.

Finally.

With Li Chingxue gone, it felt like a massive weight had been lifted off his shoulders.

The sky suddenly seemed brighter.

The air felt lighter.

Even the birds sounded happier.

The young man beside him watched Alex for a moment, quietly studying him.

Then he suddenly burst out laughing.

"So you're that guy."

Alex blinked.

"The one who's been beating up the Servant Discipline Department."

The young man's eyes sparkled with amusement.

Alex scratched the back of his head and chuckled.

"You're giving me too much credit, Elder Brother."

He waved his hand casually.

"That little thing isn't even worth mentioning."

The young man laughed even harder.

Clearly, Alex's shameless attitude entertained him greatly.

After a moment, he waved his hand.

"Come on. I'll show you around."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 584[1,265 words]

He began leading Alex along a winding stone path deeper into Thousand Herbs Peak.

As they walked, he pointed out various buildings scattered along the mountainside -storage halls, herb-drying courtyards, and refining chambers where disciples worked with large cauldrons and strange medicinal tools.

"Thousand Herbs Peak holds an important position in the Wudang Sect," the young man explained.

His tone shifted into something more professional.

"We cultivate medicinal herbs, gather rare plants from the mountains, and manage their storage."

He gestured toward several terraces carved into the hillside, each filled with carefully planted herbs.

"Our department specializes in spirit medicine."

His eyes briefly flicked toward the distant refining halls.

"Pill refinement. Herbal extraction. Medicinal preparation."

A faint smile appeared on his face.

"If it heals the body or strengthens cultivation..."

"...there's a good chance it came from here."

"Becoming an Outer Sect disciple of Thousand Herbs Peak also means something else," the young man said as they continued walking along the stone path. "You will serve as an apprentice apothecary."

He spoke calmly, but there was a hint of pride in his voice.

"That means you must study plants, vegetation, and medicinal herbs. You'll also learn the techniques used to refine and prepare spirit medicine."

Alex listened carefully as they walked. The young man explained everything in surprising detail how herbs were cultivated, how they were harvested, and how different ingredients were combined to produce medicinal effects.

By the time they reached the supply hall, Alex's head was already buzzing with new information.

Inside the building, he received his Outer Sect disciple uniform along with several standard items issued by the sect.

Time passed quickly, and before he realized it, dusk had arrived. The golden light of the setting sun washed over Thousand Herbs Peak as the two of them continued walking through the mountain paths.

Thanks to the young man's explanations, Alex had already learned a great deal about the inner workings of the peak.

Eventually, they arrived at a quiet building known as the Medicines Pavilion.

Inside, the young man handed Alex a thick book.

"This is the introductory text," he said.

Alex looked down at the heavy volume in his hands.

The title alone made his eyebrows twitch.

"This book records Twenty thousand types of plants and vegetation," the young man explained calmly. "You must memorize them."

Alex nearly choked.

"Twenty thousand?"

The young man ignored his reaction.

"Once you've mastered the contents of this book, you will be allowed to receive the second volume."

He looked at Alex with a faint smile.

"Junior Brother Bai, the road of cultivation is long and difficult. Spirit medicine is something no cultivator can do without."

His voice carried the calm confidence of someone who understood the sect well.

"If you can become an apothecary, your rise within the sect will be very fast."

He raised a finger as he spoke.

"Apprentice apothecary."

Then another.

"Senior Apothecary."

Finally, a third.

"Master apothecary."

He smiled slightly.

"Junior Brother Bai, how far you go in the future will depend on the fortune you encounter along the way."

By the time night settled over the mountain, the young man finally led Alex to a quiet courtyard residence prepared for him by the sect.

The small compound sat peacefully beneath the moonlight, surrounded by low stone walls and tall herb gardens swaying gently in the night breeze.

The young man stopped at the entrance.

"Junior Brother Bai, I have to leave the mountain tomorrow," he said.

"So I won't be able to accompany you any further."

He clasped his hands politely.

"If there's anything you don't understand, you can always come find me."

"My name is Xuan Chen. I belong to the Xuan generation."

He smiled warmly, then bowed in farewell.

Without another word, he turned and walked away down the moonlit path.

Alex stood there for a moment in silence.

The night air was cool.

After a while, he took a deep breath.

Then he turned and looked at moonlight poured over Thousand Herbs Peak of the Wudang Sect, washing the mountain in pale silver light. The thick mist that usually cloaked the slopes had begun to thin, drifting slowly through the valleys like ghostly rivers. Under the glow of the night sky, the entire peak looked breathtaking—quiet, mysterious, and almost unreal.

Halfway down the mountain, a narrow side path led to a secluded courtyard residence.

The courtyard itself was surprisingly large, nearly the size of a small field.

Flowering plants grew along the edges of the stone paths, and rows of medicinal herbs filled carefully tended garden beds. Their fragrance drifted through the cool night air, soft and soothing.

With a casual flick of his sleeve, Alex pushed open the gate and stepped into the courtyard that would now be his home.

Alex stood in the middle of the courtyard and slowly looked around.

his new courtyard.

"Well..."

A slow grin spread across his face.

"I guess becoming an Outer Sect disciple isn't so bad after all."

"Outer Sect disciples are official members of the Wudang Sect," he muttered to himself. "Of course the treatment is better than what servants get."

He glanced around the courtyard again, clearly pleased.

"This place really isn't bad at all."

His gaze slowly lifted toward the upper slopes of Thousand Herbs Peak.

The top half of the mountain was reserved for Inner Sect disciples. Only they were qualified to live closer to the peak where the spiritual energy was strongest.

Alex narrowed his eyes slightly as he studied the distant lights above.

Then he shrugged and walked across the courtyard toward a small hut standing near the corner of the yard.

He pushed the wooden door open. It creaked loudly as it swung inward, the old hinges cracking in the quiet night.

Inside, the room was simple but clean.

A low meditation bed sat in the center, with a small wooden table beside it and a shelf built into the wall. The air carried the faint scent of dried herbs.

Alex stepped inside and closed the door behind him.

He sat down on the meditation bed, pulled out the thick volume describing twenty thousand herbs, and opened it slowly.

Then, without making a sound, he gave Gaia a command inside his mind.

Record everything.

The massive book describing twenty thousand types of plants and vegetation was instantly scanned and stored. What would normally require three full years of memorization had been completed in less than an hour.

"Now," Alex murmured to himself, a faint grin tugging at the corner of his lips, "I finally have plenty of time to improve my cultivation."

Decision made, Alex cross-legged on the meditation bed.

When it came to cultivation, he had never allowed himself to slack off.

Even during the past few months, when his progress had slowed almost to a crawl, he still practiced every single day.

The reason was simple.

Cultivation was his shield.

It was the only thing protecting him in this dangerous world until he could find a way to leave.

Because of that, he had no intention of stopping.

Alex closed his eyes.

He quietly swallowed several pills he had created earlier using leftover herbs from the kitchen.

The moment the pills dissolved, warm energy began spreading through his body.

He slowly guided the flow of spiritual energy through his meridians.

The spiritual energy here was far denser than what he had experienced in the Servant Quarter. Heaven and earth energy drifted through Thousand Herbs Peak like

invisible rivers, rich and abundant

Alex drew it in steadily.

His breathing slowed.

His mind grew calm.

Soon, he entered a deep state of meditation-so focused that the outside world seemed to disappear entirely.

Time passed.

Minutes.

Hours.

Alex had no idea how long he remained in that state.

Until suddenly-

A furious roar shattered the silence of the day.

The sound exploded through the courtyard like thunder.

"You worthless Outer Sect brats!"

Alex's eyes snapped open.

The voice was full of rage.

"If your job is to help me, then why the hell have you ignored me for three months?!"

The voice grew even more furious.

"Are you all dead?!"

A moment of silence.

Then the voice roared again, filled with murderous fury.

"If you're had not dead, then I'll just kill you again right now!"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 585[1,666 words]

"You bastard, Jun Jiu-the new guy!" the man bellowed, his voice echoing across the courtyard.

"It's your job to assist me as your senior in managing the plantation! How is it possible that you haven't reported for work for an entire month? If I don't beat you to death today, then I'm the pig!"

Alex slowly opened his eyes and ended his meditation.

The shout had shattered the quiet around his small hut.

He stepped outside and walked into the courtyard.

An Outer Sect disciple stood there, glaring at him with obvious fury.

Alex paused for a moment. He had only been here a short time and still didn't understand how many things worked inside the sect.

He decided to ask.

But before he could even speak, the man who had been ready to explode with rage suddenly froze.

His eyes narrowed as he stared at Alex carefully, studying his face as if digging through his memory.

"...Wait."

The man's expression changed.

"Are you... the guy from the kitchen?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes," Alex replied calmly.

The man's face instantly turned pale.

All the anger vanished as if someone had poured cold water over his head.

"I—I'm sorry! I made a mistake. Wrong person... wrong place," the man said quickly, his voice suddenly nervous. "Sorry. I'm looking for someone else."

Without waiting for another word, he turned around and hurried away as fast as he could.

As he ran, the man cursed himself under his breath.

"Damn it... how did I end up yelling at that junior? That's the monster who defeated both the Dragon Group and the Tiger Group. I'd better stay far away from him. It's safer if I work alone."

Back in the courtyard, Alex scratched his head.

He had no idea what had just happened.

After standing there for a moment, he looked down at the book in his hands— Twenty Thousand Herbs.

He suddenly remembered that he needed to return the book so he could receive the next volume.

Since it was already daytime, he figured this was the right moment to visit the place the senior had mentioned before.

The Scripture Pavilion.

The pavilion was located quite far from his residence, on the opposite side of the mountain.

Alex began walking.

Nearly an hour passed before he finally saw a cluster of tall pagodas rising in the distance, their roofs layered like blades against the sky.

The place looked ancient and solemn.

Along the path, Alex encountered quite a few other Outer Sect disciples.

Most of them were moving quickly, busy with their own matters.

When they noticed Alex, they barely gave him a glance.

Some simply ignored him completely.

Alex didn't mind.

However, he could clearly sense that most of the disciples he passed possessed cultivation levels far higher than his own.

Because of that, he moved forward cautiously.

There were even a few disciples whose cultivation was so deep that Alex couldn't sense anything from them at all. Their strength felt like a sealed ocean-impossible to read.

Those disciples were different from the rest.

Wherever they walked, crowds of other disciples gathered around them, laughing

and chatting as if they were honored to walk beside them.

Alex watched quietly as they passed.

Then he continued walking toward the Scripture Pavilion.

The closer Alex got to the Scripture Pavilion, the thicker the crowd became.

Outer Sect disciples moved in every direction—some hurrying inside, others walking out with stacks of books under their arms. The noise of voices and footsteps filled the air.

Alex pushed his way through the crowd and headed toward the entrance.

The Scripture Pavilion towered over the surrounding buildings. It had four floors, each level rising like a quiet guardian of ancient knowledge.

When Alex stepped inside the first floor, he stopped for a moment.

The entire floor was packed with long wooden tables and rows upon rows of bookshelves. Books and bamboo scrolls filled every corner of the hall.

Near the entrance, behind a large wooden table, an old man sat quietly with his eyes closed in meditation.

He looked completely still, as if he had been sitting there for decades.

One by one, disciples who wished to enter would place their Outer Sect identity medallion on the table before walking deeper into the pavilion.

Alex glanced at the medallion hanging from his waist.

The small metal piece had his name engraved clearly on its surface.

Jun Jiu.

Following what everyone else was doing, Alex walked to the table.

He placed the book Twenty Thousand Herbs on the table and set his medallion on top of it.

He didn't see anyone writing anything down, but it seemed obvious that someone would record the return of the book later.

Many disciples simply left their medallions there and retrieved them when they finished browsing the library.

Alex left his medallion where it was and began to walk around.

The first floor was enormous.

Rows of tall shelves stretched across the hall, packed tightly with paper books and the occasional bamboo scroll. A faint glow shimmered around many of them, giving the entire floor a strange, mystical atmosphere.

The air itself felt heavy with knowledge.

After wandering for a while, Alex noticed a staircase in the distance that led to the second floor.

Curious, he walked toward it.

But the moment he tried to step onto the first stair, his foot bounced back as if he had hit an invisible wall.

Alex blinked in surprise.

Off to the side, a young man sat calmly with a bamboo scroll in his hands. His eyebrows were sharp and straight, giving him a naturally cold expression.

When he sensed what had happened, he slowly looked up at Alex.

Alex immediately put on his most friendly smile.

"Elder Brother," he said politely, "what qualifications do you need to go up there?"

The young man stared at him for a moment.

Then he scoffed.

"People like you will never step foot on the second floor," he said coldly. "Why bother asking?"

Alex kept smiling.

"Right," he said lightly.

He could already tell the young man didn't want to be disturbed.

So he simply dropped the subject.

Instead of wasting time on the second floor, Alex turned back and began wandering through the first floor again.

Occasionally he picked up a book and flipped through its pages. Other times he examined bamboo scrolls filled with strange symbols and cultivation diagrams.

The variety of magical techniques was astonishing.

There were cultivation manuals, martial techniques, herbal records, and mysterious spells that seemed both powerful and dangerous.

Alex felt like a child standing inside a treasure vault.

Suddenly, Gaia's voice echoed softly inside his mind.

"Master, do you want me to record all of these books?" she asked.

Alex paused.

Gaia continued speaking.

"After I analyze and summarize them, I can extract the best knowledge for you. Or, if you prefer, I can directly upload the memories into your brain while you sleep."

Alex raised an eyebrow.

"How exactly would that work?" he asked.

"Just skim the pages," Gaia replied calmly. "My rapid imaging system will capture everything in milliseconds."

Alex's eyes suddenly lit up.

A wide grin spread across his face.

If Gaia could record everything this quickly, then every book inside this pavilion could be copied and stored. Later he could share the knowledge with the people in Estoria

His excitement grew.

"Then let's start," Alex muttered.

He walked to the nearest shelf and picked up the first book.

He opened it, flipped through the pages quickly, then returned it to its place.

Then he grabbed the next one.

And the next.

Page after page. Book after book.

He moved methodically down the rows, repeating the same action over and over again—pick up, skim, return.

To anyone watching, the behavior looked completely insane.

Several disciples glanced at him with confused expressions.

Some whispered among themselves.

After half a day of this strange activity, one of the pavilion staff members finally approached him.

The man crossed his arms and frowned.

"What exactly are you doing?" the staff member asked. "You've been opening books and skimming them all day."

Alex looked up and gave him a friendly smile.

"I'm trying to find the cultivation method that suits me best," he explained casually. "All of these books look interesting, so I thought I'd skim the titles and pages before choosing one."

The staff member snorted.

"What a clueless newbie."

He shook his head.

"Just make sure you don't damage the books."

"Yes, yes, of course," Alex replied quickly.

The moment the man left, Alex continued his work.

Book after book.

Hour after hour.

Night eventually fell.

But the Scripture Pavilion did not close.

It remained open day and night, a quiet sanctuary of knowledge that never slept.

Alex pulled out one of his food pills and swallowed it to keep his strength up.

Whenever exhaustion crept in, he would lie down on one of the long wooden tables and sleep for a short while.

Then he would get up and start again.

The strange routine continued.

One day passed.

Then another.

By the third day, almost everyone inside the pavilion had noticed him.

By the fifth day, Alex had become something of a legend.

The disciples whispered about the strange man who did nothing but skim every book in the library.

By the seventh day, he had earned a reputation.

The freak of the Scripture Pavilion.

Some disciples even avoided walking near him.

They thought he might be mentally unstable.

But Alex didn't care.

He continued flipping through books until the final one passed through his hands.

When he finished the last book on the first floor, Alex finally stretched his stiff arms.

Then he walked toward the entrance.

He planned to retrieve his identity medallion.

But just as he reached the table-

The old man behind it suddenly opened his eyes.

The sharp gaze felt like a blade cutting through the air.

"You searched through books for seven days and seven nights," the old man said slowly. "Yet you didn't take a single one with you."

His eyes locked onto Alex.

"Why?"

Alex immediately sensed the power hidden within that gaze.

The old man's eyes were bright and sharp, filled with deep inner energy.

Alex answered honestly.

"I don't want to waste time studying a cultivation method that isn't the best."

The old man studied him quietly for a moment.

Then he nodded.

"The better manuals are on the second and third floors," he said

calmly if you become an

Intermediate Apothecary, you will be

allowed to enter the second floor."

With that, the old man slowly closed his eyes again and returned to meditation.

But Alex stood there, frozen.

A flame had ignited inside his chest.

Better cultivation methods... waiting upstairs.

If he could reach them, his progress would skyrocket.

Then he suddenly remembered something. Thousand Herbs Peak trained apothecaries.

Alex's eyes narrowed with determination.

"Well then," he murmured to himself.

"I'll become an apothecary."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 586[1,126 words]

At dawn the next morning, Alex woke early.

The air was still cool, and a faint mist hung over the mountain.

He stepped out of his small log cabin, crossed the quiet courtyard, and began walking toward the Medicines Pavilion.

The sun slowly rose over the distant horizon. Golden light spilled across the sky, scattering through layers of drifting mist. The colors shimmered across the mountain paths like schools of golden carp swimming through clouds.

It was a breathtaking sight.

But Alex barely slowed down.

He walked quickly along the stone path, surrounded by numerous Outer Sect disciples who were heading in the same direction. Their robes fluttered in the morning breeze.

None of them recognized him.

And Alex didn't recognize any of them either.

The last time he had come here, Xuan Chen had only given him a brief explanation of how things worked inside the Medicines Pavilion.

Today, he intended to see it for himself.

When Alex arrived, he walked straight to one of the staff members standing near the entrance.

"I want to take the test to become an apothecary," Alex said.

The staff member looked him up and down.

Then he pointed toward a row of massive stone steles standing in the open courtyard.

"See those five stone steles?" the man said flatly. "Place one spiritual stone on the platform and the test will begin. If you pass, you will qualify as a trainee apothecary." "Thank you," Alex said politely.

He walked across the courtyard and chose the stele standing farthest in the corner.

The stone monument towered over him.

Alex took out a spiritual stone and placed it onto the platform at the base of the stele.

The moment the stone touched the surface-

Energy surged through the monument.

Ancient runes carved into the stele lit up with a soft glow.

Suddenly, a dark dome of energy expanded outward and completely surrounded Alex.

Inside the dome, an image appeared in the air before him.

A voice echoed from the stele.

"Identify the medicinal herb."

"The more accurate your answers, the more points you will earn."

"Each incorrect answer will deduct one point."

Alex remained calm.

Before coming here, he had already used Gaia to record and analyze countless herbs.

Because of that, recognizing them now was effortless.

He answered the first question immediately.

Then the next.

And the next.

Herb after herb appeared before him.

Alex answered every question without hesitation.

But after nearly an hour, he began to frown.

The images still hadn't stopped.

More herbs kept appearing in the air.

One after another.

Endlessly.

Another hour passed.

Then another.

Alex stared at the floating images in disbelief.

"When is this test going to end?" he muttered in frustration. "This thing feels like it goes on forever."

Outside the stele, however, the situation was completely different.

The courtyard had fallen into stunned silence.

Above the testing area stood another massive stele-the Ranking Stele.

It displayed the top hundred test scores in the sect.

The rankings were constantly updated through magic.

And right now, every single person in the courtyard was staring at it.

A new name had suddenly appeared.

Jun Jiu.

At first, it had quietly entered the bottom of the top hundred.

But then it began rising.

Fast.

Within minutes, the name climbed past the top fifty.

Then the top twenty.

The crowd erupted into whispers.

"Who is that?"

"Jun Jiu?"

"I've never heard that name before."

But the name didn't stop moving.

It continued rising.

Slowly approaching the top ten.

The top ten rankings had remained unchanged for hundreds of years.

No one had managed to break into that list.

Until now.

More disciples gathered around the ranking stele.

Their eyes widened as Jun Jiu's name climbed even higher.

Top nine.

Top seven.

Top five.

The entire courtyard fell into a tense silence.

Then suddenly-

Jun Jiu.

First place.

The name settled at the very top of the ranking.

The record that had stood untouched for a thousand years had just been broken.

The courtyard exploded into chaos.

"Damn it! Who the hell is Jun Jiu?!"

"He just took first place!"

"That record has stood for a thousand years!"

"He must be a genius!"

"We have to find this person!"

Meanwhile, Alex was still answering questions, his head pounding from the endless pressure. The test had already thrown hundreds-no thousands of herbs at him and still showed no sign of stopping.

Another herb appeared.

Then another.

And another.

The questions kept coming.

Normally, the test would shut down automatically after five wrong answers. But Alex hadn't missed a single one. Because of that, the

system

going net

simply kept Continuing question after questi until the entire pool was exhausted. Cóntent

Finally, the dark dome echoed with a calm mechanical voice.

"You are getting a perfect score. Please place your medallion on the side to receive the imprint of success."

Alex exhaled heavily.

"Finally."

He stepped forward and followed the procedure, pressing his medallion against the stone slot beside the testing stele.

A faint glow spread across the surface.

With a low humming sound, the magical dark dome slowly dissolved and opened.

Fresh air rushed in.

Alex sucked in a deep breath, stretching his stiff shoulders.

"Damn... getting one pass is this brutal?"

He stepped outside and looked around.

No one was there.

He had chosen the farthest testing stele, tucked away in a quiet corner of the grounds. It was so rarely used that many disciples didn't even realize it existed.

Alex shrugged and began walking toward the Medicine Pavilion to report his result.

But the moment he arrived, he froze.

The courtyard was packed.

Dozens of disciples had gathered, all staring up at a massive stone ranking stele.

Voices buzzed everywhere.

Alex blinked, confused, then stepped closer and joined the crowd.

He tapped the shoulder of a nearby outer disciple.

"Senior brother, what's going on?"

The disciple glanced at him and pointed toward the towering stone stele.

"Can't you see it?" he said. "Someone named Jun Jiu just shot straight to the top of the rankings. That's never happened before."

"Oh."

Alex nodded casually.

"Sounds like he's pretty good."

"Pretty good?" the outer disciple

scoffed. "Are you blind? Finding a monster like this in a thousand years would already be fare. That's why everyone's freaking out. The guy is unbelievable."

Alex nodded again.

"But honestly," the disciple continued, lowering his voice, "he's also incredibly

unlucky."

Alex frowned.

"Why?"

"Because some outer disciples have been trying to claim the top ranking for months.

If someone holds the number one position for the entire month, they receive a special reward from the sect."

Alex shrugged.

"Then they should try to beat him."

The disciple snorted.

"Oh, they'll try. Just not the way you're thinking."

Alex raised an eyebrow.

"They'll try to kill this Jun Jiu in secret."

Alex's expression hardened.

"That's dirty."

The disciple shrugged helplessly.

"As long as the Discipline Department doesn't catch them, people will do anything to keep their position."

Alex sighed.

"Yeah. Rotten fruit grows everywhere."

He shook his head.

"Showing off too much always brings trouble. Thanks for the warning, brother."

In his mind, Alex dismissed the whole thing. Whoever this Jun Jiu was, it had nothing to do with him.

Not his problem.

He turned and walked toward the Medicine Pavilion counter, reaching into his robe to take out his medallion to report.

But the moment he pulled it out, his eyes fell on the engraved name.

"Jun Jiu."

Alex froze.

For a full second, his brain refused to process what he was seeing.

Then realization hit him like a brick.

"Fuck."

He stared at the medallion in disbelief.

"I'm Jun Jiu."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 587[1,986 words]

Alex had already made up his mind.

He would stay far away from the medical pavilion.

The moment he showed his face there, people would start noticing him. And once people noticed him, questions would follow. Questions meant attention. And attention always brought trouble.

Alex had no intention of inviting trouble.

So he kept to himself.

He stayed inside his small courtyard hut and stopped going anywhere near the medical pavilion.

Life as an Outer Sect disciple on Thousand Herbs Peak turned out to be surprisingly comfortable.

Back when he worked in the Kitchen, he had access to all kinds of delicious food. That was the one thing he genuinely missed. But aside from that small regret, everything else suited him perfectly.

The environment on Thousand Herbs Peak was excellent for cultivation. The spiritual energy in the air was rich and pure, far better than most places in the sect. Alex could simply sit in meditation and steadily absorb the energy around him.

For someone focused on cultivation, it was almost an ideal life.

At times, he truly felt as though he was living life to its fullest.

There was only one small problem.

His courtyard residence stood farther away than any other disciple's, isolated at the very edge of the settlement.

Most days passed without him seeing another person. Silence surrounded him constantly.

Alex stood in the courtyard one afternoon, staring up at the blue sky.

A soft sigh escaped his lips.

"Could it be that all cultivators live like this?" he muttered to himself.

Lonely.

Alex considered it again. Perhaps he could do something productive while cultivating-plant something before meditation, then return to find it growing by the time he finished.

He folded his arms and slowly studied the courtyard, his gaze sweeping across the empty patches of soil.

Maybe... he really could plant herbs here.

If he cultivated his own spirit herbs, he could use them to support his cultivation.

The idea clicked immediately. It simply made sense.

Back when he won those bets in the servant area, he had earned quite a bit of money, the spiritual stones. With those resources, buying herb seeds and young saplings would not be difficult at all.

Gaia had already compiled numerous records about herb cultivation.

The system had even updated the information recently.

Techniques for planting. Soil requirements. Growth cycles. Nutrient balance.

Everything he needed was already recorded.

The more Alex thought about it, the more excited he became.

Without wasting another moment, he left his courtyard and headed straight toward the market area on Thousand Herbs Peak.

The place was lively as always. Outer Sect disciples, herb farmers, and traders filled the narrow streets. Stalls displayed bundles of herbs, jars of medicine, spirit seeds, and young saplings.

Alex carefully selected several varieties of herb seeds and a few saplings that looked promising.

Then he returned home.

The moment he arrived at his courtyard, he got to work.

He loosened the soil, prepared planting beds, and carefully placed each seed and sapling into the earth. After that, he watered them and monitored their growth daily. Days passed.

Then weeks.

Finally, an entire month went by.

Alex stood in the courtyard again, staring down at the small patch of herbs growing from the soil.

He sighed.

The plants were growing.

But painfully slowly.

Too slowly.

Spirit herbs were not ordinary plants. For an herb to truly be considered a spirit herb useful for cultivation, it usually needed at least ten years of growth before it could be harvested-whether seasonally or once every year.

Looking at the tiny sprouts barely pushing out of the ground, Alex rubbed his forehead.

"At this rate," he muttered under his breath, "I'll grow old before these things become useful."

As Alex thought about it, he began wandering around the outer disciple areas of Thousand Herbs Peak.

While walking through the mountain paths, something slowly caught his attention.

There were several large cultivation fields scattered across the mountain. Each one was clearly marked and carefully fenced off. After observing them for a while, Alex realized something important.

These areas were assigned to outer disciples.

They were responsible for managing the herb fields.

Alex's eyes slowly narrowed as the thought sank in.

"Spirit herbs..."

He glanced around cautiously.

The path behind him was empty. The wind rustled through the bamboo, and distant birds called from somewhere in the forest. No one seemed to be paying attention.

Only then did Alex move.

He slipped quietly into a nearby thicket, his body disappearing with a soft whoosh among the leaves. Lowering his posture, he crept forward through the brush, silent and careful.

A few moments later, he emerged near a wooden fence.

Beyond that fence stretched one of the spirit herb fields belonging to Thousand Herbs Peak.

Alex froze.

Rows upon rows of rare herbs filled the field inside the enclosure. Their leaves shimmered faintly with spiritual energy.

And most importantly-

Many of them were old.

Very old.

At least twenty years of growth.

Alex's eyes began to shine.

"All of these herbs..." he whispered to himself, voice low with excitement. "If they were refined into pills, my cultivation would skyrocket."

He had already studied the rules of the Wudang Sect carefully. Especially the regulations regarding outer disciples.

Each outer disciple on Thousand Herbs Peak was assigned a herb field to manage.

All the herb fields were the personal property of the Thousand Herbs Peak Lord.

Outer disciples were simply caretakers. Their job was to plant, protect, and raise the herbs until they matured.

Across Thousand Herbs Peak, dozens of such fields existed. Each one specialized in different types of medicinal herbs.

Alex leaned slightly against the fence and studied the garden carefully.

His eyes moved from plant to plant.

The soil.

The spacing.

The irrigation channels.

The condition of the leaves.

His mind began racing, and Gaia immediately started assisting him in his work.

Within seconds, ideas poured into his thoughts one after another.

He could already think of at least twenty-five different ways to improve the long-term productivity of the field.

"For example, he murmured softly to himself while studying the rows, "plant certain herbs between the main crops to increase resistance against insects... install small water channels so the moisture spreads evenly introduce spirit worms into the soil to break up overly dense earth..."

The more he analyzed the garden, the more possibilities he saw.

The current layout was decent.

But it could be much better.

After observing the field for quite some time, Alex finally straightened up.

He did not act recklessly.

Instead, he quietly retreated the way he came and descended the mountain toward the market area.

Once there, he spent several spirit stones buying various tools and basic supplies.

Small farming tools.

Measuring rods.

Soil probes.

A few utility items he might need later.

After finishing his purchases, Alex returned to his courtyard residence.

Inside his hut, he carefully packed all the items into one of his backpacks.

Then he set out again.

This time, he headed toward the farthest herb field he had seen earlier. The one located deep in a quiet corner of Thousand Herbs Peak where very few people passed by.

When he arrived, Alex looked around cautiously.

The area was silent.

Satisfied, he stepped closer to the garden and spoke softly.

"Gaia."

"Yes?" Gaia replied immediately.

Alex studied the herb field and asked, "If I want to improve this garden..... what should I do first?"

Gaia answered almost instantly.

"There are currently one hundred and fifty possible optimization methods for this herb garden."

Alex blinked.

"One hundred and fifty?"

"Yes," Gaia replied calmly. "However,

I can provide the top three structural

diagrams. If implemented correctly, these improvements will increase the garden's productivity by two hundred percent or more."

Alex chose the best method.

Out of all the diagrams Gaia showed him, he selected the one that looked the most efficient. Then he crouched beside the herb field and began writing everything down carefully.

He copied the entire diagram onto paper.

Every detail.

Every step.

Every measurement.

He didn't stop there. Alex also added

clear markings around the field itself-small, deliberate signs placed

exactly where changes should be made. Anyone responsible for the field later would immediately understand where to dig, where to plant, and where to redirect the

water flow.

He wanted the instructions to be impossible to misunderstand.

But Alex went even further.

Beneath the diagrams, he wrote the reasoning behind each technique.

Why certain herbs should be planted beside others.

Why the soil needed to be loosened in specific areas.

Why water should flow through certain channels to balance the spiritual energy of the field.

It took him about an hour to finish writing everything.

Then he spent another hour walking through the garden, adjusting and placing his markings.

When he was done, Alex walked to the front gate of the herb field and carefully placed the paper on the door where the caretaker would easily see it.

Only then did he turn his attention to something else.

Payment.

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Payment.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 588[1,169 words]

Alex stepped into the field and quietly searched for several herbs he needed.

For him, this was more than fair.

He wasn't stealing recklessly. In fact, he had taken less than one percent of the herbs in the field. In return, he had left behind a method that could increase the field's production by two hundred percent or more.

If the owner followed the instructions, the harvest would explode.

They would become incredibly wealthy from the field alone.

That was a trade any sensible cultivator would gladly accept.

That night, Alex selected five different types of herbs.

He carefully uprooted them and carried them back to his courtyard.

Once home, he replanted the herbs in the soil of his yard.

Now he already had twenty-year-old herbs growing in his courtyard. Some could be harvested seasonally, while others could be gathered each year.

There was no longer any need for him to wait.

After that, Alex rested for several days.

He had already calculated the safest method.

If he wanted to gather herbs from the outer fields without attracting attention, he couldn't act too often. The smartest strategy was to move slowly-visit a different field once every few days, never twice in quick succession.

A few days later, Alex left his courtyard again. That night, he visited another herb field, quietly improving its layout before taking a few herbs to bring back and replant in his own courtyard.

He continued like this for weeks.

After a full month of doing it, no one seemed to know anything about the mysterious night visits.

This time he headed toward a place where Outer Sect disciples often gathered. Some chatted. Some drank tea. Others complained about cultivation or the endless work of tending herb fields.

Alex blended into the background and quietly listened.

He wanted to know if anyone had discovered the mysterious paper.

Or noticed the missing herbs.

But after listening for a while, he heard nothing.

No one mentioned a strange paper.

No one complained about herbs disappearing.

No rumors, no complaints-nothing that suggested anyone had discovered what was happening.

Instead, he overheard something far more useful.

Outer Sect disciples were assigned strict production quotas each year for their herb fields. As long as they met that quota, the sect would be satisfied.

But if they produced more than the required amount, the extra herbs belonged to them.

That meant profit.

Huge profit.

No wonder everyone wanted their fields to produce more.

After hearing that, Alex quickly understood the situation.

Whoever owned the herb field he had improved had likely discovered the paper already.

And they were smart enough to keep their mouth shut.

Why would they tell anyone?

If the field suddenly produced double the harvest, they would quietly become rich. Announcing it to others would only invite competition or investigation.

Alex smiled faintly.

Good.

That meant his plan was working perfectly.

A few days later, he prepared his backpack again.

Late at night, under the cover of darkness, Alex slipped out of his courtyard and vanished into the mountain.

When he returned before dawn, five new herbs rested inside his bag.

He replanted them carefully in his courtyard.

Then he waited again.

This pattern continued.

Days turned into weeks.

Weeks turned into months.

Eventually, nearly a full year passed.

By that time, Alex's entire courtyard had transformed.

Every corner of the yard was filled with herbs.

Dozens of varieties grew side by side-rare medicinal plants, spirit herbs, and special ingredients he needed to produce the best cultivation pills.

What had once been a quiet, empty courtyard was now a dense garden of spiritual medicine.

And Alex finally possessed everything he needed to push his cultivation to the next level.

Everything was finally in place.

All he needed now was time.

If he let the garden mature slowly, he could harvest the herbs one batch at a time

and refine them into pills. With a steady supply, his cultivation would continue rising without interruption.

His courtyard had become completely self-sustaining.

For Alex, it was the perfect system.

One day, while visiting the market on Thousand Herbs Peak, he overheard several outer disciples talking excitedly.

They were gathered around a tea stall, their voices buzzing with excitement.

"Did you hear about that mysterious elder?" one disciple said.

"What mysterious elder?" another asked.

"The one leaving those herb field papers!"

The first disciple leaned forward, his eyes shining.

"I followed the instructions on one of those papers," he said. "And you know what?

This year my harvest increased by a fifty percent."

"A fifty percent?" the second disciple exclaimed.

"That's nothing," another man jumped in. "My friend found one of those papers too. His field produced a hundred percent more herbs than last year."

The conversation immediately drew a crowd.

More disciples joined in, each telling their own version of the story.

People talked about the strange papers that appeared overnight in the herb fields. They discussed the herbs cultivation theories written on them methods most disciples had never even considered.

Some disciples were so curious that they began offering spirit stones just to obtain one of those papers.

Even several senior disciples started paying attention.

The techniques described in the papers contained fresh insights that even experienced herb growers found valuable.

Soon, the entire Thousand Herbs Peak was buzzing with discussion.

And everyone reached the same conclusion.

Whoever left those papers behind had to be an elder.

A true master with terrifying intelligence.

Some outer disciples who had not yet received help became desperate.

They began leaving offerings in front of their herb fields-food, spirit stones, and even rare herbs.

On top of the offerings, they placed handwritten messages.

"Please, mysterious elder. Help improve this field."

"You may take these spirit stones as thanks."

"You can harvest any herbs you want from the field."

More and more disciples began openly inviting the mysterious elder to visit their gardens.

They hoped the unknown master would appear in the night and transform their fields just like the others.

Before long, the strange phenomenon spread throughout all of Thousand Herbs

Peak.

Meanwhile, Alex quietly observed everything.

Whenever he passed by a field and

noticed it could be improved if

the offerings left by the owner resting enough he would visit that field at night.

He would adjust the layout.

Leave behind a new diagram.

Take a small number of herbs as payment.

Then disappear again.

The next morning, the owner of the field would discover the paper.

And the disciple would laugh with pure joy.

"I've been visited by the mysterious elder!"

It quickly became Alex's routine.

Night after night.

Field after field.

And over the next year, something remarkable happened.

The herb production of Thousand Herbs Peak exploded.

Outer disciples began harvesting more herbs than ever before.

Some fields produced fifty percent more than previous years. Others doubled their harvest entirely.

The entire mountain was overflowing with success.

Everyone was happy.

For the disciples, it meant wealth.

For Alex, it was heaven.

He had herbs.

He had spirit stones.

He had everything he needed to push his cultivation forward.

High above the mountain, two figures stood quietly on the peak of a tall cliff overlooking Thousand Herbs Peak.

From there, they could see the entire valley below.

One elder watched the courtyard where Alex lived.

A faint smile touched his lips.

"I must admit," he said slowly, "the man you brought here is quite entertaining to watch."

His gaze shifted toward the flourishing herb fields spread across the mountain.

"He has practically stirred the entire Thousand Herbs Peak."

Beside him stood a graceful woman in white robes.

The Sect Master turned toward her.

"Li Chingxue," he said calmly.

"Don't you think it's about time... for you to visit that Jun Jiu?"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 589[1,724 words]

Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Chingxue, stood among the most important disciples in the entire sect. She was one of the five core disciples personally chosen by the Sect Master-a position far above the ordinary ranks.

Core disciples answered directly to the Sect Master himself. They handled matters that affected the entire sect-internal disputes, external threats, and the delicate balance of power within Wudang.

And from those five, one would eventually inherit the position of Sect Master. Their status inside Wudang Sect was not merely high.

It was decisive.

Li Chingxue stood calmly before the Sect Master and bowed with quiet respect.

"Master, is there anything you need from me?"

The Sect Master looked at her, then suddenly laughed.

"The person you brought to the sect..." he said slowly, amusement flickering in his eyes. "That young man is extremely interesting. Ever since he appeared, life in this old sect has become far less boring."

Li Chingxue's brows tightened slightly.

"Master, if he has caused any trouble within the sect, I beg your forgiveness on his behalf."

The Sect Master waved his hand dismissively.

"Trouble? No. On the contrary-he has brought tremendous benefit to Wudang."

He leaned back in his seat, clearly entertained.

"Don't you know? Ever since he arrived at Thousand Herbs Peak, the total production of spirit herbs there has increased by nearly fifty percent in a single year."

He chuckled.

"The highest increase in the peak's entire recorded history."

Li Chingxue blinked, clearly caught off guard.

"What does that have to do with that man... Jun Jiu?" Li Chingxue asked, confusion clearly written across her face. "Isn't he just a new outer disciple?"

The Sect Master chuckled softly.

"Well..." he said, clearly amused. "The boy is unusually clever. He completely revolutionized the way spirit herbs are cultivated on Thousand Herbs Peak. The new method he designed increased the overall harvest significantly."

Li Chingxue's eyes widened slightly.

"He's that capable?"

The Sect Master nodded calmly.

"Two years ago, he took the Medical Pavilion examination. And he finished first place."

A faint smile appeared on his face.

"A result that has never happened in the past thousand years."

For a moment, Li Chingxue simply stared.

"...Are we talking about the same disciple?" she finally asked. "The one who caused trouble in the kitchen?"

"Yes," the Sect Master replied with a faint smile.

"The very same. In fact, the Lord of Thousand Herbs Peak has already come to see me."

"He requested permission to take the boy as his direct disciple... and groom him as his successor."

Li Chingxue was genuinely shocked this time.

"What?"

Then her expression softened slightly.

"That should be good news for him."

The Sect Master shook his head.

"No, not good news for him."

Li Chingxue frowned slightly.

"Why?"

"Because I refused. The Lord of Thousand Herbs Peak will not take Jun Jiu as his disciple."

Li Chingxue looked stunned.

"... Why, Master?"

The Sect Master's lips curved faintly.

"Because I am interested in him."

Li Chingxue froze.

The Sect Master continued calmly, as if discussing something completely ordinary.

"Go find him."

"Tell him to participate in the upcoming Outer Disciple Tournament."

His gaze sharpened.

"That will give me a proper reason to take him as my disciple."

Li Chingxue stared at him.

"Master... are you certain?"

The Sect Master leaned back slowly.

"No," he said honestly.

"I have not made a final decision."

His eyes gleamed faintly.

"But first... I want to see him fight."

"I want to see what kind of person he truly is when he steps into the arena."

Li Chingxue bowed deeply.

"I understand."

She turned and walked out of the hall.

But her mind was far from calm.

If the Sect Master truly took Jun Jiu as a disciple...

Then the balance of power inside Wudang Sect—especially among the five core disciples competing to become the next Sect Master—would change dramatically. And that change...

could bring both opportunity.

And danger.

At that moment, far away from the main halls of the sect—

Alex was kneeling quietly in the courtyard outside his small residence, carefully

planting a new batch of herbs into freshly turned soil.

Li Chingxue stopped the moment she stepped into the courtyard.

Shock flashed across her usually calm face.

When she had first assigned this place to Alex, it had been nothing but a barren patch of land—one of the most remote corners of the Outer Disciple area. She had chosen it deliberately. The location was isolated, far from the main paths, a place where a troublesome disciple could stay out of sight and out of trouble.

At the time, she had considered it the perfect solution.

But now...

The place had completely transformed.

What once looked like neglected wasteland had turned into something close to a small paradise.

Rows of spirit herbs grew in careful patterns across the courtyard. Rare plants swayed gently in the wind, their leaves shimmering with faint spiritual light. The air itself felt different here thicker, richer.

The surrounding spiritual energy was nearly ten times denser than in ordinary outer disciple areas.

And the reason was obvious.

The herbs themselves were releasing powerful spiritual energy into the air.

Li Chingxue stared for a long moment, genuinely stunned.

Then her voice cut sharply through the quiet courtyard.

"Jun Jiu!"

At that exact moment, Alex was crouched beside a patch of soil, carefully planting several rare herbs he had recently received as payment. The sudden shout nearly made him leap into the air.

He spun around instantly.

The moment he recognized who stood there, he hurried to his feet and bowed deeply.

"Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Chingxue. This humble outer disciple, Jun Jiu, greets you."

His tone was respectful and careful.

After all, he was only an outer disciple, while she was one of the sect's core disciples. The difference in status between them was enormous. Showing proper respect was the only sensible choice.

Li Chingxue said nothing at first.

She simply looked at him.

Her face was expressionless, but inside, her thoughts were far from calm.

She still couldn't understand it.

How could both the Lord of Thousand Herbs Peak and the Sect Master himself show interest in this man?

What exactly made him so special?

Li Chingxue gave a faint, dismissive snort.

"You've been an outer disciple for two years," she said coldly. "And yet your cultivation base..."

Her voice carried clear contempt, as if she were about to mock him for being weak.

But as she stepped closer and examined his cultivation more carefully-

Her words stopped.

For a split second, genuine shock flashed across her eyes.

Two years ago, when she had first brought him here, Alex had only been at the fifth level of Qi Condensation.

But now...

He had already reached the ninth level of Qi Condensation.

Only one step away from entering the Inner Sect.

Li Chingxue felt a chill run down her spine.

This was something that simply did not happen.

She tried to recall the exact time she had brought Alex here. At most, it had been three years.

Three years.

In just three years, this man had climbed from zero to the ninth level of Qi Condensation.

There were countless cultivators who spent thirty years and still failed to reach this level.

And as far as she could remember...

No one had ever achieved it in only three years.

Now she finally understood.

No wonder the Sect Master wanted him.

"Miss Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li

Chingxue Alex said humbly, still bowing slightly "I know my cultivation progress has been slow. I'm rather stupid and dull. I will try to

improve over the next few years."

Li Chingxue nearly choked on her own breath.

Slow?

Dull?

Her expression darkened immediately.

If three years was slow, then what did that make her?

It had taken her twenty years to enter the Inner Sect—and that achievement alone

had already earned her the title of genius within Wudang.

But this man...

Three years.

Only three years.

And he had the audacity to call himself slow and dull?

A flicker of irritation rose in her chest.

It seemed this man needed a proper lesson in humility. "Considering how much time you seem to have for playing around," Li Chingxue

said coldly, her voice sharp as a blade, "it's clear you're not exactly busy."

She crossed her arms and looked around the courtyard full of flourishing herbs.

"In that case, you will participate in the Ninth Level Qi Condensation Competition in three months."

Her gaze locked onto him.

"It will be held right here on Thousand Herbs Peak."

Alex's heart immediately began to pound.

Of course he knew about the competition.

Every outer disciple in Wudang had heard about it.

The tournament offered generous rewards rare pills, cultivation resources, and even opportunities to be noticed by powerful elders. But

everyone also knew the darker truth

behind it content

The fights were brutal.

Once inside the arena, no one held back.

Serious injuries were common.

And sometimes...

People died.

Alex frowned deeply.

"Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Chingxue," he said cautiously, choosing his words carefully. "I only reached the ninth level of Qi Condensation a few days ago My cultivation was boosted by herbs and pills. My foundation isn't stable yet."

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He shook his head.

"I'll probably need another ten years to solidify my energy properly."

Then he looked at her seriously.

"If I join the competition now and someone beats me to death in the arena... what then?"

Alex gave a small shrug.

"So I must respectfully refuse."

Li Chingxue didn't even react to the question.

Her expression turned even colder.

"It's not a request."

Her tone left no room for discussion.

"You will participate. And if you fail to place within the top three..."

Alex suddenly broke into a wide smile.

"Will you expel me from the sect and send me back to Xia?"

Li Chingxue's eyes instantly sharpened.

Every disciple she had ever met trembled in fear at the mere possibility of being expelled from Wudang.

But this man?

He looked almost... hopeful.

As if he had been waiting for exactly that.

What made it even more infuriating was the fact that this same man possessed astonishing talent—talent so great that even the Sect Master himself had taken interest in him.

And yet here he was.

Actively hoping to be thrown out.

For a moment, Li Chingxue felt a sudden urge to punch him in the face.

Alex sensed the killing intent rising from her body and instinctively stepped back. His heart started pounding violently.

"If you fail to enter the top three," Li Chingxue said slowly, her voice frighteningly calm, "I will personally send you back to Xia."

Alex's eyes lit up.

"Really?"

A wide grin spread across his face.

"Yes," Li Chingxue said, staring at him with cold disdain. A faint scoff slipped from her lips as her eyes hardened.

"But only your corpse."

A chill ran down Alex's spine.

The way she said it...

There was absolutely no doubt she meant it.

If he failed to reach the top three...

She would kill him herself.

Alex swallowed.

Then another problem surfaced in his mind.

Wudang Sect had more than eight thousand outer disciples.

And among them, countless people had reached the ninth level of Qi Condensation long time ago.

To reach the top three...

He would have to defeat an enormous number of opponents.

Alex felt a headache coming on.

This wasn't just trouble.

This was going to be a complete nightmare.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 590[1,624 words]

All Alex wanted was to survive in this place and eventually find a way out.

That was it.

He didn't want fame. He didn't want status. He certainly didn't want to throw himself into some reckless competition that could get him killed.

So why did everything here seem to drag him toward danger?

He truly couldn't understand the way these people thought.

Still... in his current condition, he had no way of facing Li Chingxue.

If this had happened in the past-when his power was still intact-the situation would have been completely different. Back then, he could have slapped that beautiful, arrogant face of hers without hesitation.

And she would have had no choice but to accept it.

But now...

"Why am I so unlucky...?"

Alex let out a long sigh.

Complaining wouldn't change anything. Right now, the only real way to protect himself was to grow stronger. He needed better skills. Better martial arts.

And that meant reaching the second floor of the library.

The first floor only held basic manuals—techniques meant for beginners. If he wanted something truly useful, something that could actually help him survive, he had to reach the second level.

But access to the second floor wasn't free.

He only had two choices.

Either become an apothecary or pay for everything with merit points.

Alex leaned against the fence of his herb garden, thinking carefully.

If he remembered correctly, disciples could earn merit points by supplying herbs to the Medicine Pavilion. The pavilion constantly needed ingredients for pills and medicines, and they rewarded disciples based on the value of what they submitted. Those merit points could then be exchanged for privileges.

Including access to the second floor of the library.

If he wasn't mistaken, one day of access to the second floor cost around one hundred merit points.

Alex quickly ran the numbers in his head.

If he could gather one thousand merit points... that would give him ten full days inside the second pavilion.

Ten days.

That would be more than enough time to study several powerful martial arts techniques.

His gaze slowly swept across the herb garden.

Rows of plants swayed gently in the breeze, nourished by the rich spiritual energy that filled the sect grounds.

Alex narrowed his eyes, carefully considering which herbs would bring the highest reward.

Then his gaze stopped.

"There you are..."

A faint smile appeared on his lips.

Earth Spirit Ginseng.

One of the most widely used ingredients in pill refinement. Nearly every alchemist needed it, which meant the Medicine Pavilion always paid well for it.

Two years ago, Alex had planted about twenty Earth Spirit Ginseng roots in this garden.

Under normal circumstances, a mature Earth Spirit Ginseng might earn around one hundred merit points.

That was the standard value.

Without hesitation, Alex picked up a small digging tool and knelt beside the nearest plant.

The soil here was rich with heaven-and-earth energy. Over the past two years, Alex had carefully guided that energy through the garden using simple formation techniques.

Combined with the precise arrangement of herbs, the entire plot had become an ideal environment for cultivation and herb growth.

He had even used leftover medicinal pills as fertilizer.

Nothing had been wasted.

Because of that careful attention, the Earth Spirit Ginseng growing here had developed far beyond normal standards.

Alex dug slowly, loosening the soil around the root.

A moment later, something massive began to emerge from the earth.

His eyes widened.

The ginseng root was enormous.

Nearly the size of an adult human.

Its body was thick and full, with branching roots that resembled arms and legs. The overall shape looked uncannily human-like a small figure sleeping beneath the soil for years.

Because Alex didn't want to damage the roots, he had to work slowly and carefully. Each thin strand of root had to be separated from the soil by hand. One careless pull could snap it.

The process was painfully slow.

After several exhausting days of digging, he had managed to harvest only three of them.

He lifted the bundle of Earth Spirit Ginseng onto his shoulder and groaned under the weight.

"These things are already one and a half meters long..." he muttered. "If they were refined into medicine, the potency would be terrifying."

For a moment, he looked at the massive roots with regret.

Then he shook his head.

"But right now, I need merit points more than I need medicine."

At that moment, a large crowd of Outer Sect disciples had gathered outside the Missions Office of Thousand Herbs Peak.

Nearly everyone was carrying something-spirit herbs, medicinal roots, rare plants anything they hoped could be exchanged for merit points.

Inside the courtyard, an elder of Thousand Herbs Peak was responsible for inspecting the items.

The reward depended entirely on quality.

Better herbs meant more merit points.

Outside the building stood a massive flat boulder, polished smooth by time.

A ruddy-faced old man with snow-white hair sat cross-legged on top of it, calm and motionless.

In front of him stretched a long line of disciples that seemed to go on forever.

Each one clutched a spirit plant nervously, waiting for their turn.

Whenever the old man finished examining an item, a young assistant standing beside him would immediately record the result and issue the corresponding merit points.

The inspection continued.

The elder picked up the next herb and studied it carefully.

"Not bad," he said after a moment. "This Moon-Dew Lotus Root has developed six spirit veins. Mid-grade quality."

He casually tossed it into a wooden tray.

The disciple's face lit up with relief.

The elder immediately reached for the next plant.

His expression darkened.

"This Earth-Vein Ginseng is far too dark," he said flatly. "The earth essence inside it is excessive and unstable."

He shook his head.

"The balance is completely ruined."

He handed the root back.

"Sorry. It does not meet the pavilion's requirements."

The disciple's shoulders slumped as he walked away, clearly disappointed.

The elder's cultivation had already reached the Foundation Establishment stage, a realm far beyond ordinary cultivators.

It stood one full level above Qi Condensation.

Although he wasn't the most powerful fighter in the sect, his reputation was unmatched in another field.

Spirit medicine.

His mastery of medicinal plants was legendary.

In fact, his obsession with the Art of herbal medicine had reached an almost frightening level.

Among the disciples, a rumor circulated often.

If the leadership of Thousand Herbs Peak were ever to change, there was little doubt about who would take the position.

Almost everyone in the sect believed the same thing.

The next Lord of Thousand Herbs Peak would almost certainly be this man.

Elder Hou.

Among the long line of waiting disciples stood a particularly handsome young man.

He stepped forward with calm confidence and bowed respectfully.

"Greetings, Elder Hou."

A polite smile touched his lips.

"It's me... Li Tianyu."

The moment the surrounding Outer Sect disciples heard the name, their attention immediately shifted toward him.

"Oh... so that's Elder Brother Li Tianyu," one disciple whispered.

"I've heard he's incredibly talented at cultivating spirit plants."

"That's right," another added quietly. "Ever since he joined the sect, not a single spirit herb he's grown has ever received less than a high-grade rating. He is top number one..."

"That's unbelievable..."

Soft murmurs spread through the crowd.

Li Tianyu heard every word.

Yet he stood there with a calm, indifferent expression, as if the praise meant nothing to him.

But deep within his eyes, a faint trace of pride burned quietly.

Elder Hou naturally noticed it.

In fact, he had been paying attention to Li Tianyu for quite some time. Among the Outer Sect disciples, it was rare to see someone with such natural talent in cultivating spiritual medicinal plants.

"Tianyu," Elder Hou said with a gentle smile.

"What kind of spirit plant did you grow this time?"

Li Tianyu bowed slightly.

"Elder Hou, this disciple successfully cultivated Earth Spirit Ginseng."

With a simple wave of his sleeve, two ginseng roots appeared on the ground before him.

Each Earth Spirit Ginseng measured roughly fifty centimeters long.

They were thick and twisted, their shapes vaguely resembling the limbs of small children. Pale golden

skin covered the roots, and faint threads of spiritual energy pulsed through the veins beneath the surface.

The moment they appeared, a rich herbal fragrance spread through the air.

The disciples nearby immediately leaned forward to look.

Li Tianyu straightened slightly and spoke with restrained pride.

"I first planted the seedlings within earth-vein spiritual soil. Every day, I nourished them with my own

spiritual energy. Once every threet

days, watered them with spirit spring water. And every ten days, I infused them with wood-type spiritual essence."

He paused briefly before continuing.

"In addition, I used the Earth Energy Gathering formation technique that I mastered, along with several supporting spirit herbs, to guide their growth."

His gaze flickered with quiet satisfaction.

"That allowed them to mature to fifty centimeters in length."

Several disciples inhaled sharply when they saw the roots clearly.

Even those who knew little about spirit herbs could feel the dense energy coming from them.

Elder Hou leaned forward slightly, studying the ginseng roots with great attention.

After a moment, he slowly stroked his beard.

"Very good," he said.

"These Earth Spirit Ginseng roots have already reached half a meter in length, and their spiritual veins are extremely stable."

He lifted one of the roots and examined it carefully.

"If they remained underground, they could easily continue growing until they reached seventy-five centimeter."

He set the root back down and nodded approvingly.

"They have already surpassed the standard for high-grade herbs."

A faint smile appeared on his face.

"These can be classified as extreme high-grade Earth Spirit Ginseng."

"I encourage you to continue working hard, Elder Hou said

calmly. "If you can cultivate these

Earth Spirit Ginseng roots until they reach Seventy-five centimeters, they would qualify as superior-grade

spirit medicine."

The moment the surrounding disciples heard the words extreme high-grade, a ripple

of astonished whispers swept through the crowd.

Many disciples stared at the thick ginseng roots lying on the ground, their eyes filled

with naked envy.

Extreme high-grade spirit herbs were not something ordinary Outer Sect disciples could produce.

Yet Li Tianyu had grown ten of them.

Li Tianyu's smile widened slightly. The pride in his eyes grew brighter.

He clasped his hands respectfully toward Elder Hou.

"Thank you for Elder Hou's praise."

He turned, preparing to walk toward the assistant to collect his merit points—

When suddenly a cold snort cut through the air.

"Elder Hou, those herbs are completely ordinary. There's nothing worth keeping in

such low-grade plants. Why not just throw them away?"

The voice was sharp and unpleasant.

The Almighty Dominance

Chapter 591[1,278 words]

"Disciple Guo Mingxuan has also cultivated Earth Spirit Ginseng."

A long-faced young man with narrow eyes stepped out from the crowd.

As he walked forward, his gaze slid toward Li Tianyu with open disdain.

The moment the surrounding disciples recognized him, the entire crowd stirred with excitement.

"It's Elder Brother Guo Mingxuan!"

"I heard Elder Brother Guo's skill with spirit herbs is just as strong as Li Tianyu's!"

"That's right. They're always ranked first and second on Thousand Herbs Peak!"

The atmosphere instantly changed.

The disciples shifted their attention between the two men, sensing that something interesting was about to happen.

"Well, well... now we'll get to see them compete."

"They've been rivals for years."

"Both of them want the title of number one spirit herb cultivator among the disciples."

Li Tianyu's expression darkened immediately.

His eyes turned cold as he looked at Guo Mingxuan.

Guo Mingxuan glared back without the slightest hesitation.

The tension between them thickened instantly.

Even the air seemed heavier.

"Guo Mingxuan, go ahead and show us your Earth Spirit Ginseng," Elder Hou said encouragingly.

Even he looked slightly curious.

After all, he had long known about the rivalry between these two young disciples— and truthfully, he welcomed it.

Competition created progress.

Without rivals, talent often stagnated.

Guo Mingxuan clasped his hands respectfully toward Elder Hou.

"Understood, Elder."

Then he took out two enormous Earth Spirit Ginseng roots.

The moment they landed, the crowd gasped.

Each root was more than seventy-five centimeters long, nearly the size of a child's body.

Their surfaces glowed faintly, almost crystalline, as if they had spent decades absorbing pure spiritual energy deep beneath the earth.

A dense wave of herbal energy spread outward like an invisible tide.

Compared to them, Li Tianyu's half-meter ginseng suddenly looked ordinary.

The crowd immediately erupted into loud discussion.

"Seventy-five centimeters...!"

The shout came from somewhere in the crowd.

Another disciple leaned forward, eyes wide with disbelief.

"Those Earth Spirit Ginseng roots actually reached seventy-five centimeters!"

"I've heard they could grow that long," someone else said, shaking his head. "But I've never seen it with my own eyes."

"How long would it take to cultivate something like that?"

"Look at them," another disciple murmured in awe. "They're already emitting spiritual energy."

A ripple of admiration spread through the crowd.

"Elder Brother Guo's skill with spirit herbs is definitely the best among the Outer Sect disciples of Thousand Herbs Peak!"

Seeing the crowd erupt with excitement, Guo Mingxuan slowly turned his head.

His gaze landed on Li Tianyu.

A faint, provocative smile appeared on his face.

Li Tianyu's expression darkened instantly.

Elder Hou leaned forward and carefully inspected the massive ginseng roots.

The moment he examined them closely, praise filled his eyes.

"Excellent... truly excellent."

He stroked his beard slowly while studying the roots.

"Quite a few disciples have submitted Earth Spirit Ginseng today," he said thoughtfully. "But in terms of quality, yours are clearly the best."

He nodded with approval.

"These roots have already grown to seventy-five centimeters and have begun emitting spiritual energy."

He paused for emphasis.

"They are far beyond high-grade."

His voice carried authority as he concluded.

"They can only be classified as superior-grade spirit medicine."

He looked at the young man with satisfaction.

"Very good, Guo Mingxuan. Continue working hard."

Guo Mingxuan bowed respectfully.

"Thank you for Elder Hou's guidance."

When he straightened, he turned toward Li Tianyu.

The smile on his face was calm-but unmistakably challenging.

"Junior Brother Chen," he said lightly, "it seems you still need to put a little more effort into your studies."

Li Tianyu's expression grew colder.

He let out a sharp snort.

"Isn't it a little early to celebrate, Elder Brother Guo?"

His voice dropped, icy and cutting.

"After all... it hardly counts when an Inner Disciple helps you."

The accusation sliced through the air like a blade.

Guo Mingxuan burst into loud laughter.

"When you lose, you should learn how to accept it," he said coldly. "Go back and study harder. If all you do is look for excuses and blame other people, you'll never improve."

Li Tianyu's eyes burned with anger.

"Soon, I'll cultivate a one-meter Earth Spirit Ginseng," he declared.

Guo Mingxuan smirked.

"Junior Brother Chen," he said mockingly, "if you brag too much, you're only setting yourself up for embarrassment."

He casually pointed toward the enormous ginseng roots on the ground.

"Earth Spirit Ginseng requires an enormous amount of spiritual energy to grow," he explained with a smirk.

"For Qi Condensation disciples like us, reaching seventy-five centimeters is already the absolute limit."

His eyes gleamed with ridicule.

"And you think you can grow it to one meter?"

He shook his head.

"Only Foundation Establishment elders could accomplish something like that."

His tone grew even more dismissive.

"And that's not even talking about one meter."

He crossed his arms confidently.

"In all the years I've been in this sect..."

"I've never even seen a one-meter Earth Spirit Ginseng before."

Before Guo Mingxuan could finish speaking-

A sudden shout exploded from the edge of the crowd.

"What-what is that?!"

Another voice cried out immediately after.

"Wait... why did the spiritual energy just change?!"

A wave of disturbance rippled through the courtyard. Disciples began turning their heads in confusion, some even stepping back as the air itself seemed to thrum

with a strange pressure.

The tense confrontation between Guo Mingxuan and Li Tianyu was instantly broken.

Both men frowned and turned toward the source of the disturbance.

At first, it was only a faint golden glow appearing along the distant mountain path.

Then the glow grew brighter.

Stronger.

Soon a lone figure began to emerge from the horizon.

Someone was walking up the stone road.

And on the back of that man...

Three enormous objects were slung across his shoulders.

Even from a distance, they radiated a brilliant multicolored light.

But the most shocking part wasn't the glow.

It was the overwhelming wave of spiritual energy pouring from them.

The moment the disciples sensed it, shocked cries erupted across the courtyard.

"Wh-what is that thing?!"

"It looks like... a human!"

"No... wait... that's not a person!"

A disciple suddenly shouted.

"That's Earth Spirit Ginseng!"

The crowd exploded into chaos.

Li Tianyu and Guo Mingxuan both frowned deeply.

bet

Even with their experience cultivating spirit herbs, they couldn't

immediately understand what

they

were seeing. Content béos to

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However, one thing was certain.

Whatever those things were...

They were extraordinary.

Off to the side, Elder Hou suddenly leaned forward.

His eyes widened dramatically.

He stared at the approaching shapes, his breathing becoming noticeably heavier.

When the figure finally stepped fully into view, the entire crowd fell into stunned silence.

Three enormous Earth Spirit Ginseng roots rested across the man's shoulders.

Each one was nearly one and a half meters long.

Their bodies were thick and full, shaped uncannily like adult human figures.

Golden veins pulsed beneath their skin, while faint violet specks shimmered across their surface like

distant stars.

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Dense spiritual energy radiated from them in waves so powerful that the air itself seemed to ripple.

And those three massive roots were being carried-

By Alex.

The surrounding Outer Sect disciples instinctively stepped aside as he walked forward.

Alex staggered slightly under the weight and lowered the ginseng roots onto the ground with a heavy thud.

He wiped the sweat from his forehead, breathing hard.

"Man... I'm exhausted."

Only then did he notice Elder Hou sitting nearby.

"Oh."

He gave a casual nod.

"Hello, Elder."

Alex gestured toward the enormous roots behind him.

"I'm here to submit this mission."

At that moment, he suddenly felt something strange.

The entire courtyard had gone quiet.

Alex slowly turned his head and looked around.

Only then did he realize that every single person present was staring at the giant roots lying on the ground.

Some disciples were openly gasping.

Others simply stood frozen in shock.

Alex blinked in confusion.

"...Earth Spirit Ginseng?"

He scratched his head awkwardly.

"You guys are staring like you've never seen it before."

He looked down at the massive roots again.

"...It is Earth Spirit Ginseng, right?"

A disciple suddenly shouted from the crowd.

"It's... impossible!"

"I've never seen Earth Spirit Ginseng that huge before!"

Another voice joined in disbelief.

"Come on! Those can't be herbs!"

"They're the size of a human body!"

Nearby, Li Tianyu and Guo Mingxuan could barely conceal their shock.

Now that they could see the roots clearly, they finally understood what they were looking at.

But even so...

They could hardly believe it was real.

Without hesitation, both men rushed forward and dropped to their knees beside the enormous roots.

Their hands trembled slightly as they began examining them up close.

If you find any errors (non-standard content, ads redirect, broken links, etc..), Please let us know so we can fix it as soon as possible.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 592[1,850 words]

Guo Mingxuan's hands even began to tremble.

He had to resist the urge to break open one of the ginseng roots just to inspect the inside.

Before he could do anything, Elder Hou suddenly strode forward.

With a casual wave of his sleeve-

A powerful gust of energy exploded outward.

Li Tianyu and Guo Mingxuan were instantly sent tumbling several meters away.

Elder Hou then stepped forward and stood directly in front of the massive roots, staring at them with wide eyes.

After a long moment, he inhaled sharply.

"Th-this..."

His voice trembled.

"This really is Earth spirit ginseng!!"

For a moment, the surrounding Outer Sect disciples stood frozen in shock.

Then the entire courtyard erupted into chaos.

"Earth spirit ginseng!!"

"I can't believe those giant roots are actually Earth spirit ginseng!!"

"How is that even possible?!"

"How could Earth spirit ginseng grow this big?!"

"Those roots are long!"

"As big as an adult human body. Th-that's... ginseng?!"

The noise of the crowd grew even louder as people began comparing Alex's enormous roots with the one and half meter Earth spirit ginseng Guo Mingxuan had just submitted.

The difference was so ridiculous it felt unreal.

Alex stood there, staring in confusion at the chaos unfolding around him.

Why were they making such a commotion over a mere Earth Spirit Ginseng of this size? If he truly wanted to, he could have easily grown it to five meters tall. The one he brought today was already restrained compared to what it could become.

Li Tianyu and Guo Mingxuan seemed to have completely forgotten the pain from being thrown aside by Elder Hou.

Both of them scrambled back toward the roots and knelt down again, examining them with trembling hands.

Meanwhile, Elder Hou began carefully inspecting each massive root one by one.

His face was filled with a mixture of shock and delight.

Everyone's crazed reaction left Alex feeling slightly uneasy.

In his eyes, these people were acting like lunatics.

It was just Earth spirit ginseng, wasn't it?

Alex slowly stepped backward and tried to get Elder Hou's attention.

"Elder..." he called out loudly.

He was suddenly worried that this man—and everyone gathered here might refuse to give him the merit points he needed for the library.

"Wonderful! Incredible!"

Elder Hou burst into excited laughter as he gently ran his hands along the massive roots.

Apparently, he hadn't heard Alex speaking at all.

"Earth spirit ginseng of this size is extremely rare!"

He excitedly continued examining the roots.

"Only after growing to one and half meter can Earth spirit ginseng develop such dense golden veins."

He nodded repeatedly.

"At this stage, it's no longer simply a spirit medicinal herb."

"It has become a primary ingredient for many elixir pills, and it can even serve as the main ingredient to restore missing limbs and save lives."

"Everyone, listen carefully."

Elder Hou suddenly raised his hand.

"Take a deep breath."

Looking extremely excited, he closed his eyes and inhaled deeply

"Can you smell that fragrance?"

"It smells like flesh and bone, doesn't it?"

"That is the unique aroma that appears once Earth spirit ginseng reaches one and half meter!"

"As long as a person still draws breath, this herb can bring them back from the brink of death. Truly amazing! I never thought that in my lifetime I would be able to see

this herb that until now only existed in the records of history!"

Li Tianyu and Guo Mingxuan immediately inhaled deeply.

The surrounding disciples also crowded closer, eagerly trying to smell the fragrance. Alex cleared his throat awkwardly.

He remember In the cultivation world, spiritual plants do not grow only from soil and water. They grow from qi.

Ginseng in particular is known as a spirit-absorbing herb. One of the most sensitive reacts to living essence around it.

So on the library he focused on an old record about.

When animals passed through the forest and relieved themselves near a young earth spirit ginseng, the herb grew noticeably faster. At first it sounded ridiculous, but the sect elders eventually understood the reason.

It was not the urine itself.

It was the life essence inside it.

Urine carries a tiny amount of expelled Essence of life residue from the body.

For ordinary people this residue is weak and scattered. But for a cultivator whose meridians are open and whose dantian stores spiritual qi, even bodily waste contains trace spiritual essence.

Spirit herbs like ginseng are extremely sensitive to that essence.

When the liquid seeps into the soil, the herb absorbs the residual life-qi.

It is similar to a diluted spiritual fertilizer.

And Alex was mostly piss on that ginseng to make them grow bigger. And now all of them smell it like crazy.

At this point, Alex was fully convinced that everyone here was completely insane.

"Elder..." he called again.

Suddenly, Elder Hou's body trembled violently.

His eyes burst open.

Flames of rage appeared within them.

His expression twisted with fury.

"DAMMIT!"

"What the hell happened here?!"

His furious voice echoed across the courtyard.

"Someone actually bit a chunk out of it?!"

"Earth spirit ginseng this old contains extremely concentrated energy! It absolutely cannot be eaten raw!"

"Which idiot bit a piece off and ruined its purity?!"

Elder Hou looked utterly heartbroken.

To him, this was like discovering a perfect piece of priceless jade—

Only to find that part of it had been damaged by pests.

His head snapped upward.

His gaze landed directly on Alex.

"It wasn't me!" Alex blurted instantly, stumbling a step backward.

The way the elder was staring at him made the hairs on his neck stand up. This old man was clearly unhinged, and from the aura rolling off him, Alex had no doubt the elder was more than capable of beating him into the ground if he felt like it.

A few days earlier, while digging up the Earth Spirit Ginseng, Alex had run into a small problem.

He had been starving.

Cooking anything out in the wilderness would have taken time, and Alex had been

far too tired and lazy to bother. The ginseng itself was enormous—almost as large as a person—so he had simply bit off a small corner.

He had even been careful about it.

Alex had shaved the edge neatly, making sure it looked natural. With a root that massive, he had been absolutely certain no one would ever notice unless they examined it extremely closely.

But who would have thought this lunatic elder would actually inspect every single corner of the herb?

Alex swallowed.

This old man really checked the entire thing... piece by piece.

How could he possibly have imagined that it would lead to this kind of disaster when he submitted the mission?

Or that a single bite mark would cause such chaos among these lunatics?

When the surrounding disciples heard Elder Hou's accusation, they all leaned closer to inspect the roots.

Sure enough...

On the last ginseng root, there was a very obvious bite mark.

Elder Hou stared at the damaged section for a long time.

Finally, he let out a long sigh.

After all, he was a Foundation Establishment cultivator, and his obsession with the Dao of medicine was well known.

However, the Earth spirit ginseng Alex had brought was so unbelievable-so completely different from anything he had ever seen—

That he had completely lost his composure earlier.

Finally, he slowly lifted his gaze and looked deeply at Alex.

Then he flicked his sleeve.

Elder Hou took a deep breath as he stared at the massive Earth spirit ginseng roots.

"This Earth spirit ginseng is extreme super-grade..."

He paused, his eyes burning with excitement.

"No... wait..."

"This is supreme-grade!"

His voice rang loudly across the courtyard.

"Yes. Record it as supreme-grade. The reward will be 10,000 merit points!"

The entire crowd gasped.

Normally, plant-growing missions only rewarded around ten merit points.

At best, someone might receive one hundred.

But now-

Ten thousand merit points.

The number was so shocking that the entire courtyard erupted into stunned whispers.

Off to the side, the young assistant stared in disbelief.

For years and years, it had been incredibly rare for a spirit plant to even be labeled super-grade.

But supreme-grade?

That level had not appeared in hundreds of years.

Alex's eyes instantly lit up.

Ten thousand!

He hurried over and handed his identity medallion to the assistant.

The assistant hesitated for a moment, then glanced nervously toward Elder Hou, who was still obsessively examining the giant roots.

Finally, he clenched his teeth and transferred the 10,000 merit points into Alex's medallion.

As soon as the points were confirmed, Alex grabbed his medallion and immediately turned to leave.

He had already made up his mind.

He was never coming back to deal with these lunatics again.

Just as he reached the edge of the courtyard—

"Wait."

Elder Hou's voice suddenly rang out behind him.

"What is your name?"

Alex turned around.

"Alex," he answered immediately.

Then he quickly added,

"My name is Jun Jiu, and Li Chingxue is my sister."

Before coming here, Alex had never imagined that his Earth spirit ginseng would cause such an enormous commotion.

Now he was a little worried.

So he quickly dropped Li Chingxue's name as a protective warning.

"Hmph."

Elder Hou snorted softly, clearly annoyed.

"You think you're clever, using your sister's name, don't you?"

"The Wudang Sect is one of the great sects with a long history. Do you think I would covet your little secret? I am not that low."

He looked at Alex calmly.

"There are always disciples who appear with their own secrets... and their own fortunate opportunities."

He flicked his sleeve dismissively.

"I will not lower myself to asking exactly how you managed to cultivate this Earth Spirit Ginseng."

Then his eyes narrowed slightly.

"But next time you grow something like this..."

"You bring it directly to me."

"I will make sure you receive an appropriate amount of merit points."

Finally, Elder Hou waved his hand again, dismissing Alex.

But Alex suddenly felt that this could become trouble. If all these people thought he was hiding some secret method, every pair of eyes would be fixed on him from now on

So he bowed and said, "Elder, to tell the truth, there is no secret behind this Earth Spirit Ginseng. I was simply lucky. Someone once visited my courtyard and left me a note

about how to grow this herb of you want, I can give you the noted received."

Everyone present was shocked.

"So there really was a mysterious elder helping him!"

"Yeah! I've heard stories like this before. Some people receive guidance from wandering masters, and their herbs turn out extraordinary!"

Elder Hou stood up abruptly, his eyes widening.

"Are... are you sure you want to share it with me?"

"Of course Alex replied calmly. The

last thing he wanted was for this crazy elder to keep an eye on him "Please provide me with paper and

ink + memorized the method years ago, so I can write it down.

Elder Hou immediately turned to his assistant. "What are you waiting for? Quickly bring paper and ink!"

The assistant hurried forward and placed the materials in front of Alex.

Alex quickly began writing. His brush moved swiftly across the page, and within just a few minutes he finished and handed the paper to Elder Hou.

The elder immediately grabbed the paper and began studying it with intense focus.

People nearby craned their necks to peek at the contents, and soon the entire crowd was staring at the sheet.

No one could pay attention to anything else anymore.

Meanwhile, Alex clutched his identity medallion tightly as he slipped out and left the Missions Office as quickly as possible.

His destination was clear.

He headed straight toward the library of Thousand Herbs Peak.

Only after he had already disappeared down the mountain path did someone suddenly slap his forehead.

"Wait a minute!"

The man stared toward the door Alex had just left through.

"Didn't he say his name was Jun Jiu?"

The crowd paused

Another disciple frowned and said slowly, "Now that you mention it... doesn't that name sound familiar?"

A third disciple's eyes widened.

"Isn't Jun Jiu the number one name on the test ranking stone stele at the Medical Pavilion?!"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 593[2,267 words]

Alex stood inside the quiet library of the Medicine Pavilion.

At a wooden table near the entrance sat an elder, deep in meditation. His eyes were closed, his breathing slow and steady, as if the outside world didn't exist.

Alex walked up to him and spoke respectfully.

"Honorable Elder," Alex said respectfully, bowing slightly. "I would like to access the second floor using my merit points.

The elder didn't open his eyes.

"Place your medallion on the table. One day on the second floor costs one thousand merit points. When the points run out, someone will escort you out."

"Thank you," Alex said with a slight bow.

He placed his medallion on the table, then turned and walked toward the staircase.

Usually, a faint energy barrier blocked the path to the second floor, refusing him entry no matter how close he got.

But this time, the barrier parted silently.

Alex climbed the stairs.

When he reached the second floor, the difference was immediately clear.

The space was far smaller than the first floor. Instead of endless shelves packed with books, this level held only a few quiet rows.

Alex estimated there were around two thousand books here.

The first floor probably had at least ten thousand.

Only two people were present.

Both were elders.

They sat at separate tables, reading slowly, turning pages with the patience of people who had spent their entire lives around books.

Alex didn't greet them.

He simply walked to the nearest shelf and picked up the first book.

Then he started reading.

Not carefully.

Not slowly.

He flipped through the pages rapidly, his eyes scanning the text at astonishing speed before placing the book back on the shelf.

Then he grabbed the next one.

And the next.

To anyone watching, it looked absurd.

Like someone pretending to read.

But Alex had a reason.

He didn't need to memorize everything himself.

Gaia was recording every single page he saw.

Later, when he needed specific information, Gaia could analyze the entire archive instantly.

So Alex continued.

Book after book.

Shelf after shelf.

He didn't care whether the content was related to medicine, poison, herbs, or ancient theories.

Everything was useful.

Everything was data.

The first day passed quietly.

The two elders occasionally glanced at Alex.

Their brows furrowed when they saw the way he "read."

Flip.

Scan.

Return.

Repeat.

But neither of them said anything.

They simply went back to their own books.

The second day passed the same way.

Alex moved through the shelves like a storm of turning pages.

By the third day, he had almost finished the entire second floor.

That was when someone new arrived.

Footsteps echoed from the staircase.

A middle-aged man stepped onto the second floor.

He paused the moment he noticed Alex.

From across the room, he watched the strange scene.

Alex grabbed a book.

Flipped through it in seconds.

Returned it.

Then grabbed another.

The man's eyes narrowed.

He walked closer.

When he finally stood beside Alex, he spoke coldly.

"Young disciple. This is not how one reads."

"If you came here only to fool around, then you should leave immediately."

Alex slowly turned his head and looked at him.

"I entered with my merit points," Alex said evenly.

"So can you stop bothering me and mind your own business?"

Then he turned back to the shelf.

Picked up another book.

And continued reading exactly the same way.

The middle-aged man's face darkened.

"I am Han Fei," he said sharply.

His voice carried the weight of authority.

"I have served as the assistant elder of the Pill Creation Pavilion for over twenty years," Han Fei said coldly. "Show me the respect you owe me."

Alex kept flipping pages.

Han Fei's eyes grew colder.

"Out of kindness, I am trying to guide you so you can have a better future," he continued.

"But you refuse to listen."

"Now I order you to leave the second floor immediately."

He pointed at the shelves.

"You are not studying."

"You are destroying these books."

"Brother," Alex said calmly without looking at him, his eyes still moving across the pages of the book in his hands. "I don't know how you gained access to the second floor. But if you're using merit points like I am, shouldn't you spend your time doing what you came here for?"

He flipped another page.

"So stop worrying about how I use my time," Alex continued evenly. "We're both paying to be here."

"You !"

Han Fei exploded.

"I am doing this for your own good, and you dare reject my guidance?" he barked.

"You don't even show respect! I am your senior. You should bow when you speak to me!"

"And yet you stand there acting arrogant?"

Han Fei pointed toward the staircase.

"Get out from here. Leave the second floor immediately!"

Alex had plenty he could say.

But for someone like this man, arguing felt like a waste of time.

He was almost finished scanning the entire floor anyway.

So Alex simply ignored him.

Completely.

He turned another page.

Han Fei's anger boiled over.

Being ignored was worse than being insulted.

His hand shot forward.

He tried to grab Alex by the collar.

But Alex shifted his body slightly.

The movement was so natural it almost looked unconscious.

His eyes never even left the book.

Han Fei's hand closed on empty air.

"You!"

Shock flashed across his face.

Han Fei was a Great Qi Condensation cultivator. He could clearly sense Alex's cultivation level.

Ninth Qi Condensation.

In theory, someone like Alex should have been easy to control.

Yet every time Han Fei reached out-

Alex moved just enough to evade him.

Once.

Twice.

Five times.

Ten.

No matter how many times he tried to grab Alex's collar, his hand never landed.

Han Fei's anger turned into humiliation.

Finally, he stopped trying to grab him.

Instead, he swung his palm toward Alex's shoulder.

Alex leaned slightly.

Another ten unsuccessful attempts followed.

Han Fei's frustration boiled over.

His open palm slowly tightened-
until it curled into a clenched fist.

Now he was truly furious.

He threw punch after punch, aiming at Alex's chest, his shoulder, even his head.

But Alex continued flipping through the book, his body shifting naturally, dodging
every blow without even looking.

To anyone watching, it was surreal.

The assistant elder was attacking.

And Alex looked like he was just... reading.

Minutes passed.

Han Fei kept striking the air around Alex, his frustration growing with every miss.

Alex thought eventually the man would get tired and leave.

But suddenly-

Han Fei's face turned red.

His eyes burned with fury.

He gathered his inner force, Qi surging through his body.

This time, he raised his hand with real power behind it.

A heavy strike meant to crush Alex where he stood.

The moment the killing intent appeared- Alex reacted instinctively.

His body moved before his mind even caught up.

His fist shot out.

A single punch.

Straight into Han Fei's face.

THUD.

The impact echoed through the quiet library.

Han Fei's eyes widened in shock.

He had never expected Alex to strike back.

Alex himself froze.

He hadn't meant to hit him.

But it had already happened.

Han Fei's body swayed.

Then he collapsed to the floor.

Unconscious.

Silence filled the second floor.

Alex slowly looked around.

One of the elders at the table had lifted his head and was watching the scene.

Alex quickly spoke.

"I didn't mean to hit him."

He pointed at the unconscious Han Fei.

"It was... accidental."

The elder waved his hand dismissively.

"No need to worry."

He closed his book calmly.

"I saw everything."

"He attacked you about fifty times."

The elder glanced at Han Fei on the floor.

"You only returned one punch."

He looked back at Alex.

"No one will blame you. But next time, try not to be so generous."

"Thank you," Alex said, bowing slightly.

Then he glanced down at Han Fei lying unconscious on the floor.

Alex's eyes narrowed.

When this man woke up, he would definitely cause trouble.

Alex had no doubt about that.

Fortunately, during the past few days of reading, Alex had studied several books on acupuncture and energy channels.

So before returning to the shelves, he crouched beside Han Fei.

With calm precision, he tapped several acupuncture points on the man's body.

Sleep points.

Energy suppression points.

Nothing dangerous.

Just enough to make sure Han Fei wouldn't wake up anytime soon.

Alex stood up and dusted off his hands.

"Now you can rest peacefully," he murmured.

Han Fei would remain unconscious for at least twenty-four hours.

Just to be polite, Alex even adjusted the man's position slightly so he was lying more comfortably on the floor.

Then Alex walked back to the shelves.

And continued working.

Book after book.

Page after page.

Gaia recorded everything.

Six hours later, Alex finished scanning the entire second floor.

Every single book.

There was nothing left.

Alex closed the final book and returned it to the shelf.

Then he walked toward the staircase leading to the third floor.

But before reaching the stairs, he noticed something unusual.

A long hall stretched in front of the staircase.

The walls were covered with sheets of paper.

Curious, Alex walked closer.

Each paper contained a question.

A technical question about medicine, herbs, cultivation, or rare materials.

Beneath many of the questions were written answers.

Different handwriting.

Different opinions.

Some were theories.

Some were guesses.

Alex read one of them carefully.

How can the Earth Spirit Ginseng grow longer than one meter?

Several answers had already been written below the question.

But Alex immediately recognized the problem.

None of them were correct.

He frowned slightly.

Then he smiled.

On Prussia, online forums were filled with people asking questions and helping each other.

It was a simple way to improve knowledge and make life easier for everyone.

This place felt similar.

So Alex decided to help.

He picked up a pen and dipped it into the ink on a nearby table.

Then he wrote below the question.

You need to add herbs like Moonlight Grass to balance the cold yin energy surrounding the Earth Spirit Ginseng. Without neutralizing that energy, the ginseng's growth will weaken and it will never exceed

one meter.

Alex continued writing, carefully explaining the full method for

helping the Earth Spirit Ginseng grow beyond one meter. Only after finishing the final line did he place the pen back on the table.

Then he looked at the next paper. Another question.

Another problem.

He picked up the pen again.

Some questions were complicated.

But Gaia analyzed the data from thousands of books Alex had already scanned.

The answers came quickly.

Accurate.

Precise.

Alex moved from paper to paper, writing solutions.

Sometimes the questions themselves triggered new insights.

Sometimes Gaia found connections hidden deep within the recorded knowledge.

Time passed quietly.

By the time Alex finished, every single question on the hall walls had an answer.

Alex stepped back and looked at the long corridor.

For the first time, he felt strangely satisfied.

Helping people solve problems felt... good.

Then he turned and walked toward the stairs.

Alex climbed to the third floor.

This time there was no barrier at all.

The stairs simply opened into the next level.

When he stepped onto the third floor, Alex immediately stopped.

The walls on all four sides were completely covered with papers.

Hundreds of them.

Maybe thousands.

Every single one contained a question.

And none of them had answers yet.

On the third floor, the space was quieter than the levels below.

A long wooden table stood near the center of the room, and several shelves lined the walls. On them rested a small collection of books-far fewer than the lower floors.

Alex counted them roughly.

About two hundred.

He nodded to himself.

"Alright," Alex murmured. "Let's help the community a little more."

He picked up the pen again and returned to the wall of unanswered questions.

Alex picked one at random.

Why do Frost Vine roots rot when planted beside Spirit Jade soil?

He read it twice.

Then Gaia responded instantly.

"Conflict between cold yin resonance and jade mineral radiation. Root tissue collapses after prolonged exposure."

Alex nodded.

Simple.

He grabbed a pen.

Then wrote neatly beneath the question:

The Frost Vine root absorbs cold yin

energy. Spirit Jade soil releases

neutral mineral radiation that disrupts the vine's absorption cycle, causing root decay. Plant Frost Vine Moon Clay instead to stabilize energy flow.

Alex stepped back.

Looked at the answer.

And smiled slightly.

One down.

The blank walls slowly began to change.

Because one by one-

Questions that had remained unanswered for years... even decades...

Finally received answers.

Some of the problems were complicated. When Alex encountered one that required deeper analysis, Gaia began processing the data in the background.

While waiting for the result, Alex simply walked to the shelves.

He skimmed the books.

Page after page.

More information for Gaia.

Then he returned to the questions and wrote the answers once Gaia finished analyzing.

This cycle continued.

Question.

Analysis.

Book.

Answer.

Time passed quietly.

A few days slipped by while Alex worked his way through the entire wall of problems.

Meanwhile, Han Fei slowly regained consciousness.

His head throbbed.

He opened his eyes and found himself lying on the first floor of the Medicine Pavilion

library.

For a moment, he was confused.

Then the memory came rushing back.

That arrogant brat.

Han Fei jumped to his feet and rushed toward the stairs leading to the second floor.

But the moment he stepped forward-

A barrier blocked him.

He slammed into it and stumbled back.

"What?!"

Han Fei rushed to the elder sitting by the entrance.

"I paid one thousand merit points!" he shouted. "It took me half a year to save that!

Why can't I enter the second floor?!"

The elder opened his eyes slowly and sighed.

"You already entered yesterday," he said calmly.

Han Fei froze.

"You spent the entire day sleeping on the second floor."

The elder shrugged slightly.

"If you wanted to sleep, why waste a thousand merit points doing it there?"

Han Fei's face twisted with rage.

"Someone knocked me out!" he shouted. "I was attacked!"

The elder closed his eyes again.

"I don't care."

His voice was completely indifferent.

"You used your merit points."

"That's your problem."

Han Fei's fists clenched.

One thousand merit points.

Do

you know how hard that was to earn?

A normal earth spirit ginseng only gave him ten merit points.

He had worked endlessly to collect those thousand points.

And now they were gone.

All for sleeping.

"That bastard..." Han Fei muttered through gritted teeth.

Then his eyes fell on the table.

Alex's medallion still sat there.

Han Fei's face darkened.

"You think you can humiliate me and walk away?" he snarled.

He turned and stormed out of the Medicine Pavilion.

"I'll bring my brothers," he muttered coldly. "Let's see how long you can hide."

Not long after, Han Fei gathered a group of outer disciples.

His voice was filled with anger as he spoke.

"Listen! A young brat robbed one thousand of my merit points and is hiding inside the Medicine Pavilion library!"

His fists shook.

"I want justice!"

Immediately, several disciples stepped forward.

"Who dares rob Brother Han Fei?"

"Let's go teach him a lesson!"

Another disciple sneered.

"Brother Han Fei is the assistant elder of the Medicine Pavilion. Who would dare disrespect him?"

One man cracked his knuckles.

"Anyone who robs my brother deserves to die."

Soon, nearly thirty outer disciples gathered.

Together they marched to the Medicine Pavilion.

They stood outside the entrance, arms crossed, eyes burning with hostility.

Waiting.

Patiently.

"For him to come out," one of them said coldly.

"When he does..."

"He's dead."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 594[1,694 words]

Outside the second-floor library, the old man stood frozen.

For decades, those problems had hung on the wall-untouched, unanswered, almost forgotten. Yet now, one after another, they were being solved.

By a single young man.

Jun Jiu.

The old man's eyes trembled as they scanned the answers on the paper. Each line was clear. Precise. Flawless.

His hands began to shake.

His breathing turned uneven.

Impossible...

Yet the truth was right in front of him.

This... this is impossible.

A surge of excitement hit him so hard he nearly stepped forward.

I have to take him as my disciple.

The words burned in his throat. He wanted to shout them. To grab Alex by the shoulder and drag him away if he had to.

"He is incredible! He must become my disciple!"

But he didn't move.

A promise held him back.

The sect leaders wanted this young man—so he had no choice but to step aside.

The old man clenched his fists, his knuckles turning white.

To hell with promises.

"I want him," he muttered under his breath.

Without another thought, he turned and strode toward the stairs leading to the third floor.

"Thousand Herbs Peak Leader... where are you going?"

The voice came from behind him—calm, steady, but carrying undeniable authority.

The old man froze.

Slowly, he turned.

His pupils shrank.

Standing there was the Wudang Sect Master.

"I... I was just going to take a look," the old man said, forcing a stiff smile as he gave a slight bow. "At the work he's done."

The Sect Master's gaze was sharp, almost amused.

"Don't pretend," he said flatly. "I know exactly what you're thinking."

A pause.

Then, without hesitation-

"He will be my sixth disciple."

The words landed like a hammer.

"Sect Master!" the Thousand Herbs Peak Leader cried out, panic breaking through his composure. "You already have five outstanding disciples! Why do you need another? Please—just give me this one!"

The Sect Master raised an eyebrow.

"What?" he said, almost offended. "I only have six. You already have twenty. And you still want more?"

The Thousand Herbs Peak Leader's face twisted with frustration.

Twenty disciples-yes.

But none like this.

Never in his life had he encountered talent like Alex's.

And now, the Sect Master was trying to take him without shame.

"But he's a disciple of Thousand Herbs Peak-and I'm the Peak Leader!"

His voice hardened, edged with frustration.

"He is a disciple of the Wudang Sect," the Sect Master replied calmly. "And I am its master."

There was no hesitation in his voice. No room for argument.

He wasn't backing down.

"Sect Master..." he tried again. "What if he's a spy? Someone with hidden intentions?"

He stepped closer, his tone turning urgent.

"If you make him a direct disciple... a core disciple... even a successor it could endanger the entire Wudang Sect. Wouldn't it be safer to let me handle him?"

The Sect Master let out a quiet scoff.

"If he were a spy," he said, eyes narrowing, "do you think he would spend his time solving four hundred unanswered questions that have been sitting there for decades?"

The old man went silent.

"You've already gained more than enough. With those answers alone, your herb production and growth could increase fivefold to tenfold."

He leaned slightly forward.

"Don't be greedy. He's already done more than enough for you."

Inside, the Thousand Herbs Peak Leader burned.

Greedy?

You call me greedy?

You're the one trying to take him for yourself.

He swallowed the words.

Barely.

"...So, Sect Master," he asked after a long pause, "when do you plan to take him?"

The Sect Master glanced toward the third floor, where Alex still worked, completely unaware of the storm gathering around him.

"Perhaps after he enters the inner sect," he said calmly.

A faint smile touched his lips.

"For now... let him be."

"Let him do things his own way."

"And don't disturb him."

The moment the two elders heard footsteps coming down the stairs, they vanished.

Gone.

As if they had never been there at all.

Alex stepped down from the second floor, a faint smile playing on his lips. There was a strange sense of satisfaction in his chest-quiet, steady, almost addictive.

Four hundred questions.

All answered.

"Aih... helping people really does feel good," he murmured, letting out a long yawn.

He hadn't slept much. His body should have been exhausted.

But instead, he felt... refreshed.

Light.

When he reached the first floor, he walked over to the table and picked up his medallion.

For the first time, the old man sitting there opened his eyes.

He looked directly at Alex.

Those eyes were deep-sharp enough to feel like they could cut straight through him.

Alex paused.

"Thank you for answering the questions," the elder said calmly. "Someone will come to verify your answers. If they are correct, your merit points will be updated."

Alex blinked, genuinely surprised.

"...I get merit points for answering those?"

The elder raised an eyebrow.

"Didn't you do it for the merit points?"

Alex smiled, almost sheepishly.

"No," he said. "I just helped because I could."

The elder stared at him for a moment.

Then he chuckled softly.

"Good heart... very good heart."

Suddenly, the medallion lifted from the table and floated into Alex's hand.

"You may take it back," the elder continued. "There will be no deduction of merit points from you."

He paused, then added-

"Since you have already reached the third floor, you now have full access to the library. No points required."

Alex's eyes lit up.

"No points needed?" he repeated, grinning. "Thank you."

He couldn't help it.

He felt proud.

Do something good... and something good comes back.

Simple.

Fair.

Perfect.

But the moment he stepped outside—

"THAT'S HIM!"

The shout exploded through the air.

Alex stopped.

His eyes widened slightly.

Standing ahead was Han Fei.

And behind him-

Thirty people.

Waiting.

All staring straight at him.

"That's the bastard!" Han Fei yelled, his voice filled with fury. "He dared to hit me— and stole my one thousand merit points!"

Alex sighed softly.

"...Yeah," he muttered under his breath. "Do something bad... and something bad

comes back too."

Han Fei stepped forward, the group closing in around Alex from all sides. Other disciples quickly backed away, clearing the area as tension snapped tight in the air.

Alex remained where he was, calm.

"I don't remember stealing your merit points," he said evenly.

Han Fei's face twisted with rage.

"How dare you deny it!" he snapped. "I spent half a year saving up those one thousand points!"

His voice rose, almost shaking.

"You hit me! Knocked me out! I was unconscious the whole day on the second floor!

My points were wasted because of you!"

He pointed straight at Alex.

"If that's not stealing-then what is it?!"

Alex frowned, his patience thinning.

"You swung at me fifty times," he said flatly. "hit you once. And now you're crying, calling your friends

and accusing me of stealing?" .net "Liar!" Han Fei's face flushed red

with anger. "I was giving you kind advice told you not to read so recklessly-for your own good. But you got angry and attacked me from behind!"

Alex stared at him for a moment.

Then he exhaled.

"Fine," he said. "I don't want trouble. I'll return the one thousand merit points."

He met Han Fei's eyes.

"Are we done?"

"What do you mean done?!" Han Fei shouted.

His voice echoed across the courtyard.

"You hit my face. You stole my thousand points. You think that's enough?"

He stepped forward, eyes burning.

"You owe me ten thousand merit points."

A beat.

"And one of your arms."

Everything changed.

The air around Alex seemed to drop in temperature.

His expression hardened.

He had already stepped back. Already chosen peace.

And this man kept pushing.

Does he think I'm weak?

Alex's gaze swept across the surrounding disciples.

"Listen," he said, his voice rising-sharp, commanding.

"Everyone here."

The crowd fell quiet.

"This man attacked me fifty times. I hit him once. I was willing to compensate him out of goodwill."

His eyes turned cold.

"But now he wants ten thousand points... and my arm?"

His voice dropped—low, dangerous.

"I'm telling all of you right now if any of you dare to make a move..."

A faint killing intent bled into his tone.

"Don't blame me when I take your arms instead."

The words hit hard.

Some of the disciples hesitated, exchanging uncertain glances.

The tension shifted.

But Han Fei's face twisted even further, rage completely overtaking reason.

"You're twisting black into white!" he roared. "I didn't even touch you, and you attacked me first!"

He turned to the others, raising his voice.

"Don't be afraid of him! Today we make him pay!"

Han Fei had status.

As an assistant elder, he had influence. Connections.

People behind him.

Unlike Alex-

Just a newcomer.

Han Fei reached to his side and drew his sword.

The blade flashed in the light.

"If you refuse to pay ten thousand merit points..... and give up your arm..."

His voice dropped to a deadly whisper.

"Then I'll take your life instead."

Han Fei moved first.

His sword flashed as he lunged.

Then-

In less than a heartbeat-

Something flew through the air.

An arm.

Spinning. Blood spraying. Then it hit the ground with a sickening thud.

A scream tore through the courtyard.

Everyone froze.

Because the arm... belonged to Han Fei.

And his sword-

Was already in Alex's hand.

collapsed

"AAAAARGHHH-!" Han Fei to his knees, clutching the stump of his shoulder, his face twisted in agony My art! My arm

He couldn't even process what had just happened.

One moment, he had been attacking.

The next-

His arm was gone.

Alex stood where he was, calm, unmoved, the stolen sword resting loosely in his grip.

"Attack him!" Han Fei screamed, his voice breaking. "He cut my arm! Kill him!"

Several of his followers stepped forward, drawing their weapons.

"STOP."

Alex's voice cracked through the air like thunder.

They froze.

His eyes were cold. Deadly.

"We have no grudge," Alex said slowly. "But if you attack me now..."

He lifted the sword slightly.

"I won't show mercy."

"I'll take every one of your arms."

The threat hung heavy in the air.

Some of the disciples hesitated, exchanging uneasy glances.

They knew Han Fei-but not the full story.

And many of them... knew his reputation.

Arrogant. Cruel. Always pushing too far.

Maybe this time... he went too far.

"Don't be afraid of him!" Han Fei roared again, blood pouring down his body. "There are thirty of us!"

But before anyone could move—

Another flash.

A blur.

A second scream.

“AAAAAAHHHHH-!”

Han Fei's other arm spun into the air.

Gone.

Just like the first.

Silence crashed down over the courtyard.

Several disciples turned pale on the spot.

They had seen fights before.

They had seen blood.

But this-

This was different.

Cold.

Efficient.

Merciless.

"You-!" one disciple near Han Fei started, anger rising as he stepped forward.

The tip of a sword was suddenly at his throat.

He froze.

"You draw your weapon," Alex said quietly, his voice almost a whisper, "your arm will be next."

The man's body went rigid.

Then-

He felt it.

A crushing, suffocating killing intent pouring off Alex like a storm.

His legs trembled.

Warmth spread down his robes.

He had lost control.

Around them, the group of thirty stood frozen.

Moments ago, they had thought this would be easy.

Just gang up on one newcomer.

Teach him a lesson.

Now-

They understood.

They weren't facing prey.

They were facing something far more dangerous.

A monster.

And if they moved-

They might not leave here alive.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 595[1,530 words]

Alex's gaze locked onto Han Fei, both of his arms were gone.

Blood soaked his robes, but it wasn't pouring anymore. One of his companions had already struck several pressure points along his shoulders, sealing the flow.

Another disciple knelt nearby, carefully holding the severed arms, channeling inner energy into them, preserving what life remained in the flesh.

They all knew—if treated fast enough, the arms could still be reattached.

Silence hung heavy in the air.

Then Alex moved.

"You," he said, pointing at a nearby disciple. "Give me your disciple medallion."

The disciple froze, fear flashing across his face. "I—I don't have enough merit points," he stammered. "Please... don't take mine..."

Alex let out a cold, humorless laugh. "Who said anything about taking it from you?" The tension broke-but only slightly.

"I heard it costs one thousand merit points to reattach a single arm," Alex continued, his tone flat, almost indifferent.

"I'll pay two thousand to have both his arms treated," Alex said, his voice steady, almost indifferent. "And another thousand... to compensate for what he lost in the library."

A ripple of shock spread through the crowd.

Three thousand merit points.

That wasn't generosity. That was dominance.

The disciple stared at him, stunned, then hurriedly handed over the medallion. The moment Alex touched it, a faint glow flickered-points transferring in an instant.

Three thousand.

Done.

Without another word, Alex let the medallion drop back into the disciple's trembling hands. Then he flicked the sword away. It struck the ground with a sharp, biting sound, the blade sinking into the earth.

He didn't look back.

He simply turned and walked away.

The crowd parted immediately, instinctively, as if pushed aside by an invisible force. No one dared stand in his way. No one even breathed too loudly.

Behind him, Han Fei's voice tore through the air.

"This isn't over!" he shouted, his face twisted in pain and fury. "I'll report this to the Elder! You attacked me you cut off both my arms! You'll be expelled for this!"

Alex didn't stop.

"Yes," he said, his voice drifting back, calm and almost bored. "Please do."

"Tell him to throw me out of this place. I'm already sick of it... especially seeing people like you calling yourselves disciples."

"I'd be glad to leave."

"You-!" Han Fei's voice cracked, trembling with rage. "Just wait!"

But Alex was already gone.

Gone as if he had never been there at all.

A sudden stillness swept across the courtyard.

Then-

An old man appeared.

No one saw him arrive. One moment the space was empty, the next he was standing there, hands clasped behind his back, eyes deep and unreadable. Recognition spread like wildfire.

"Peak Leader!" voices whispered, then rose as one. Everyone bowed deeply, heads lowered in respect.

The Thousand Herbs Peak Leader didn't answer.

His gaze lingered in the distance—where Alex's figure had already vanished.

He had heard everything.

Every word. Every action.

A rare talent.

Dangerously rare.

If such a man turned against the Wudang Sect...

...it wouldn't just be a loss.

It would be a disaster.

"Peak Leader!"

Han Fei dropped to his knees, his voice trembling with urgency and pain. "Please, you must give me justice! That new outer disciple attacked me he cut off both my arms!"

Tears streamed down his face.

"I beg you give me justice!"

The Peak Leader slowly turned his gaze toward him.

For a moment, there was only silence.

Then, in a voice as calm as still water, he said:

"You struck him fifty times."

His eyes sharpened.

"He struck you once."

"And you still dare to ask me for justice?"

"That's a lie!" Han Fei shouted, his voice hoarse but defiant. "I never hit him even once! He's the one who attacked me!"

The crowd shifted uneasily.

The Peak Leader didn't move. His gaze stayed calm-too calm.

"You lost to him-miserably," he said, each word slow and deliberate. "And then you gathered a crowd... demanded ten thousand merit points... and even one of his arms."

A faint shake of his head.

"And you call that justice?"

Han Fei's expression twisted. "Peak Leader..... he humiliated me. I deserve compensation—for my dignity."

The words barely left his mouth before the air turned cold.

"Han Fei," the Peak Leader said, his tone dropping, heavy with quiet authority. "Because your uncle is an Elder, you've grown arrogant."

"You flaunt your status. You manipulate others. You use his name to extort your fellow disciples." His eyes narrowed. "This isn't the first time."

Murmurs rippled through the crowd.

"You've escaped punishment again and again," he continued, "only because of who stands behind you."

Han Fei clenched his jaw, his voice tight with defiance. "I'm telling the truth, Peak Leader!"

Silence followed.

Then the Peak Leader stepped forward.

"I watched you," he said,. "On the second floor. I saw you strike him again and again."

"Fifty times."

"So tell me... are you saying what I saw... was a lie."

Han Fei's face drained of color.

He hadn't known.

Hadn't even imagined...

...someone was watching.

"This isn't your first offense," the Peak Leader continued. "You've caused chaos before. Driven good disciples out of Wudang."

"All because you hide behind your uncle's authority."

"You are destroying the very people who still believe in this sect," he said. "Breaking its laws. Corrupting its foundation."

He stopped beside the sword, its blade still stabbed into the ground.

"For that," he said quietly, "I will give you justice."

The sword vanished.

No one saw how.

One blink-it was there.

The next-

Gone.

Then-

It reappeared, driven back into the ground, exactly where it had been—like it had never moved at all.

For a heartbeat, nothing happened.

Han Fei stood there, frozen, his eyes wide, his mouth slightly open—as if trying to speak.

Then-

A thin red line appeared across his neck.

Time slowed.

His head tilted.

Slid.

And fell.

It hit the ground with a dull, final sound.

The courtyard erupted into silence so deep it felt suffocating.

No one breathed.

No one moved.

The Peak Leader had just beheaded him.

Effortlessly.

The Peak Leader turned his gaze-cold, sharp, absolute toward the thirty disciples who had come with Han Fei.

"You," he said.

His voice alone made their knees buckle.

"You followed him without question. Without thought. Without knowing right from wrong."

"All of you deserve to die."

Panic exploded.

The thirty disciples dropped to their knees as one, their faces pale, their bodies trembling.

"Peak Leader-please!"

"We didn't know! Han Fei lied to us!"

"Please forgive us!"

"We thought we were helping him!"

Their voices overlapped, desperate, breaking.

Fear filled the air like smoke.

They finally understood.

Too late.

The Peak Leader let out a cold snort.

"Forgive you?" he said.

His gaze swept over them like a blade.

"For having no mind of your own?"

"Fine, I'll give you a choice."

"Go to that man-Jun Jiu. Take Han Fei's head with you. Return every merit point you extorted."

"If he forgives you, then you live."

"If he doesn't..." his gaze swept over them like a blade, "then I will personally take each of your heads."

The words dropped like a sentence from heaven.

All thirty disciples went pale.

In that moment, they finally understood.

Han Fei hadn't offended just anyone.

He had provoked someone... far beyond their reach.

"Go. Now!"

The Peak Leader's voice thundered across the courtyard.

They scrambled to their feet, bodies shaking, and began to move-fast, desperate, almost tripping over themselves to escape.

"Stop."

The command snapped through the air.

All thirty froze instantly.

"Someone," the Peak Leader said coldly, "pick up Han Fei's head."

"...Yes."

One disciple forced himself back,

One ambling as he bent down

hands

his

He swallowed hard, then lifted the severed head from the ground, trying not to look at the lifeless eyes.

Then they ran.

Not walked.

Ran.

Fear drove them forward like a storm at their backs.

The courtyard fell silent again.

The Peak Leader let out a long breath, his expression unreadable.

"That man... Jun Jiu," he murmured. "Too kind."

He glanced at the blood-stained ground.

"He only cut off two arms... and even paid to have them restored."

A faint shake of his head.

"A man like that... won't survive long in this world if he stays that soft."

A figure appeared beside him without warning.

The Sect Master.

"You killed Han Fei," the Sect Master said lightly. "Aren't you afraid his uncle will come after you?"

The Peak Leader let out a short laugh.

"I dared to do it," he replied, "because I trust you."

His eyes flicked sideways.

"If that Elder dares to touch your disciple... you'll take his head as well."

The Sect Master smiled.

"Fair enough."

Far from the courtyard, the thirty disciples finally slowed, breathless, their hearts still pounding.

One of them suddenly raised his hand.

"Stop!"

They all halted, turning toward him in confusion.

"What now?" someone snapped.

The disciple hesitated, then asked the question no one wanted to face.

"...Does anyone know where Jun Jiu lives?"

Silence.

Their expressions shifted—from fear... to something worse.

Realization.

"I... I only heard his name," one of them said weakly. "Jun Jiu..."

Another disciple's eyes widened. "Wait... Jun Jiu? Isn't he the one who took first place? The top disciple?"

A chill ran through the group.

"No wonder the Peak Leader sided with him..."

"Damn it...." someone muttered. "Han Fei really picked the wrong person to mess with."

One of the disciples suddenly spat on Han Fei's severed head.

"You dragged all of us into this mess he snarled, his voice

with anger Dying like that, wamet

easy for you. Damn it!"

too.

"So?" another said, voice tight. "Does anyone know where he actually stays?"

They looked at each other.

No one answered.

No one knew.

Panic crept in again.

"Our lives are on the line," one of them said, his voice shaking. "Think! Please!"

"Ask your friends!"

"Anyone just ask!"

They scattered slightly, pulling out communication talismans, whispering urgently, reaching out to anyone they could.

Minutes passed.

Then more.

One by one, they lowered their hands.

Faces pale.

Eyes hollow.

"No one knows..."

"How is that possible?"

"A disciple that strong... and no one knows where he lives?"

The wind brushed past them, cold and empty.

The thirty disciples stood there, frozen in place-Han Fei's severed head still in their hands-

and for the first time since all of this began...

They truly felt despair.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 596[1,591 words]

Alex stepped back into his hut after leaving the library, closing the door behind him with a quiet thud. The silence wrapped around him, but his mind refused to rest.

Three months.

That was all the time he had.

And it wasn't enough.

There were still too many techniques, too many fragments of martial knowledge buried in the library that he hadn't even touched yet. If he tried to learn everything the normal way, he would fall behind far behind.

His gaze hardened.

There was only one way.

"The fastest path... is through sleep. Through meditation."

When the mind slips into a dreamlike state, time bends.

Three months in the real world... could become thirty months inside the dream.

A faint breath escaped his lips as the thought settled in.

"I have to survive."

"I'm not dying here."

Not in a place where countless others were stronger than him. Not when he hadn't even begun to climb.

"I won't be distracted. And no one... will be allowed to distract me."

With that, Alex reached into his storage and pulled out a pile of spiritual stones— nearly thirty of them. One by one, he placed them around the hut, forming a precise pattern on the ground.

Each stone settled into position like a piece of a larger puzzle.

A formation.

As the final stone dropped into place, the entire array pulsed faintly-then came alive.

A soft hum filled the air.

Energy surged through the pattern, linking each stone together until a translucent dome formed around the hut, sealing it off from the outside world.

Sound could not enter.

Presence could not penetrate.

As long as the spiritual stones held their power... no one would break through.

Alex exhaled slowly, looking around at the barrier with quiet satisfaction.

"The library... really does have everything."

Then, without hesitation, he stepped inside, shut the door, and sat down.

His eyes closed.

And he sank into meditation.

Two days later.

A group of thirty disciples finally arrived at the remote corner of the sect.

They had spent days searching—until Li Qingxue finally sent people to give them his location.

One of them frowned as he looked around the desolate area.

"How is he staying all the way out here? This is the farthest, most isolated part of the disciple grounds."

Another let out a dry laugh. "If I remember right... this place is usually reserved for the worst troublemakers."

"Yeah," a third added, glancing around uneasily. "The last time someone stayed here was twenty years ago. And even then, they didn't last long. Everyone who ends

up here eventually leaves... or disappears into obscurity."

"No wonder no one's heard of him," someone muttered.

They continued forward, their steps slowing as something subtle began to shift.

"Wait."

One of the disciples stopped abruptly, his expression tightening.

"...Do you feel that?"

The others paused.

At first, there was only silence.

Then-

"...The energy."

Another disciple inhaled sharply, his chest rising as if the air itself had grown heavier.

"It's getting denser."

"Not just denser," someone added, voice lowering. "It's still increasing..."

A ripple of unease passed through the group.

They quickened their pace, eyes scanning their surroundings with growing caution.

Then one of them suddenly pointed ahead.

"...Do peach trees grow like that?"

The others followed his gaze.

And froze.

In front of them stood a peach tree-massive, towering, utterly unnatural. Its trunk was thick beyond reason, its branches sprawling wide like it had grown for centuries.

It didn't belong here.

It didn't look normal.

It looked... wrong.

"Hey..." one of the disciples whispered, his voice tight with disbelief. "Have you ever seen an earth spiritual ginseng leaf this big?"

No one answered.

Because the longer they looked, the more stunned they became.

Every herb. Every plant.

Things they had only ever seen in small, precious amounts after decades of growth... now stood before them in monstrous proportions.

Oversized. Thriving. Abundant.

"This doesn't make any sense," another muttered, stepping closer, his eyes scanning the garden. "How can all these spiritual herbs and fruits grow like this?"

"Forget the size," a third said, lowering his voice. "Don't you feel it?"

They all paused.

The air.

"...The energy here is at least ten times denser than our place."

Silence fell over the group.

Then, slowly—almost unconsciously—they moved deeper into the garden, drawn toward its center.

Toward the hut.

One disciple stepped forward, swallowing hard before cupping his fists.

"Brother Jun Jiu," he called out loudly. "We came here... to ask for your forgiveness."

The words echoed faintly across the garden.

But-

No response.

They waited.

A minute.

Five.

Ten.

Still nothing.

The disciple frowned, then raised his voice, shouting again-louder this time.

"Brother Jun Jiu! Please, hear us!"

Again.

And again.

Every ten minutes, his voice rang out, growing more desperate, more strained.

Hours passed.

The sun shifted across the sky.

Still

Nothing.

Finally, one of them couldn't take it anymore. He stepped forward, approaching the hut cautiously.

Then-

He stopped.

His hand lifted, reaching out into empty air—

And hit something.

An unseen barrier.

His eyes widened.

"...There's something here."

The others rushed forward.

He pressed his palm against the invisible surface, feeling the resistance.

"This... this is an invisible wall. A protection formation."

"What?" another exclaimed, immediately stepping in to examine it. His expression quickly changed.

"...He's right. It's a defensive array. And not just that-there's soundproofing built into it."

A heavy realization settled over them.

"That means..." someone said slowly, "...he can't hear us."

"And we can't get in," another finished grimly.

The group fell silent.

"So... what do we do now?" one of them finally asked.

A bitter laugh slipped out from another.

"What can we do... except wait?"

They exchanged uneasy glances.

From the very beginning, they hadn't had a choice.

"If he doesn't forgive us..." one disciple said quietly, his voice trembling slightly, "...our heads will end up like Han Fei's."

The threat hung in the air like a blade.

No one argued.

"...Then we wait," another said. "At least the energy here is incredible. It's not a bad place to cultivate."

That night, all thirty of them sat down.

And began to meditate.

One day passed.

Then another.

They stayed-waiting, cultivating, enduring.

But not everyone had the patience to remain still.

Some began to wander.

They studied the herb formations, circling through the garden with fascination.

"...This is incredible," one murmured, crouching beside a cluster of plants.

"I never knew these herbs could support each other like this...at's perfectly balanced."

"It can sustain itself for a long time without external help," another added, eyes gleaming with realization.

Others joined in, examining different sections, quietly discussing what they saw.

A few went further.

They began trimming dying branches, clearing out weak plants, even transplanting small saplings to better positions-carefully, respectfully.

Almost unconsciously... they started tending the garden.

Days passed.

Then a week.

And something changed.

One disciple made a decision.

"I'm moving my hut here," he said.

The others looked at him-but no one laughed.

Because they were thinking the same thing.

One by one... more followed.

And before long-

The once-abandoned corner of the sect was no longer empty.

They started cleaning Alex's herb garden.

At first, it was hesitant. Awkward. Like they didn't quite belong there.

"Tell me something," one disciple muttered as he pulled weeds from the soil. "Why are we taking care of his garden?"

Another didn't even look up as he worked.

"We came here to ask for his forgiveness," he said calmly. "If he comes out and sees everything better than before... don't you think our chances improve?"

He paused, then added under his breath-

"I don't plan on dying."

That was enough.

A third disciple exhaled slowly. "Besides... haven't you noticed? The peak leaders clearly support him. Everything he has—it's all exclusive."

His gaze hardened.

"I don't want to be on the wrong side of someone like that."

"Agreed," another said immediately.

"And honestly..." someone else

added, glancing around at the lush

gar don't even mind staying

here. The energy is at least ten times richer than my place."

"You're not wrong," a voice chimed in.

There was a brief silence.

Then one disciple spoke what the others were already thinking.

"...I might just follow him."

Another raised an eyebrow. "Follow him? You don't even know him."

"I know enough."

"Oh? Like what?"

The disciple gestured around the garden. "He has resources, backing, strength, and a place with ten times the energy."

A third nodded. "That's not a person. That's a walking opportunity."

The second crossed his arms. "So you're not loyal. You're strategic."

The first smiled faintly. "Call it what you want."

A pause.

Then someone behind them added, "I call it joining the winning side before it becomes expensive."

"You all know I don't have backing in

the Wudang Sect," the first

continued. "If I can stand beside someone like him someone who

ranks first and has the peak leaders behind him..."

He let out a quiet breath.

"My future won't be bad."

No one responded. Because no one disagreed.

And just like that—

Without a word, without a declaration—

Alex gained thirty loyal followers.

Time passed, one day at a time.

The garden flourished under their care. The energy grew thicker. The atmosphere... shifted.

And soon—

The competition Li Qingxue had mentioned was only two days away.

Inside the hut, Alex finally opened his eyes.

The meditation ended.

Everything he had learned from the library—every technique, every insight—had been absorbed, refined, and etched into his mind.

His strength had risen.

Not just a little.

Several levels.

A quiet confidence settled into his chest.

This time... he was ready.

More than ready.

In the coming battle among the outer disciples—

He would be undefeated.

Losing wasn't even a possibility.

Alex stood, calm and composed, and walked toward the door.

Then

He opened it.

For the first time in days.

And froze.

His eyes widened slightly.

Because outside-

The courtyard was filled with people.

Dozens of them.

Some were meditating, some were working, others studying his herbs—his entire courtyard was alive with activity.

Then the hut door opened.

The moment they saw him step out everything stopped.

Every single one of them bowed deeply.

"Greetings, Big Brother Jun Jiu!"

Their voices rang out in unison.

Alex stood there, momentarily stunned, his gaze sweeping across the scene.

There were at least seventy people.

And more were still running over from the distance, rushing to join.

The number... kept growing.

Maybe a hundred.

"...What is this?" Alex asked, his voice edged with disbelief.

One of the disciples stepped forward, head still lowered.

"We are your loyal brothers—your followers," he said firmly. "We will follow you through fire and storm. Just give the command. We would die for you."

Silence fell.

Alex stared at them, unmoving.

Just three months ago—

He had been alone, buried in meditation, fighting for every step forward.

And now-

He had an army.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 597[1,637 words]

The past two days had been exhausting.

From the outside, having a hundred followers looked like power. Influence. Control.

The truth?

It was a constant, relentless headache.

Alex barely had a moment to breathe. Every hour was spent organizing assigning roles, dividing responsibilities, deciding who did what, who answered to whom. Without structure, everything would collapse into chaos.

Only by forcing order into the madness could they actually function... and maybe, just maybe, turn it into something profitable.

Alex sat atop a large boulder, the wind brushing lightly against his robes. Below him,

over a hundred disciples stood in silence, their eyes fixed on him.

"Remember this," Alex said carrying easily across the crowd. "Before I left, I prepared three manuals."

He raised a hand, counting them off.

"One for managing the herb garden."

"Two-for cultivation."

"Three-for basic martial arts."

A faint pause.

"If you study them properly... you'll see results within a year."

The crowd stirred slightly, a ripple of anticipation moving through them.

"What they didn't know-

Gaia had already compiled and rewritten everything.

Using knowledge drawn from Prussia and Estoria, the AI had taken the original teachings and refined them into something sharper. More efficient. More powerful.

These weren't ordinary manuals anymore.

They were an evolution.

"I never expected you to be a teacher."

The voice was soft.

Beautiful.

And yet, it cut through the air like a blade.

Every head snapped upward.

There-floating in the sky as if the heavens themselves held her-was a woman in flowing white.

Cold.

Untouchable.

Pure Snow Sword Maiden... Li Qingxue.

In an instant, all hundred disciples dropped to one knee.

"Outer disciples greet Core Disciple-Pure Snow Sword Maiden, Li Qingxue!"

Their voices echoed in unison.

She gave a small, indifferent nod.

Then, with a flick of her wrist-

Alex felt the air shift.

A force wrapped around him, lifting him effortlessly from the boulder. In the next breath, he was already at her side, standing in the open sky as if gravity had simply... forgotten him.

He let out a quiet sigh.

"I didn't know I could teach either," Alex admitted, glancing at her. "But the peak leaders sent thirty people to ask for forgiveness. Then those thirty called their friends... and their families..."

He gestured downward at the crowd below.

"And now they're all here."

Li Qingxue said nothing.

She simply turned-

And the world moved with her.

The two of them shot across the sky, wind roaring past as the Thousand Herbs

Peak rose beneath them.

At the summit, a massive arena awaited.

Already, hundreds of outer disciples had gathered.

Alex's gaze swept across them.

More people.

More pressure.

"Remember," Li Qingxue said at last. "You need to rank within the top ten of the Thousand Peaks' outer disciples."

"And only if you pass that... will you become an inner disciple."

"Can I choose to remain an outer disciple?" Alex asked.

He kept his tone neutral, but the meaning was clear.

He had no desire to step into the inner circle-where monsters walked in human skin.

Li Qingxue didn't even hesitate.

"You can choose death," she said coldly.

And then-

She waved her hand.

The world flipped.

Alex was hurled from the sky like a stone, wind screaming past his ears as the ground rushed up to meet him. At the last second, his body moved on instinct- lightness technique activating, energy surging through his limbs.

He twisted midair-

Landed hard-

Skidded across the ground before coming to a stop.

Alive.

Barely.

Alex exhaled slowly, dust clinging to his clothes.

You damn woman... he sneered inwardly, eyes dark. Just wait. When I regain my strength... when I reach my peak again... I'll put you in your place.

He said nothing out loud.

Instead, he turned and walked toward the registration area.

A long line had already formed.

Hundreds of outer disciples, all waiting for the same thing—

A chance to rise.

A chance to prove themselves.

A chance to become something more.

Alex stepped into line without a word.

This year, there were 1035 outer disciples from Thousand Herbs Peak alone competing for the number one rank.

And that was just one peak.

Later, the top ten from each peak across the entire Wudang Sect would face off, battling for the true ranking among all outer disciples.

A brutal system.

Efficient.

Alex glanced down at the wooden plate in his hand and let out a quiet sigh.

All he had ever wanted... was a peaceful life.

Instead

Fate... no.

Li Qingxue had dragged him straight into this mess.

A system designed to crush the weak and elevate only the absolute best.

A complete waste of time.

To reach rank one, he would need to win ten consecutive fights.

Ten.

He rolled his shoulders slightly.

This is going to be long.

His eyes dropped to the number carved into his wooden plate.

The moment he infused a thread of inner energy into it, the plate vibrated softly—then emitted a faint glow.

A mechanical voice echoed from within it:

"Please proceed to Arena Eleven."

Alex clicked his tongue and started walking.

The deeper he went, the louder it became.

Shouts.

Cheers.

Clashing energy.

The entire tournament grounds were in chaos—twenty arenas running simultaneously, each filled with fighters and surrounded by spectators.

A storm of ambition and violence.

But finding Arena Eleven wasn't difficult.

He arrived just as two disciples were still battling on the platform—energy colliding, movements sharp and ruthless.

Without hesitation, Alex stepped forward and placed his wooden plate on the registration table.

The staff member glanced at it, checked the inscription, then nodded.

“You'll be up after three matches,” he said quickly. “Stay nearby. When your number is called—step in immediately.”

Alex gave a slight nod and stepped aside.

His gaze lifted to the arena.

Two figures clashed in the center—fists, blades, techniques, everything unleashed without restraint.

No hesitation.

No mercy.

Alex watched in silence.

Waiting.

He yawned.

Watching outer disciples at the fifth to ninth level of Qi Condensation held no interest for him. Their movements were slow, their techniques predictable. To Alex, it felt like watching children swing wooden swords.

Still... he didn't look away.

Gaia, record everything, he instructed silently.

Even if it bored him, information was still valuable.

Fight after fight passed.

Bodies hit the ground. Blood stained the stone. Some fought desperately, clawing for victory. Others surrendered the moment they sensed the gap between them and their opponent.

Then-

The referee's voice rang out across Arena Eleven.

"Number 777... versus Number 650."

Alex stepped forward.

The moment he climbed onto the platform, the smell hit him-iron and sweat. The stone beneath his feet was already streaked with blood, dark patches marking where others had fallen.

Across from him stood a large man-broad shoulders, thick arms, the kind of build that relied on brute force.

The man cracked his neck and smirked.

"If you surrender now," he said, eyeing Alex, "I won't hurt you."

The referee raised his hand.

"Begin."

Alex met the man's gaze, completely calm.

"If you kneel now," he said flatly, "I won't hurt you."

"You-!"

The man's anger flared-

And then-

His body moved.

Without warning, without control-

He dropped to his knees.

A dull thud echoed across the arena.

Silence.

The referee blinked, stunned.

The crowd froze.

"...What the hell?" someone muttered.

The big man himself looked down at his own hands, his own legs, confusion
flooding his face.

He hadn't meant to kneel.

He couldn't understand why he had.

The referee recovered quickly, raising his hand.

"Number 777 wins."

"Wait—I haven't lost!" Number 650 shouted, still kneeling. "I didn't—!"

"You knelt," the referee cut him off coldly. "That's surrender. Get off the arena.

Others are waiting."

Number 650 remained there for a moment longer, stunned.

Why... did I kneel?

It made no sense.

None at all.

Alex didn't even look back.

He had already turned, stepping down from the arena as if nothing had happened.

He retrieved his wooden plate and infused it with a thread of energy.

It vibrated.

"Please proceed to Arena Ten."

He clicked his tongue softly and walked on.

Arena Ten.

He placed his wooden plate on the table.

The staff member checked it, then slotted it into the winners' bracket without hesitation.

"You'll be up after five matches," he said.

Alex nodded and stepped aside.

More waiting.

More watching.

More boredom.

Some fights didn't even last ten

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seconds. The weaker disciples

would take one look at their

opponent, sense the difference in

strength-

And surrender immediately.

Not everyone was aiming for the top.

Some only wanted to survive long enough to secure a better ranking.

Top 500.

Top 400.

Each hundred ranks higher meant better monthly resources-more pills, more herbs, more opportunities.

Ambition, here, came in different forms.

Not everyone wanted glory.

Some just wanted a slightly better life.

By the time Alex reached his ninth match—

He stepped forward, facing his next opponent.

And said the exact same words.

"If you kneel... I'll let you surrender."

"The hell I'm kneeling to you," the disciple snapped, fury flashing across his face.

A heartbeat later-

His legs gave out.

He dropped to his knees.

Silence crashed over the arena.

Third match.

"If

you kneel, I'll let you surrender."

Thud.

Fourth match.

Same words.

Same result.

It didn't matter who stood across from him.

Strong. Weak. Confident. Arrogant.

Every single one of them—

Kneeled.

Whether they wanted to or not.

At first, it was confusion.

Then whispers.

Then-

Shock.

"What... what is this?" someone muttered from the crowd.

"No way... that was Senior Brother Yun Feng. How could he kneel to Number 777 without fight?"

"I heard everyone who fights him ends up kneeling."

"Did you find out what's happening?"

"They asked the earlier opponents,"

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A pause.

"Do you think he's using some kind of black magic?"

"I don't know... but the elders and referees haven't stopped it."

That made it worse.

If even the officials allowed it-

Then whatever this was... it wasn't against the rules.

It was just... terrifying.

By the fifth round, the tournament had thinned down to around sixty participants.

Now, every match mattered.

Ranking sixty and ranking fifty weren't the same.

The difference in monthly resources alone was enough to change someone's future.

A large man stepped forward, his jaw tight with determination.

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"Referee," he said loudly, "even if I request permission to continue the

kneel that doesn't mean surrept fight." ng

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He couldn't afford to lose here.

Not at this stage.

Not when he was this close.

The referee frowned slightly... then nodded.

"...Fight."

Alex sighed.

Stubborn.

The man charged forward-

And instantly-

Dropped.

His knees slammed into the ground.

"I'm not surrendering!" he shouted, forcing the words out through gritted teeth.

But something was wrong.

His voice wavered.

His body trembled.

Then-

As if pulled by invisible strings—

He raised both hands.

And slowly... bowed.

Forehead lowering toward the ground in front of Alex.

Complete submission.

The arena went dead silent.

No one breathed.

No one moved.

Alex stepped forward calmly.

Placed his foot on the man's head.

Then looked at the referee.

"Does this count as surrender?"

No one answered.

Because no one had ever seen anything like this.

All around them, disciples stared in disbelief.

This wasn't a fight.

This wasn't even domination.

It was something else entirely.

One by one-

People weren't just losing to Number 777.

They were kneeling to him.

Bowing to him.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 598[1,558 words]

One of the elders from Thousand Herbs Peak narrowed his eyes at Alex, a deep frown creasing his face.

"Who is contestant number 777?" he asked sharply.

The staff member beside him hurriedly checked the records, hands slightly trembling. "He's registered under the name Jun Jiu."

The elder's expression darkened instantly, his gaze turning cold and hostile. "So... you're the one called Jun Jiu."

A flicker of memory surged through his mind—three months ago. His nephew, Han Fei, dead. Killed because of this man.

The one who carried out the execution had been a Peak Leader. Someone far above him.

He hadn't been able to act then.

So he waited.

Waited for the right moment.

Waited to strike back.

His eyes shifted, glancing toward the central viewing platform where the Peak Leader sat, calmly watching the fights unfold.

"Your time is running out," the elder muttered under his breath, a thin, dangerous smile forming.

Not just the Peak Leader.

The Wudang Sect Master as well.

He had already made contact with the Murim Alliance. The wheels were in motion. It wouldn't be long before Wudang fell under their control.

He could be patient for that.

But this... this outer disciple?

The one responsible for Han Fei's death?

That was different.

That didn't require patience.

The elder suddenly rose from his seat—and in the next instant, he was gone.

A blur.

Then he landed directly in Alex's arena.

At that very moment, Alex's opponent was already on his knees, head bowed in surrender.

The entire arena fell silent.

The elder stepped forward, his presence pressing down like a storm.

"You. Number 777." His voice was sharp, cutting. "What kind of black magic are you using?"

His eyes locked onto Alex, filled with suspicion—and something darker.

Among cultivators, black magic was forbidden.

A taboo.

It was the art of sacrifice, of trading lives for power, of making pacts with demons. Anyone accused of it... was as good as dead.

Alex met his gaze calmly, though he could clearly feel the hostility radiating from the man.

"I'm not using any magic," he said evenly.

The elder's eyes narrowed further.

"Then what? You bribed them?" he snapped. "You forced them to kneel so you could win? You dare break the sacred laws of this tournament?"

His aura flared, oppressive and suffocating.

"You will be punished."

Alex exhaled slowly, irritation flashing across his face.

"...And who are you supposed to be?"

"I am Elder Han!" the man barked, his voice thundering across the arena. "How dare you not recognize your own elder? I hereby sentence you to imprisonment for disrupting this match!"

"I've fought every match fairly," Alex said. "On what grounds are you accusing me?"

Elder Han didn't bother answering.

He snapped his fingers.

A sharp metallic hum sliced through the air as his sword shot up, hovering beside him like a living thing, its blade gleaming with lethal intent.

"You still refuse to submit?" Elder Han's voice dropped, cold and merciless. "Then I'll carve your legs off where you stand-leave you screaming on the ground until you learn what it means to kneel."

His gaze hardened, filled with cruel satisfaction.

"And when you can't even crawl anymore... I'll drag what's left of you to prison like a broken animal."

For a moment, the arena held its breath.

Then-

Alex laughed.

It wasn't loud.

But it was clear.

And it carried.

"So..." Alex tilted his head slightly, looking at the elder with open disdain. "Even the Peak Lords haven't said a word, but you're already jumping in to show off."

A faint smirk touched his lips.

"Aren't you worried I might slap you across the face in front of everyone here?"

A ripple of shock spread through the crowd.

Alex's gaze hardened.

"But since you're so eager to take my legs..." he said, his voice turning colder, sharper, "then it's only fair I take yours instead."

Silence.

Complete, suffocating silence.

Elder Han froze.

The spectators froze.

Every disciple in the arena stared in disbelief.

An outer disciple... daring to speak to an elder like this?

In Wudang, outer disciples were nothing.

When an elder spoke, they obeyed.

If an elder said prison-they went to prison.

If an elder wanted their legs-

They gave them.

No one resisted.

No one dared.

And Elder Han... was notorious.

He had crippled disciples for far less.

"You insignificant outer disciple," Elder Han said slowly, his voice dropping into something dark and dangerous. "You've barely stepped into Qi Condensation... and you dare speak to me like this?"

His sword shifted beside him, humming with killing intent.

"Kneel," he said. "Cut off your own legs. Offer them to me."

A cruel smile curled on his lips.

"Or I'll kill you where you stand."

Inside, he was already pleased.

Now he had a reason.

A legitimate excuse to kill Alex.

To avenge Han Fei.

But Alex didn't kneel.

He stepped forward instead.

Calm.

Unafraid.

"You're weak," Alex said simply.

"If you can't even understand what I'm doing... then you have no right to challenge me."

"How arrogant!" Elder Han roared, stepping forward as well, his sword gliding at his side like a predator ready to strike.

From the main viewing platform—

Li Qingxue shot to her feet.

Her heart tightened as she looked toward the arena, ready to intervene.

"Miss Li Qingxue."

The Peak Lord's calm voice cut through the tension just as she stepped forward.

"What Jun Jiu said is correct," he continued, his tone steady, almost indifferent. "If Elder Han cannot see what Alex is doing... then it only proves his own weakness."

Li Qingxue hesitated, her eyes still fixed on the arena below.

"But... are you sure nothing will happen to him?" she asked, unable to hide the concern in her voice.

The Peak Lord didn't answer immediately.

Instead, he watched Alex.

Carefully.

Intently.

"I wasn't sure before," he said at last.

A faint smile touched his lips.

"But now... I am completely certain."

Across the arena grounds, one by one, the fights began to slow.

Then stop.

Disciples turned. Eyes shifted.

Every gaze locked onto a single stage.

Elder Han.

Alex.

The outer disciples held their breath.

There was no way Alex could fight an elder.

No way—

And yet-

Elder Han suddenly froze.

His body locked in place.

His sword, still hovering in the air, trembled—

Then dropped.

Clang.

The sound echoed unnaturally loud.

Elder Han's eyes widened.

Shock.

Pure, undisguised shock.

He tried to move.

Nothing happened.

Not a finger.

Not a step.

It was as if his entire body had been seized by an invisible force.

And then-

Alex smiled.

A small, almost amused smile.

He raised his hand.

Snapped his fingers.

"Kneel."

The word fell softly.

But it carried absolute authority.

Elder Han's legs buckled instantly.

Both knees slammed into the ground.

Hard.

A collective gasp rippled through the crowd.

Elder Han's face twisted in disbelief.

"I-what-"

He couldn't even finish.

His body... wouldn't obey him.

Alex stepped forward slowly, unhurried, as if none of this surprised him.

"I remember," Alex said, "you said you were going to cut off my legs."

He bent down and picked up the fallen sword.

The blade gleamed faintly in his hand.

"So..." he continued, tilting his head slightly, "how about I take yours instead?"

For a brief moment, his eyes flicked upward toward the main platform.

Toward Li Qingxue.

Toward the Peak Lord.

Would they stop him?

Or let this continue?

"You..." Elder Han's voice trembled now, stripped of all arrogance. "What did you do to me?"

His face had gone pale.

Cold sweat beaded along his temples.

He couldn't understand it.

Couldn't feel his own strength.

Couldn't control his own body.

Panic began to creep in.

"Everyone!" he shouted suddenly, desperation breaking through. "This Jun Jiu is using black magic! Something dangerous-kill him!"

The accusation rang out across the arena.

Instantly, every elder and Peak Lord turned their attention to Alex.

The weight of their gazes pressed down on him.

But Alex didn't flinch.

Didn't retreat.

He simply looked up at the Peak Lord and bowed slightly.

"Peak Lord," he said calmly, "do you also believe I'm using black magic?"

For a heartbeat, silence ruled.

Then-

The Peak Lord laughed.

"What black magic?" he said, amusement clear in his voice.

"You're simply compressing the air into microscopic ice needles... and firing them into their pressure points."

His gaze flicked to Elder Han's knees.

"Especially the joints."

"Shutting down their movement... and forcing them to kneel."

The entire arena erupted in shock.

"Compressing air into tiny ice needles?"

"That would make them invisible..."

"But can something like that even hit acupuncture points?"

"It can," someone muttered. "If it

you. and water No

strikes the exact point, it paralyze et

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A ripple of realization spread through the crowd.

"So that's his secret..."

"A hidden weapon."

Alex didn't react.

But he knew—the Peak Lord had seen through everything.

Slowly, he opened his palm.

The air around him shifted.

Subtle.

Almost imperceptible.

Moisture gathered from the atmosphere, drawn together by an unseen force. Tiny droplets condensed, trembling in place—

Then sharpened.

Forming dozens... no, hundreds of hair-thin ice needles.

They hovered around Alex, glinting faintly in the light.

Most people couldn't even see them unless they focused hard.

And if Alex moved them at full speed—

They would become completely invisible.

Untraceable.

Unavoidable.

Alex lifted his eyes toward the main platform.

"So, Peak Lord," he said calmly, "can I take both of this elder's legs?"

"No."

The answer came immediately.

"You are a disciple. He is an elder,"

the Peak Lord said evenly. "There are laws you cannot cross. If Elder Han has committed a mistake, the disciplinary hall will handle his punishment."

Alex's gaze didn't waver.

"So I can't do anything to him?" he asked again.

"You cannot," the Peak Lord replied. "But you've already made him kneel in front of you."

"That should be enough."

"Then release me!" Elder Han roared, his voice filled with fury and humiliation. "You have no right to do this to me!"

Alex turned his head slowly, looking down at him.

"Really?"

He snapped his fingers.

Ten nearly invisible ice needles formed instantly in the air.

Before anyone could react-

They shot forward. Straight into Elder Han's head.

"What did you do?!" Elder Han

gasped, his body jolting as a

freezing sensation pierced into

skup his neck, his temples, deep

into unseen

points.

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The cold spread rapidly.

Sharp.

Precise.

Terrifying.

Alex stepped closer, lowering his voice so only Elder Han could hear.

"What did I do?" he whispered.

"Since I can't take your legs..."

A faint smile touched his lips.

"I'll take your life instead."

He leaned in slightly.

"I don't keep enemies for the future."

The Almighty Dominance

Chapter 599[1,941 words]

Elder Han froze, disbelief flashing across his face.

He couldn't accept it—couldn't believe that Jun Jiu would actually dare lay a hand on an Elder in front of everyone.

This wasn't just arrogance. This was suicide. Killing an Elder meant punishment. Death punishment.

"You wouldn't dare kill me," Elder Han sneered.

A soft, almost gentle smile curved on Alex's lips.

"You're absolutely right," he said calmly. "I won't kill you... not today."

"But there are many ways to destroy a man without taking his life."

Alex lifted his hand and snapped his fingers.

A thin, shimmering ice needle formed instantly between them—so fine it almost looked invisible under the light.

Before anyone could react—

He flicked his wrist.

The needle shot forward.

It struck Elder Han's body with deadly precision, piercing through multiple acupuncture points in a blink.

Elder Han's body jerked.

Then went rigid.

Alex didn't even look back.

"I won't be helping this Elder," he said lightly as he turned away. "If anyone wants to assist him... be my guest."

And just like that he walked out of the arena.

Leaving Elder Han behind.

Kneeling.

Frozen in place.

A heavy silence fell over the crowd.

The referee rushed forward, grabbing Elder Han's arm, trying to pull him up-but the moment he touched him, he realized something was wrong.

The body was stiff. Completely locked.

"I— I can't move!" Elder Han gritted out. "Open my acupuncture points first!"

The referee nodded quickly, raising his hand and striking several points along Elder Han's body with practiced precision.

Nothing happened.

He tried again.

Still nothing.

Elder Han's face suddenly turned pale.

Then-

A loud, unmistakable sound exploded from behind him.

The entire arena went dead silent.

Someone in the crowd blinked, confused.

"... Did he just fart?"

Another voice followed, hesitant but certain.

"That... that was a fart, right?"

A strange smell began to spread through the air.

Within seconds, realization dawned across every face.

It wasn't a fart.

It was shit.

They could see it.

Elder Han's back robes... were already soaked.

A large stain spreading unmistakably across the fabric.

The silence deepened into something suffocating.

"Quick-help me!" Elder Han shouted, panic breaking through his pride.

The referee swallowed hard, holding his breath as the smell intensified. Fighting his own disgust, he struck the acupuncture points again, faster this time, more urgently.

But the moment he did-

Everyone froze.

Because now-

The front of Elder Han's pants darkened.

"...Did he just-"

"...He peed himself?"

Elder Han's face turned crimson.

His body trembled, but he couldn't stop it. Couldn't control it.

His dignity... shattered in front of everyone.

And it was obvious.

This was no accident.

Alex had done something.

"Jun Jiu!" Elder Han roared, his voice shaking with humiliation and rage.

Far ahead, Alex looked at him.

"Release my acupuncture lock!" Elder Han shouted, desperation creeping into his voice.

"Why? You wanted to take my legs," Alex said. "And I didn't take yours. That alone is already mercy."

A faint smile touched his lips.

"If you're capable... try unlocking it yourself."

Alex understood exactly where he was.

Thousand Herbs Peak.

A place where disciples and elders devoted their lives to cultivation-not for battle,

but for healing. Herbs. Medicine. Pills. Recovery.

Their strength wasn't in combat.

It was in saving lives.

Which meant-

Their fighting ability was... mediocre at best.

Very different from him.

Alex had walked both paths.

Medicine and combat.

He had trained, refined, and mastered both disciplines side by side. And now-with

Gaia's advanced knowledge, Prussian technologies, and the complete medical teachings from Wudang Sect-

Everything within him had evolved.

Sharpened.

Elevated to an entirely different level.

Including his ability to fight.

Back in the arena-

Elder Han was collapsing under humiliation.

His body remained locked in place, still kneeling, unable to move even a finger. His

robes were a mess-filthy, wet-his dignity completely shattered in front of everyone.

People rushed forward, trying to help.

One after another, they attempted to unlock his acupuncture points.

But the more they tried-

The worse it became.

Elder Han's condition didn't improve.

It deteriorated.

The entire arena had come to a halt.

No one fought anymore.

All eyes were on him.

From a distance, two figures approached.

The Peak Leader.

And Li Qingxue.

They stopped several meters away—far enough to avoid the stench, but close enough to clearly see the situation.

"Young Miss Li. Can you unlock it?" the Peak Leader asked quietly.

Li Qingxue studied Elder Han for a moment, her brows slowly tightening.

"...I don't think I can," she admitted. "The acupuncture points... they're not fixed. It's like they're shifting every time they're struck."

The Peak Leader's eyes narrowed slightly.

"No," he said. "It's worse than that."

Li Qingxue turned to him.

"They're not just shifting when struck. The positions are changing continuously... with every breath... every heartbeat... every pulse of blood through his body."

A brief silence.

"Even I," the Peak Leader continued, "would struggle to predict it."

Li Qingxue felt a chill run down her spine.

This wasn't just skill.

This was control on an entirely different level.

"...Then what do we do?" she asked.

She hadn't expected this.

Not from Jun Jiu.

Not again.

Trouble seemed to follow him wherever he went.

The Peak Leader exhaled slowly, his expression turning cautious.

"What do we do?" he repeated.

A faint, bitter smile appeared.

"We do nothing."

Li Qingxue blinked.

"If I go there and try to help... and fail in front of everyone, I'll only humiliate myself as well."

He folded his hands behind his back.

"We wait."

"For the lock to dissolve on its own."

"It'll last about eight hours," Li Qingxue said quietly.

Her gaze flicked back to Elder Han, still frozen in humiliation.

"Are we really going to leave him like that for eight hours?"

The Peak Leader smiled faintly.

"Tell me," he said, almost amused, "do you see anyone willing to step forward and move him?"

Li Qingxue fell silent.

No one moved.

Not a single person.

"Jun Jiu! Unlock the acupuncture points!"

Her voice rang out across the arena.

Alex stood just outside, arms relaxed at his sides, as if he had been waiting.

"Of course," he replied lightly. "Kick me out of Wudang Sect... and I'll release him."

Li Qingxue's expression hardened instantly.

"You-!"

"What?" Alex cut in, his tone calm but sharp.

"He tried to take both my legs," he said, his eyes locking onto hers. "And none of you stepped in."

"Now you want me to help him?"

His smile was faint, but there was no warmth in it.

"Why don't you just expel me?" he continued. "From everything I've seen... there's no justice here."

"So why should I stay?"

Li Qingxue froze.

For a moment, she didn't know what to say.

The Sect Master had already shown interest in Jun Jiu. If she mishandled this-if she openly sided with Elder Han-

There was a real chance they would lose him entirely.

And worse-

He would walk away hating Wudang Sect.

Her fingers tightened slightly.

In the end... she turned away.

"... Forget it."

A ripple spread through the crowd.

Eyes shifted toward Alex.

This time-not with curiosity.

But fear.

He stood there, completely unbothered.

Unafraid.

Even Li Qingxue the core disciple-couldn't control him.

Even the Peak Leader had chosen silence.

No one dared step forward.

"Jun Jiu!"

A furious shout cut through the tension.

One of Elder Han's direct disciples rushed forward, eyes blazing.

"What did you do to my master?!"

Alex tilted his head slightly.

"What do you think I did?"

"Release him!" the disciple shouted.

Four more rushed in, surrounding Alex.

"Jun Jiu, he's your Elder!"

Alex let out a short laugh.

"That Elder tried to cripple me," He looked at them, amused.

"I was simply defending myself. And you call that wrong?"

The five disciples attacked at once.

Fast.

Desperate.

But-

No one saw what happened.

There was no movement.

No visible strike.

And yet-

In the next instant-

All five of them dropped to their knees.

Their bodies locked.

Their faces twisted in horror.

Then-

The same sound.

Again.

One after another.

Their robes darkened.

The smell spread instantly.

The crowd recoiled in shock.

People stepped back, covering their noses, retreating as if from a disease.

Like a plague had broken out.

No one dared get close.

"Jun Jiu." Li Qingxue's voice came again—this time lower.

stead Alex shot back, his voice

"What?" steady but edged with irritation. no one comes tooing for trouble keep to myself. I don't start fights."

His eyes locked onto Li Qingxue.

"So why don't you control them first... before trying to control me?"

Li Qingxue felt a sharp headache building behind her eyes.

"You-"

She stopped herself.

This man... he wasn't like the others.

Other disciples feared punishment. Feared expulsion. Feared authority.

But Alex?

He didn't fear being cast out.

And worse-

He wasn't someone you could bend.

Not with pressure. Not with threats.

A man like him... would never bow.

He would either stand... or break.

And if pushed far enough—

He would rather die than yield.

"Miss Li Qingxue."

The Peak Leader's calm voice cut through the tension.

"Jun Jiu is correct," he said evenly. "They were the ones who provoked him."

He glanced toward the kneeling disciples and Elder Han.

"He has committed no wrongdoing."

With a small gesture, he ordered several disciples forward.

"Take them to the medical tent."

The disciples hesitated for a moment-then moved in, forcing themselves to lift the rigid, humiliated bodies and carry them away.

Elder Han's face burned red.

Not just from anger-

But from shame.

He could see it.

Every glance. Every suppressed laugh.

Every whisper.

They were mocking him.

All of them.

A cold, venomous thought took root deep inside his mind.

Just wait.

When I become Sect Master...

The first thing I'll destroy... is this entire Thousand Herbs Peak.

Because of the chaos, the matches ended early that day.

The competition would continue tomorrow.

Night fell, and rain poured steadily into the darkness.

Inside a quiet hut, Alex sat alone.

The world outside was filled with the endless sound of rainfall, drumming softly against the roof.

"Gaia, how is Elder Han?" he asked calmly.

A soft, precise voice answered inside his mind.

"Master, you deployed a portion of my nanobots into Elder Han's head."

"Right now, they have already infiltrated his brain cells."

"They are currently gathering all neurological and memory data," Gaia continued. "This process will

take approximately forty-eight hours."

A pause.

"However... within seventy-two hours, the execution protocol will activate."

Alex's eyes darkened slightly.

"When Elder Han enters deep sleep, the nanobots will begin targeted destruction of his brain cells."

A brief silence followed.

"He will die in his sleep."

"Good."

Alex's voice was quiet.

Cold.

Over the past few years, he had come to understand one thing with absolute clarity

His greatest advantage...

Was Gaia.

But Gaia only had a limited number of nanobots.

Not enough.

Not yet.

So in every moment of cultivation-every moment he didn't need active assistance

Alex fed Gaia resources.

Materials.

Energy.

Everything it needed to replicate.

To grow.

To evolve.

Now-

What had once been a small system...

Was becoming something far more powerful.

Given enough time... Gaia would be capable of far more.

As long as there were enough nanobots—

There would be almost nothing it couldn't do.

The next day, the competition resumed.

Only thirty-two participants remained.

The real battles began now.

This was where ranks would be decided who would stand at the top... and who would fall to the bottom.

The arena buzzed with tension.

Fighters clashed the moment they met no hesitation, no mercy.

But when one of them stepped forward and realized his opponent was Alex—

He froze.

Then, without even taking a stance, he turned and bowed toward the Peak Leader.

“Respected Peak Master,” he said loudly, his tone respectful but urgent. “This is Thousand Herbs Peak.”

The crowd quieted slightly.

"If we are deciding ranks," he continued, "shouldn't it be based not only on cultivation and combat strength?"

His eyes swept across the arena.

"Everyone here already considers themselves among the strongest fighters of the peak. So I propose—"

A brief pause.

"That we compete in medical knowledge... instead of fighting."

A ripple of surprise spread through the crowd.

The reason was obvious.

If he fought Alex directly-

He would lose.

Instantly.

And likely end up kneeling in humiliation..... just like the others.

But in medical knowledge-

There was a chance.

"What exactly are you proposing?" one of the elders asked, narrowing his eyes.

The man straightened.

"I propose a test of herb recognition," he said confidently.

The elder frowned slightly.

"...Do you know who your opponent is?"

"Yes," the man replied without hesitation. "Jun Jiu."

He lifted his chin, pride flashing in his eyes.

"My name's Tang Ming. I've just

come on

of two years of

closed door training. I've memorized

over forty thousand types of herbs

A faint smile appeared on his face.

"I don't believe he can defeat me in this."

For a moment-

The entire arena went quiet.

Then-

A strange, knowing look passed through the crowd.

Some people exchanged glances.

Others couldn't help but smile.

He really didn't know.

He had just come out of seclusion.

He had no idea what kind of monster he was challenging.

Jun Jiu-

Ranked number one in herb knowledge across the peak.

"... You don't understand," the elder said slowly.

Tang Ming frowned, clearly offended.

"I do understand," he insisted. "I know exactly who he is."

A few people in the crowd let out quiet chuckles.

Arrogant.

And completely clueless.

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The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 600[2,091 words]

"Tang Ming, how do you want this competition to be decided?" one of the elders asked, his voice calm but carrying across the arena.

Tang Ming lifted his chin, pride glinting in his eyes. "A few years ago, I placed eleventh in the herb knowledge test. My name is carved into the stone stele rankings—you can see it for yourself."

There was no modesty in his tone-only certainty. Among the younger generation, he stood alone. Everyone ranked above him had long since died. There was no one left to challenge his claim.

"So," he continued, glancing at Alex, "I'll take the herb ranking test again. I'm confident I'll enter the top ten. You should take it too. Whoever ranks higher wins this competition."

"Alright," Alex said.

His voice was flat, almost indifferent. The truth was, he didn't care.

"Good!" Tang Ming grinned, already turning away. "I'll head to the medical pavilion now."

Without waiting another second, he rushed down the peak toward the stone stele test, his robes fluttering behind him.

He left Alex standing in the arena with the referee.

The referee watched Tang Ming disappear, then let out a quiet sigh. "He truly believes he's going to win... and no one even bothers correcting him anymore."

Alex glanced at him. "So... what now?"

The referee looked exhausted, as if the outcome had already drained him. He raised his hand lazily.

"I declare Jun Jiu—ranked first on the stone stele rankings—as the winner."

For a moment, there was silence.

Then the disciples burst into laughter.

No one questioned it. No one objected.

Waiting for Tang Ming's result would've been nothing but a waste of time.

Without any trouble, Alex advanced to the next round. Only sixteen remained.

"I want to fight him." Alex's next opponent a very big guy-stepped forward, eyes burning with confidence-confidence built on disbelief.

He refused to accept that Alex was unbeatable.

That belief didn't last long.

Moments later, he was on his knees, head lowered in surrender.

Even elders couldn't defeat Alex-what chance did an outer disciple have?

Soon, Alex stood among the top eight.

For the outer disciples, this was more than just another round.

This fight would decide their fate for the entire year.

Their rank would determine everything their resources, their status, their future within the sect.

And for many of them... it was the difference between rising or being forgotten.

"Jun Jiu."

A very beautiful female disciple stepped onto the arena, her movements calm, deliberate. She didn't take a fighting stance. Instead, she faced Alex with a faint, confident smile.

"I don't want to fight you," she said. "Let's compete in something else herb cultivation."

Alex looked at her for a moment, then gave a small nod. "Alright."

To him, it made no difference.

With Gaia's complete knowledge of herb growth-and the countless experiments he had already run in the virtual lab, testing every possible method to push growth to its absolute limit—this kind of competition was effortless.

"I choose the Eternal Blue Flower," the beautiful woman said, her smile widening.

A ripple of shock spread instantly through the crowd.

"That's cheating!" a disciple shouted from outside the arena. "Xiao Huang is Elder Xiao's disciple! Only their lineage has ever grown the Eternal Blue Flower!"

"Exactly! For hundreds of years, it's been passed down only between them!" "It's impossible for anyone else to grow it!"

"I heard even the sect library doesn't have a complete method-just fragments of basic records!"

"There's no way Jun Jiu can beat Xiao Huang in this!"

The murmurs grew louder, turning into a wave of certainty.

This wasn't a fair competition.

It was a trap.

Alex, however, simply nodded again. "Okay. I agree."

Xiao Huang's smile deepened, almost radiant with victory. In her eyes, the outcome was already decided.

"Good," she said. "We'll both write down our methods. Then we'll let an elder judge." Her confidence wasn't without reason.

The judge would be Elder Xiao-her own master.

And in the entire sect, no one understood the Eternal Blue Flower better than her.

There was only one thing Xiao Huang had worried about-

That Alex might refuse.

But he didn't.

And now, there was nothing left that could threaten her win.

Paper and ink were brought forward.

The two of them sat across from each other and began to write.

The arena fell into a tense silence, broken only by the faint scratch of brush against paper.

Alex finished first.

Without hesitation, he set his brush down.

One of the staff members quickly collected his paper and delivered it to Elder Xiao.

The old woman took it, her expression indifferent as her eyes scanned the contents.

A second passed.

Then her lips curled in disdain.

"What nonsense."

She scoffed, her voice sharp and dismissive.

"This is complete garbage."

With a flick of her wrist, she threw the paper aside as if it disgusted her.

"Even as a theoretical method, this is nothing but fantasy. Unrealistic. Absurd."

Xiao Huang's paper was finally delivered to Elder Xiao.

The moment the old woman began reading, her expression lit up. A wide, satisfied smile spread across her face.

"Yes... this is correct. Good. Very good."

She lifted her head and looked toward the Peak Leader. "I've reviewed both submissions. My decision is clear-Xiao Huang is the winner."

Li Qingxue's brows drew together. "Are you certain?"

Elder Xiao gave a short, confident laugh. "Of course, Miss Li Qingxue. You may be a core disciple, but I've spent my entire life cultivating the Eternal Blue Flower. Who could possibly understand it better than I do?"

The referee didn't hesitate. He raised his hand.

"The winner is Xiao Huang."

A ripple moved through the arena.

Alex simply nodded.

He didn't argue. Didn't react.

To him, this competition had been nothing more than a way to pass time. His method was correct he knew that—but it was far beyond what these people could comprehend. Too advanced. Too far ahead of their understanding.

And he had already secured a place in the top ten.

That was enough.

Li Qingxue would have no reason to make a move against him now.

He turned, ready to leave the arena and return to his hut.

But before he could take more than a step, a sudden commotion broke out among the elders and the Peak Leader.

Li Qingxue's voice cut through the noise. "There may be valuable insight in Jun Jiu's theory. How can you dismiss it as garbage without even properly reading it?"

Elder Xiao let out a harsh laugh.

"I don't need to read the entire thing," she said, waving a hand dismissively. "The moment I saw him claim the Eternal Blue Flower could grow to twenty-five centimeters, I knew it was nonsense."

Her eyes gleamed with certainty.

"In all my years, the largest I've ever cultivated was twenty centimeters. That alone proves his theory is absurd."

The Peak Leader leaned forward slightly, his tone calmer, more measured. "It wouldn't hurt to read it fully. He is ranked first on the herb stele. There may be something worth considering—perhaps a new perspective."

"Rubbish is still rubbish," Elder Xiao snapped.

She rose to her feet, her sleeve flicking sharply as she pointed directly at Alex.

"You-Jun Jiu!"

Her voice rang across the arena, loud and unforgiving.

"You'd better admit it yourself that what you wrote is complete nonsense!"

Her gaze burned with disdain.

"An Eternal Blue Flower reaching twenty-five centimeters? Who do you think you are?"

She let out a cold, mocking laugh.

"I'm starting to wonder... have you ever even seen an Eternal Blue Flower in your life?"

Alex frowned, his gaze locking onto the arrogant elder.

Of course he knew the Eternal Blue Flower.

He had stolen a small one before—studied it, planted it himself, and then run countless simulations in the virtual world. Millions of iterations. Every variable tested. Every possibility refined.

He knew exactly what he was talking about.

"Why are you silent?" Elder Xiao pressed, her voice sharp with contempt. "Did your lies choke you? Goon—admit it. Admit in front of everyone that what you wrote is nothing but nonsense."

Alex didn't want trouble.

Not here. Not now.

But he wouldn't deny the truth.

"I admit it!" Alex suddenly shouted, his voice cutting through the arena like a blade.

The crowd froze.

"My theory is the truth. And if someone can't understand it..." His eyes hardened.

"Then they're simply too stupid to comprehend it."

The words landed like thunder.

In front of everyone, it was no different than saying-

Elder Xiao is the one too stupid to understand.

For a heartbeat, the entire arena fell into stunned silence.

Then-

Elder Xiao's face flushed deep red. Rage twisted her features as she drew her sword in one sharp motion.

Steel flashed.

"Impudent brat!" she roared. "You dare call me stupid?! If you don't die today, then I am no longer Elder Xiao!"

The killing intent in her voice was suffocating.

But Alex didn't flinch.

He even bowed slightly, calm—almost polite.

"Please don't force me," he said evenly, "to make another person kneel... and shit themselves. It's not a sight worth seeing."

The moment those words left his mouth-

Elder Xiao froze.

So did the other elders.

Even Elder Han had been humiliated like that before.

And she knew it.

She knew exactly how powerful Alex was.

There was no chance she could defeat him.

The rage in her eyes flickered... then dimmed.

Slowly, stiffly, she lowered her sword.

"I am an elder," she said coldly, forcing composure back into her voice. "I will not lower myself to fight an outer disciple."

She turned sharply toward the Peak Leader.

"Peak Leader—I demand that he be expelled from the Wudang Sect! A disciple who dares humiliate an elder has no morals, no respect!"

"Yes, Peak Leader," Alex added immediately, almost too quickly. "Please expel me."

The Peak Leader stared at him, his expression darkening.

For a moment, it looked like he genuinely wanted to strike Alex's head on the spot.

Li Qingxue stepped forward, her eyes blazing as she glared at him.

"Jun Jiu! Do you want to die?"

Alex instinctively took a step back.

Out of everyone here—

She was the only one he truly feared.

"I don't," he admitted.

"Then prove your theory," Li Qingxue said coldly. "Instead of causing trouble."

Alex let out a slow breath.

He didn't want this.

But now, his life was on the line.

"Miss Li Qingxue," he said, steadying his voice, "you can go to my place. Ask the

disciples there to bring one of the Eternal Blue Flowers."

He paused, then added calmly, "But tell them to pick the smallest one. The others are still under observation."

Elder Xiao's eyes widened in disbelief. "You... planted the Eternal Blue Flower?" Her voice sharpened. "And you're asking for the smallest one?"

Li Qingxue didn't waste time arguing.

Without another word, she rose into the air and shot toward Alex's herb garden, her figure vanishing into the sky.

The arena erupted into murmurs.

Elder Xiao turned immediately to the Peak Leader, her voice tight with anger.

"Leader, this man is not only insane—he's delusional. No one can grow the Eternal Blue Flower. No one."

Xiao Huang stepped forward, stopping just a few paces from Alex. Her expression was cold, but there was a flicker of impatience behind it.

"You should just admit you're lying," she said. "You're clinging to your pride. When the truth comes out, you'll only make a fool of yourself in front of everyone." Alex let out a quiet, dismissive snort. "We'll see who ends up being the fool."

Xiao Huang laughed, sharp and mocking. "You really think you can grow the Eternal Blue Flower?"

Her eyes gleamed.

"If you're so confident... then let's make a bet."

Alex didn't respond immediately.

"If you lose," she continued, her voice rising so everyone could hear, "your technique will be confiscated. And you will serve me. Whatever I command—you will obey."

A ripple of shock passed through the crowd.

"You'll sign a slave contract."

Alex's gaze sharpened, but his voice remained calm. "And if I'm telling the truth?"

Xiao Huang smiled wider, almost daring him.

"If you're telling the truth," she said loudly, "—which is impossible—then I'll become your slave."

The entire arena fell silent.

Every eye was on them.

"Deal," Alex said.

"Deal," Xiao Huang echoed.

The words rang out clearly, witnessed by everyone present.

A wager had been made.

A brutal one.

The outer disciples buzzed with excitement, tension building like a storm on the verge of breaking. Some were eager. Some were uneasy. But all of them were watching—waiting.

Especially Xiao Huang.

She wasn't just talented—she was widely recognized as one of the top five most beautiful virgins of the Herbs Peak. Her reputation alone.

drew attention, and her presence carried an almost untouchable allure. Everyone knew she had hundreds—if not thousands—of admirers among the disciples.

An idol.

And now—

That idol had just wagered herself.

If she lost, she would become a slave.

The thought alone sent a surge of energy through the crowd.

Every outer disciple—especially the men—turned their eyes toward Alex.

Their expressions had changed.

He wasn't just a competitor anymore.

He stood on the edge of something unreal—

the one man who might reach what no one else could.

If... he actually won-

He wouldn't just be another disciple.

He would become the man.

The one every other man looked up to.

The kind of man they could only dream of becoming.

Then-

A streak of light cut across the sky.

Li Qingxue returned.

She descended slowly into the arena, her robes fluttering as she landed.

In her hand-

A single flower.

The moment it came into view, the entire arena froze.

Shock rippled outward like a wave.

Because what she held...

Was unmistakable.