

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 601[1,692 words]

What truly shocked everyone—especially Elder Xiao—was the Eternal Blue Flower.

Growing one was no simple task. It demanded relentless care, precision, and patience. One mistake just one—and the flower would wither and die instantly. Because of that, no one outside Elder Xiao and her direct disciples had ever succeeded in cultivating it.

And yet—

Li Qingxue had returned with one.

Not only that... it was massive.

At a glance, it was clearly over twenty-five centimeters.

A ripple of disbelief spread through the hall.

Li Qingxue walked calmly toward the Peak Leaders, her expression composed, almost indifferent to the storm she had just unleashed.

"I was asked to bring the smallest flower," she said evenly. "This is the best I could find."

She paused, glancing down at the glowing blue petals in her hand.

"I estimate it to be around twenty-seven centimeters."

Shock exploded across every elder's face.

For years, they had bent themselves to please Elder Xiao—enduring her conditions, her prices, her arrogance just for a chance to obtain a single Eternal Blue Flower.

But now?

If someone else could grow it...

If there was another source...

Then everything changed.

No more dependence.

No more outrageous prices.

No more bowing their heads.

And then-

Their eyes shifted.

Not to the flower.

But to the paper.

The paper Alex had given to Elder Xiao.

A method.

A way to cultivate the Eternal Blue Flower.

Whoever possessed it...

Would no longer be a buyer.

They would be the supplier.

Two elders moved first-fast, desperate-lunging toward the table.

Elder Xiao reacted instantly, her hand snapping forward to seize the paper.

But before anyone could secure it—

A fist struck.

The paper was blasted off the table, spinning wildly into the air.

"Mine!"

Another elder shot forward, reaching for it midair—

Only to be intercepted.

A blow landed.

Another elder clashed with him.

In an instant-

Chaos erupted.

Four elders, including Elder Xiao herself, collided in a furious scramble, striking, blocking, grabbing—each one fighting for that single piece of paper as if it were a divine treasure.

The surrounding outer disciples froze.

Their eyes wide.

Their minds unable to process what they were seeing.

These were elders.

Respected figures.

Pillars of dignity and authority.

And yet now-

They were brawling like desperate scavengers over a piece of paper written by an outer disciple.

Like beasts fighting over a mythical artifact.

"Stop this at once!"

The Peak Leader's voice thundered across the hall.

But no one listened.

They couldn't.

The value of that paper-

Far exceeded authority.

Far exceeded pride.

Far exceeded everything.

The Peak Leader's expression darkened, anger flashing in his eyes.

Enough.

He stepped forward-then burst into motion, entering the fray himself.

But even he-

Was blocked.

The other elders didn't hesitate.

They struck at him, preventing him from reaching the paper.

Respect?

Status?

All of it had vanished.

Only greed remained.

The fight descended into complete disorder.

Blows exchanged.

Sleeves torn.

Spiritual energy flaring in chaotic bursts.

Five minutes passed-

A messy, relentless struggle with no clear victor.

Until finally-

All of them froze.

Because at the center-

The paper was no longer flying.

It was held.

Not by one.

But by all of them.

Four elders and a peak leader... each gripping a corner.

None willing to let go.

Not even an inch.

In the next instant-

The paper tore apart.

Five fragments.

Each elder held a piece.

No one won.

A stunned silence followed, heavy and suffocating.

Then-

Alex's gaze shifted, landing on Xiao Huan.

She was undeniably beautiful, but there was something sharp about her-prideful, spoiled, used to getting her way. The kind of woman who had never been challenged.

"What are you staring at?" Xiao Huan snapped, her tone cold and offended.

Alex didn't look away.

"At my new slave," he said flatly.

He tilted his head slightly, as if considering something trivial.

"I'm just wondering what your first task should be," he continued. "Whether you should serve me naked... or spend the next thirty days making love every day and night to cultivate yin and yang, naked."

Xiao Huan froze.

Her eyes widened, shock crashing into fury.

"How dare you" Her voice trembled, then rose into a sharp shout. "You bastard!"

Her face flushed with humiliation and rage as she turned sharply and stormed away, her steps fast, almost unsteady.

Alex scoffed under his breath.

Good.

That was the point.

He didn't want a slave.

He wanted peace.

And if his words were enough to make sure Xiao Huan would never show her face in front of him again-

Even better.

Li Qingxue stepped quietly to his side, her attention shifting back to the glowing flower.

"What should be done with this?" she asked.

"It's yours," Alex replied casually, as if he were giving away something insignificant.

Li Qingxue blinked, clearly caught off guard.

"This... for me?"

She knew exactly how valuable it was.

The Eternal Blue Flower wasn't just rare-it was nearly impossible to obtain. And for her cultivation, it was priceless.

Alex shrugged. "If you need more, just come find me."

That only deepened her surprise.

She looked at him differently now.

This man-

The same one rumored to be reckless, arrogant, always causing trouble... always surrounded by women in pleasure houses—

Maybe those rumors weren't the whole truth.

Maybe—

He wasn't as worthless as people said.

Across the hall, the elders and the Peak Leader stood in tense silence, each holding

a torn piece of the paper.

Elder Xiao's expression darkened.

Regret flickered in her eyes.

She should have kept it.

She had the chance.

But instead, she let it slip away.

Now

No one had it.

And no one could fully claim it.

Li Qingxue suddenly spoke again, her voice calm but probing.

"What about your method?" she asked, glancing at Alex. "Who were you planning to give that paper to?"

Alex blinked a few times, as if the answer were obvious.

"You," he said simply.

The word landed softly.

But it carried weight.

Li Qingxue's expression shifted just slightly.

For a brief moment—

The coldness around her seemed to melt.

And the faintest hint of a smile touched her lips.

Because sometimes—

Even the most distant, untouchable woman—

Could still be moved.

Not by charm.

Not by looks.

But by something far more real, MONEY.

"Thank you," Li Qingxue said softly.

Then she turned, her gaze sweeping across the elders, calm but commanding.

"To all elders," she continued, "I have already received permission from Jun Ji The cultivation method for

the Eternal Blue Flower will be entrusted to me." fo FindNovel.net

A pause.

"If any of you wish to grow it," she added, "I ask for only ten percent of the profit from its sale."

Her words landed like a stone dropped into still water.

Ripples spread instantly.

The elders exchanged glances, their minds racing, calculations already unfolding behind their eyes.

Before anyone else could speak—

"I accept."

The voice cut through the silence.

It was the Peak Leader.

Every head snapped toward him.

Shock flickered across the hall.

"Miss Li Qingxue," he said, stepping

forward with a composed smile, "grant me the on will ensure you receive your ten percent."

Cgths to oversee the

Li Qingxue studied him for a moment, then nodded.

"Agreed. I'll transfer the method to you later."

The elders erupted immediately.

"Leader, you can't do this!"

"How will you control something like this?"

"This is too important—"

"I won't control it," the Peak Leader interrupted calmly.

That only made them pause.

He let the silence stretch for a heartbeat.

Then-

"I will let all of you grow it," he said. "But twenty percent of your profits will go to me."

Silence.

Then-

"What?!"

The elders stared at him, stunned.

It clicked instantly.

He wasn't just accepting the deal-

He was expanding it.

Turning it into a multi-level marketing system.

Taking Li Qingxue's ten percent... and stacking another ten percent on top for himself.

Letting them do the work.

While he profited from all of it.

No wonder he sat at the top.

"So," Li Qingxue said lightly, "Jun Jiu is the winner, correct?"

The Peak Leader nodded without hesitation.

"Yes."

The referee, startled back to his role, quickly stepped forward and raised his voice.

"Jun Jiu is the winner of this match!"

For a split second-

Silence.

Then-

The entire arena exploded.

Cheers roared through the air like thunder.

"Jun Jiu!"

"Jun Jiu!"

"Jun Jiu!"

The name echoed endlessly, filling every corner of the space.

Alex watched it all, expression unreadable.

People were celebrating.

"Tomorrow," the referee continued loudly, struggling to be heard over the noise, "we will continue with the final four rankings!"

Gradually, the crowd began to disperse.

But even as they left-

There was only one name on their lips.

Jun Jiu.

No one spoke of anyone else.

The remaining four competitors, aside from Jun Jiu, were all direct disciples of the elders—elite, carefully nurtured, supported with the best resources.

They were the strongest.

The smartest.

The most prepared.

And yet-

Now they faced an unknown.

A black horse.

Jun Jiu.

That night-

Strategies were drawn.

Plans were made.

Every possible weakness was analyzed, every advantage calculated.

They would do whatever it took to ensure Jun Jiu lost.

Sleep became a luxury none of them could afford.

Except one.

Alex.

Alex slept like nothing in the world mattered.

Because, to him, it didn't.

He had already made it into the top ten. That alone was more than enough. Li

Qingxue wouldn't trouble him anymore, and there was no reason to push further. Winning?

That would only bring attention.

And attention meant trouble.

Lying there in the quiet of the night, Alex stared at the ceiling for a moment, then let

out a slow breath.

He didn't need this.

Tomorrow-

He could just step onto the stage, say a few simple words, and walk away.

"I surrender."

He nodded to himself.

Yeah.

That was the best choice.

Simple. Clean. No complications.

Morning came.

The arena was already packed.

Crowds filled every corner, voices

overlapping into a constant hum of anticipation. Everyone was eager,

waiting to see the next round of who would rise

battles who who would

fall

FindNovel.net

Alex stepped into the arena and glanced at the sea of faces.

A faint smirk tugged at his lips.

"They're going to be disappointed," he murmured to himself.

There was nothing interesting here for him.

Just noise.

Just expectation.

The referee's voice rang out.

"Number 777 versus Number 17!"

Number 17-Lu Nan stood across from him.

Alex brought his hands together in a polite fist-and-palm salute, bowing slightly as

etiquette demanded.

Lu Nan didn't return it.

He didn't even acknowledge it.

Alex straightened, unbothered.

"I surrender," he said calmly.

But Lu Nan didn't hear him because he was also speaking at the same time like a machine

gun.

"You bastard, Jun Jiu!" Lu Nan shouted, his voice sharp and aggressive. "I challenge you to a pill concoction duel!"

"I know you've never even touched pill refining! You're no apothecary—you're just a lucky fool who stumbled this far!"

He took a step forward, pointing directly at Alex.

"If you refuse, then you're nothing but a coward! A disgrace! Your parents must have been idiots to raise someone like you!"

The words came fast.

Too fast.

As if he had rehearsed them.

Because he had.

He needed this.

A pill duel was his only chance.

If the fight stayed physical—

He would lose.

So he had prepared every insult, every provocation, every line meant to force Alex into

accepting.

And now-

He had said them all.

Every last one.

Then-

He froze.

".....What?" Lu Nan blinked, confusion flashing across his face. "Did you just say surrender?"

Alex didn't answer immediately.

His eyes, however—

Had changed.

The calm was gone.

Something colder burned beneath the surface.

"No," Alex said quietly.

But dangerous.

"I said I agree to your pill duel."

"But if you lose..." Alex continued, his tone dropping, "I take your tongue."

"You shouldn't have spoken about my parents."

Lu Nan's face turned pale instantly.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 602[1,427 words]

"Wait—wait!" Lu Nan's voice cut sharply across the arena as he stepped forward and bowed toward the referee. "I clearly heard him say surrender. Shouldn't you be announcing that I've already won?"

The referee turned, his gaze settling on Alex. "Did you just say you surrender?"

Alex inclined his head. "Yes. I did." He paused. "But that was before he insulted my parents. Now... I have no intention of surrendering."

Lu Nan's expression twisted. "A man's word, once spoken, should never be taken back!" he shouted.

"And a man," Alex replied coldly, lifting his chin, "never lets anyone insult his parents and walk away."

A faint, dangerous smile touched his lips.

"When you lose... believe me, I'll take your tongue."

A murmur rippled through the crowd.

"Referee!" Lu Nan barked, his patience snapping. "You must declare my victory!"

The referee raised a hand, leaving no room for argument. "The match will proceed. Jun Jiu has withdrawn his surrender and is willing to continue. Therefore you will fight."

He paused, then added, "Since this is an alchemy duel, have you both decided what pill you will refine?"

Lu Nan's jaw tightened.

What should have been an effortless win had slipped through his fingers. Now he was forced to actually compete—and worse, against this stubborn fool.

Still... it didn't matter.

Jun Jiu couldn't even refine proper pills, let alone an elixir.

"I'll explain the rules," Lu Nan said, regaining his composure. "The Medicine Pavilion will provide a selection of herbs. We are free to choose our own ingredients and refine an elixir that enhances cultivation. The one with the highest concentration of inner force... wins."

At his signal, the staff of the Medicine Pavilion stepped forward. Tables were swiftly arranged, laden with spirit herbs, rare fruits, and exotic flowers that released faint, shimmering auras.

The scent alone was intoxicating.

Lu Nan didn't hesitate.

He had prepared for this long ago.

With practiced confidence, he selected his ingredients, moving with precision. One by one, he dropped them into his cauldron, lit the fire beneath it, and began channeling his inner force into the vessel. Flames roared to life as his energy fused with the herbs, the air around him pulsing with heat and power.

On the other side-

Alex didn't move.

Not at first.

He walked slowly along the tables, his gaze sweeping over every herb, every fruit, every flower. He crouched to inspect the firewood, testing its dryness, its burn quality details most would overlook.

Minutes passed.

Ten... maybe more.

To the crowd, it looked like hesitation.

Indecision.

But inside Alex's mind, Gaia was already running countless simulations—virtual trials of refinement, combinations forming and collapsing, recalculating again and again until only the most optimal path remained.

Finally-

He stopped.

And began selecting his ingredients.

A quiet shift rippled through the crowd as people noticed something strange.

Alex reached for a cauldron.

Not one of the polished, high-grade ones-

But a cheap, ordinary cauldron. The kind beginners used.

A moment of stunned silence.

Then laughter broke out.

Lu Nan's supporters scoffed openly.

"Is he serious?"

"He's using that kind of cauldron?"

"Does he even know what he's doing? That's the standard one for first-time learners!"

Mockery spread like wildfire.

But Alex didn't even glance at them.

He simply set the crude cauldron down before him... and began.

Alex had gotten that cauldron from a desperate gambler back when he was still nothing more than a servant-someone who had wagered his belongings on a fight and lost everything.

He didn't even know what grade it was.

Didn't care.

To him, if it could hold heat and cook-it was enough.

But the moment he set it down, laughter erupted.

Across from him, Lu Nan's cauldron gleamed like a work of art jade-green, etched with fine golden lines that shimmered under the light. It radiated prestige, power, wealth. Even the flames licking its surface seemed to bend in reverence, making it look almost divine.

Alex's, on the other hand...

Was battered.

Used.

The base was blackened with soot, scarred by countless burns, like it had lived a hundred lifetimes already.

The contrast was almost embarrassing.

And the crowd didn't hold back.

"Look at that thing-"

"Did he pick it out of a trash heap?"

"That's not even worth comparing to Senior Lu Nan's!"

Mockery spread, sharp and relentless.

Lu Nan didn't even bother hiding his smirk.

But Alex?

He didn't react.

Didn't argue.

Didn't defend himself.

He simply... continued.

Calm. Focused. Unshaken.

Alchemy wasn't a quick craft. Everyone knew that. Refining a proper pill could take hours-sometimes even days. It required patience, control, and absolute precision. So when after four hours passed-

Bang.

Alex suddenly slammed his cauldron, the sound cracking through the arena like thunder.

Every head snapped toward him.

From within the cauldron, five pills shot into the air, gleaming faintly as they spun. Without hesitation, Alex caught them smoothly and sealed them inside a porcelain bottle, locking it tight to prevent even the slightest leakage of energy.

Silence fell.

"I'm done," Alex said simply.

Then-

Laughter exploded again.

"What a joke," Lu Nan scoffed without even looking up from his work, his hands still moving steadily as he refined his pill. "I've studied alchemy for decades. I've never seen a combination like that."

He sneered.

"You just grabbed random herbs and cooked them together because you don't want

to admit you can't refine a real pill."

Alex stepped closer.

Slow. Measured.

"I know every herb you picked," he said quietly.

"And I know exactly what you're trying to make."

Alex's gaze locked onto him, sharp as a blade.

"An elixir that adds ten years of cultivation to whoever consumes it. Am I right?"

Lu Nan straightened, pride flashing across his face. "If you already know that much,"

he said coldly, "then you should also know to admit defeat."

Alex laughed.

Not loudly—but with something dangerous underneath.

"Admit defeat... to you?"

He stepped closer still, until the distance between them vanished.

"I don't have time to wait another four hours for you," Alex continued, voice low, almost mocking, "just for your elixir that only adds ten years of cultivation."

And then-

Smack.

The sound echoed, sharp and brutal.

Alex's hand struck Lu Nan's face with such force that his head snapped to the side.

Lu Nan's focus shattered the moment the slap landed.

His grip loosened.

The cauldron—once under perfect control—shuddered violently.

Then-

Boom.

It exploded.

Fragments burst outward as the unstable energy inside collapsed The half-formed pill disintegrated instantly, turning into nothing but useless residue that scattered across the ground.
'FindNovel.net

Ruined.

Completely ruined.

The referee's eyes widened.

The entire arena fell into dead, suffocating silence.

No one had expected that.

No one.

And yet-

Alex stood there, calm as ever... like nothing had just happened.

Lu Nan staggered, still reeling from the blow. Pain exploded through his jaw-sharp, blinding. He tasted blood. When his tongue brushed against his teeth-

Four were already gone.

His mouth filled with iron.

"HOW DARE YOU!"

Elder Ang shot to his feet, fury erupting from him like a storm. "This is a pill refinement duel! How dare you use your hands—"

"After I cut his tongue for slandering my parents," Alex said flatly, cutting him off,

"then we can talk about rules."

Before anyone could react-

Smack.

Alex struck Lu Nan again, this time from the opposite side.

The crack echoed even louder.

Six more teeth shattered.

Lu Nan's body twisted with the force, blood spraying as he collapsed to his knees,

barely conscious.

“You dare!” Elder Ang roared, his aura surging violently. He leapt from his seat, sword already drawn, killing intent blazing in his eyes.

"I'll kill you!"

He shot toward the arena like a bolt of lightning.

But just as he reached Alex-

Something changed.

No one saw how.

No one understood when.

Elder Ang's body suddenly froze mid-motion.

Then-

He dropped to his knees.

Both hands lifted... offering his sword forward.

To Alex.

The entire arena went dead silent.

Alex didn't hesitate.

He took the sword.

Turned.

And walked toward Lu Nan.

"No—don't you dare—!" Elder Ang yelled.

Alex didn't even glance at them.

"Oh, so he can slander my parents," Alex said calmly, his voice carrying across the arena, "and I'm supposed to let him go?"

His eyes were cold.

"Then he should learn... that his tongue comes with consequences."

The blade flashed.

Clean.

Precise.

A single smooth motion-

And Lu Nan's scream was cut short as his tongue was severed, blood pouring from his mouth.

"You will die for this!" Elder Ang roared, his face twisted with rage—but his body remained locked in place, still kneeling, unable to move.

Alex laughed softly.

Then walked over to him.

"The disciple is this pathetic..." Alex said, tilting his head slightly. "No wonder the elder failed to teach him properly."

Smack.

The sound rang out again—this time even louder.

Alex's hand struck Elder Ang's face.

The entire crowd recoiled.

No one breathed.

No one spoke.

"How dare—" Elder Ang began, humiliation burning through him—

Smack.

Another slap.

Sharper.

Harder.

Alex leaned closer, his voice low, almost amused.

"Say one more word... and you'll get another."

Elder Ang's face flushed deep red, rage and shame choking him silent.

Never-

In his entire life-

Had he been humiliated like this.

"Jun Jiu....." Li Qingxue stepped forward, her voice cutting through the tension.

Alex didn't even look at her.

He simply tossed the porcelain bottle toward her.

It arced cleanly through the air.

She caught it instinctively.

And just like that-

Alex turned his back on the arena... and walked away.

Leaving behind silence.

Shock.

And a memory no one there would ever forget.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 603[1,805 words]

Alex stepped out of the arena as if the outcome meant nothing to him-no triumph, no defeat, no lingering attachment. His expression was calm, almost indifferent.

But the truth ran deeper.

He wanted to lose.

Because standing at the top didn't just bring glory-it brought attention. Pressure. Endless trouble that never stopped knocking at your door.

The tallest tree always caught the strongest wind.

And eventually... the woodcutters came.

Across the arena, Elder Yu approached Li Qingxue, his robe swaying with quiet authority. His eyes, however, were fixed-sharp, intent.

"Give me the pill," he said, extending his hand. "I need to examine what kind of medicine he created."

As a respected elder of the Medicine Pavilion, his words carried weight.

Li Qingxue hesitated for only a moment before reaching into her sleeve and taking out one of the pills Alex had refined. She placed it carefully into Elder Yu's palm.

The elder lifted it slowly, studying its surface... then brought it closer to his nose. He inhaled.

And froze.

His eyes widened—just slightly, but enough to betray the shock beneath his composure.

"Just the scent..." he murmured, voice low with disbelief. "My entire body feels refreshed... as if every cell has awakened."

A ripple of whispers spread through the crowd.

"But..." Elder Yu continued, "I cannot determine its full effect without testing it myself."

Before anyone could respond before Li Qingxue could even react-he tossed the pill into his mouth.

Gasps echoed.

Without asking permission.

Without hesitation.

Elder Yu immediately sat down, crossing his legs as he entered a meditative state.

The arena fell into an uneasy silence.

All eyes locked onto him.

Minutes stretched.

Ten... twenty... thirty.

The tension thickened, pressing against every breath as the crowd waited for his verdict.

Then-

Elder Yu opened his eyes.

But instead of clarity, there was only confusion.

A deep, unsettling confusion.

"This is... strange," he said slowly, his brows furrowing. "The effect... it's difficult to define."

He turned to Li Qingxue, his gaze now sharper-hungrier.

"I need another pill," he said. "Only then can I accurately determine its true value—

how much cultivation it provides."

Li Qingxue hesitated this time.

Something felt... off.

But under the weight of countless watching eyes—and the authority of an elder- she still took out another pill and handed it over.

The moment it touched his hand, something in Elder Yu's expression shifted.

Subtle.

But unmistakable.

Greed.

Still, no one spoke.

No one dared.

He swallowed the second pill without delay and returned to meditation.

Again, the crowd waited.

Half an hour passed.

When Elder Yu opened his eyes this time—

A surge of energy rippled outward.

Even those with weaker cultivation could feel it.

He had advanced.

A breakthrough.

The crowd erupted into murmurs, shock spreading like wildfire.

But Elder Yu's face...

Wasn't triumphant.

It was troubled.

Deeply troubled.

"This pill..." he muttered, his voice strained now. "Sometimes it's potent... unbelievably so. And other times..... it's almost nothing."

His gaze flicked toward Li Qingxue again—more urgent now, more desperate.

"I must test it again," he insisted. "One more pill. This time, I will be absolutely certain. There will be no mistake."

But now...

Everyone could see it.

Something was wrong with Elder Yu.

"Elder Yu," Another elder stepped forward, his expression dark with irritation, "have you suddenly gone senile? You're from the Medicine Pavilion-yet you can't even judge a pill's potency? You've already consumed two, and you're telling us you still don't understand?"

Elder Hou stepped to Li Qingxue's side, his tone shifting instantly, smooth and persuasive.

"Miss Li Qingxue," he said, offering a faint smile, "those pills are extremely valuable. Only five were created—two have already been used. That leaves three."

His eyes flicked briefly toward Elder Yu, then back to her.

"Don't waste another one on him," he continued calmly. "Give it to me. I'll evaluate it properly. I'll tell you exactly how potent it is."

Li Qingxue hesitated... then nodded.

She handed him a pill.

Elder Hou took it with careful reverence, lifting it to his nose. He inhaled slowly, eyes narrowing.

Fresh.

Pure.

Powerful.

A trace of excitement flickered across his face.

Without another word, he sat down, crossing his legs as he slipped into a meditative state. The pill disappeared into his mouth.

The crowd held its breath once again.

Time dragged.

Another half hour passed.

Finally, Elder Hou opened his eyes.

His gaze met Elder Yu's.

For a brief moment too brief for most to notice something passed between them.

Understanding.

Then Elder Hou let out a long, heavy sigh.

"This pill..." he said slowly, shaking his head. "It's... unusual. Difficult to fully comprehend."

He turned back to Li Qingxue, his tone now measured, almost reluctant.

"I believe I'll need another one to be certain. Only then can I determine its true value."

Li Qingxue frowned.

Something didn't add up.

Testing a pill... measuring its cultivation effect... it shouldn't be this complicated. For elders of their level, this should have been effortless.

Yet here they were uncertain, confused, asking for more.

Still...

She wasn't from the Medicine Pavilion.

She didn't fully understand their methods.

"Miss Li Qingxue," Elder Hou pressed gently, "you still have two pills left. Give me one more. I promise you—I'll tell you exactly how much cultivation it provides."

"Enough."

A voice thundered across the arena.

The Peak Leader stepped forward, his presence instantly silencing the crowd.

His gaze swept over Elder Yu and Elder Hou—sharp, piercing, seeing far more than they intended to show.

"Give the pill to me," he said coldly. "These two are clearly playing games."

Li Qingxue didn't hesitate this time.

She handed him the pill.

The Peak Leader took it without ceremony, sat down, and entered meditation.

The arena fell silent once more.

Half an hour passed.

Then-

He opened his eyes.

And his face turned red with fury.

"Elder Yu! Elder Hou-you bastards!"

His voice exploded like thunder.

But the two elders were already gone.

Vanished.

The realization spread through the crowd like a shockwave.

"Peak Leader..." Li Qingxue stepped forward, confusion written across her face.

"What happened?"

His jaw tightened.

"That pill," he said, his voice heavy with anger, "contains the equivalent of fifty years of cultivation at the Foundation Building stage."

Gasps erupted.

"It's pure energy-refined, adaptable, usable across multiple elements."

His eyes burned with fury.

"And those two... pretended they couldn't understand it—just to consume more."

His fists clenched.

"They weren't testing the pill."

"They were stealing it."

Only then did the others begin to understand what had just happened.

Fifty years of cultivation energy at the Foundation Building stage.....

That was nearly equivalent to a hundred years of Qi Condensation.

A pill like that wasn't just rare.

It was terrifying.

And now it was obvious.

Elder Yu and Elder Hou hadn't been confused.

They had been greedy.

But by the time the truth settled over the arena-

They were already gone.

Fled without a trace.

The Peak Leader's gaze hardened as it shifted toward Elder Ang.

Vol

"This time he said coldly, "your disciple, tu Nan, could at best produce a pill worth ten years. cultivation at the Of Cond level."

His voice dropped, each word deliberate.

"But Jun Jiu..."

"He created something worth a hundred years at that same level."

Silence pressed down on the arena.

"I believe you understand who the winner is."

"Impossible!" Elder Ang snapped, his voice rising sharply. "This is absurd! All three of you must be conspiring against me!"

His eyes burned with disbelief.

"There is no logic-none that could allow such simple ingredients, refined in mere hours, to produce a pill of that level!"

The Peak Leader didn't argue.

He simply turned his head.

"Li Qingxue."

She stepped forward immediately.

"Give him the last pill," he said. "If he doesn't experience it himself... he will never accept the truth."

Li Qingxue hesitated.

This was the final one.

The last proof.

But if Alex was to win-if the truth was to stand unchallenged there was no other way.

Slowly, she took out the final pill...

.....and placed it in Elder Ang's hand.

The entire arena held its breath as he sat down, crossing his legs, his expression still full of defiance.

He swallowed the pill.

Closed his eyes.

And began to circulate his energy.

Time stretched.

Thirty minutes passed.

Then-

Elder Ang's eyes snapped open.

Wide.

Shaken.

"Amazing....." he whispered, his voice trembling. "This is... truly unbelievable."

He looked down at his own hands, as if feeling something he couldn't fully grasp.

"I never imagined... that such simple ingredients could produce this level of power..."

"This... this is extraordinary."

A flicker of greed of ambition-flashed across his face.

"If we could mass-produce this... the Wudang Sect would rise above all others. We could lead the entire martial world... dominate the alliance..."

The Peak Leader's voice cut through his rising excitement like a blade.

"So."

"Do you now admit that your disciple has lost to Jun Jiu?"

Elder Ang froze.

His face darkened instantly.

Slowly, he turned his head toward Lu Nan—

And his expression twisted with fury.

Without warning, he lashed out and kicked Lu Nan off the platform.

"You useless fool!" he roared.

Lu Nan crashed to the ground, pain exploding through his body.

"How can you be this incompetent?!"

Elder Ang's voice burned with humiliation and rage.

"Not only are you weak-you dared to insult Jun Jiu's parents?!"

"You should be grateful he didn't kill you!"

Lu Nan stood there, stunned.

The pain in his body hadn't even

settled yet he had barely managed

to stabilize himself with

الله هـ

medicine-and now his own master

had kicked him aside like he was

nothing content

His mind reeled.

What did I do wrong?

The question echoed, hollow and desperate.

"Referee," the Peak Leader said. "Elder Ang has already acknowledged the result.

Announce it."

The referee swallowed, then raised his voice.

"The match between Jun Jiu and Lu Nan-"

A brief pause.

"The winner... is Jun Jiu!"

The words rang out across the arena.

But instead of cheers, there was confusion.

The disciples looked at each other, whispering, unsettled.

Jun Jiu... had already left.

He hadn't stayed to hear the result.

Hadn't waited for praise.

Hadn't even looked back.

It was as if none of this mattered to him at all.

And that only made it more unsettling.

"How...?" someone muttered under their breath. "How can he be this good at everything?"

No one had an answer.

The Peak Leader turned to Li Qingxue.

"Call him back," he said. "This afternoon, he will fight for first and second place."

Li Qingxue nodded, though her thoughts were still tangled in everything that had just happened.

On another arena, the final opponent had already been decided.

A young woman stood at the center-calm, poised, her presence sharp as a blade.

Hou Mei.

Daughter of Elder Hou.

"Daughter."

A figure appeared beside her-Elder Hou himself, his expression carrying a strange confidence.

"This time," he said quietly, "you will take the top rank."

Hou Mei frowned slightly.

"What do you mean, Father?" she asked. "I don't think I can defeat him. Jun Jiu.....

he's on another level."

Her voice lowered.

"He's like a king among us."

"Don't worry daughter. Even if you lose," he continued, "you will still win."

She turned to him, confusion clear in her eyes.

Elder Hou leaned closer, his voice dropping to a whisper.

He said something only she could hear.

And Hou Mei froze.

Her cheeks flushed instantly, a deep red spreading across her face.

"Father..." she whispered, her voice trembling between embarrassment and disbelief. "Are you serious? You

want me to do that during the fight?"

Elder Hou nodded, completely unfazed.

"Whether you win or lose," he said, "we still win."

Hou Mei bit her lip, her heart pounding.

"This... this isn't right..."

"No," Elder Hou cut in, his tone firm, leaving no room for refusal. "You don't get to protest."

His gaze sharpened.

"Don't you see? He's talented, powerful... and rare. A genius in both cultivation and pill refinement."

There was something calculating in his eyes now.

"We must secure him-no matter what."

Silence stretched between them.

Hou Mei lowered her gaze, her fingers curling slightly at her sides.

Then, slowly...

She nodded.

"Fine," she said quietly. "I'll do it... for our family."

A satisfied smile spread across Elder Hou's face.

"Good," he said. "You won't regret this."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 604[2,075 words]

The referee stood at the center of the arena, robes fluttering in the wind as his voice rang out across the vast grounds.

"This," he declared, sweeping his gaze over the roaring crowd, "is the most anticipated battle of the year at Thousand Herbs Peak!"

The noise swelled thousands of disciples pressing forward, eyes burning with anticipation.

"And now," the referee continued, his tone sharpening with excitement, "we arrive at the pinnacle of the tournament—the clash between the first and second-ranked contenders!"

A beat.

"Who will claim the title of this year's top outer disciples of Thousand Herbs Peak?"

He raised one hand, pointing to the right side of the arena.

"From the right-Hou Mei!"

The crowd erupted.

"She is acknowledged as the most beautiful fairy of Thousand Herbs Peak—ranked among the top ten beauties of the entire Wudang Sect!"

Cheers turned into a frenzy of admiration.

"She has defeated every challenger before her with overwhelming skill. Her cultivation stands at the peak of Qi Condensation—just one step away from Foundation Establishment!"

"Welcome-the most beautiful woman of Thousand Herbs Peak!"

The applause became deafening.

Hou Mei stepped forward.

Every movement was effortless. Grace flowed through her like water-each step precise, each gesture refined. Her robes shimmered softly as she ascended the arena, her presence alone enough to still the air.

Eyes followed her.

Breaths caught.

For a moment, even the noise seemed to bow before her.

And then-

The silence shattered.

The entire arena erupted into a frenzy.

Voices exploded in every direction, wild and uncontrollable, like a storm breaking loose after being held back too long. Disciples leapt to their feet, shouting, laughing, roaring-some in shock, others in sheer excitement at the chaos unfolding before

them.

"Hou Mei! Hou Mei!"

"You're my idol!"

The cries turned feverish, especially from the male disciples. Their voices rose above the rest—desperate, unhinged, filled with admiration that bordered on obsession.

Some pounded their chests. Others waved their arms like madmen, trying to catch her attention.

"Hou Mei, look at me!"

"You're the most beautiful!"

"I'd die for you!"

The energy spiraled out of control no longer just a crowd, but a living, breathing force of hysteria.

And at the center of it all-

Everything was about to explode.

"And from the left..."

A pause.

"Contestant number 777-Jun Jiu!"

A ripple of curiosity spread through the crowd.

"The number one scorer in the Herb Knowledge Stone Stele—an achievement unseen in a thousand years!"

This time, the applause came louder, sharper—charged with expectation.

All eyes turned.

They waited.

And waited.

The cheers began to fade.

No one stepped forward.

The referee frowned slightly, glancing toward the entrance.

"...Please welcome Jun Jiu," he called again.

The crowd clapped once more, though now there was hesitation—whispers
threading through the noise.

Still no one appeared.

A third time, the referee called out, louder than before.

"Jun Jiu!"

Silence answered him.

Confusion spread like a crack through glass.

Where was he?

Just as the tension tightened to its breaking point—

A sharp gasp rippled through the crowd.

High above, a figure cut across the sky like a streak of frost.

The Pure Snow Sword Maiden-Li Qingxue.

Her robes billowed like drifting snow, her presence cold and absolute.

And in her grip—

A man.

Dangling.

Dragged unceremoniously by the collar.

"Hey—HEY!" Alex shouted, his voice carried by the wind as he flailed midair. "I

already lost! Why do I have to fight again?!"

Li Qingxue didn't even look at him.

"You won your match," she replied, her tone as calm and merciless as winter. "So you will fight."

"Can't I just not show up? Then everyone can say I lost!" Alex protested desperately.

"No."

One word.

Final.

Before he could say another, she flicked her wrist—

And threw him.

Alex dropped from the sky like a sack of grain.

He hit the arena with a heavy thud, landing squarely on his backside.

The crowd blinked.

Then... exhaled.

Just like that, the tension shattered.

Alex groaned, rubbing his butt as he sat there, utterly undignified.

"That damn Li Qingxue....." he muttered under his breath. "Dragging me out of my nap like that..."

"Good!" the referee exclaimed, his excitement surging back as if nothing strange had just happened. "Contestant Jun Jiu has arrived! Now let the final match begin! Who will emerge victorious?!"

The arena exploded into noise.

Disciples shouted over one another, voices clashing like waves against stone. Some called out for Jun Jiu-but they were drowned out by the overwhelming chorus screaming Hou Mei's name, desperate for even a glance from her.

"I surrender!"

Alex's voice tore through the chaos like a blade.

Everything stopped.

The noise collapsed into absolute silence.

Thousands of people froze, eyes wide, breath caught in their throats.

Did he just-

Did Jun Jiu just surrender... before the fight even began?

The arena held its breath.

The referee blinked, then let out an awkward laugh. "Ah... what a joke."

"Sorry," Alex said flatly, completely serious. "This isn't a joke. I surrender."

The referee's smile stiffened. "Of course... of course it's a joke," he said, forcing a chuckle. "Because just moments ago, the Peak Leader introduced a new regulation."

"No one is allowed to surrender in the final match."

A ripple of shock moved through the crowd.

Alex's head snapped toward the high platform.

The Peak Leader sat there, calm, composed—watching him.

Smiling.

"I know you want to surrender," the Peak Leader said leisurely. "Did you really think I wouldn't stop you?"

His smile deepened.

"Dream on. You will fight."

Alex's eyes darkened, but before he could respond—

"My respects."

Hou Mei stepped forward, bowing gracefully to the Peak Leaders. Her voice was soft, almost fragile—but it carried clearly.

"I am only a woman," she said softly, lowering her gaze with practiced modesty. "If I were to face a male opponent in direct combat... then by nature, by birth—" her

voice dipped, almost fragile, "—I would stand at a disadvantage compared to Jun Jiu."

The crowd quieted, drawn in by her gentleness.

"So," she continued, lifting her eyes slightly, "I would like to propose... a different kind of match."

Alex barely reacted.

In his mind, this was already over.

Perfect, he thought.

Whatever she suggested—he would just agree, then lose on purpose.

If it was pills? He'd ruin one step.

If it was cooking? He'd make it taste awful.

If it was anything else—he'd find a way to fail.

How hard could it be to lose?

"Brother Jun Jiu," Hou Mei said, turning to him with a soft, hopeful gaze. "I hope you

will agree to this arrangement."

Alex nodded immediately. "Sure. Whatever kind of fight you want—I'll agree."

Her face lit up, a faint blush coloring her cheeks.

"Thank you, Brother Jun Jiu," she said gently. "You are truly kind... a real gentleman. It is rare to find a man like you."

Alex shrugged, completely indifferent.

"So," the referee said, raising an eyebrow, curiosity creeping into his voice, "what kind of competition do you propose?"

Hou Mei hesitated for just a moment.

Then she took out a small piece of paper and handed it to him, her expression turning shy-almost embarrassed.

The referee unfolded it.

His eyes scanned the words.

And then-

His expression changed.

He froze.

"...Are you certain," he asked slowly, lowering the paper just enough to look at her, "that this is the competition you want?"

Hou Mei lowered her head, her blush deepening.

She nodded.

The referee let out a long, complicated sigh.

"Well... I suppose this is one way to do it."

Then his gaze shifted toward Alex.

Another sigh. "...What a lucky bastard."

"Very well," the referee said, drawing a slow breath as he steadied himself. "I will now announce the nature of this competition."

The arena leaned in.

"This test," he continued, voice ringing clearly across the grounds, "belongs to one of Wudang's specialized branches of cultivation."

A pause.

"It is... a Yin-Yang dual cultivation match."

Silence.

It didn't spread gradually—it slammed into the crowd all at once.

Even Alex froze.

The referee had expected this. He let the shock settle before explaining further, his tone measured, deliberate.

"In this match, both participants will exchange Yin and Yang energy...

through an intimate form of cultivation," the referee said, his tone steady despite the tension rippling through the arena. "The one who

loses control first tugging a complete collapse of their energy flow—"

He paused, letting the implication settle heavily over the crowd.

"...will be declared the loser."

The arena became so quiet it was suffocating.

You could have heard a needle hit stone.

Then—

"What?!"

The eruption came all at once.

"What kind of fight is that?!"

"That's dual cultivation!"

"Isn't that only done between Dao partners?! Husband and wife?!"

"Do they have to become Dao partners to even do this?!"

"And if Hou Mei gets pregnant-what then?! Does that mean Jun Jiu has to marry her?!"

The questions spiraled into chaos, voices overlapping, rising, crashing into each other in disbelief. Some of the outer disciples looked completely lost.

"Wait—does that mean..... win or lose... they become husband and wife?!"

That realization hit harder than anything else.

Shock rippled through the crowd again-deeper this time, heavier.

"I surrender!"

Alex's voice came out sharp, almost desperate.

His face had gone pale.

Yes, Hou Mei was beautiful-unbelievably so. The kind of beauty that turned heads without trying.

But that wasn't the point.

He'd already had enough entanglements in his life-enough complications, enough ties that weren't his choice.

He wanted freedom.

Not this.

"No."

Hou Mei's voice cut through his protest.

"I will not accept a victory by surrender," she said, her tone gentle but unyielding. "You ml

fight me. Whether you win or lose...

that will be decided by us content

She hesitated, her cheeks flushing as her words stumbled slightly.

"I mean... it will be decided by... you know... our lower part."

"No." Alex shook his head immediately, taking a step back. "I'm not doing this. I'm not playing this kind of game."

"Sorry, Jun Jiu," Hou Mei said, smiling softly-but there was something in her eyes now, something firm. "You can't run from this."

Above them, on the high platform, the Peak Leader turned his gaze toward Elder Hou.

"How shameless," he said. "You see his talent, and suddenly you're eager to secure him as a son-in-law."

Elder Hou didn't even flinch. He simply shook his head, calm and unapologetic.

"My daughter is the most beautiful woman of this peak," he replied evenly. "If anyone is lucky, it's Jun Jiu-not the other way around."

Not far from them, Li Qingxue stood in silence.

Her expression was cold as ever-untouched, distant, like a queen carved from ice.

Her gaze drifted between Alex and Hou Mei.

None of this should have mattered to her.

It didn't concern her.

It shouldn't.

And yet-

Something twisted inside her chest.

A sharp, unfamiliar irritation.

The thought of Alex being bound to Hou Mei-of him belonging to someone else—

For reasons she refused to name

It angered her.

While the crowd was still buzzing-arguing, shouting, speculating the staff moved with quiet efficiency.

From the edges of the arena, several attendants carried in a large bed.

Not small. Not modest.

Large enough to command attention the moment it touched the stone floor at the very center.

Then came the wooden panels-broad, tall, and solid. One by one, they were set upright, forming enclosed walls around the bed. Tight. Sealed. Private.

A tent was stretched over the top.

In seconds, the center of the arena had transformed into something..... else.

Something intimate.

Something no one expected to see in a place meant for battle.

The disciples stared, stunned.

"...Are they seriously building a love nest in the middle of the arena?" someone whispered.

The shock rippled outward.

Hou Mei lowered her gaze, her cheeks flushed a soft pink. She glanced at Alex shyly.

"Brother Jun Jiu... why don't you go in first?"

Alex didn't move.

Before he could respond, she added quickly, her voice softer, almost embarrassed,

"If I go in first... you might run away. So... please. You first."

"Jun Jiu!" a disciple suddenly shouted from the crowd.

"If you're a man, accept the challenge!"

"Yeah! Show her your strength!"

"Don't embarrass yourself—get in there!"

The shouting grew louder, more aggressive—voices stacking on top of each other, pushing, pressuring, cornering him.

Alex stood there, trapped in the noise.

"I surrender," he said again, turning toward the referee.

The referee shook his head without hesitation. "You can't. Just accept it.

Do you know how many people would kill to be your position?

Being chosen by Hou Mei—you should consider yourself lucky."

Lucky.

Alex almost laughed.

Around him, the pressure only intensified. The crowd surged emotionally, their voices becoming a single force, pushing him forward.

And then—

A hand.

Hou Mei's fingers wrapped around his.

Gentle.

But firm.

She began pulling him, step by step, toward the enclosed space.

Toward the bed.

Each step felt heavier than the last.

If he crossed that threshold-

Everything would change.

His future.

His freedom.

His life.

No.

His mind raced, panic tightening around his chest.

There has to be a way out-

"STOP!"

His voice exploded through the arena.

Everything froze.

"I... only love Li Qingxue!" Alex shouted, the words spilling out in desperation. "She is my Dao partner! Even if I die-I will only become her husband!"

Silence.

Absolute.

The kind that pressed down on every ear, every breath.

Even Alex felt it-his own words echoing back at him, louder than he expected.

He swallowed hard.

That had been the only thing he could think of.

The only escape.

The crowd erupted-not in noise, but in whispers.

"So it's true..."

"Jun Jiu and Miss Li Qingxue..."

"They really have that kind of relationship..."

High above-

Li Qingxue stood still.

Her expression didn't change.

But her eyes-

They grew colder.

Sharp enough to cut.

Her gaze locked onto Alex like a blade resting against his throat.

"Do you really want to die?" she asked.

Alex's face drained of color.

Because in that moment-

He realized something far worse than being forced into that bed.

He had just provoked her.

And now-

He had no idea which fate was worse.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 605[2,445 words]

Alex had hoped-truly hoped that he would lose this fight.

He didn't want to become the Dao partner of Hou Mei... or Li Qingxue.

Either path was a trap.

His plan had been simple-force Li Qingxue into the spotlight as a Core Disciple, stir enough pressure and tension that Hou Mei would have no choice but to step back on her own.

Clean. Controlled. Effective.

But Li Qingxue...

She had no intention of helping him.

Not even a little.

If anything, she seemed determined to do the exact opposite-crushing his plan without hesitation, leaving him trapped in the very situation he was trying to escape.

“Jun Jiu,” Li Qingxue said coldly, "keep your delusions to yourself. You are not worthy to be my Dao partner. Give up.”

Before Alex could respond, Hou Mei stepped forward, her tone soft but pressing, almost eager. “Jun Jiu, you heard Miss Li Qingxue. Why not stop struggling? Come with me instead. Be my Dao partner.”

Her voice dropped slightly, more intimate now.

"We can even start now. I promise... I'll make you happy. Forever."

Alex would never let that happen.

Not under any circumstances.

The entire plan had been built on a fragile illusion—that he and Li Qingxue shared some kind of connection. Just enough to create pressure. Just enough to make Hou Mei hesitate... and step back.

It was never meant to be real.

But right now, Li Qingxue was tearing that illusion apart without hesitation, rejecting him so coldly that there was nothing left to stand on.

So he had no choice.

If she refused to play along... then he would make it real himself.

Or at least-

Make it look real.

No matter the cost.

He drew a slow breath, then lifted his gaze toward her.

"Miss Li Qingxue," he said, "no matter how many times you reject me... I am still a man who made a vow the moment I first saw you."

"I swore to the heavens that I would love only you for the rest of my life... and become someone worthy of standing beside you."

A ripple of murmurs spread through the crowd.

Even now, under her cold stare, he continued.

"Even if you reject me today... I will not stop loving you."

Then he turned slightly and bowed toward Hou Mei, his expression calm, but firm.

"Miss Hou, I'm truly sorry. But I am not the right person for you. My heart already belongs to someone... and I will never betray it."

"Jun Jiu!" Li Qingxue's voice rang out, sharp and furious. "I told you already-I will never accept you as my Dao partner! Get rid of that ridiculous thought!"

Alex-Jun Jiu-met her gaze head-on, right there in front of everyone.

"Li Qingxue!" he shouted back, his voice no longer restrained. "You may not have me in your heart—but it is impossible for me to not have you in mine!"

The crowd fell silent.

"This is my life," he continued, every word heavy with resolve. "And I've already chosen. You are the only one who will ever be in my heart. Even when I grow old... even if I never become your Dao partner... I will die with you still in my heart."

Li Qingxue stood there, unmoved on the surface—but her presence alone seemed to freeze the air.

She was known to all-beautiful beyond compare, yet colder than winter itself. Countless people had fallen for her, only to be met with that same unfeeling gaze. That was why they called her the Pure Snow Sword Maiden.

And now, that icy gaze sharpened.

"I don't like people like you liking me," she said, her voice low, dangerous. "Take it back... or I will kill you."

The threat hung in the air like a drawn blade.

Alex stood still, his emotions twisting into something tangled and unreadable.

This had never been about love.

Not really.

He had only wanted an escape.

Only wanted to push Li Qingxue forward as a shield—to create enough distance between himself and Hou Mei so he could walk away.

But now...

Everything had spiraled far beyond his control.

"Can you just accept it and say yes?" Alex shouted, his voice raw, almost breaking.

But inside-

He had already sworn the opposite.

He would never chase Li Qingxue. Never disturb that cold, distant woman. Not now. Not ever.

This wasn't love.

It was a performance.

A carefully constructed illusion-one meant to show just how far he was willing to go, how deep his "feelings" ran, how impossible it would be to shake him off.

Because only something that intense...

Could force Hou Mei to step back.

Hou Mei stepped in quickly, her tone soft but urgent, as if trying to pull him back from the edge. "Jun Jiu. Please, just forget Miss Li Qingxue. She's far beyond your reach. Her standards are too high for you. Choose me instead... it's more realistic."

Alex didn't even look at her.

He took a step forward, his eyes locking onto Li Qingxue as if the entire world had narrowed down to just her.

"If you can not let me love you. Then kill me," he said quietly.

The shift in his voice made it worse.

Because it wasn't loud anymore.

It was certain.

"Because if I can't love you... then this life has no more meaning for me."

A wave of shock rippled through the surrounding disciples. Murmurs died in their

throats. No one spoke. No one moved.

All eyes turned to Li Qingxue.

Waiting.

Watching.

Inside, Alex was screaming.

Please..... just forget me. I'm not going to chase you. I don't want any of this.

But none of that showed on his face.

He had to make it real.

The deeper, the stronger, the more desperate his "love" looked... the faster Hou Mei would let go.

Li Qingxue's expression darkened, her cold beauty hardening into something dangerous.

"You really want to die," she said flatly.

In the next instant, her sword was already in her hand.

A flash of steel.

A streak of white.

She moved like a gust of winter wind-fast, precise, and merciless.

And then-

She stabbed.

The blade drove straight into Alex's chest.

Gasps exploded across the arena.

No one had expected her to actually do it.

Blood surged out immediately, dark and thick, staining his clothes as the sword pierced through him—so deep that the tip pushed out from his back.

And yet...

Alex didn't move.

Didn't flinch.

Didn't even look down.

His eyes never left hers.

Li Qingxue had controlled the strike with terrifying precision. The blade missed his vital points by the smallest margin-enough to hurt, enough to threaten... but not enough to kill.

Not yet.

"Take back your words," she said, her voice colder than the blade in his chest. "Or next time, I won't stop."

Alex stared at her, his face pale but steady.

"You can kill me," he said, each word slow, deliberate, unshaken. "But you'll never be able to kill my love for you... even after I die."

Their gazes locked.

Cold against cold.

Neither of them yielding.

Then-

"Jun Jiu!" Hou Mei's voice broke through as she rushed forward, panic finally tearing through her composure. "You can't die!"

But Alex had already moved.

With the last of his strength, his fingers flicked.

Thin, nearly invisible needles shot out from his sleeve-fast, silent.

They struck Hou Mei before she could react.

Her body froze mid-step.

Her eyes widened.

Then the strength drained out of her completely as she collapsed, falling into a deep, unnatural sleep.

The crowd gasped again, stunned by the sudden turn.

Alex slowly raised his hand toward Li Qingxue, his palm open, as if inviting something inevitable.

"Come," he said softly, almost gently.

"Finish it."

Blood dripped steadily from his chest, soaking into the ground beneath him.

"I'm willing to die by your sword."

His voice didn't waver.

"Because living... without being able to love you..."

"...is the worst kind of life."

He looked straight into her eyes.

"So now... you can take my life."

Alex was gambling.

Gaia had already analyzed everything-the smallest shifts in Li Qingxue's breathing,

the angle of her shoulders, the tension in her grip. From every micro-movement and fragment of body language, the conclusion had been clear: she had never intended

to truly kill him. The strike had been meant to scare him. To force him to retreat.

But human emotion was never that simple.

Push too far... and even someone like Li Qingxue might snap.

And if she snapped-

He would die.

So he chose to gamble.

Li Qingxue studied him in silence, her cold eyes sharp, searching, as if trying to peel

him apart layer by layer.

"Do you know," she said at last, her voice low and cutting, "that men are all the same? Betrayers. Unfaithful. Weak."

Alex met her gaze without hesitation.

"Maybe many men are like that," he said calmly. "But I'm not."

"My love for you will be eternal. It will never end."

Inside, his mind moved rapidly.

Gaia fed him possibilities-countless answers, countless outcomes. Words, tones, expressions. Each one calculated. Each one measured against her reactions.

He chose the one with the highest emotional impact.

"There's no such thing as eternal love," Li Qingxue replied, her expression unmoved.

"There is," Alex said.

He took a step closer, ignoring the pain tearing through his chest.

"There is eternal love. Like mine for you."

"If you die... I die with you. I'd follow you into the afterlife—and I would still love you there. Because what I feel... what we have... is unbreakable. Not even death can end it."

For a brief moment, even he hesitated.

Was that too much?

Did I push too far?

Li Qingxue's eyes narrowed slightly.

"You would never do that," she said.

"If you never give me the chance," Alex replied, "then you'll never know."

Her gaze hardened again.

"You're too weak," she said bluntly. "Too weak to be my partner."

Alex didn't flinch.

"If you give me time," he said, "I'll surpass you."

He had already stood at that height once before.

This wasn't arrogance.

It was certainty.

Li Qingxue held his gaze, measuring him again, as if recalculating everything she thought she knew.

"Fine," she said at last.

A ripple passed through the crowd.

"If you can surpass me in ten years... I'll give you a chance."

"Five," Alex said immediately.

The word landed without hesitation.

"I only need five years. And I'll surpass your cultivation."

Li Qingxue stared at him.

"You think you can surpass me in five years?" she said, a faint edge entering her voice. "I won't stay the same. I'll grow stronger too."

"If I can't surpass you in five years," Alex said, "then I'll choose death over a life where I can't love you."

The surrounding disciples fell completely silent.

They stared at him as if he had lost his mind.

Or as if they were witnessing something they couldn't understand.

Li Qingxue's expression shifted-just slightly.

"Your future is long," she said, quieter now. She knew his talent. His potential in cultivation... in alchemy... in everything He had a path ahead

of him that few could ever reach.

But Alex shook his head.

"Even if my future is long..." he said slowly, choosing each word with precision—

following the path Gaia had laid before him—

"If you're not in it... then I won't walk that future at all."

And this time—

There was no calculation in his eyes.

Only resolve.

A voice suddenly broke through the tension from the outer disciples.

"What a man!" someone shouted. "Miss Li Qingxue, you should give him a chance!"

"Yeah!" another added quickly. "He'll be loyal to you. You won't find someone like him again!"

More voices rose—louder, bolder, feeding off each other. Especially those who supported Hou Mei. Ironically, they were the ones shouting the

hardest now, desperate to stop Jun Jiu from ever becoming her Dao partner.

"Miss Li Qingxue, please accept Jun Jiu!"

"Accept him!"

"Accept!"

"Accept!"

The chant spread like wildfire.

"ACCEPT! ACCEPT! ACCEPT!"

Hundreds of voices merged into one thunderous demand, echoing across the arena, shaking the air itself. The crowd surged with emotion, united in a single cry.

And then—

Li Qingxue raised her hand.

Silence fell instantly.

Not gradually.

Not reluctantly.

It was as if the entire world had been cut off mid-breath.

"Fine," she said.

One word.

Cold. Clear. Absolute.

"I will accept the five-year promise."

A collective gasp swept through the crowd.

She withdrew her sword from Alex's chest in one smooth motion. Blood followed the blade as it slid free, but she didn't look back.

Without another word, she turned-

And flew into the sky, her figure disappearing into the distance like a streak of white frost.

For a heartbeat, no one moved.

Then-

The arena exploded.

"YESSS!"

"Jun Jiu, you did it!"

"You're accepted!"

"Jun Jiu!"

"Jun Jiu!"

"JUN JIU!"

"JUN JIU! JUN JIU!"

Alex stood there, blood soaking his robes, barely able to remain upright.

A disciple yelled to Alex, eyes blazing with admiration.

"You see that? You shook her! Even Li Qingxue accepted you!"

Another laughed loudly.

"You're a legend now! The man who forced the Pure Snow Maiden to agree!"

Alex's lips parted slightly.

"...Forced?"

"Of course!" someone shouted. "That kind of devotion—who could refuse?!"

More voices piled in.

"You're the most loyal man in the sect!"

"A man among men!"

"A real cultivator!"

Each word hit harder than the last.

Because none of them were true.

Alex's hand trembled faintly.

"I..." he started—

Then stopped.

Because there was nothing he could say.

If he denied it—

Everything would collapse.

If he accepted it—

He would be trapped.

A slow, hollow realization crept in.

".....I can't get out anymore," he whispered.

No one heard him.

They were still cheering.

Still worshipping.

Still turning him into something he was never meant to be.

And for the first time-

Alex felt something worse than fear.

He felt stuck.

The cheers crashed like waves, overwhelming, deafening. People shouted his name over and over, their voices filled with excitement, disbelief, and awe.

But what none of them saw-

Was Li Qingxue, far above and far away, her cold expression finally breaking.

A faint blush touched her cheeks.

And for the briefest moment-

She smiled.

Back in the arena, the referee stepped forward, his voice cutting through the chaos.

"The winner of the top-ranked outer disciple match... is Jun Jiu!"

Another wave of cheers erupted.

"Jun Jiu!"

"Jun Jiu!"

But not everyone celebrated.

A group of disciples-especially Hou Mei's supporters-pushed forward, anger burning in their eyes.

"This isn't fair!" one of them shouted. "The winner should be Hou Mei!"

"Exactly!" another snapped. "Jun Jiu already surrendered! He didn't even dare to

enter the bed match with Hou Mei. That means he lost!"

"No," someone else shot back immediately. "The winner is Jun Jiu! Hou Mei is already down!"

Voices clashed.

Arguments ignited.

Tension snapped.

"How dare you talk like that?" one disciple barked, shoving another. "You think I'm afraid of you?"

"You're just Hou Mei's lapdogs!" the other fired back, his voice rising into a snarl.

"We stand with a real man! You think we're afraid of you?!"

The insult hit harder than any fist.

For a heartbeat, everything held.

Then-

Someone swung.

The first punch cracked across a jaw with a sickening snap.

Blood sprayed.

Another fist followed-then another-then a knee drove into someone's ribs hard

enough to fold him in half. A body slammed into the stone floor. Someone screamed. Someone laughed.

And then it broke.

Completely.

The argument didn't just turn into a fight—it exploded.

Disciples lunged at each other from

every direction. Robes tore. Bones collided. Elbows smashed into faces. A kick sent one man crashing

into a row of others, knocking them down like collapsing pillars. Someone grabbed a fistful of hair and slammed a head into the ground again and again until the screams turned wet and choked.

More joined.

More fell.

The sound became unbearable—shouting, roaring, the dull thud of flesh against flesh, the crack of impact, the chaos of bodies surging and colliding without control.

Techniques flared.

Energy burst loose.

One disciple was thrown through the

air, crashing into a stone pillar hard

enough to fracture it. Another was dragged down by three others, disappearing beneath a pile of fists

and boots.

No sides.

No rules.

No restraint.

It wasn't a match anymore.

It was a riot.

What had begun as cheers for a victory-

Had twisted into something savage.

Something violent.

Something completely out of control.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 606[1,701 words]

It took less than a week for the story to spread.

By the time it did, there wasn't a single disciple in the sect who hadn't heard it—Jun Jiu had crushed Hou Mei in the competition.

The tale moved like wildfire through the Wudang Sect, growing louder, sharper, more exaggerated with every retelling.

No one could fully agree on what had truly happened in that fight. The outcome itself had been... unclear. Messy. Controversial.

But one truth refused to be ignored.

Jun Jiu had never been defeated.

And that alone was enough.

The Wudang Sect stood across thirteen towering mountain peaks, ten of which housed the major departments. Among them was the Thousand Herbs Peak.

Soon, the top five disciples from each peak would gather.

They would fight.

The rankings of the outer disciples would be decided in that battle—and with it, the allocation of resources for the entire year. Support. Supplies. Influence.

Everything was on the line.

And Alex... was already at the center of it all.

These days, whenever he stepped outside, the atmosphere shifted.

Outer Sect disciples would greet him with bright smiles and loud enthusiasm, their voices filled with admiration. Some even bowed slightly as he passed, their eyes shining with something dangerously close to reverence.

Meanwhile, the number of people working in his garden had exploded.

What had once been a small group of a hundred had now grown to three hundred... and it was still increasing.

They came willingly.

Too willingly.

Alex didn't know what to do with them.

So he didn't.

Instead, he handed everything over to Gaia.

She built a system-cold, efficient, precise. The workers were managed like a perfectly controlled machine. Tasks were assigned. Results were measured. Rewards were distributed based on performance.

No emotion. No chaos. No wasted effort.

It worked flawlessly.

And best of all...

Alex didn't have to think about it.

"Elder Brother Jun."

The voice pulled him back.

Lu Piao stood nearby, one of his most trusted aides.

He carried a stack of reports, his expression serious.

"The garden is stable," Lu Piao said, handing over the information. "Production has increased by fifty percent."

Alex barely glanced at the papers.

"Is that all?"

Lu Piao hesitated.

"No. There's something else."

"All ten peaks," Lu Piao continued, "have already placed you on their watch list.

Their top disciples are wary of you. Very wary."

Alex frowned slightly. "Why?"

Lu Piao let out a quiet breath.

"Because you're one of the strongest competitors," Lu Piao went on.

"And not just that... you made a name for yourself by striking an Elder. Do you know how insane that sounds? Almost no one would dare to do something like that."

"To them... you're the biggest obstacle standing between them and first place."

Alex listened.

Then he yawned.

"I'm not interested in fighting anymore," he said lazily, stretching his arms. "I'll just surrender."

Lu Piao blinked.

For a moment, he thought he had misheard.

But Alex had already turned away, as if the entire matter was beneath his concern. As if the storm gathering around him...

didn't exist at all.

"Really?" Lu Piao stared at him, stunned. "Do you even understand what you're walking away from? If you take first place, you'll be rewarded-top-grade weapons, rare pills... even high-level martial arts manuals."

Alex shook his head without hesitation.

"I don't want any of that."

To him, those so-called rewards meant nothing.

He already possessed the cultivation method of the royal family-something far beyond what most disciples could ever hope to touch.

He didn't need anything else.

Lu Piao studied him for a moment, then slowly nodded, as if trying to make sense of something that refused to be understood.

"If that's the case... then they shouldn't be worried about you at all." He exhaled, his tone easing slightly.

"You can focus entirely on your cultivation. With your current progress, reaching Foundation Establishment is only a matter of time. You're already at the peak of the great cycle of Qi Condensation."

He paused, then spoke again this time more quietly, more earnestly.

"I believe you'll definitely reach it, Elder Brother Jun."

Lu Piao's gaze drifted slightly, as if recalling something distant.

"You know... for cultivators like us, the beginning is always the same. We start as servants. Then, if we're lucky, we enter the Outer Sect." His lips curled into a faint, almost bitter smile. "People like to compare it to a fish leaping over the dragon gate."

He shook his head.

"But that's not the truth."

"The real leap... the one that actually matters... is breaking through from Qi Condensation to Foundation Establishment."

"That's the moment everything changes. That's when you stop being... mortal."

"That's when you step onto the true path of immortality."

"And your lifespan... increases by one to two hundred years."

"Did you just say..." Alex asked. "That reaching Foundation Establishment gives you an extra hundred years of life?"

"...Yes," he answered slowly, nodding.

Alex inhaled sharply, the sound ragged, almost desperate-then suddenly he began pacing across the courtyard.

Back and forth.

Faster.

Time did not flow the same between worlds. One year on Xia or Estoria was equal to a hundred years here.

That meant if he wanted to survive five years on Estoria...

He needed at least five hundred years of life in this world.

The realization struck him like lightning.

Foundation Establishment was no longer just a stage of cultivation.

It was survival.

It was time itself.

"One hundred years... Foundation Establishment..." Alex muttered. Then his head snapped up, eyes blazing with certainty. "I'm going to reach it. No matter what—I will reach Foundation Establishment."

From that moment on, everything changed.

He gave Gaia a single command.

Find the best possible path.

Not the fastest.

Not the easiest.

The best.

It took nearly a week for Gaia to complete the calculations—to analyze, reconstruct, and design a method that surpassed anything known within the Wudang Sect.

Because the traditional path... was flawed.

Foundation Establishment was normally built upon five elements—metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. Every cultivator chose one.

Just one.

They built their entire foundation on that element, shaping their power around it.

But that choice came with a weakness.

Fire cultivators were suppressed by water.

Water could be countered by earth.

Every element had its opposite. Every strength carried an inherent flaw.

Some tried to overcome this by cultivating dual elements—but that path came at a cost. The foundation became unstable, weaker than those who fully committed to a single element.

In the end, most people had no choice.

They picked one.

And lived with the consequences.

But Alex... was different.

He had seen something else.

Buried deep within the royal family's cultivation records was a forbidden concept—something no one in the Wudang Sect had ever even heard of.

A Five-Element Foundation Establishment.

Not five elements clashing against each other.

But five elements working in harmony.

A perfect cycle.

Metal feeding water. Water nourishing wood. Wood fueling fire. Fire creating earth.

Earth giving birth to metal.

A closed loop.

Balanced. Endless.

Perfect.

A foundation without weakness.

A power that could grow without limit.

But such perfection came with a price.

A brutal one.

To achieve it... Alex couldn't simply break through once.

He had to do it five times.

He had to form a complete Foundation Establishment for each individual element—one by one.

Metal.

Wood.

Water.

Fire.

Earth.

Only after completing all five could he merge them together using the royal family's technique... forging the true Five-Element Foundation.

It meant his path would take five times longer than anyone else's.

Five times the effort.

Five times the risk.

But the reward...

Alex's breathing grew heavier as the realization sank deeper into his bones.

Instead of gaining just one hundred years of additional lifespan...

He would gain five hundred.

Five full cycles of life.

Five chances to survive.

Five chances to win against time itself.

No one in the Wudang Sect had ever attempted something like this.

No one had even imagined it.

But Alex didn't hesitate.

Because to him-

This was no longer about cultivation.

This was war against death itself.

He had to keep it secret.

Everything.

The method. The goal. The truth behind what he was about to attempt.

If anyone found out... it wouldn't just bring trouble. It would bring enemies.

So Alex made his decision.

Closed-door cultivation.

No distractions. No interference. No one allowed inside.

He was just about to seal himself away when a voice called from outside his hut.

"Big Brother Jun Jiu!"

Lu Piao.

Alex didn't move from where he stood. "What is it?"

"There's an Outer Sect disciple from Sword Peak," Lu Piao said from beyond the door. "He wants to challenge you."

Alex didn't even hesitate.

"Tell them I'm not fighting. I'll surrender. They can find someone else."

There was a brief pause.

"Are you sure, brother?" Lu Piao asked, uncertainty creeping into his voice.

"Yes."

Alex didn't even bother opening the door.

"...Understood. I'll inform them."

Footsteps faded.

Silence returned.

Alex exhaled slowly, closing his eyes as the tension slipped from his shoulders.

"Good," he murmured to himself. "Now I can finally have some peace."

For a moment... it almost felt real.

Then-

The noise shattered everything.

A sudden commotion erupted outside his hut-shouting, hurried footsteps, voices tangled in panio tore through the quiet like a blade,

dragging Alex out of his focus.

His eyes snapped open.

"Big Brother Alex!"

The voice was urgent. Breathless.

Alex stepped toward the door, irritation already rising. "What happened?"

One of the disciples stumbled forward, face pale.

"Something happened to Brother Lu Piao."

Alex's expression hardened instantly. "What happened?"

The disciple swallowed.

"The Sword Peak disciples... they cut off his hand. They said since they couldn't fight you... they'd prove you were nothing but a coward."

For a split second-

Everything went still.

Then Alex opened the door.

And the world turned red.

Lu Piao was there.

Collapsed against another disciple,

his body trembling. One of his arms hung uselessly-severed, barely attached, blood soaking through his

robes and dripping onto the ground

in thick, steady drops.

The metallic scent filled the air.

His face was pale. Lips shaking.

"Big... Brother Alex..." Lu Piao forced the words out through clenched teeth, his voice breaking under the pain. "I'm... sorry... I couldn't—"

"Enough."

Alex's voice cut through him like a blade.

"Take him to the healing department," Alex ordered, pulling out his medallion and tossing it over. "Use my merit points. Whatever it takes."

"Yes, Big Brother!"

The disciples moved immediately, supporting Lu Piao as they rushed away.

But Lu Piao's eyes... lingered.

Filled with guilt.

With shame.

Alex didn't look at him again.

Instead, he turned slowly to the others, his face unreadable-too calm.

"Take me to them."

The words were soft.

But something underneath them... wasn't.

The disciples froze.

"B-Big Brother..." one of them stammered, fear flashing across his face. "There are five of them-from Sword Peak You, you can't fight all

of them alone.

FindNovel.net

Another quickly added, "This is against the rules! Disciples aren't supposed to harm each other like this. We should report this to an Elder—"

Alex didn't even let him finish.

"No need."

Inside his chest-

Something burned.

Slow. Violent. Uncontrollable.

“Just take me there,” he said quietly. "I only want to... see them.”

The air turned heavy.

No one spoke again.

"... Yes, Big Brother."

And as they led him away-

No one noticed how tightly Alex's fists had clenched.

Or how the calm in his eyes...

had already turned into something far more dangerous.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 607[1,920 words]

On the descending path of Thousand Herbs Peak, six outer disciples from Sword Peak made their way down the mountain, their laughter echoing through the quiet air.

“Turns out Jun Jiu's name was just hype," one of them scoffed, grinning.

"Pathetic," another added. "He surrendered the moment he heard we were coming to test him."

"Senior brother," a third chimed in with a smirk, "this is Thousand Herbs Peak. They're just a bunch of herb-obsessed nerds, gardening and brewing pills all day. What would they know about real swordsmanship?"

"Exactly," someone else said. "That disciple had no idea how powerful Sword Peak truly is. And he still dared to challenge us?"

"Oh, come on," one of them laughed, nudging his companion with a crooked grin. "They're so weak-even if Jun Jiu showed up, he'd just lower his head and lick our shoes."

"Yeah," another voice cut in mockingly. "And that idiot friend of his what was his name? Lu Piao? Lost his arm trying to protect that coward."

The group burst into loud, cruel laughter.

"Good," one of them said, wiping a tear of amusement from his eye. "Now we just need to spread the word-Jun Jiu is nothing but a coward."

They continued down the mountain, still chuckling until suddenly, a figure dropped from above and landed directly in their path.

The sound of impact silenced them instantly.

Dust settled.

A man stood before them, calm... still... holding nothing but a simple kitchen knife.

"Can someone tell me," he said quietly, his voice cutting sharper than any blade, "who was the one... that cut off Lu Piao's arm?"

The six disciples stopped in unison, their expressions shifting from amusement to irritation.

One of them stepped forward, sneering. "That robe... you're from Thousand Herbs Peak, aren't you?"

His eyes swept over Alex with open contempt.

"I'll give you some advice," he continued coldly. "Wipe that look off your face... or I'll take your arms too. Just like I did to your friend."

Alex's gaze moved slowly-until it locked onto him.

"So," Alex said, his tone eerily calm, "you're the one who took Lu Piao's arms."

The man laughed, loud and fearless. "Yeah. So what?"

His grin widened.

"If you don't get lost right now," he added, "I'll take yours too."

For a moment... nothing happened.

The wind shifted.

Then Alex moved.

Just once.

So fast it barely registered.

The six disciples were still laughing—

Until suddenly-

A wet, heavy thud broke the air.

The man's laughter died instantly.

His eyes widened.

He hadn't even felt it.

Then-

Both of his arms fell to the ground.

Into the dirt.

Blood poured into the earth, dark and spreading, soaking through the soil-dripping from his hands, staining his clothes, turning everything it touched into something raw... something irreversible.

Silence.

Absolute.

The world seemed to stop breathing.

"I took one arm," Alex said quietly, his voice steady, almost indifferent, "for Lu Piao."

His eyes darkened.

"And the other... for threatening to take mine."

A scream tore through the mountain.

Raw.

Primal.

The man collapsed, writhing in agony, blood pouring into the earth beneath him.

The other five froze-shock crashing over them like ice water.

Then instinct kicked in.

Their hands snapped toward their swords.

In that same instant-

A pressure descended.

Invisible.

Crushing.

Alex stepped forward slightly, his presence suddenly overwhelming, suffocating.

"If you draw your swords..." he said softly-

"...I'll take that as you wanting to fight me."

"Who do you think you're scaring?" one of the disciples snapped, yanking his sword free.

The blade had barely cleared its sheath-

When his arm fell.

It hit the ground with a dull, sickening thud.

For a second, he just stood there, staring..... unable to understand what had happened. His mind lagged behind reality, refusing to catch up.

Then the pain came.

Too late.

Too sharp.

Too real.

No one saw Alex move.

No one saw anything.

One moment, the arm was there

The next, it wasn't.

The remaining four froze mid-motion, their hands hovering near their swords, suddenly unsure... suddenly afraid.

If they couldn't see how he attacked-

How were they supposed to fight him?

"Go," Alex said calmly. "Take your people and leave. Their arms can still be reattached... if you're fast enough."

"How dare you do this to us?" one of them shouted, his voice trembling despite the anger. "Do you even know who we are? We're from Sword Peak!"

Alex tilted his head slightly, his expression cold.

"And this," he said, his voice dropping, "is Thousand Herbs Peak."

"How dare you come here... and cut off one of our people's arms?"

"Brothers....." one of the Sword Peak disciples whispered urgently, his voice tight with anger. "There are four of us. If we attack together... we might still—"

His words cut off.

Cleanly.

Just like his arm.

It dropped to the ground before he even realized it was gone.

A heartbeat later-

He screamed.

Alex took a step forward.

Just one.

But it was enough.

All disciples staggered back instinctively, their faces draining of color, their confidence shattered beyond repair.

"I don't care why you came here," Alex said, his tone steady, but laced with something far more dangerous than anger. "You hurt one of our people."

His eyes darkened.

"My people. And you were going to pay for that."

"If·

f you want to die here," he continued quietly, "I can cut your necks just as easily."

In that instant-

Every single one of them felt it.

A phantom sensation.

Cold steel brushing against their throats.

As if their heads had already been severed—

As if death had already claimed them.

One of them let out a strangled sound.

Another staggered, barely holding himself upright.

Someone... lost control completely, warmth spreading down their legs as fear took over.

The smell spread.

Their legs trembled violently, their faces pale as ghosts, eyes wide with raw, animal fear.

Alex walked past them.

"Don't come here again," he said, without even looking back.

From the path ahead, the disciple who had guided Alex earlier suddenly came running toward him, breath ragged, panic in his voice.

"Elder brother—how could you just leave me—"

He stopped.

Mid-step.

His words died in his throat.

Because he saw them.

The Sword Peak disciples.

And then-

He saw the ground.

His stomach twisted violently.

Severed arms lay scattered in the dirt, soaked in blood, motionless.

Three of them had lost one arm.

One... had lost both.

The reality of it struck harder than any blade ever could.

"Senior Brother... Jun Jiu..." one of them said, his voice trembling, caught

somewhere between fear and awe. "You... you avenged Lu Piao..."

Alex didn't turn.

"Let's go back," he said simply.

And he walked away.

The next day.

Alex was still inside his hut when a figure appeared at the entrance.

"Big brother Alex..." Lu Piao stepped in slowly, his movements careful, his presence

quieter than usual.

Then-

He bowed.

Deeply.

"Thank you... for taking revenge for me."

Alex studied Lu Piao's arms in silence.

They were already reattached.

Cleanly.

He could tell from the stitching, the alignment, the faint discoloration around the

seams. Whoever had done the procedure knew exactly what they were doing.

Under normal circumstances, a severed limb had a narrow

window-four to six hours beforez

reattachment became unlikely. presented properly cooled invice,

that window could stretch to twelve.

Beyond that, muscle tissue began to die. Cells collapsed. Necrosis set in.

After that... even the best surgeons could do little.

But here—

The work was precise.

Advanced.

Better than he had expected.

"Are your arms okay?" Alex asked.

Lu Piao nodded. Slowly, he raised his hands and flexed his fingers. The motion was stiff, careful-but real.

"They'll recover," he said. "In about a week, I should be able to use them normally again. Until then... I can't put too much strain on them."

Alex gave a small nod. "Good."

For a moment, silence settled between them.

Then Lu Piao stepped forward and bowed deeply.

"Big brother... you took revenge for me. And you even spent your merit points to have my arms restored." His voice tightened slightly. "I don't know how I can ever repay you."

"Don't worry about it," Alex said calmly. "They won't dare come here again."

His gaze shifted slightly, already moving on.

"Focus on the garden," he added. "Harvest season is coming. There'll be plenty of merit points to earn."

"Yes, brother," Lu Piao said, bowing again.

Three days passed.

Alex remained inside his hut, completely focused on one thing—

Reaching Foundation Establishment.

Time blurred.

The outside world moved on without him.

But the story of what he had done... didn't.

It spread.

Fast.

Like wildfire across Thousand Herbs Peak.

Everyone heard it—

How Jun Jiu-Alex-had crippled the Sword Peak disciples who dared to harm Lu

Piao.

How he had severed their arms without anyone seeing his blade move.

How he had spent his own merit points... just to restore Lu Piao's.

By the fourth day-

People began to look at him differently.

Not just as the strongest-

But as the one they could rely on.

The eldest brother.

"Jun Jiu!"

The voice exploded outside his hut early the next morning.

Alex's eyes opened slowly.

Silence lingered for half a second—

Then he stood and stepped outside.

Four figures were waiting.

Their robes were different.

Discipline Hall.

Their presence alone carried authority.

"We are from the Discipline Committee," one of them said coldly. "You are to come with us to Sword Peak."

"You assaulted their disciples and severed their arms."

His gaze hardened.

"You will take responsibility for your actions."

Behind Alex, several disciples from Thousand Herbs Peak had already gathered, watching in tense silence.

Then-

"Responsibility?"

Lu Piao stepped forward suddenly, his voice rising, unable to hold back.

His bandaged arms trembled slightly-but his eyes burned.

"How can the Discipline Committee come here demanding justice for Sword Peak-" he said, his voice sharp with anger, "-when they were

the ones who came here first and

cut off my arm?

FindNovel.net

The disciples from the Discipline Committee turned their cold gazes on Lu Piao.

"We are the Discipline Committee," one of them said sharply. "We don't answer to you. You answer to us. So keep your mouth shut."

Lu Piao's face flushed deep red, anger burning through the humiliation.

"This isn't fair!" he shouted, his voice cracking but loud enough to carry

across the crowd. "All of you saw it! You saw how those Sword Peak disciples cut off my arm and the Discipline Committee did nothing!"

His breathing grew heavier, his chest rising and falling as emotion surged. "But the moment Elder Brother Jun Jiu helped me take revenge—now you show

up?" His eyes swept across them, blazing. "Tell me do you call that justice?"

"No!" the crowd roared.

The sound erupted like thunder.

Hundreds of disciples from Thousand Herbs Peak—gardeners, cultivators, workers

—stood behind Lu Piao, their voices unified, their anger no longer restrained.

Around four hundred people.

All watching.

All judging.

"Shut up," one of the Discipline Committee members snapped, his patience gone.

"My word is law here. You will not interfere. And if you do—"

His eyes hardened.

"I won't hesitate to strike you down."

Lu Piao stepped forward instead.

Not back.

"I respect justice," he said. "But I will never respect arrogance."

He lifted his chin.

"You are not the law. The law exists for everyone."

The man's expression twisted.

"How dare you "

Before the sentence even finished-

His hand lashed out.

Smack.

The sound rang out—sharp, brutal, undeniable.

Lu Piao's head snapped to the side.

The entire mountain seemed to fall silent.

It happened in front of everyone.

Every single person saw it.

"All of you—" the Discipline Committee disciple barked arrogantly, sweeping his gaze across the crowd, "if you dare interfere, we will not hesitate to use force!"

For a moment-

No one moved.

Then Lu Piao slowly turned his head back, his cheek flushed, his eyes burning.

"Brother....." he said, his voice low but carrying. "You all saw that, right? He was the one who struck first."

"We saw it, Brother Lu!" the crowd shouted.

Four hundred voices.

Unified.

Furious.

Then-

Steel sang.

One after another-

Blades slid free.

The sound multiplied—dozens, then hundreds—until it filled the air like a rising storm.

The four Discipline Committee members froze.

Their faces went pale.

They had never seen this before.

Wherever they went, people feared them.

Avoided them.

Bribed them.

No one had ever stood against them like this.

Not like this.

"Don't use weapons," Lu Piao said suddenly, raising his voice above the tension.

"They hit me so we hit them back with our fists."

His eyes hardened.

"Just don't kill them."

"You dare—!" one of the Discipline Committee members shouted, panic creeping into his voice.

Too late.

The crowd surged.

Chaos exploded.

Fists flew.

Kicks followed.

A storm of bodies crashed into the four men, overwhelming them instantly.

Four arms against dozens—

Against hundreds—

It wasn't a fight.

It was a collapse.

No matter how they shouted, no matter how they tried to push back—

Blow after blow rained down on them.

Relentless.

Unstoppable.

The authority they once carried shattered beneath the weight of raw, collective fury.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 608[1,812 words]

By the next day, word of the incident had spread across the entire sect-the Thousand Herbs Peak disciple who had crippled four members of the Discipline Committee was all anyone talked about.

Within Thousand Herbs Peak, the reaction was immediate and unified. They stood behind their own.

"How can a Sword Peak disciple cut off one of ours' arms," one disciple demanded bitterly, "and when we retaliate, the Discipline Committee suddenly says we're the ones at fault?"

"They should be investigating Sword Peak instead," another snapped.

"Exactly."

A third lowered his voice, glancing around. "But haven't you heard? More than eighty percent of the Discipline Department... they all come from Sword Peak."

"That's true," someone else agreed. "Sword Peak dominates everything- tournaments, inter-peak battles. They specialize in combat. They're always the strongest."

"Not like us," another muttered. "We study medicine, herbs, formations... other paths. No wonder the Discipline Department always takes their side. Sword Peak disciples have been bullying others for years—and no one stops them."

A brief silence followed.

Then someone spoke again, quieter-but with a spark of hope.

"But not this year."

Heads turned.

"We have Jun Jiu now. I heard his techniques are terrifying... that even Sword Peak disciples had no choice but to bow their heads and run-after losing their arms."

The murmurs spread like wildfire.

Meanwhile, atop Heaven Law Peak-the seat of the Discipline Department-the atmosphere was far colder.

An elder stood at the front of the hall, his expression dark with fury as he looked over the gathered disciples.

"We have been humiliated," he said, his voice low but sharp enough to cut. "Humiliated... by disciples of Thousand Herbs Peak."

His gaze hardened.

"Those people... who spend their days tending gardens, refining pills, and treating sword practice as nothing more than a warm-up exercise."

His fist slammed into the table.

Wood shattered instantly, splintering under the force.

"Do you not feel the shame?" he roared. "They should fear us—not the other way around!"

A disciple stepped forward, lowering his head respectfully.

"Master, this was my failure. I was the one who assigned four of our people to handle the situation." His voice steadied. "Give me another chance."

The elder said nothing.

"I will personally lead a group—twenty disciples at the Great Qi Condensation stage, and one at Foundation Establishment. This time... no one will be able to touch them."

The hall fell silent.

"We won't just bring Jun Jiu back to Sword Peak," the disciple continued, his tone turning cold. "Anyone who dared harm our people... will be taken as well."

His eyes lifted slightly, filled with restrained fury.

"They will answer for it."

"Go," the elder said coldly. "I will not tolerate another mistake."

All twenty-one disciples bowed in unison. "We will bring the culprit back."

Without another word, they turned and rushed out, heading straight for Thousand Herbs Peak.

They didn't stop to rest.

They didn't slow down.

Anger burned in their veins, driving them forward like a storm. Ever since the last incident, the entire sect had begun to look down on them. The humiliation clung to their backs like a shadow.

This time, they would reclaim their honor.

They already knew where Jun Jiu was.

So they went straight for the front courtyard of his residence.

"Jun Jiu!" the leader at the Foundation Establishment stage roared, his voice echoing across the area, shaking the air itself.

Inside the hut, Alex stepped out, his expression calm—almost bored.

"Who's shouting like that?" he said casually. "My hearing is perfectly fine. You could've just spoken normally. Why scream like a madman... or are you deaf?" "How dare you!" one of the Discipline members snapped. "Jun Jiu, you injured members of Sword Peak. You will kneel, cut off one of your arms, and submit yourself before we take you back."

His voice turned even colder.

"Jun Jiu! Last chance-kneel and cut off your arm!"

"Oh? Just one arm?" Alex tilted his head.

"Yes. Consider it mercy."

"Only one?"

"...What, you want to negotiate?"

"No, I'm just surprised."

"Surprised?"

"You came all this way... and only brought enough courage to ask for one?"

The other Thousand Herbs Peak disciples burst into laughter, the sound loud and unrestrained.

"So the Discipline Department's members are cowards after all," one of them mocked.

The leader's face twisted with rage. His chest rose and fell as anger surged through him, and then he roared-

"Everyone who laid a hand on our people yesterday every one of you will kneel, follow us to the Discipline Department, and serve one year in confinement!"

The disciples of Thousand Herbs Peak froze, stunned by the demand.

"How can you be this unreasonable?!" Lu Piao shouted, stepping forward, fury blazing in his eyes. "You didn't even bother asking who was at fault-you just came here to force your twisted version of justice on us! We're not going anywhere with you!"

At once, the Discipline members drew their swords.

Steel flashed under the light.

"If you refuse to come peacefully," one of them said, voice dripping with threat, "then we'll drag you there ourselves—even if we have to cut you down first. Either way, you're coming."

"Do you really think force makes you right?" Alex asked, his tone still calm—but now colder. "Do you think calling something 'justice' makes it justice... just because the strong crush the weak?"

The leader laughed, a harsh, mocking sound.

"In Murim," he said, "justice belongs to the strong."

A brief silence followed.

Then Lu Piao let out a sharp laugh.

"Well said," he replied, turning to the others. "You all heard him. Justice belongs to the strong."

His grin widened, fierce and fearless.

"So if we beat them... then we're justice."

He clenched his fists.

"Brothers-hit them!"

The leader and the twenty Discipline members burst into laughter.

"You're not even at Great Qi Foundation," one of them sneered. "And you want to teach us?"

The leader stepped forward, eyes cold with arrogance. "Fine. Let's call this justice. If we lose... we'll admit we were wrong."

"But if you lose—every one of you will pay a heavy price."

To them, it was unthinkable.

Disciples at Great Qi Condensation—and even Foundation Establishment—losing to a group made up mostly of fifth-level Qi Condensation fighters?

It defied everything they believed.

In their eyes, the gap between those levels wasn't just large—it was absolute. It was the difference between power and helplessness.

Like an adult facing a five-year-old child.

A single slap should have been enough.

There was no world in which they were supposed to lose.

"Attack," Lu Piao said.

He didn't hesitate.

Despite being only at the fifth level of Qi Condensation, he charged forward without a trace of fear.

The leader raised his hand, ready to strike—

Then froze.

A flicker of shock crossed his face.

He couldn't channel his inner force.

It was as if something inside him had been sealed shut.

Around him, the other twenty Discipline members felt it too. No matter how they tried, their energy

refused to respond. Even those at Great Q Condensation stood there, suddenly powerless.

Without their inner force, they were worse than beginners.

Lu Piao's fist slammed straight into the leader's face—

A sharp crack followed.

Several teeth broke loose, scattering as the man's head snapped back from the force.

At the same time, the disciples of Thousand Herbs Peak surged forward.

What had begun as a confrontation instantly turned into chaos.

More than a hundred people descended on the twenty-one Discipline members.

Blows rained down from every direction.

"This isn't fair!" the leader screamed, struggling under the barrage. "You... you poisoned us!"

But his voice was drowned out.

They didn't get the chance to say anything more.

They were beaten senseless.

Not far away, Alex simply shook his head.

From the moment the group had arrived, he had already sensed the direction of the wind. Quietly, he positioned himself where the airflow would carry what he needed.

A fine powder-nearly invisible-had been released into the air.

The wind carried it straight to the Discipline members.

It didn't harm them.

It only sealed their inner force... for about an hour.

More than enough time.

More than enough for what was happening now.

"So this is justice," Lu Piao said between strikes, breathing hard but grinning. "Turns out... the strong really do decide everything."

He kicked one of the fallen Discipline members, who was already crying out in pain.

"I think I'm starting to like this kind of justice."

"Every one Lu Piao shouted, his voice blazing with fury. "These bastards came here to take our big brother's arm we're already showing them mercy for not taking

their arms!"

His grin turned fierce, almost savage.

"So this time... we shave them bald and throw them out naked! Let the Discipline

Department see what happens when they push us too far!"

A beat-

Then the entire crowd erupted.

Cheers exploded across the courtyard, loud, wild, and unstoppable.

High above, on one of the peaks, the sect leader watched the entire scene unfold.

Then he laughed.

A deep, unrestrained laugh.

"I don't think I've ever been this entertained," he said, eyes gleaming, "in all my years at Wudang Sect."

"Master," Li Qingxue said, her voice cutting through the laughter, "don't you think this should be stopped? A small fire... can grow out of control."

The sect leader only laughed harder, clearly amused.

"Oh, come on, Qingxue," he said, waving a hand dismissively. "We both know the Discipline

Department has

Salways sided with

Sword Peak. And now... they ve

kicked an iron plate."

His eyes gleamed with interest.

"Don't you want to see what happens next?"

Li Qingxue's expression didn't change.

"No," she replied calmly. "I'm afraid that fire will keep growing... until it burns Jun Jiu."

"Really?" The sect leader tilted his head, studying her. Then a knowing smile spread across his face. "So that's it. You want to protect your future Dao partner."

"No," Li Qingxue said, her tone turning cold.

The sect leader chuckled.

"Don't worry," he said. "From what I've seen... Jun Jiu won't be the one burned."

His gaze drifted toward the distant figure below.

"If the Discipline Department refuses to lower their heads... if they keep forcing their version of justice—then they're the ones who'll be consumed by the flames."

Li Qingxue frowned slightly. "I don't believe that."

The sect leader's smile sharpened.

"Then let's make a bet."

Silence settled between them.

"If Jun Jiu is the one who gets burned," he continued, "you can step in and stop it."

And in return... you can ask me for one thing."

He paused, letting the weight of his words sink in.

"But if the Discipline Department is the one that burns....."

His voice dropped, quieter now-but far more dangerous.

"Then you will stop Jun Jiu yourself."

Li Qingxue's brows tightened.

"And," he added casually, "you will agree to become his Dao partner."

Her eyes widened in shock.

But the sect leader had already turned his attention back to the scene below, his gaze fixed on Jun Jiu-on Alex—with a calculating intensity.

He knew what kind of man he was looking at.

A man who didn't belong in one place for long.

A man who would eventually leave.

Unless...

Unless he was given a reason to stay.

A faint smile touched the sect leader's lips.

Even a hero can be anchored... if you bind him with the right chain.

And what better chain than a woman like Li Qingxue?

"Do you agree, Li Qingxue?" he asked without looking at her.

A long silence followed.

Then-

"Yes, Master," she said.

The sect leader burst into laughter again, louder than before.

The next day, the Discipline Department erupted into fury.

The elder's voice thundered through the hall.

"We will send a hundred people," he roared. "Crush them and bring Jun Jiu back!"

His eyes burned with rage.

"And if they dare resist..."

A deadly pause.

"Then burn the entire Thousand Herbs Peak."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 609[2,130 words]

The Discipline Department had been in the middle of a meeting, but the atmosphere felt less like governance and more like a battlefield on the verge of eruption.

One of the three elders-Elder Tong-sat rigid in his seat, his face flushed with fury, his voice sharp enough to cut through steel.

"We must not tolerate this," he thundered. "Capture that Jun Jiu immediately. And as for those from Thousand Herbs Peak who dared lay hands on our people—if they refuse to submit, then we burn the entire peak to the ground."

"Elder Tong," another elder spoke, his voice calm yet laced with quiet disapproval. It was Elder Guo. "How can you treat them as enemies? We all belong to the Wudang Sect."

Tong's head snapped toward him, his eyes sharp and filled with hostility.

"Those unruly fools?" he said coldly. "They are not part of the Wudang Sect."

"Just because you are from Sword Peak," Guo continued, his voice steady, "doesn't mean you must blindly support them. Have you even looked into the cause of this incident? It began when a Sword Peak disciple severed the hand of one of theirs."

"Elder Guo," Tong said angrily, "what exactly are you implying?"

Guo didn't flinch. "I mean exactly what I said."

His gaze swept the room before returning to Tong.

"We are here to uphold justice. If you want to bring someone in for questioning, then start with the Sword Peak disciple who caused this mess in the first place. You cannot punish someone who merely retaliated."

"Elder Guo. Are you suggesting that Jun Jiu cutting down a Sword Peak disciple should go unpunished?"

As Elder Tong spoke, a faint surge of inner power began to gather around him, invisible yet heavy, like a storm building beneath still skies.

Guo's expression hardened. Without hesitation, he released his own aura in response, his presence rising to meet Tong's head-on.

"So in your eyes," Guo continued, his voice now sharper, "a Sword Peak disciple can walk into Thousand Herbs Peak, maim someone, and still be considered innocent?"

He let out a cold scoff.

"You always turn a blind eye to whatever Sword Peak does. If that is your standard

of justice, then you have no place in the Discipline Department."

The tension snapped.

In an instant, both Elder Tong and Elder Guo erupted with their inner force, invisible waves clashing in the air as if the room itself might split apart.

"Enough!"

The leader of the Discipline Department slammed his hand onto the table. The

sharp crack echoed through the chamber, cutting through the rising storm.

"If you want to fight, take it outside," he said leaving no room for argument. "But right now, we are here to handle this case."

His gaze swept across the elders, heavy with authority.

"The entire sect is already looking down on us. We cannot even deal with a single outer disciple—must we really sink that low?"

"Leader," Elder Tong said after a moment, still simmering, "then why not simply expel that outer disciple, Jun Jiu, from the Wudang Sect?"

At those words, the leader fell quiet.

His expression shifted—just slightly—but enough to show something had changed.

A memory surfaced.

The previous day, he had been summoned by the Sect Master himself.

The man's voice had been calm, yet carried a weight that could not be ignored.

"Whatever happens," the Sect Master had said, "you must not expel the man named Jun Jiu."

He had bowed then, unable to hide his confusion.

"May I know the reason?" he had asked.

"Because if you expel him," the Sect Master gave a small, knowing nod, "he will be the happiest person to walk out of this place."

"So you may do anything you want to him... just never expel him. Because soon, he will become my direct disciple."

The leader of the Discipline Department had been stunned, the words striking him harder than any blow.

"If that is the case," he had replied carefully, "then I will not touch him at all. Especially since this matter wasn't even started by him."

But the Sect Master had only shaken his head, a faint smile playing on his lips.

"You may try to do anything to him," he said lightly. "But I doubt your entire Discipline Department will be able to do a thing."

"Sect Master," the leader had pressed, still unable to accept it, "he is only an outer disciple."

"You can try," the Sect Master had laughed. "But I suggest you don't involve yourself personally. Otherwise, you'll only end up humiliated... by that outer disciple."

The leader had frowned, disbelief still clinging to him.

"Sect Master, are you certain? I have already reached the Core Formation stage, while he is still only at the Great Qi Foundation."

The Sect Master had turned to him then, his laughter deepening.

"Believe me, that young man has more schemes than you can imagine. If you are not fully prepared, you won't survive standing in front of him."

Those words had lingered.

Even now, the leader of the Discipline Department could still feel the faint chill creeping along the back of his neck.

Back in the present, he lifted his gaze toward Elder Tong.

This man—and most of his disciples from Sword Peak—controlled nearly seventy percent of the Discipline Department. Even as the leader, he had to tread carefully around him. Authority, in name, might have belonged to him... but in practice, it was something he constantly had to guard.

"Leader," Elder Tong said, pressing forward without hesitation. "We must capture that outer disciple to protect our dignity."

The leader exchanged a glance with Elder Guo, a silent understanding passing between them.

"I agree with Elder Guo," the leader said at last, his tone steady. "That man made no mistake. I believe we should cancel the disciplinary punishment against Jun Jiu... and let this matter end here."

The room froze.

Elder Tong's expression darkened instantly.

His hand slammed onto the table with a loud crack.

"That is unacceptable!" he roared. "If we let this go, we lose all dignity!"

His gaze burned with fury as he leaned forward.

"If you refuse to send the Discipline Department, then at the very least, you must allow me and my people to go there and capture that bastard."

"You?" Elder Guo let out a short, mocking laugh. "You and your people?"

He shook his head slowly, amusement flickering in his eyes.

"You are part of the Discipline Department. If you fail again—like the first and second attempts—you won't just embarrass yourself. You'll drag the entire department down with you. No, it is not a good idea."

"But... if you're willing to put it in writing—if you dare to sign that if you lose for the third time, you will resign and hand over all your disciples to me....."

A faint smile spread across his face.

"Then yes," he said softly, almost provocatively. "I'll support you."

"And what if I successfully detain that bastard?" Elder Tong shot back, his voice burning with rage, his eyes blazing as he glared across the table.

Elder Guo didn't even flinch.

"Then you would still be disgracing the Discipline Department," he replied coldly, "by personally going after an outer disciple who hasn't even reached Foundation Establishment."

He turned slightly and bowed toward the leader, his tone shifting into something more formal—but no less firm.

"My suggestion is simple. We acknowledge that Jun Jiu made no mistake. Instead, we discipline the Sword Peak disciple who initiated this conflict—who went to Thousand Herbs Peak and severed another disciple's arm. That is where justice lies."

Elder Tong's fury exploded.

"How dare you speak like this!" he roared, slamming his hand against the table so hard it echoed through the hall. "Do you have a death wish?"

Elder Guo met his gaze without hesitation, his voice calm but unyielding.

"I do not fear fighting you," he said. "But if you are unwilling to sign that contract,

then forget it. I will use everything in my power to stop you." "Leader," Elder Tong said, turning sharply. "Grant me permission." The leader fell silent for a moment, weighing the situation carefully. "What Elder Guo says is correct," he said at last. "I am inclined to follow his proposal. We should punish Sword Peak-not Thousand Herbs Peak."

He paused, then fixed his gaze on Elder Tong—who had once come from Sword Peak, where the current leader was none other than his own brother.

"But if you insist on resolving this your way, then you must sign a paper. I need assurance that, if I grant you permission, you will not bring shame upon the Discipline Department."

"Fine," Elder Tong snapped. "But if I succeed in capturing that wretch, then I want Elder Guo to step down and retire."

Before Guo could respond, the leader spoke again.

"How about this, Elder Tong—if you resolve this matter without humiliation, I will allow you to take my position as the leader of the Discipline Department."

A ripple of tension swept through the room.

"You've had your eyes on this seat for a long time, haven't you?" the leader added quietly.

Elder Tong froze for a split second—then burst into loud laughter, his earlier anger twisting into something sharp and ambitious.

"Even better," he said, his grin widening. "If I handle this insignificant outer disciple, I become the leader."

"But remember," the leader said, his tone suddenly cold, "if you fail to capture Jun Jiu... you will resign."

"Resign?" Elder Tong barked, his pride flaring. "If I fail, I'll kill myself!"

"Good," Elder Guo said evenly, watching him with steady eyes. "The I will draft the paper."

His lips curved slightly.

"I'll make sure the Sect Master—and every leader in the sect—gets to see it."

Elder Tong let out a cold, mocking sneer.

"I'll be leading five hundred disciples," he said, his voice dripping with confidence.

"And I'll be going personally. Do you really think I could lose to a mere outer disciple?"

He scoffed.

"Keep dreaming."

Within a few minutes, Elder Guo placed the scroll on the table.

Ink. Seal. Finality.

Elder Tong grabbed the brush without hesitation.

"I'll sign it now," he said.

Guo watched him carefully.

"Before you do," Guo said softly, "you should read the last clause."

Tong scoffed. "I don't need to."

"That's exactly why you should."

Tong's eyes flicked down.

Just briefly.

Then-

His expression changed.

"What is this?" Tong's voice dropped.

Guo's smile was faint.

"If you fail," he said evenly, "you will resign... or you may choose to take your own life. The choice is yours."

"But for sure, your entire faction dissolves. Your disciples will be reassigned."

The room erupted in whispers.

Tong's grip tightened on the brush.

"You're stripping me of everything."

Guo's gaze didn't waver.

"No," he said quietly.

"I'm making sure you understand what you're risking."

"Or... you can walk away right now."

Without hesitation, Elder Tong signed the paper. In front of all the gathered elders, he pressed his thumb into his own blood and

stamped it onto the palet

Koel

sealing his vow with a bold, irreversible mark.

"When I return," he said, stepping away with a sharp laugh, "you'd better have that seat cleaned and ready for me."

Then he turned and strode out of the hall, laughter echoing behind him.

He truly believed it-believed that

with five hundred disciples, five team leaders on Foundation Establishment, and himself—standing at the peak of Greater Foundation Establishment,

only a step away from Core Formation-capturing Jun Jiu would

be effortless.

To him, this wasn't a challenge.

It was a formality.

Elder Guo watched as Elder Tong and his forces departed from the Discipline

Department Peak. Only when they were gone did he turn to the leader, his expression tightening.

"Leader... are you certain about this?" he asked quietly. "You're wagering your position on this outcome. We

both know Elder Tong has always coveted your seat but now you're risking everything... over an outer

disciple."

FindNovel.net

The leader said nothing, but his eyes darkened slightly, his thoughts unreadable.

He was placing his bet on the Sect Master's words.

Outside Thousand Herbs Peak, the moment the students spotted the approaching force from the Discipline Department, panic spread like wildfire.

"They're here!"

Several disciples immediately rushed off, hurrying to report to Alex.

"Don't worry," Alex said calmly when they reached him. "Prepare exactly as I taught you last night."

A faint smile curved on his lips.

"Nothing will go wrong. This time... they'll be the ones leaving naked."

"Yes, Big Brother!" they responded in unison, their earlier fear replaced with determination as they quickly moved to take their assigned positions. Within minutes, everything was in place.

Elder Tong arrived at the front of Alex's garden, his five hundred disciples fanning out behind him like a tide ready to swallow everything in its path.

"Jun Jiu!" Elder Tong's voice thundered across the area. "You dare oppose the Discipline Department?" "Come out and kneel to receive your punishment!"

His eyes gleamed with hostility as he raised his hand slightly.

"If you don't come out within three counts, I will burn this entire herb garden to the ground and drag every disciple from Thousand Herbs Peak with me!"

A single figure stepped forward.

Alex.

He stood alone, facing the overwhelming force before him as if it meant nothing.

"If I don't send all of you out of here naked and crawling," he said evenly, "then my name is not Jun Jiu."

Elder Tong's face twisted with fury.

"Attack him!" he roared.

But Alex only smiled.

Then he snapped his fingers.

In an instant, a thick mist surged from the ground, rolling out in all directions—silent, suffocating, and absolute—until it swallowed the entire area whole.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 610[1,555 words]

Elder Tong swept his gaze across the surroundings, and for the first time, a flicker of shock crossed his face. The air was thick-unnaturally so. Mist coiled and twisted around them like something alive, swallowing the land in silence.

"Everyone... this is an illusion formation."

His voice cut through the haze with certainty. He had seen too many traps like this to be deceived for long. Still, the scale of it... was impressive.

"I'll lead the way. All of you follow me!"

His shout rang out as his inner force surged. Power gathered within him, dense and violent, before erupting outward in a single, crushing strike. The force tore through the mist like a blade, scattering it in all directions.

In an instant, the illusion shattered.

Blue sky returned.

Clarity returned.

And there-standing at the front was Jun Jiu.

Elder Tong's eyes sharpened. "The illusion is gone. Attack!"

The command exploded into motion.

Hundreds surged forward at once, their killing intent flooding the air as they charged straight toward Jun Jiu and the Thousand Herbs disciples.

"Capture every Thousand Herbs disciple," Elder Tong ordered coldly. "Burn their gardens."

His lips curled into something merciless.

"And anyone who dares resist... cut off their arms. Destroy their cultivation. How dare they defy the Discipline Department."

"Yes, Elder!"

Over five hundred disciples answered in unison, their voices thunderous as they rushed forward like a tidal wave.

"The formation is destroyed!" Lu Piao shouted, panic breaking through his voice. "Everyone-run!"

"We failed to stop them-run!" others echoed, fear spreading like wildfire.

But there was no escape.

The invading disciples showed no mercy.

Those who dropped to their knees had their arms severed without hesitation.

Those who refused... were cut down where they stood.

Blood soaked into the earth.

Cries of pain filled the once-peaceful grounds.

Still-some resisted.

Some refused to kneel.

"You're nothing but gardeners from Thousand Herbs Peak," one attacker sneered, sword gleaming with fresh blood. "While you were tending plants, we were training our blades. And you dare to fight us?"

Elder Tong himself moved into the battlefield, his figure like a storm unleashed. He struck the nearest disciples without pause, his attacks ruthless and overwhelming.

But then-

Several senior disciples of Thousand Herbs rushed forward, intercepting him.

Their presence shifted the air.

Elder Tong's expression flickered-just slightly.

"So... you're at the early stage of Foundation Establishment?" he said, a hint of surprise slipping through.

He hadn't expected resistance at this level.

But the shock lasted only a moment.

A cold smile spread across his face.

"Unfortunately..... I've already reached the greater stage of Foundation Establishment."

His aura exploded.

"To me you are nothing."

He lunged forward.

And the killing began.

Bones shattered beneath his strikes.

Arms were severed mid-motion.

His attacks were relentless-brutal-unstoppable.

Elder Tong didn't slow down. He didn't hesitate. He didn't show mercy.

And yet...

The disciples of Thousand Herbs refused to yield.

Even as they bled.

Even as their bodies broke.

They fought.

With everything they had.

The battle raged on-for three long hours.

By the end...

The ground was covered in bodies.

Every Thousand Herbs disciple lay scattered across the earth, soaked in blood,

broken, unable to move.

Around them, the gardens burned.

Flames roared high into the sky, devouring everything-years of care, of cultivation,
of quiet life-reduced to ash.

Elder Tong stood amidst the destruction.

And he laughed.

"When I gave you a chance to surrender... you refused."

His voice dripped with cruel satisfaction as he looked over the fallen.

"Now look at you."

He stepped forward slowly, his shadow stretching over the broken bodies.

"Bones shattered. Arms severed."

He tilted his head slightly, smiling.

"Have you finally learned... what fear feels like?"

Elder Tong stood alone against hundreds of disciples—and even after exhausting most of his strength, he still won.

He had fought like a madman.

Every strike had been brutal. Every movement driven by instinct and fury. His breath had grown heavy, his body weighed down by fatigue, yet he had not stopped. Not
once.

Victory... had seemed absolute.

But then-

Something shifted.

The Thousand Herbs disciples he had cut down... the bodies scattered across the
ground... the fire that had consumed the gardens-

All of it vanished.

In an instant.

Like a mirage dissolving under sunlight.

Like it had never existed at all.

Elder Tong froze.

"What...?"

The battlefield was gone.

The blood was gone.

The flames were gone.

And what stood before him instead—

Was Alex's courtyard.

Clean. Intact. Untouched.

The Thousand Herbs disciples stood all around him, staring—wide-eyed, shocked...

but unharmed. Not a single wound on their bodies. Not a trace of blood.

All of them... perfectly fine.

Elder Tong's heart dropped.

At the center, Alex stood calmly, facing him.

And for the first time-Elder Tong felt something unfamiliar.

Confusion.

No... something worse.

Doubt.

"That's impossible..." Elder Tong muttered, his voice trembling despite himself. "I clearly... I defeated them. I injured them—"

His mind raced.

If they were all unharmed...

Then who—

Who had he been fighting?

A chill crawled up his spine.

Slowly, he turned his head.

And what he saw made his blood run cold.

Behind him his own disciples.

Five hundred of them.

And the five leaders he had brought with him.

All of them lay sprawled across the ground-groaning, broken, covered in blood.

Some clutched shattered limbs. Others struggled to breathe. Their bodies were twisted in pain.

They looked like... the enemy he thought he had just defeated.

Elder Tong staggered back a step.

"No... no..."

The truth hit him all at once.

He hadn't been fighting the Thousand Herbs disciples.

He had been fighting his own people.

They had been destroying each other.

His vision blurred.

Shock gave way to horror.

"Did I...?" His lips trembled. "Did I really... destroy my own disciples?"

A quiet step echoed forward.

Alex.

He moved calmly, stopping just a few paces away, his gaze steady and unreadable.

"All of you were trapped inside my double illusion formation," Alex said evenly.

"What you saw... what you believed... was never real."

His eyes flicked briefly toward the fallen.

"You attacked your own disciples. Injured them. Crippled them. Some of them may die... if they aren't treated soon."

A pause.

"And as for their cultivation..." his voice lowered slightly, almost cold, "you've already destroyed parts of it."

"No!" Elder Tong roared, shaking his head violently. "This is your illusion! You're the one who caused all of this!"

His voice cracked with desperation.

Alex shook his head. "What you

intended to do to the Thousand Herbs disciples... you ended up doing to your own people. If you had

let us@o, none of this would have

ham But you chose to harm

us so this... this is on you.

His gaze hardened.

"This is karma. You destroyed your own disciples."

Around them, the five hundred disciples stared in stunned silence.

Their minds reeled.

They had believed they were fighting Jun Jiu.

But the truth-

They had been fighting their own elder.

And some of them... had paid a devastating price.

Several clutched their cores, their faces pale with fear.

Their cultivation had regressed.

Especially the five leaders.

Their foundations-ruined.

Destroyed by Elder Tong himself.

"Don't resent me," Alex said quietly.

"Again, You're only reaping what you sowed."

The words fell like a verdict.

Elder Tong's face twisted-rage, guilt, disbelief all colliding at once.

"I'll kill you!" he roared, his voice breaking into madness.

With a surge of what strength he had left, he lunged forward-

Straight at Alex.

Elder Tong barely managed two steps toward Alex before his body betrayed him.

His movements slowed abruptly-like his strength had been drained in an instant.

Then-

He coughed.

A mouthful of blood spilled from his lips.

His eyes widened in shock.

"What..... what did you do to me?" Elder Tong gasped, his voice trembling.

Alex didn't answer immediately.

He stepped forward calmly... and slapped him.

The sound cracked sharply across the courtyard.

"How dare you act arrogant in front

of me?" Alex said. "You've already exhausted most of your inner force, and yet you still dared to step closer."

FindNovel.net

He leaned in slightly, his gaze piercing.

"Did you not notice? The air around me is filled with poison."

Elder Tong's pupils shrank.

"You... you poisoned me?" he choked, panic creeping into his voice.

"No." Alex shook his head.

"I stood still. You rushed toward me." A faint, cruel edge touched his lips. "You poisoned yourself."

Elder Tong's breathing grew uneven.

"And since you're already affected..." Alex continued, almost casually, "I might as well tell you."

"That poison is called Cultivation Destroying Poison."

,

The words landed like a death sentence.

"The more you breathe... the faster it eats away at your cultivation."

"By the time this is over—you'll be crippled."

Elder Tong froze.

Then—

He felt it.

Deep within his body... his cultivation core trembled.

Cracks began to spread.

Energy—his power, his very foundation—started leaking uncontrollably.

His face turned pale.

This... wasn't just injury.

This was ruin.

What he had thought would be an easy victory... had become a fatal mistake.

Not only had he failed-

He was about to lose everything.

His position.

His power.

His future.

And worst of all—

His protection.

He had made enemies within the Wudang Sect.

Many of them.

If they discovered he had lost his cultivation...

They wouldn't hesitate.

They would crush him.

Or kill him.

"Jun Jiu!" Elder Tong shouted, desperation breaking through his voice. "I only intended to discipline

you! How dare you treat me like this and these disciples, don't you remember we are all from the Wudang Sect?!"

FindNovel.net

"Really?" Alex replied, almost amused.

"Then you should ask yourself something."

He gestured lightly toward the fallen.

"You attacked them with your own hands. You believed they were Thousand Herbs disciples... and you didn't hesitate."

"So everything that happened here... is because of you."

Elder Tong's face flushed red with fury and humiliation.

Alex continued, his tone cutting deeper.

"This all started when you accused me of cutting off the arms of Sword Peak disciples."

"Without even knowing who started cutting ours first."

His gaze hardened.

"And you held onto that mistake... until now."

"If you want to blame someone..."

"Blame yourself for choosing to stand with injustice."

Elder Tong's body trembled.

Another wave of blood surged up-

He vomited again, staggering backward.

His condition was worsening rapidly.

He had already fought hundreds of disciples.

His strength was nearly gone.

And now-

The poison was finishing what the battle had started.

He was at his limit.

At the edge.

At collapse.

Elder Tong's knees weakened.

His pride-his arrogance-everything shattered in that moment.

"Please....." he said, his voice hoarse, almost unrecognizable. "Help me..."

He looked at Alex-not as an enemy.

But as a lifeline.

"I am your elder..."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 611[2,868 words]

"You call yourself my elder?" Alex laughed.

"Don't make me laugh. You came here with killing intent. You wanted to burn this entire garden, cut off our arms, and even kill us if we refused to obey."

"What kind of elder would do that? All I see is an enemy," Alex said, shaking his head. "And I have no mercy for my enemies."

"Please," Elder Tong begged. "We are all disciples of the Wudang Sect. There is no need to be so heavy-handed. Please give me the antidote."

He could already feel his cultivation beginning to dissipate, and if this continued any longer, he would soon reach the point of no return.

He would lose his chance to remain a cultivator forever.

Alex shook his head. "If I showed mercy to every enemy I had, I would have died long ago."

"This world has karma. You chose your actions. Then accept the consequences. You chose to make me your enemy. Then I am your worst nightmare."

Alex raised his hand. "Brothers! These people came here intending to cut off our arms and punish us for something we didn't even do."

"And if we refused to comply, they were going to kill us. Do you really think we should show mercy to people like them?"

The disciples fell silent.

Because they all knew the truth.

They were also part of the Wudang Sect.

Alex swept his gaze across all of them. "Remember this well. If someone treats you with kindness, repay them with twice the kindness, because they carry gratitude in their hearts and speak the same language as your soul."

"But if someone treats you with cruelty and harshness, then answer them in the same language they chose."

"Show weakness to hyenas, and they won't see mercy-they'll see an opening. And they'll tear you apart for it."

His gaze hardened, voice low and steady.

"Kindness is meant for human, for those who understand it... not for creatures like them."

"That way, you will never be the one being exploited."

Alex stepped forward. "They came here to hurt us. If we had been weaker, we would have been the ones suffering, and they would have laughed while doing it. But now that they see we are stronger, suddenly they ask us for kindness?"

"To hell with that attitude. If they strike with a heavy hand, then they could only expect a heavy hand in return." Alex raised his hand.

"They came here to hurt you... and we weren't supposed to fight back at all?" Alex's voice turned cold. "Then the time is now."

He stepped forward, eyes sharp and merciless.

"Go. Take down every single one of them who came with the intent to harm you. Strip them of everything they have. Force them to sign a slave contract for five years." His tone dropped even lower. "And if they refuse... kill them, just like they intended to kill us."

The entire Discipline Department froze in shock.

Even Elder Tong's face went pale.

"You... you can't do this to us!"

Alex moved without hesitation.

Slap!

The sound echoed sharply as his hand struck Elder Tong across the face, sending him staggering.

"So you're saying I can't kill you," Alex said, his voice laced with icy contempt, "but you can kill me?" He tilted his head slightly. "What kind of twisted logic is that?" "What kind of justice is that?"

"We are the Discipline Department!" Elder Tong shouted, his voice trembling with both anger and fear.

Behind him, the other disciples quickly echoed in agreement.

Alex's gaze swept across them, slow and unforgiving.

"You hide behind titles. You claim your duty is to uphold justice." His lips curled slightly. "But all I see... is people abusing it."

He took a step closer.

"And what I'm doing right now?" His voice hardened. "This is real justice. An eye for an eye. An arm for an arm."

Alex raised his hand.

"Do it."

The command fell like a hammer.

The Thousand Herbs Peak disciples hesitated.

They were gardeners. Apothecaries. People who nurtured life, not took it. They weren't swordsmen. They weren't killers. Most of them had never even raised a hand against another person.

This... wasn't their world.

"Brother!" Lu Piao's voice broke the silence as he stepped forward. "Big Brother is right!"

He clenched his fists, his voice rising with emotion.

"If it weren't for him, we might already be locked in a prison cell... or worse!" His eyes burned as he looked at the others. "Right now, we're the ones in control. And you want to show mercy to people who came here to kill us?"

He shook his head.

"We're not doing anything wrong. We're just giving back what they tried to give us." "...He's right."

One voice after another began to rise.

"We're not people who can be beaten without fighting back."

"Just because they're from the Discipline Department doesn't mean we have to bow."

"Exactly."

A disciple stepped forward, his expression hardening. "Today... I'll take a slave for five years."

Something shifted.

The hesitation broke.

The Thousand Herbs Peak disciples surged forward.

They rushed toward the members of the Discipline Department, their fear replaced by anger and a newfound resolve.

Some targeted those who looked wealthy-dragging them down, stripping away their robes, taking everything of value.

One by one, others followed.

At first, it was only a few.

Then dozens.

Then hundreds.

Within moments, chaos spread across the entire area as over a hundred, then several hundred Discipline Department disciples-most of them injured were forced to their knees, their possessions taken, their dignity stripped away.

Bodies trembled. Faces burned with humiliation.

A disciple stood over one of them, his voice cold but steady.

"Swear it."

He looked down at the man beneath him.

"Swear on your Dao Heart that you will serve me for five years. Work in the gardens.

Do whatever I command."

His eyes narrowed.

"And I won't kill you."

The entire Discipline Department was drowning in humiliation.

They had always stood above the others-the so-called elite, the enforcers of order. Never, not even in their worst imagination, had they thought they would be reduced to this... kneeling, stripped, and powerless.

"How dare you!"

A furious roar exploded through the air, so loud it made every disciple's ears ring.

All heads snapped upward.

Two figures descended from the sky.

"Leader!" the Discipline Department disciples shouted in unison, their voices filled with desperation. "Please, help us!"

The leader of the Discipline Department landed heavily, his presence pressing down like a mountain. His eyes locked onto Alex, cold and filled with authority.

"You've gone too far," he said, his tone sharp with warning. "Greed and humiliation have their limits. Release them. Now."

Alex burst into laughter.

It wasn't amused. It was mocking.

"So you're their leader?" he said, shaking his head. "Then I guess you're just another dog among dogs."

His gaze hardened.

"They came here to kill us. To cripple us. To destroy everything we have." His voice grew colder with each word. "And now you show up... not to judge them, but to tell us to forgive?"

He took a step forward.

"Tell me something," Alex said, his eyes burning. "Are you here to uphold justice... bury it? Did you turn a blind eye to what they did to us-yet expect us to do the same when they tried to kill us?"

His voice sharpened, cutting through the air.

"Is that the justice you serve?"

The leader's expression darkened.

He knew Elder Tong had crossed the line.

But what Alex was doing now... that wasn't justice either.

"Let them go," the leader said again, his voice firm. "I will forget everything that happens here."

"You can forget anything you want," Alex said, shaking his head without hesitation.

"But I remember every harm done to me."

His voice turned cold, unwavering.

"I won't let them go. Not without paying for what they've done."

A suffocating pressure suddenly flooded the area.

The leader released his Core Formation aura.

It crashed down like an invisible storm, forcing many disciples to tremble. Some collapsed to their knees, unable to withstand the overwhelming force.

Even Alex's body shook under the pressure.

But he smiled.

"You can try," Alex said calmly. "But the moment you step forward....."

His eyes locked onto the leader's.

"...we become enemies."

His voice dropped, sharp as a blade.

"And from that moment on, you'll never again be someone I can respect as the leader of the Wudang Sect's Discipline Department."

The leader's pupils shrank.

How could this outer disciple-someone only at the Great Qi Formation stage-dare to threaten him?

His aura surged even stronger.

More disciples dropped to their knees, gasping under the crushing weight.

"You dare speak to me like that?" the leader said, his voice turning dangerous.

"You'll regret those words when you fall into my hands."

Alex didn't flinch.

Instead, his smile deepened-colder, darker.

"You should be the one thinking about what happens... if you fall into mine," he replied. "Because when that happens..."

His gaze turned merciless.

"It won't be pretty."

A brief pause.

"Maybe I'll strip you too," Alex added lightly. "Make you kneel. Make you serve me as my slave."

The words landed like a slap.

The leader froze for a fraction of a second-

Then something inside him snapped.

He had never-never-been insulted like this in his entire life.

"You're courting death!"

With a furious roar, the leader of the Discipline Department surged forward, his killing intent exploding into the air.

"You call yourself my elder?" Alex laughed.

"Don't make me laugh. You came here with killing intent. You wanted to burn this entire garden, cut off our arms, and even kill us if we refused to obey."

"What kind of elder would do that? All I see is an enemy," Alex said, shaking his head. "And I have no mercy for my enemies."

"Please," Elder Tong begged. "We are all disciples of the Wudang Sect. There is no need to be so heavy-handed. Please give me the antidote."

He could already feel his cultivation beginning to dissipate, and if this continued any longer, he would soon reach the point of no return.

He would lose his chance to remain a cultivator forever.

Alex shook his head. "If I showed mercy to every enemy I had, I would have died

long ago."

"This world has karma. You chose your actions. Then accept the consequences. You chose to make me your enemy. Then I am your worst nightmare."

Alex raised his hand. "Brothers! These people came here intending to cut off our arms and punish us for something we didn't even do."

"And if we refused to comply, they were going to kill us. Do you really think we should show mercy to people like them?"

The disciples fell silent.

Because they all knew the truth.

They were also part of the Wudang Sect.

Alex swept his gaze across all of them. "Remember this well. If someone treats you

with kindness, repay them with twice the kindness, because they carry gratitude in their hearts and speak the same language as your soul."

"But if someone treats you with cruelty and harshness, then answer them in the same language they chose."

"Show weakness to hyenas, and they won't see mercy-they'll see an opening. And they'll tear you apart for it."

His gaze hardened, voice low and steady.

"Kindness is meant for human, for those who understand it... not for creatures like them."

"That way, you will never be the one being exploited."

Alex stepped forward. "They came here to hurt us. If we had been weaker, we would have been the ones suffering, and they would have aughed while doing it. But now that they see we are stronger, suddenly they ask us for kindness?"

"To hell with that attitude. If they strike with a heavy hand, then they could only expect a heavy hand in return." Alex raised his hand.

"They came here to hurt you... and we weren't supposed to fight back at all?" Alex's

voice turned cold. "Then the time is now."

He stepped forward, eyes sharp and merciless.

"Go. Take down every single one of

them who came with the intent to harm you Strip them of everything

they have. Force them to sign a slave contract for five years His tone dropped even lower And they refuse... kill them, just like they

intended to kill us."

The entire Discipline Department froze in shock.

Even Elder Tong's face went pale.

"You... you can't do this to us!"

Alex moved without hesitation.

Slap!

The sound echoed sharply as his hand struck Elder Tong across the face, sending

him

staggering.

"So you're saying I can't kill you," Alex said, his voice laced with icy contempt, "but

you can kill me?" He tilted his head slightly. "What kind of twisted logic is that?" "What kind of justice is that?"

"We are the Discipline Department!" Elder Tong shouted, his voice trembling with

both anger and fear.

Behind him, the other disciples quickly echoed in agreement.

Alex's gaze swept across them, slow and unforgiving.

"You hide behind titles. You claim your duty is to uphold justice." His lips curled

slightly. "But all I see... is people abusing it."

He took a step closer.

"And what I'm doing right now?" His voice hardened. "This is real justice. An eye

for an eye. An arm for an arm."

Alex raised his hand.

"Do it."

The command fell like a hammer.

The Thousand Herbs Peak disciples hesitated.

They were gardeners. Apothecaries. People who nurtured life, not took it. They weren't swordsmen. They weren't killers. Most of them had never even raised a hand against another person.

This... wasn't their world.

"Brother!" Lu Piao's voice broke the silence as he stepped forward. "Big Brother is right!"

He clenched his fists, his voice rising with emotion.

"If it weren't for him, we might already be locked in a prison cell... or worse!" His eyes burned as he

looked at the others. "Right now set?

we're the ones in control.

And you

want to show mercy to people who

came here to kill us?"

He shook his head.

"We're not doing anything wrong. We're just giving back what they tried to give us."

"...He's right."

One voice after another began to rise.

"We're not people who can be beaten without fighting back."

"Just because they're from the Discipline Department doesn't mean we have to

bow."

"Exactly."

A disciple stepped forward, his expression hardening. "Today... I'll take a slave for five years."

Something shifted.

The hesitation broke.

The Thousand Herbs Peak disciples surged forward.

They rushed toward the members of the Discipline Department, their fear replaced by anger and a newfound resolve.

Some targeted those who looked wealthy—dragging them down, stripping away their robes, taking everything of value.

One by one, others followed.

At first, it was only a few.

Then dozens.

Then hundreds.

Within moments, chaos spread across the entire area as over a hundred, then several hundred Discipline Department disciples—most of them injured were

forced to their knees, their possessions taken, their dignity stripped away.

Bodies trembled. Faces burned with humiliation.

A disciple stood over one of them, his voice cold but steady.

"Swear it."

He looked down at the man beneath him.

"Swear on your Dao Heart that you will serve me for five years. Work in the gardens.

Do whatever I command."

His eyes narrowed.

"And I won't kill you."

The entire Discipline Department was drowning in humiliation.

They had always stood above the others the so-called elite, the enforcers of order.

Never, not even in their worst imagination, had they thought they would be reduced to this... kneeling, stripped, and powerless.

"How dare you!"

A furious roar exploded through the air, so loud it made every disciple's ears ring.

All heads snapped upward.

Two figures descended from the sky. "Leader!" the Discipline Department disciples shouted in unison, their voices filled

with desperation. "Please, help us!"

The leader of the Discipline Department landed heavily, his presence pressing down like a mountain. His eyes locked onto Alex, cold and filled with authority.

"You've gone too far," he said, his tone sharp with warning. "Greed and humiliation have their limits. Release them. Now."

Alex burst into laughter.

It wasn't amused. It was mocking.

"So you're their leader?" he said, shaking his head. "Then I guess you're just another dog among dogs."

His gaze hardened.

"They came here to kill us. To cripple us. To destroy everything we have." His voice grew colder with each word. "And now you show up... not to judge them, but to tell us to forgive?"

He took a step forward.

"Tell me something," Alex said, his eyes burning. "Are you here to uphold justice... or bury it? Did you turn a blind eye to what they did to us—yet expect us to do the same when they tried to kill us?"

His voice sharpened, cutting through the air.

"Is that the justice you serve?"

The leader's expression darkened.

He knew Elder Tong had crossed the line.

But what Alex was doing now... that wasn't justice either.

"Let them go," the leader said again, his voice firm. "I will forget everything that happens here."

"You can forget anything you want," Alex said, shaking his head without hesitation.

"But I remember every harm done to me."

His voice turned cold, unwavering.

"I won't let them go. Not without paying for what they've done."

A suffocating pressure suddenly flooded the area.

The leader released his Core Formation aura.

It crashed down like an invisible storm, forcing many disciples to tremble. Some collapsed to their knees, unable to withstand the overwhelming force.

Even Alex's body shook under the pressure.

But he smiled.

"You can try," Alex said calmly. "But the moment you step forward..."

His eyes locked onto the leader's.

"...we become enemies."

His voice dropped, sharp as a blade.

"And from that moment on, you'll never again be someone I can respect as the leader of the Wudang Sect's Discipline Department."

The leader's pupils shrank.

How could this outer disciple—someone only at the Great Qi Formation stage-dare to threaten him?

His aura surged even stronger.

More disciples dropped to their knees, gasping under the crushing weight.

"You dare speak to me like that?" the leader said, his voice turning dangerous.

"You'll regret those words when you fall into my hands."

Alex didn't flinch.

Instead, his smile deepened-colder, darker.

"You should be the one thinking about what happens... if you fall into mine," he replied. "Because when that happens..."

His gaze turned merciless.

"It won't be pretty."

A brief pause.

"Maybe I'll strip you too," Alex added lightly. "Make you kneel. Make you serve me as my slave."

The words landed like a slap.

The leader froze for a fraction of a second-

Then something inside him snapped.

He had never-never-been insulted like this in his entire life.

"You're courting death!"

With a furious roar, the leader of the Discipline Department surged forward, his killing intent exploding into the air.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 612[1,306 words]

Without warning, Alex drew his sword and pressed the blade against Elder Tong's neck.

At the same time, Lu Piao and the Thousand Herbs disciples-still crushed under the overwhelming pressure from the Discipline Department's leader-made their choice.

Despite the force bearing down on them, they drew their swords.

Steel flashed.

In a single motion, they placed their blades against the throats of all five hundred Discipline disciples.

The leader's face went pale. His charge toward Alex halted instantly.

"What... what are you doing?" he demanded, his voice unsteady.

Alex met his gaze, eyes cold and unwavering.

"Take one more step," he said quietly, "and we'll send every one of them to hell."

"You dare?!" the leader shouted, stunned.

A sharp, humorless laugh escaped Alex. "Why wouldn't I?"

His voice turned lethal.

"Cut."

The command fell like a blade.

At once, the Thousand Herbs disciples obeyed. A thin line of red appeared across each captive's throat-just enough to draw blood, just enough to prove there would be no hesitation.

Every eye turned toward the leader.

Not one of them cared about their own lives anymore.

But they would make sure those five hundred died first.

More blades pressed tighter. More blood followed-thin, controlled, deliberate.

"Wait!" the leader shouted, panic breaking through his composure. "You don't have to do this! We are all disciples of the Wudang Sect. There's no need for killing!" Alex's expression twisted with fury.

"Don't you dare say 'Wudang Sect' to me," he spat. "Not after you stood by and let this elder and his five hundred dogs come here to slaughter us."

The leader flinched. "I know what Elder Tong did was wrong," he said, forcing the words out, "but threatening five hundred lives-this isn't right either!"

Alex laughed-loud, bitter, and merciless.

"So you think your negligence is right?" he shot back. "You stood there while Elder Tong tried to kill us. And now you rush in, pretending to fix your mistake by attacking me? Saving him? Hurting us?"

"You don't serve justice. You serve your own pathetic excuses."

The leader's lips parted, but no words came.

Alex stepped forward slightly, the blade at Elder Tong's throat pressing just enough to draw a deeper line of blood.

"How did someone like you become a leader?" he demanded. "All you know how to do is protect yourself."

His eyes burned.

"And hear me clearly if these five hundred die, it will be because of you."

Silence fell like a hammer.

"You, as their leader, let them come here," Alex continued, his voice low and deadly. "You allowed this to happen. Don't you dare pretend you're innocent."

His grip tightened on the sword.

"You're the leader. You should have stopped them the moment they were wrong."

The leader froze.

The words struck harder than any weapon.

For the first time... he had no answer.

At the mountain peak, Li Qingxue stood before the Sect Master and bowed slightly.

"Master... don't you think it's time for us to step in and stop them?"

The Sect Master didn't even hesitate.

"No," he said calmly. "It's not our time to interfere."

Li Qingxue's brows tightened. "But... Jun Jiu is about to kill our five hundred disciples."

The Sect Master suddenly laughed loud and unconcerned.

"You really don't understand Jun Jiu, do you?" he said. "He won't harm those disciples."

Li Qingxue frowned deeper, confusion flickering in her eyes.

"He's not killing them," the Sect Master continued, his tone almost amused. "He's teaching that fool, Cao Xi, a lesson."

A brief silence followed.

"If you're going to worry about anyone," the Sect Master added, "then worry about Cao Xi."

Li Qingxue hesitated. "The leader of the Discipline Department... he's in the Core Formation realm. He's practically unbeatable..."

The Sect Master shook his head slightly.

"Remember this," he said. "A higher cultivation level doesn't guarantee victory."

Back at Alex's residence, the tension had only grown heavier.

Alex's voice cut through the silence.

"You see all of this?" he said coldly. "This happened because of you."

Cao Xi's expression stiffened.

"And let me tell you what happens next," Alex continued. "We kill these five hundred disciples!"

His tone turned sharper, more ruthless.

"Once they're dead, the Wudang Sect loses five hundred disciples. And in your anger, you can throw the Thousand Herbs disciples-the ones who did the killing- into prison... or sentence all of us to death."

Cao Xi's face drained of color.

He had never considered that outcome.

"And that's not even the end of it," Alex went on, his eyes locked onto him. "After losing that many disciples, do you really think you can wash your hands clean?"

His voice lowered, each word deliberate.

"People will start asking questions. They'll trace everything back... to Elder Tong. And then to you—the leader who failed to uphold justice."

Cao Xi's breathing grew heavier.

"After that Alex said, a faint,

mocking smile forming, "the disciples of the Wudang Sect would lose faith in the Discipline Department and eventually in the sect itself."

FindNovel.net

"And you?" Alex let out a cold laugh. "You'll be punished for your failure as a leader."

Silence swallowed the space between them.

"In the end," he finished, "five hundred disciples die... and the entire mess still lands right back in your hands."

Cao Xi's face had gone completely pale.

He wasn't a fool.

Everything Alex said... was true.

And that was exactly why he couldn't argue.

Not a single word.

After a long pause, he finally spoke his voice steadier, but heavier than before.

"...What do you want?"

"What do I want?" Alex let out a low, humorless laugh. "You already know."

His eyes flicked toward Elder Tong before returning to Cao Xi.

"This whole mess started with him. And now you think you can clean up his mistake by using force to make us submit?" Alex's voice turned cold and unyielding "Keep dreaming. We would rather die than kneel before injustice."

He held the silence for a beat, his gaze unwavering. "We want justice."

Cao Xi drew a breath, forcing himself to remain composed.

"If you release them," he said carefully, "I promise they will face proper discipline and punishment."

Alex shook his head immediately.

"No," he said flatly. "I don't believe in your Discipline Department."

There was no hesitation in his tone-only certainty.

"I want to they repay what they've done to us..." He paused, his gaze turning cold.

"They'll spend five years working for us."

"That's the price," Alex continued. "They came here to kill us. We spare their lives.

They repay the debt. Seems fair to me."

Cao Xi's jaw tightened.

"And if I refuse?" he asked. "You'll kill them?"

Alex looked at him for a long moment... then shook his head.

"No," he said quietly. "I never wanted to kill them."

The words landed heavier than any threat.

"You were the one ready to kill us to protect them," Alex added. "That's why we're treating you like an enemy."

Cao Xi froze, caught off guard.

"Don't pretend you don't understand," Alex went on. "When you protect those who are wrong... you become part of that wrong."

His eyes locked onto Cao Xi's.

"You're not protecting justice," he said. "You're protecting injustice."

The accusation hit like a strike to the chest.

"But don't worry," Alex continued, almost casually. "I won't kill these five hundred people. I'm not that low."

A faint, mocking edge crept into his voice.

"Unlike you."

Cao Xi's expression stiffened.

"I only said it was possible," Alex added. "That I could make it happen. And if it did..... it would all be because of you."

"Remember, you let these people run

wild. That's where this began. And now you want to force your way, through this situation?" He shook his head slightly. "That just makes you

as bad as they are."

Cao Xi felt the weight of every word.

He couldn't deny it.

Couldn't argue.

Because it was true.

Without another word, Alex lifted his hand slightly.

In the next instant, Elder Tong's body went slack-his consciousness slipping away as if cut off.

A quiet gasp rippled through the crowd.

"Let's fight," Alex said.

"I don't think I can beat you in a fight," he admitted. "But I can promise you this—if we fight..."

A suffocating killing intent poured out from him, thick and undeniable.

"I would die," Alex said softly. "And you wouldn't walk away much better."

A faint, dangerous calm settled over his expression.

"That much," he added, "I could guarantee."

And for the first time... Cao Xi truly felt it.

This wasn't a bluff.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 613[1,805 words]

Alex stared at the growing crowd that had fallen in behind them, his brow furrowed in genuine confusion.

"Why are all these people gathering with us?" he asked.

Lu Piao threw his head back and laughed, the sound bright and unrestrained. "Big Brother, your humbleness is bottomless. Let me bow to you first." He swept into a deep, theatrical bow, holding it just long enough for Alex to feel awkward.

Alex accepted the gesture with a small, resigned nod and waited.

Still grinning, Lu Piao straightened. "First," he said, voice ringing with pride, "who on this peak doesn't know you're ranked number one on the Thousand Herbs Stone Stele for medical knowledge?"

Alex gave a slight nod. That much he understood; the ranking was public.

"Second," Lu Piao continued, "you're the undisputed number-one outer disciple of Thousand Herb Peak. Everyone saw that fight."

Again Alex nodded. The memory of the bout still sat fresh in his mind, raw and public.

"Third," Lu Piao said, "for the last two years you've been quietly teaching everyone how to grow herbs properly. You shared your notes with anyone who asked, never once asking for anything in return."

"People finally realized the mysterious helper in the gardens all this time was you."

Alex blinked, startled. "How did they figure it out?"

"Your handwriting," Lu Piao answered with a shrug. "A lot of them came to me just to say thank you. They owe their best harvests to you."

Alex nodded again. He had never tried to hide it. In Estoria, knowledge was something you passed on freely; hoarding it felt small.

"Fourth," Lu Piao went on, "you showed everyone how to lay down those garden formations to draw in spiritual energy. Every disciple on the peak-outer, inner, doesn't matter has used your method. They all feel like they owe you a debt they can never repay."

Alex's expression stayed calm, but inside he did that for a reason.

Rich cities had fewer thieves because people had enough. Raise the whole peak's prosperity, and safety would follow.

It was simple math. He had done it for himself as much as for them.

"And fifth," Lu Piao added, eyes gleaming, "even the seniors and elders have started showing up at your hut. They speak to you with respect, bow when they arrive, smile when they leave, and half the time they press gifts into your hands just to stay in your good graces."

Alex frowned, surprised. He remembered the steady trickle of visitors after his answers in the library-quiet questions, exchanged insights, grateful expressions.

He hadn't realized how far word had spread, or how much those small exchanges had meant to them.

Every time someone left smiling, every gift left on his doorstep, it had felt ordinary to him. Just people helping people.

He looked out at the crowd again, the weight of their attention settling over him like an unfamiliar cloak.

Gratitude, respect, even a kind of quiet awe-he could see it in every face now.

And for the first time, he wondered if maybe, in this world, sharing what he knew had changed more than just a few herb beds. It had changed how they saw him.

"Sixth," Lu Piao continued, his voice bright with excitement, "even the Peak Leader himself—"

"Let's stop there," Alex cut in suddenly. There was no need to say it out loud. He didn't want the words hanging in the air about the Peak Leader coming to learn from him.

Lu Piao paused, then gave a knowing nod. "Alright." He understood. Alex's humbleness ran deep and everyone on the peak knew it; that quiet modesty only made more people want to draw close and call him friend.

Alex glanced back at the growing sea of faces. "I can see it's not just our Thousand Herb Peak anymore. Disciples from the other peaks are joining us too."

Lu Piao nodded. "Your stand against Elder Tong has been noticed by a lot of people -especially those who've been pushed around or hurt by him and his group. Some are here because they want to back you up if things turn ugly. Others..."

He shrugged with a small grin. "They've got time to burn and just want to watch the show."

And so the crowd kept swelling. By the time they reached Sword Peak, more than five thousand people streamed behind them, flowing into the peak's largest training ground like a slow-moving river.

Kuang Liang and the roughly one hundred Sword Peak disciples with him already stood waiting in the center of the training ground.

Every face among them was frozen in shock and disbelief. The arrogance they had worn like armor had vanished completely, replaced by pale, wide-eyed tension.

They had come planning to taunt Jun Jiu with their superior numbers and crush him under the weight of a hundred voices. Instead, the tables had turned in the cruelest way possible. Now they were the ones being mocked in front of thousands.

They were afraid now. One wrong word, they knew, and the thousands of hostile eyes locked onto them would turn into a storm of jeers and fists they could never escape.

Moments later Elder Guo arrived, leading nearly six thousand disciples.

The elder stepped forward to take charge of the matter. He brought Lu Piao and Alex before Kuang Liang and the seven Sword Peak disciples whose arms had been severed.

"I want to hear the origin of this conflict," Elder Guo said, his voice calm and authoritative.

Kuang Liang stepped forward. "The problem was caused by this man, Jun Jiu. He

cut off the arms of seven of our people. He is the one at fault."

The seven disciples nodded in firm agreement.

Elder Guo turned to Alex. "What do you have to say for yourself?"

"Me?" Alex answered evenly. "They cut off Lu Piao's arm first. When I chased them down and demanded they apologize to him, they suddenly attacked me and tried to take my arms too. I acted in self-defense. The real question is why they started by cutting off Lu Piao's arm in the first place."

One of the seven disciples spoke up, voice sharp. "He had a mutually agreed fight with Lu Piao. He lost, so I took his arm. That's not a crime-that's the justice of the duel. People get hurt in fights. If you don't want to risk injury, you shouldn't bring a

sword onto the stage."

"I agree," Alex said, raising his voice deliberately so the thousands gathered could hear every word.

"I agree," Alex said, raising his voice deliberately so the thousands gathered could hear every word.

"Just like when cut off the arms of these seven. We never had a proper, justified fight-you came at me seven against one. But since I turned out to be stronger than a seven of you combined, you run off and report it like a bunch of snitching losers. What a coward."

The moment the words left his mouth, the entire training ground erupted in loud, rolling laughter.

The crowd's mood turned ugly in an instant.

"You Sword Peak disciples really are something," one spectator shouted. "You seven fight one person, lose, then run straight to the Discipline Department? Pathetic."

"Cowards!"

"Sword Peak's gone soft-nothing but mama's boys now."

Jeers and mocking laughter rolled across the training ground like a wave. The insults came fast, sharp, and unrelenting.

Kuang Liang's face flushed deep crimson. "Silence!" he roared. "This bastard Jun Jiu attacked seven of our disciples from behind while they weren't even ready! It was a sneak attack-pure cowardice and a crime!"

A ripple of shock moved through the thousands gathered.

"Jun Jiu actually used a sneak attack?"

"No wonder he could take on seven at once..."

The seven Sword Peak disciples quickly piled on. "Of course it was a sneak attack!"

one of them yelled. "Our disciples have never lost a proper one-on-one fight!"

"Yeah-total coward!"

Alex suddenly threw his head back and laughed, the sound bold and genuine, cutting through the noise like a blade.

He looked straight at Kuang Liang and the Sword Peak group, his voice carrying clearly across the entire field.

"Great," he said. "So you're claiming I launched a sneak attack? Fine. Let's settle this. Send your people. Not seven. Not seventeen. I'll let seventy of you come at me

at once-alone. Then we'll see exactly who the real cowards are."

His challenge hit like a thunderclap. The whole training ground fell into stunned silence.

Kuang Liang's eyes flashed with raw fury. He wanted nothing more than to accept and crush the arrogant outsider right there. But just as he opened his mouth, a cold voice transmission whispered urgently in his ear from someone far away. Kuang Liang's jaw tightened. He forced a contemptuous sneer.

"Sorry," he said loudly. "We are Sword Peak. Everyone knows what kind of coward you are—poison, dirty tricks, black-handed sneak attacks. We don't fight filth like you."

Lu Piao's face darkened with anger. "If you're scared and don't have the ability, just admit it. Why drag the other side down by calling them cowards?"

"Me? A coward?" Kuang Liang laughed, loud and mocking. He jabbed a finger toward the towering Sword Knowledge Stone Stele. "Take a good look at that ranking. I'm number twenty-five. How dare you call someone like me a coward? It's you who can't face the truth."

"You bastard," Lu Piao spat. "In a real fight, only the winner matters."

"That's exactly what a coward would say," Kuang Liang shot back. "Anything besides pure swordplay is the way of the weak and the dishonest."

Kuang liang's words ignited the crowd.

Disciples from the other peaks those who trained in fist techniques, spear arts, and every other weapon-erupted in furious protest, shouting straight at the Sword Peak group. Voices rose in a raw wave of outrage, thick with contempt.

In seconds the training ground descended into chaos-both sides yelling, insults flying, the noise swelling into a deafening roar.

No matter how loudly Elder Guo tried to restore order, his voice was swallowed completely.

Through the uproar Alex stood calm, a faint, almost amused smile on his lips.

His gaze drifted to the massive Sword Knowledge Stone Stele at the edge of the field, like a man who had stumbled onto an entertaining game.

Without a word he turned and walked toward it. He took out his disciple medallion and pressed it against the stone. It accepted him at once.

Alex smiled softly to himself. Let's test this, he thought. And let Gaia collect every bit of its knowledge.

The moment the thought formed, a powerful surge of energy erupted around him. A

glowing cube of light formed, sealing him inside as the Sword Knowledge test began. "Wait," one disciple suddenly shouted, his voice slicing through the chaos, "Jun Jiu

is taking the Sword Knowledge test right now!"

The words swept through the massive crowd like wildfire. In seconds the furious shouting died away as thousands of disciples turned as one toward the glowing cube of light that now surrounded Alex, their faces slack with stunned disbelief. "A disciple from Thousand Herb Peak?" one of Sword peak disciple shouted, his

voice thick with mockery. "A gardener and apothecary trying to take the Sword Knowledge test? That's hilarious-and completely impossible!"

Laughter erupted across the training ground, rolling through the thousands in waves of ridicule and disbelief.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 614[1,594 words]

Alex stepped into the swordplay trial, and the first bout hit him like a cold slap.

One moment he stood among the gathered disciples on Sword Peak; the next, the world blurred and he found himself alone in a wide stone arena under a pale sky.

A figure shimmered into existence across from him—a young disciple gripping a wooden sword. The attacker came on without hesitation, blade flashing in a simple, textbook arc from the Wudang basics.

Alex's pulse quickened. He had trained these same forms for years. He saw the opening before the strike even finished its path: the slight drop of the elbow, the overextended shoulder.

His own wooden sword snapped up, parried cleanly, and drove forward in a crisp counter. Wood cracked against wood. The disciple staggered and dissolved into light.

Ten points flashed in front of his eyes.

He allowed himself a tight smile. So that was how it worked.

Every victory added ten points. Every loss would strip them away just as fast. As long as the tally stayed positive, the trials would keep coming.

Most of the early opponents relied on the same foundational Wudang swordplay. Alex moved through them with growing confidence, each win sharpening his focus.

The forms grew more intricate the higher he climbed angles tightened, feints multiplied, footwork turned slippery and deceptive. Yet the core truth never changed.

"This is pure technique," he murmured, half to himself. "No inner force, no raw power. Just speed, timing, and understanding."

The realization settled over him like a quiet thrill.

Gaia had already begun its work in the background of his vision: analyzing every incoming strike, tracing faint red lines across the air to mark the perfect counter.

Alex didn't need to think; he only had to feel the logic behind each glowing path, let his body follow, and learn why that line existed. It turned the fight into something almost beautiful—a dance of prediction and response.

He cut down opponent after opponent. The counter in the corner of his sight rolled upward steadily.

Two digits. Then three. The arena never emptied; the next disciple simply appeared the instant the last one vanished.

Outside the testing array, on the stone terraces of Sword Peak, the crowd had fallen silent.

At first they had laughed when Alex's name appeared at the very bottom of the ranking stone—ten-thousand-and-something, a nobody from the outer sect daring the trial.

Now that same name climbed the list without pause, passing rank after rank like a spark racing up dry tinder.

Lu Piao's voice cut through the hush, bright with excitement. "Look-our big brother! He just shot from ten thousand to five thousand. That fast!"

Kuang Liang let out a short, scornful laugh. "Any outer disciple who's spent a month on Sword Peak could reach five thousand. Nothing shocking about it."

"Yeah," another disciple added quickly, folding his arms. "I'm sitting at three thousand myself. Five thousand doesn't mean a thing."

"It's nothing," one of them muttered.

"Exactly," another agreed.

They kept watching the ranking stone while they talked, voices still easy and dismissive. But even as the words left their lips, Alex's name continued its steady climb. It had already reached the three-thousand mark.

A disciple from Thousand Herbs Peak glanced over. "Is getting to the three- thousand rank really that easy?"

"Of course," a Sword Peak outer disciple answered with a short laugh. "Even I could reach it without much trouble."

Inside, though, a flicker of panic stirred in his chest. He had spent more than ten years as an outer disciple on this very peak and had never managed to climb above the four-thousand line.

The sword trial grew merciless the higher you went each new opponent sharper, faster, more unforgiving. Even the elders still tested themselves against the Sword Stone when they wanted a true challenge.

Elder Guo stood a short distance away, watching the exchange in silence. He understood now that pressing the issue would change nothing.

These Sword Peak disciples were too proud, too convinced of their own superiority, to ever admit they might be wrong.

No amount of proof would make them acknowledge a mistake.

Besides, he could not punish them without stirring up serious trouble—especially with Jun Jiu involved. The whole effort had become pointless.

He had already turned to leave for the Discipline Department Peak when a ripple of shock ran through the crowd.

“Impossible!” someone cried out. “Alex has already passed the two-thousand rank!” Kuang Liang and the rest of the Sword Peak disciples fell instantly silent.

On this peak, crossing the two-thousand line meant everything. It marked the divide between outer and inner disciples—the invisible barrier that separated the ordinary from the elite. In a single leap, Alex had now surpassed every outer disciple on Sword Peak.

“Wait,” another voice broke in, tight with disbelief. “He’s already reached the one- thousand rank. How is he moving this fast?”

“Is the Sword Peak trial supposed to be that easy?” someone else asked, confusion thick in his tone.

They had all seen how smoothly Alex advanced, as if the test itself bent to his will.

Nearby, a disciple from another peak stepped forward, medallion in hand, and pressed it firmly against the sword-testing stone. He needed to see the truth for himself.

A few minutes later, one disciple staggered out of the sword-testing array, wiping sweat from his brow.

“Damn,” he growled. “How the hell is it so hard to pass?”

More followed, each one emerging with the same bitter complaint, their shoulders slumped in defeat.

“Look!” Lu Piao called, his voice cutting through the murmurs and pulling every eye back to the ranking stone. “Our big brother just passed the five-hundred rank!”

The blood drained from every Sword Peak face.

No one had ever heard of a newcomer breaking the five-hundred mark on their first attempt. That alone thrust Alex straight into the upper tier of inner disciples.

Kuang Lian stood at the absolute peak of Sword Peak's inner sect—the favored direct student of the peak leaders and the one they called a genius born once in a thousand years.

With their full support behind him, he had fought his way to rank twenty-five. That was the only reason he could speak with such practiced scorn.

“Five hundred might sound impressive,” he said loudly, the sneer sharp enough to cut. “But I’m already sitting at twenty-five. What’s so special about five hundred?”

The words landed flat. Every Sword Peak disciple knew the truth he tried to bury: Kuang Lian had needed a full century of brutal effort to reach that rank. His cultivation had long since advanced to the great Foundation Establishment stage. Alex, by comparison, still operated at the Great Qi Condensation level.

Inside the array, the test had grown sharper. The holographic opponents now moved with lethal grace, threading faint currents of inner force into every strike.

"This test is incredible," Alex said under his breath, genuine admiration warming his tone. "They're using the smallest possible amount of inner force to create the greatest possible effect."

"Gaia, you need to study this."

"Yes, Master" Gaia answered calmly inside his mind. "I'm recording every detail. I can already isolate the exact quantity of force and the precise acupoints they're channeling through. I'll compile it all for you to learn later."

"Good," Alex said, a quiet spark of satisfaction lighting his chest.

The swordplay trial turned out to be far more than a simple test of skill.

It was a hidden treasure of the peak, quietly recording every strike, every parry, every flicker of inner force so it could teach anyone brave enough to step inside. With Gaia capturing every detail, Alex's knowledge of swordplay and inner force grew by the second.

He absorbed lessons faster than he could have imagined, turning each bout into a master class.

Time stretched inside the array. The higher the ranks climbed, the longer each fight lasted.

A few times he let himself lose on purpose, studying the exact mistake before stepping back in sharper and more focused than before.

Outside on the terraces of Sword Peak, a full day had slipped past. Still no one defied. If anything, the crowd had only grown, disciples from every peak pressing shoulder to shoulder around the great ranking stone.

"He's already at rank twenty-seven," Lu Piao called out, loud enough for the whole gathering to hear.

"And I remember Senior Kuang Liang saying he was one of Sword Peak's top students at rank twenty-five. I'm opening bets right now—will our big brother pass him or not?"

The Sword Peak disciples exploded.

"Impossible!" one of them shouted. "No one from Thousand Herbs Peak could ever cross that line!"

"Yeah!" others roared in agreement.

But the Thousand Herbs disciples answered just as fiercely. "Big brother won't just pass rank twenty-five-he's going all the way to first place!" "Impossible," the Sword Peak group snarled back. "There's no way someone from Thousand Herbs could ever claim the top rank on our peak."

"Our big brother is special," a Thousand Herbs disciple fired back, voice sharp with pride. "And your Sword Peak? Weak."

"You dare call us weak!" a Sword Peak outer disciple bellowed, face twisting with rage.

"What? Can't handle the truth?" the other taunted. "You think your peak is the best in the whole sect? You'll be kneeling before my swordplay soon enough."

"You dare—!"

No one saw who threw the first punch.

In the next breath the terraces erupted into chaos-fists swinging, shoulders shoving, bodies slamming together as disciples from the rival peaks crashed into one another.

"Stop this at once!" an elder from Sword Peak shouted, wading in alongside several others from different peaks.

They grabbed arms and pulled fighters apart, but the brawl had already taken on a life of its own. No one listened.

Then a single voice cut through the noise like a blade.

"Look at the ranking stone!"

The fighting stuttered and died. Every head turned.

A heavy silence dropped over the entire area.

What they saw was impossible.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 615[1,537 words]

Alex stood within the illusory realm of the swordplay trial. An elder materialized before him, robes stirring as though touched by an invisible breeze.

"This is the Wudang Seven Moons," the elder said. He lifted his sword and began to move.

Every arc of the blade summoned seven luminous moons that hung in the air like pale lanterns, their light flowing with each strike. The forms were graceful yet merciless, a dance of moonlight and steel.

When the demonstration ended, the elder lowered his weapon and met Alex's gaze. "If you can defend yourself against seven times seven of those strikes-forty-nine in all-you will advance. You have one hour to study the art."

Most who saw the technique only once would have needed rare fortune to grasp even its basics.

Alex had Gaia. The system captured every angle, every shift of weight and breath, then replayed the sequence hundreds of times inside his mind with flawless precision.

He sat in meditation while the hour ticked away in the real world. Gaia pulled him deeper, into a quiet realm of pure thought where time stretched hundredfold.

There, Alex let the sword art sink into his bones. He practiced the forms until they felt like his own, then sparred against phantom opponents who wielded the same

moons.

Each clash sharpened him.

The hour ended.

The elder attacked without hesitation, his blade a silver blur. Alex rose to meet him. He did not simply survive the first forty-nine strikes; he answered them with the same art, his sword carving moonlight of its own.

The elder's laughter died quickly. Their blades rang together more than a hundred times, each collision sharper than the last.

Alex felt the rhythm settle into his blood. Understanding turned to instinct. In one clean motion he cut straight through the elder's illusory body.

A calm, resonant voice filled the realm. "You are the first to strike back with the same sword art. Your score has been doubled."

Alex's rank surged to fourth place.

A new elder appeared. "Now witness the Wudang Seven Suns."

The demonstration unfolded again, fiercer this time—each swing igniting seven blazing suns that burned across the void.

Alex studied them the same way, Gaia carrying him once more into the slowed realm of the mind.

When the fight came, he met the elder's fire with fire of his own. Blades clashed in a storm of heat and light. Alex pressed forward, confidence steady and bright, until his sword found its mark.

He rose to third rank.

Outside the illusion, the crowd had gone dead silent. Then the whispers began— sharp, disbelieving, spreading like cracks through glass-as every eye fixed on the rankings that had just changed in ways no one had thought possible.

Kuang Liang stared at the glowing stone stele, his face slack with disbelief.

"Third rank," he whispered. "He's really sitting in third."

None of it made sense. Thousand Herbs Peak trained its disciples to tend gardens, raise crops, and brew medicine.

They were farmers and apothecaries, not warriors. A man from that gentle world should never have torn through the sword trial like this.

It was as absurd as watching a simple farmer cut down a battle-hardened knight. Yet the proof hung there in cold, shining characters.

His mouth stayed open, unable to close.

He knew exactly how savage the climb was how many broke their spirits just trying to push past rank twenty-five. And now this man had stormed all the way to third.

"How long has it been since anyone reached the third rank?" a nearby disciple asked.

"Nearly five hundred years," another answered quietly. "The last was Huang Jie. He was the only Wudang disciple in history to become Leader of the Murim Alliance— and he remained undefeated for a full century."

"So Jun Jiu has that same kind of power?" someone breathed. "We're looking at a living legend."

Excitement crackled across Sword Peak.

A moment later, fireworks roared into the sky, blooming in brilliant bursts of red and gold to signal the elders that the impossible had happened.

Within minutes, several elders streaked through the air on their swords and landed in a swirl of robes. They crowded around the stele, eyes widening as they read the rankings.

"Someone has finally reached the third rank?" one elder said, voice rough with shock.

"Who is this man named Jun Jiu?" another demanded, a hungry light in his eyes. "I must claim him as my disciple."

No one felt the triumph more deeply than the disciples of Thousand Herbs Peak. Pride swelled in their chests until they could barely contain it, as though they themselves had climbed those ranks.

They began to chant, voices rising together in a wave of joy and fierce belonging.

"Jun Jiu! Jun Jiu! Jun Jiu!"

High on the main peak, the Sect Master watched the scene unfold below. A long, quiet sigh slipped from him.

"Even I never reached the third rank on that stele," he murmured. "And the monument has stood for ten thousand years." The Sect Master lifted his eyes to the sky, voice low but steady.

"If even one disciple reached the top five in our lifetime, it would be a blessing enough for Wudang—enough to lift our name once more across the Murim. But third rank..."

His eyes glistened. "When the sect stood at its lowest, when the world had all but forgotten us, Heaven was kind. It sent us a savior."

Beside him, Li Qingxue felt a quiet warmth bloom inside her chest, melting the long frost that had settled around her heart.

The Sect Master had pulled her from

the cold as an infant and given her a life. Every breath she had taken since belonged to

Nudang

Whatever it cost, whatever it demanded, she would give it gladly if it meant the sect could rise again.

A ripple passed through the air above Sword Peak.

An illusion shimmered into existence—seven moons glowing with soft, silver light. Their radiance spilled across the gathered crowd like liquid starlight. Gasps rose on every side. The Sword Peak elders trembled where they stood.

"That is our lost Wudang Seven Moons," one elder whispered, voice thick with disbelief. "Gone for five hundred years. I never thought I would see it before I died." While the elders remained frozen in shock, the Sect Master's eyes sharpened with sudden, fierce hope.

"At last," he breathed. "Wudang's most famous and long-lost sword art has returned. This boy will shake the entire Murim."

Before anyone could draw another breath, the seven moons dissolved. In their place, seven blazing suns flared to life, burning with golden fire.

Every elder and the Sect Master alike stared with wide eyes and open mouths. "Wudang... Seven Suns," someone stammered.

"That art has been lost for a thousand years," another elder managed. "How-how is it appearing now?"

"Don't tell me Jun Jiu has mastered both of the lost techniques..."

The elders stood rooted, stunned into silence. Not one of them had dared imagine that in their generation-Wudang's lowest ebb in the Murim-such miracles could return.

Yet here they were, burning in the sky. Everything was about to change.

Just as the wonder seemed to crest, the image shifted once more.

Beside the seven blazing suns, the seven moons reappeared serene silver light now glowing in perfect harmony with the golden fire.

Both lost arts burned together, moon and sun, ancient and unstoppable.

The elders stood frozen, eyes wide with disbelief. None of them had ever imagined such a thing was possible.

Only the Sect Master trembled from head to toe. Then, without a word, he dropped to his knees before the vision in the sky.

The seven moons glowed with cool,

silver yin, while the seven suns burned with fierce golden yang. Slowly they began to turn circling each other in perfect rhythm until their right merged into a flawless yin-yang symbol-ancient, alive, and

impossibly whole.

A brilliant, multicolored radiance burst outward, flooding Sword Peak in hues no one had ever seen.

The elders gasped, stunned into silence. They had never heard of this

phenomenon, let alone witnessed it.

Still kneeling, the Sect Master's eyes filled with tears that spilled freely down his weathered cheeks.

He was a boy again in his mind, standing before his own master, listening to the old man speak with quiet longing.

"There is a legend," his master had

said, "of a sword art created by Wudang's founder himself. No

one

has ever succeeded in recreating it.

It exists only in stories now. If I could

see that art with my own eyes

before I die, it would be the greatest gift Heaven could give me."

Now the vision above him pulsed with life. The yin-yang turned in flawless harmony,

and within its center a heavenly realm seemed to open-pure light in perfect balance with earth, sky, and existence itself.

The Sect Master's voice shook as he whispered the name he had waited his entire

life to speak.

"Wudang's Heaven Sword Art..."

He remembered the rest of his master's words and spoke them like a prayer.

"Undefeatable under heaven."

Li Qingxue's breath caught. She repeated the words silently, lips forming each syllable as if afraid they might vanish.

Undefeatable under heaven.

Was it truly possible? Wudang currently languished at the very bottom of the seven

great sects and five great clans.

Yet here, in this single moment, everything had changed. With Jun Jiu and the return of the lost arts, the sect could finally rise within the Murim Alliance.

More than that—its name could echo across the entire Jiang Hu, the whole martial world.

While every eye remained fixed on the sky, no one noticed the stone stele shift once more.

Jun Jiu's rank climbed from third to second.

He now stood alone before the final trial.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 616[1,604 words]

The illusory realm shimmered and dissolved around Alex like mist burning off under morning sun.

In its place stretched a vast, rolling hill crowned with ancient trees, a crystal-clear river winding lazily through the valley below, and a dense forest of emerald pines and flowering maples that whispered in the breeze.

Sunlight dappled the grass in golden patches. The air smelled of pine resin and wildflowers, crisp and alive.

An old man stood beside the river, tall and straight-backed, his silver hair tied neatly at the nape of his neck.

He was strikingly handsome even in age-high cheekbones, warm brown eyes that sparkled with quiet mischief, and a smile that carried the easy charm of someone who had once turned every head in a room.

He wore simple gray robes that moved with the wind as though they belonged to the landscape itself.

Alex approached slowly. The old man tilted his face toward the open sky, watching a lone hawk circle overhead.

"I don't know how many centuries have passed since anyone last mastered Wudang's Heaven Sword Art," he said, voice low and resonant, carrying the weight of forgotten years.

He turned those bright eyes on Alex. "How long has it been since the Wudang Sect was founded?"

Alex hesitated. "A few thousand years ago, I think."

The old man exhaled a soft laugh that held no bitterness, only wonder.

"Thousands of years..." He shook his head, gazing out over the river as though he could see every lost decade drifting past on the current. "Time really does slip away like water."

"Will we fight?" Alex asked.

The old man's smile widened, gentle and knowing. "Maybe later. Not today, though. You don't need to worry about the clock out there."

He gestured lightly at the sky. "In this place, one day in your world equals a hundred here. Plenty of time."

He clapped his hands once. The sharp sound echoed across the hill. '

From behind a cluster of ancient trees stepped three figures, each dressed in the distinct uniforms of different sects-crisp and unmistakable even at a distance.

Gaia's calm voice bloomed in Alex's mind, feeding him names and histories in a single heartbeat.

Mount Hua. Emei. Qingcheng.

"They're disciples of the Mount Hua Sect, the Emei Sect, and the Qingcheng Sect," Alex said aloud.

"You're right," the old man replied, pride flickering across his face.

"In my time I learned every technique they possessed. If they wouldn't teach me willingly, I took what I needed. I know their sword arts better than most of their own disciples ever did. I spent long nights drinking tea and trading stories with their head sect leaders-back when they still walked the earth."

He studied Alex for a moment, eyes sharpening.

"On every peak of the Wudang Sect, the moment you claim the first rank, the secrets of the Five Great Clans and the Nine Great Sects open to you."

Alex felt the words land like a stone in still water. "What?"

The old man nodded toward the horizon, as if the peaks themselves were listening. '

"Go to the Fist Peak of Wudang. Conquer its top rank and you'll find the complete fist arts and cultivation methods of Shaolin Temple-everything they guarded so jealously."

"You'll also unlock treasures from the other great sects: the Eighteen Dragon Subduing Palms, the Drunken Fist, techniques that once shook the martial world." Alex's pulse quickened. A sudden realization slammed into him, bright and electric. "I'm already ranked first on the Thousand Herb Peak..."

He met the old man's gaze, voice tight with sudden hope and disbelief. "Does that mean... I've already learned something?"

The old man smiled. "Then you must already have learned the Tang Clan's poison techniques."

The realization crashed over Alex like cold river water. In that final stage of the Thousand Herb Peak, the ancient records had never been about medicine at all.

They were poison manuals-page after meticulous page of lethal formulas, hidden in plain sight.

No wonder the forbidden arts had come so easily to him when he faced the Discipline Department disciples. The knowledge had been waiting for him all along, coiled and patient.

"What do you want me to do?" Alex asked.

The old man's smile deepened, warm yet commanding. "You will learn every one of their sword arts. I will guide you myself."

Alex frowned, the weight of the task settling on his shoulders. "Do I really need to study all of them?"

The old man nodded, his gaze drifting for a moment across the river as though the centuries were passing before his eyes once more.

"That is an excellent question-one I asked myself long ago. After I created the Seven Moon Sword Art, and then the Seven Suns, I forged the Heaven Sword Art. It made me undefeatable beneath the heavens."

"Yet even then, something inside me knew there was a higher realm still waiting. So

I turned to the sword styles of countless sects and masters, absorbing their essence until I could finally create what I had been searching for my entire life."

"And what is it?" Alex asked.

The old man's smile carried the quiet fire of a lifetime's obsession. With fluid grace he raised his hands and moved them in the slow, circular patterns of Taiji-the ancient art of perfect harmony.

"It will be the Limitless Sword Art. The moment when every sword technique returns to its purest origin: the balance of yin and yang, light and darkness, life and death."

As he spoke, two swords materialized in his hands-one jet black as midnight, the other pure gleaming white.

Alex watched, breathless, as the old man demonstrated. Wherever the black blade swept, the grass beneath it withered instantly, flowers curled and died, drained of every trace of life.

When the white sword followed, new life exploded in its wake: blossoms unfurled in vivid color, grass surged thick and lush as though spring itself had answered the call.

"You will learn these arts," the old

man said, his voice carrying the calm authority of someone who had already walked this path to its end, and you will help me perfect the Limitless Sword Art. Only then will you be permitted to leave this illusory realm."

Respect surged through Alex like a river breaking its banks. He clasped his hands together and bowed deeply, forehead nearly touching the grass. "I will listen to Master's teaching."

"Good." The old man nodded with quiet satisfaction. "Now you may begin by learning from the Mount Hua disciple."

At his words the figure in the Mount Hua uniform stepped forward. He raised his sword and executed a simple, elegant opening movement, the blade cutting through the air with precise, flowing beauty.

"This is the beginning of the Twenty-Four Plum Blossom Sword Technique," he announced in a clear, disciplined voice.

The Mount Hua disciple moved with effortless precision, his sword tracing elegant arcs through the air like blossoms caught in a spring gale.

Each form of the Twenty-Four Plum Blossom Sword unfolded in perfect sequence: a rising cut that scattered invisible petals of light, a spinning parry that bloomed into three rapid thrusts, a low sweep that rooted itself in the earth before exploding

upward.

The blade sang softly, leaving faint pinkish trails that lingered like falling flowers before dissolving into the breeze.

Alex watched, every detail burning into his mind.

The moment the demonstration ended, Gaia's calm, synthetic voice bloomed inside his head.

"Full-spectrum analysis initiated. I

am projecting a real-time visual overlay directly into your visual cortex. Follow the blue holographic form exactly. It will show you the ideal path-every angle every micro-adjustment Matchit will refine the guide as you move."

A translucent blue silhouette materialized in Alex's sight, superimposed over the world like augmented reality only he could see.

The glowing figure stood in the exact same stance as the disciple, sword raised, every joint, muscle, and breath marked in crisp, luminous lines. It moved slowly at first, repeating the opening sequence with flawless grace.

"Now, it is your turn," the old man said.

Alex took his sword. The moment his grip settled, the holographic guide began to flow. He stepped into the stance and mirrored the blue figure step for step. Where his elbow dropped a fraction too low, the overlay pulsed brighter, gently nudging his awareness until he corrected it.

When his wrist stiffened, the guide slowed, showing the exact wrist flick in glowing detail.

"Breathe into the pivot-now," Gaia whispered, and the hologram demonstrated the perfect inhalation synced to the cut.

Within the hour, the full Twenty-Four Plum Blossom flowed from him without pause. The blue guide had become an extension of his own body, a silent teacher that never tired, never judged, only refined.

The old man watched from the riverbank, arms folded, one eyebrow raised in quiet surprise, but he said nothing.'

That was only the beginning.

The old man, watching Alex practice his sword art, suddenly began reciting the Mount Hua Sect's secret cultivation technique. He used it to guide the flow of inner force specifically for the Mount Hua Sword Art-a style that was normally a closely guarded secret passed down only within the sect itself.

By the fiftieth day, the entire sword canon of Mount Hua-dozens of forms and hundreds of variations-had fused into Alex as naturally as breathing.

The old man laughed heartily. "Good! You have perfected the Mount Hua Sect's sword art even better than their own masters."

He gestured toward the woman from the Emei Sect. She stepped forward with quiet

dignity, her white robes edged in pale green and her long black hair braided with silver threads that shimmered in the sunlight.

She drew her slender blade, its edge gleaming like moonlight on snow. "This is the Emei Lotus Heart Sword Art," she said, her voice soft yet carrying clearly across the hill. "It flows from within, not from force. Watch."

After another fifty days, the old man clapped once more, and the man from the Qingcheng Sect stepped forward.

"This is the Qingcheng Windcleaver Sword Technique."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 617[2,190 words]

Alex had spent days absorbing every sword art the old man offered from the Murim traditions.

Mount Hua's flowing strikes, Emei's precise cuts, Qingcheng's relentless pressure— he had mastered them all with Gaia's quiet assistance, the system recording each form perfectly in his mind.

"What do you think?" the old man asked, his voice low and steady.

Alex hesitated. He had turned the question over in his head for hours now.

The old techniques felt natural after Gaia's help, like extensions of his own body.

But this new art the old man wanted to teach him the Limitless Sword, the origin of life and death—left him completely lost.

No matter how hard he tried, he could not grasp it.

Even Gaia had failed. The old man's movements refused to be captured. Every swing shifted and changed, impossible to pin down.

Limitless, just as the name promised. The system could only report the same empty message: No pattern detected.

The old man rose slowly to his feet. "I know you possess a sharp mind, boy. But even the sharpest mind is trapped in the third dimension. What I am about to teach you cannot be reached by thought alone. Only the heart can achieve it."

"Heart?" Alex echoed, frowning.

The old man gave a single, patient nod. "The simplest language humans ever created is spoken words. The most complex is feeling the language the heart speaks."

Alex's brow furrowed deeper. "Can the heart even talk?"

"Of course," the old man replied, his eyes softening with something close to kindness. "Your voice travels only a short distance. But when two people share a deep connection, their feelings cross any distance and any span of time. That is the language of the heart."

He paused, letting the words settle. "The Wudang sect built its core on yin and yang -the origin of all things. To touch the boundless light, the source of creation itself, you must reach your heart through the feeling of love. To touch the complete destruction of everything, you must embrace your darkest emotions."

The old man lifted his plain white sword. "If you can open your heart and truly understand the language of feeling, you will stand at the source of life."

He began to move.

The sword danced in his hands, graceful and alive. Petals unfolded in the air around him, flowers blooming in sudden, vivid color across the barren ground.

For a moment the world felt warm, full of promise and light. Alex's chest tightened with an emotion he could not name hope, maybe, or wonder so sharp it hurt.

Then the old man's expression changed. His eyes darkened, and the sword's path twisted with raw, negative force.

Everything withered.

The flowers curled and blackened. Leaves crumbled to dust. The air grew cold and heavy, as if death itself had breathed across the clearing.

Alex felt the chill sink into his bones, a hollow ache that mirrored the old man's sudden fury and grief.

The old man lowered the sword. The darkness faded.

"Remember this," the old man said quietly. "The Limitless Sword is only the beginning of the true art."

Alex's eyes snapped open in sudden clarity. Enlightenment flooded through him like a quiet storm, sharp and undeniable. He folded his legs beneath him and sank into meditation, breath steady, heart wide open.

This sword art was different.

Gaia could never touch it. The system lived only in the third dimension, bound by logic and data. But humans could reach further-past every rule, past every limit- straight into the origin of their own creation. The True Source.

When Alex opened his eyes again, the world had vanished.

He stood alone in an endless realm of pure light and shadow, vast beyond imagining. No ground beneath his feet, no sky above, only infinite space stretching forever in every direction. A soft, living silence pressed against his skin.

The old man appeared at his side without a sound.

"I never thought you would reach this place so soon," the old man said, voice calm yet laced with quiet surprise.

"What is this place?" Alex asked, turning slowly.

"The Realm of Spirit," the old man answered. "A place that can only be found by the heart."

Alex lifted his gaze. In the distance, an immense, radiant light pulsed with gentle power-boundless, warm, alive. It called to something deep inside him.

"That," he whispered, pointing, "is the True Source of all creation."

The old man nodded once.

Alex shifted his hand toward the opposite horizon. There, a darkness so complete and hungry that it made his chest tighten with instinctive dread.

"And that?" he asked.

"That is the core of darkness," the old man replied simply.

The old man's eyes met Alex's with solemn weight. "You are now standing on the first true step into the reality of everything."

He raised a hand, indicating the two vast forces that flanked them. "From here, you have three choices."

"First, you may walk into the light. You would become one of the angels, one of the holy spirits those who choose life and everlasting existence."

Inside the brilliant glow, Alex glimpsed countless forms: humans, spirits, and beings of breathtaking beauty, all woven together in harmony, creation blooming endlessly around them. The sight filled him with a longing so pure it ached.

"The second path," the old man continued, voice dropping lower, "is the side of darkness. You would choose only destruction, the ending of all things. You would become one of the dark creatures that exist solely to unmake everything."

A cold wave passed through Alex. For a moment he felt the raw terror of that path— the endless hunger, the final silence it promised. Fear prickled along his spine.

He swallowed hard. "Can I choose neither?"

The old man's expression softened with understanding. "Of course. That is what some call the middle path, or nirvana. But you would remain trapped in the middle of nowhere never touching the light, never falling into the darkness. You would enter the realm of nothingness and stay there, stagnant, for an eternity."

Alex stared into the vast emptiness between the two forces. The silence felt heavier now.

He turned back to the old man. "Where was I created from?"

The old man let out a slow, weary sigh, as if the question carried the weight of ages.

"Truthfully," he said, "you were born from the source of light. Always have been. But many people prefer to deny that. So let us say this instead: you simply appeared from nowhere."

The words hung in the infinite space between them, quiet and final.

The old man's gaze sharpened. "And starting now, where do you think you're going? Will you walk the path of light... or the path of darkness?"

Alex felt the weight of the question settle heavy in his chest. "Can I choose both of them, not denying them?"

"Of course you can," the old man replied, his voice patient but edged with quiet warning.

"But if you refuse to choose, you will never truly grow. You will drift back and forth, caught between the two forces, never evolving. You will remain trapped in the physical world, living, dying, and being reborn again and again—endless cycles with no end. People call it sansara. Neverending dreaming of life and death. Only when you finally pick a side will you begin to grow."

Alex stared into the vast emptiness between the two realms. "Where does each path lead?"

The old man turned and gestured

toward the brilliant light. "If you become part of the light, you will draw power directly from the True Source. You will accept every gift it offers. You will grow bigger, stronger, more alive—until your existence stretches beyond any limit."

"No one knows how far a being of light can expand. You will learn to create life itself. Small at first, then vast: planets, galaxies, entire dimensions, whole realities, and even what lies beyond them."

"You will fill everything with life and beauty. That growth has no ceiling. That is what it means to walk with the light."

A warm ache bloomed in Alex's heart as he pictured it—endless creation, light spreading like sunrise across the void. It felt like hope made real.

He swallowed. "And if I choose the dark side?"

The old man's expression darkened, sorrow flickering across his ancient features.

"Then you will step into the darkness and devour everything the light has ever created."

"You will never create anything of your own. You will only hunger, consume, and destroy—again and again. Eternal hunger. Eternal pain. Nothing but the need to unmake. And yet that very destruction will make you powerful beyond measure."

He let the words linger, heavy in the silent realm.

Then the old man sighed, a sound worn thin by centuries. He reached down and drew two swords—one pure white, one pitch black. Their blades caught the glow of

the distant light and the pull of the waiting dark.

"The Limitless Sword art I created," he said quietly. "Is a sword art that changes depending on which source you connect to."

He raised the black sword high. With a single, fluid swing, the blade cut through the air. In that instant, Alex felt it—an invisible thread snap into place, linking the old man straight to the cold, hungry core of the darkness itself.

"When I swing this sword," the old man said, voice low and final, "no matter how powerful the enemy, they have only one choice left: death."

He lowered the blade slowly. The connection faded, but the chill of it lingered on

Alex's skin.

"Yet every time you use this dark power," the old man added, meeting Alex's eyes,

"it will corrupt you. Bit by bit. Until there is nothing left but the darkness inside. It is death sword."

The old man lifted the white sword with reverence, its blade gleaming like fresh morning light. "This is the Life Sword," he said, his voice steady and deep. "Wherever you move, life will follow. When it meets darkness or negative emotion, it will devour the shadow and turn it into fertilizer-nourishing new growth."

He paused, letting the words sink in. "But it will never kill or destroy anything. It only brings life."

The old man lowered the blade and met Alex's eyes with quiet solemnity. "For now, I will give these two swords to you the life and the death-until you decide which path you will walk."

Before Alex could answer, the realm around him cracked open. The endless space of light and shadow fractured like thin glass, spinning wildly. Everything blurred and rushed away.

Outside, in the physical world, the disciples of Wudang had gathered in silence for days.

They stood in hushed rows across the peaks, eyes fixed on the motionless figure of Alex meditation at the center of Sword Peak test stone.

He had not stirred, not even breathed visibly, for nearly a week. The elders and the sect master watched with growing unease.

Then the sky tore in two.

A deafening crack of thunder rolled across the heavens. One half of the sky turned black as pitch, filled with roiling storm clouds and jagged bolts of angry lightning that lit the darkness in violent flashes.

The other half remained perfectly clear-bright blue, scattered with soft white clouds and bathed in warm sunlight.

The divide was razor-sharp, as if the very heavens had been split down the middle by an invisible blade.

No one at Wudang had ever witnessed anything like it. Disciples whispered in awe.

Elders exchanged wide-eyed glances. Even the sect master stood frozen, unable to explain the impossible sight.

From the highest peaks of the sect, two swords suddenly rose from an ancient grave, gleaming as they shot into the air.

They streaked across the fractured sky and plunged toward the center of Sword

Peak arena, landing with a resonant clang that shook the stone beneath everyone's feet.

When the black sword struck the ground, the stormy half of the sky answered. Thunder roared without end. Dark winds howled around the blade, whipping up dust and shadow, as if the sword itself commanded the fury of the storm.

At the same moment the white sword touched down, a wave of pure warmth washed over the arena.

Joy bloomed in every chest. A gentle harmony settled across the crowd. People felt

lighter, renewed, as though years of weariness had been lifted from their shoulders in a single breath.

The two swords stood side by side, pulsing with opposing forces.

Then, in the blinding flash of lightning and sunlight colliding, a man appeared out of

nowhere in the center of the arena. He reached out and seized both blades-one in each hand.

Thunder crashed louder than ever, forcing every eye to close and every ear to ring. Voices cried out in shock. A fierce wind exploded across the peak. And then, just as suddenly, the storm vanished.

The dark half of the sky cleared in an instant. The raging clouds dissolved. The

lightning died. A final gust of wind swept through, and the entire heavens turned brilliant blue once more, calm and endless.

When the light settled and everyone could see again, Alex stood tall in the middle of the arena.

The black sword rested in his left hand, the white in his right. His robes stirred faintly

in the breeze.

Power radiated from him like visible aura-celestial, commanding, almost divine. Under the newly cleared sky, he looked transformed: shoulders squared, eyes sharp with newfound understanding, as if a hidden star had ignited inside him.

Every disciple stared in stunned silence. The elders leaned forward. Even the sect

master could not hide the awe on his face.

Alex had returned.

And something far greater had returned with him.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 618[1,636 words]

Alex felt the surge of power settle deep within him as he broke through to the first stage of Foundation Establishment.

The metal element coursed through his meridians like liquid steel, sharp and unyielding, born from the long hours of enlightenment.

The knowledge had flooded him, reshaping everything he thought he knew about combat and cultivation.

He opened his eyes and scanned the plaza.

Dozens of outer disciples stared at him in open-mouthed awe, their faces frozen between disbelief and reverence.

But Alex had no time for their stares. He did not care what they thought of him.

Without a word, he flicked his wrist and hurled the white sword skyward. It spun once, then hung motionless in the air, humming with quiet power.

In one fluid motion he leaped, landing lightly on its flat blade.

"Go," he said.

The sword shot forward like an arrow released from a bow, carrying him high above the peaks in a streak of white light.

Gasps rippled through the crowd. Shock turned to frenzy. A handful of elders exchanged quick glances, then flung their own swords into the air and gave chase.

Most of the outer disciples could only stand rooted to the ground, eyes wide, mouths moving in silent questions.

"What... what is happening?" one finally whispered.

No one answered. No one knew.

Three elders pushed their qi to the limit, faces tight with effort, yet they still fell farther and farther behind. They had never imagined a Foundation Establishment cultivator could make a flying sword move with such blistering speed.

The wind howled past them as they strained, refusing to give up, but Alex's blade was already a distant white speck racing toward the next mountain's peak.

By the time the elders caught sight of their destination, they had arrived at Heavenly Fist Peak.

Ten of them landed in a rush of robes and swirling dust, drawing startled cries from the disciples gathered in the plaza.

The young men and women dropped into hurried bows, hearts hammering.

"Where is the disciple who just arrived?" one elder demanded, voice sharp with urgency.

A disciple lifted his head, voice trembling. "He... he went straight to the Heavenly Fist test stone, Elder."

The words landed like a thunderclap. The elders froze.

"The fist test?" another elder blurted. "Does that boy even know how to throw a punch?"

They stared at one another, utterly stunned.

They waited in tense silence, eyes fixed on the glowing ranking stone at the center of the plaza.

At first nothing changed. Then, slowly at first and then with startling speed, the name Jun Jiu began to climb the list.

Higher. Higher. Each new position came faster than the last.

The elders watched in growing disbelief. Their confusion deepened with every rank the name gained.

"How is this possible?" one muttered. "Does this man truly understand fist techniques?"

Inside the test chamber, the world felt strangely familiar to Alex. The stone arena mirrored the sword trial exactly, except there were no blades this time—only fists and kicks, raw and unadorned.

Opponents materialized from light, striking with precise, brutal forms. Alex moved without hesitation.

Gaia had already recorded every motion, every shift of weight, every angle of attack, feeding the data straight into his mind.

He had realigned his understanding of fist work during the sword enlightenment, and now the knowledge flowed through him like second nature.

It was easier than the sword trial. Much easier.

He struck, dodged, countered—each movement clean, economical, and devastating.

The test stone drank in his performance, and outside, the name Jun Jiu kept rising, unstoppable.

Alex condensed his newly formed Foundation Establishment core in a single, deliberate breath and sealed it deep within his dantian. The power folded in on itself, vanishing completely.

In an instant, his aura dropped back to Greater Qi Condensation, smooth and unremarkable.

He wanted it this way. Only when he had mastered all five elements would he allow his true foundation to shine.

Anything less felt incomplete, unfinished—like leaving a blade half-forged.

For the next few days, he lived inside the fist trial without pause. Strike after strike, the stone arena tested him relentlessly.

On the morning of the fourth day, his name on the ranking stele climbed to second place. Moments later, it surged into the final stage of first rank.

He stepped through the shimmering barrier and found himself in a vast inner chamber. All around him, phantom figures of ancient masters moved in perfect loops.

Shaolin disciples flowed through iron-hard forms, their fists cracking the air like thunder.

Nearby, beggars from the Beggar Sect demonstrated the legendary Eighteen Dragon Subduing Palms—each palm strike rippling with dragon-like force—and the wild, unpredictable Drunken Fist that turned drunken stumbling into lethal grace. Alex watched, heart pounding with quiet awe.

This was it. Wudang had hidden the deepest secrets of the entire martial world here, locked behind every test.

Every sect, every clan, every lost technique waited for someone strong enough to claim them. For Alex, it felt like stumbling into a treasure vault built just for him.

A once-in-a-lifetime chance to devour knowledge no outsider had ever touched.

Even better was the way the test stone itself rewarded him.

Every time his rank rose, warm currents of pure inner energy poured into his body. Fatigue melted away.

His qi surged stronger than before, as though he had swallowed a priceless elixir. The stone did not merely judge him—it fed him, pushed him, urged him onward.

When his name finally locked into first place on the Heavenly Fist ranking, the earth element answered.

Power erupted through his meridians, heavy and immovable as ancient stone. His second Foundation Establishment was complete.

"Good," Alex whispered, then threw his head back and laughed-deep, raw, triumphant. "Very good."

Thirteen peaks stood across Wudang Mountain.

The old man who ruled this place had built something extraordinary, something that could reshape an entire era if anyone proved worthy enough to claim it all.

He truly dared to smuggle the Nine Great Sects and Five Powerful Clans' most guarded arts into the trials behind each first-rank barrier

Outside in the plaza, the crowd had swollen again. Disciples pressed shoulder to shoulder, voices buzzing with disbelief.

"So Jun Jiu really charged straight to Heavenly Fist Peak and took the test," someone said. "And now he's sitting at first rank again."

"Is he even human?"

"Does the guy have a limit?"

The words had barely left their lips when the massive test stone flared white-hot. A sudden gale whipped across the plaza, tugging at robes and scattering dust. Every head snapped toward the light.

From the heart of the glowing stone,

an image burst into

P.n

existence thousands of phantom fists streaking through the air in perfect unison; The vision rolled outward like a storm, majestic and overwhelming.

A group of Heavenly Fist elders stood frozen, faces pale with shock.

"That's impossible," one elder breathed, voice hoarse. "That is the lost Wudang Thousand Fists... a technique that vanished a thousand years ago."

"What?" one of the elders stammered, his voice cracking with disbelief. "Did Jun Jiu just master every lost martial art of Wudang?"

The vision of a thousand phantom fists exploded outward from the test stone, filling the sky with blurring strikes. A violent gust of wind slammed across the plaza like a physical blow.

Several outer disciples cried out and tumbled backward, knocked clean off their feet by the raw pressure.

One elder stared at the display, blood draining from his face. He knew that if he ever faced someone who could unleash that technique he would be utterly helpless, struck, a thousand times before he could even raise a hand in defense.

When Alex finally stepped out of the Heavenly Fist test chamber, the entire plaza had fallen into a stunned silence.

Elders and disciples alike stood frozen, mouths hanging open, eyes wide with shock, as if they were staring at a living legend that had just walked out of myth. "Looks like they don't have anything better to do," Alex muttered with a small nod. He assumed their frozen stares came from nothing more than too much free time on their hands.

Without wasting another second, he flicked his white sword into the air.

The blade spun once, then hovered steady above him. He leaped lightly onto its flat surface and shot forward in a streak of white light, racing toward the next distant peak.

Every elder's face turned deathly pale.

"Is he heading to the other peaks?" one whispered.

"You don't think..." another began, horror creeping into his voice. "Is he really planning to take first place on every single one?"

The more they considered it, the deeper their shock became. A ripple of disbelief spread through the crowd like wildfire.

And that was exactly what Jun Jiu did.

Over the next two months, Alex moved like a storm across Wudang Mountain.

He stormed Mystic Staff Peak and absorbed every secret of staff and spear combat.

He conquered Divine Saber Peak, mastering the ruthless grace of every saber technique.

At Eight Trigram Array Peak, he unraveled the hidden knowledge of formations, arrays, talismans, seals, barriers, and battlefield strategy.

He swept through all thirteen peaks without rest, claiming blacksmithing, body refinement, hidden weapons, movement arts, and every legendary Murim art the mountain guarded. He devoured them all.

The greatest shock came when he entered the final peak-one almost no one ever visited. It was Wudang's Art Peak, a quiet sanctuary dedicated to the refined arts. literature, poetry, calligraphy the game of Go, singing, painting, dance, and every elegant cultural pursuit

the ancient sect preserved.

Even here, Alex pushed forward with the same relentless focus. When he finished,

he stood at first rank in every discipline.

When Jun Jiu finally stopped, he had achieved something no one in the long history

of Wudang had ever done.

He was now known across the entire mountain as Wudang Number One.

At that moment, the sect leaders gathered with solemn expressions. After long, quiet discussion, they reached their decision.

"It is time," the Sect Master declared. "I must take this extraordinary young man as a

direct disciple."

Meanwhile, Alex stood alone on a quiet cliff edge, gazing out over the vast, mist- covered mountains. A cold, determined smile touched his lips.

"This is the perfect time," he thought. "Time for me to leave Wudang."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 619[1,634 words]

Alex felt the surge of power settle deep within him as he broke through to the first stage of Foundation Establishment.

The metal element coursed through his meridians like liquid steel, sharp and unyielding, born from the long hours of enlightenment.

The knowledge had flooded him, reshaping everything he thought he knew about combat and cultivation.

He opened his eyes and scanned the plaza.

Dozens of outer disciples stared at him in open-mouthed awe, their faces frozen between disbelief and reverence.

But Alex had no time for their stares. He did not care what they thought of him.

Without a word, he flicked his wrist and hurled the white sword skyward. It spun once, then hung motionless in the air, humming with quiet power.

In one fluid motion he leaped, landing lightly on its flat blade.

"Go," he said.

The sword shot forward like an arrow released from a bow, carrying him high above the peaks in a streak of white light.

Gasps rippled through the crowd. Shock turned to frenzy. A handful of elders exchanged quick glances, then flung their own swords into the air and gave chase.

Most of the outer disciples could only stand rooted to the ground, eyes wide, mouths moving in silent questions.

"What... what is happening?" one finally whispered.

No one answered. No one knew.

Three elders pushed their qi to the limit, faces tight with effort, yet they still fell farther and farther behind. They had never imagined a Foundation Establishment cultivator could make a flying sword move with such blistering speed.

The wind howled past them as they strained, refusing to give up, but Alex's blade was already a distant white speck racing toward the next mountain's peak.

By the time the elders caught sight of their destination, they had arrived at Heavenly Fist Peak.

Ten of them landed in a rush of robes and swirling dust, drawing startled cries from the disciples gathered in the plaza.

The young men and women dropped into hurried bows, hearts hammering.

"Where is the disciple who just arrived?" one elder demanded, voice sharp with urgency.

A disciple lifted his head, voice trembling. "He... he went straight to the Heavenly Fist test stone, Elder."

The words landed like a thunderclap. The elders froze.

"The fist test?" another elder blurted. "Does that boy even know how to throw a punch?"

They stared at one another, utterly stunned.

They waited in tense silence, eyes fixed on the glowing ranking stone at the center of the plaza.

At first nothing changed. Then, slowly at first and then with startling speed, the name Jun Jiu began to climb the list.

Higher. Higher. Each new position came faster than the last.

The elders watched in growing disbelief. Their confusion deepened with every rank the name gained.

"How is this possible?" one muttered. "Does this man truly understand fist techniques?"

Inside the test chamber, the world felt strangely familiar to Alex. The stone arena mirrored the sword trial exactly, except there were no blades this time-only fists and kicks, raw and unadorned.

Opponents materialized from light, striking with precise, brutal forms. Alex moved without hesitation.

Gaia had already recorded every motion, every shift of weight, every angle of attack, feeding the data straight into his mind.

He had realigned his understanding of fist work during the sword enlightenment, and now the knowledge flowed through him like second nature.

It was easier than the sword trial. Much easier.

He struck, dodged, countered-each movement clean, economical, and devastating.

The test stone drank in his performance, and outside, the name Jun Jiu kept rising, unstoppable.

Alex condensed his newly formed Foundation Establishment core in a single, deliberate breath and sealed it deep within his dantian. The power folded in on itself, vanishing completely.

In an instant, his aura dropped back to Greater Qi Condensation, smooth and unremarkable.

He wanted it this way. Only when he had mastered all five elements would he allow his true foundation to shine.

Anything less felt incomplete, unfinished-like leaving a blade half-forged.

For the next few days, he lived inside the fist trial without pause. Strike after strike, the stone arena tested him relentlessly.

On the morning of the fourth day, his name on the ranking stele climbed to second place. Moments later, it surged into the final stage of first rank.

He stepped through the shimmering barrier and found himself in a vast inner chamber. All around him, phantom figures of ancient masters moved in perfect loops.

Shaolin disciples flowed through iron-hard forms, their fists cracking the air like thunder.

Nearby, beggars from the Beggar Sect demonstrated the legendary Eighteen Dragon Subduing Palms—each palm strike rippling with dragon-like force—and the wild, unpredictable Drunken Fist that turned drunken stumbling into lethal grace. Alex watched, heart pounding with quiet awe.

This was it. Wudang had hidden the deepest secrets of the entire martial world here, locked behind every test.

Every sect, every clan, every lost technique waited for someone strong enough to claim them. For Alex, it felt like stumbling into a treasure vault built just for him.

A once-in-a-lifetime chance to devour knowledge no outsider had ever touched.

Even better was the way the test stone itself rewarded him.

Every time his rank rose, warm currents of pure inner energy poured into his body. Fatigue melted away.

His qi surged stronger than before, as though he had swallowed a priceless elixir. The stone did not merely judge him—it fed him, pushed him, urged him onward.

When his name finally locked into first place on the Heavenly Fist ranking, the earth element answered.

Power erupted through his meridians, heavy and immovable as ancient stone. His second Foundation Establishment was complete.

"Good," Alex whispered, then threw his head back and laughed deep, raw, triumphant. "Very good."

Thirteen peaks stood across Wudang Mountain.

The old man who ruled this place had built something extraordinary, something that could reshape an entire era if anyone proved worthy enough to claim it all.

He truly dared to smuggle the Nine Great Sects and Five Powerful Clans' most guarded arts into the trials behind each first-rank barrier

Outside in the plaza, the crowd had swollen again. Disciples pressed shoulder to shoulder, voices buzzing with disbelief.

"So Jun Jiu really charged straight to Heavenly Fist Peak and took the test," someone said. "And now he's sitting at first rank again."

"Is he even human?"

"Does the guy have a limit?"

The words had barely left their lips when the massive test stone flared white-hot. A sudden gale whipped across the plaza, tugging at robes and scattering dust. Every head snapped toward the light.

From the heart of the glowing stone,

an image burst into

P.ne

existence thousands of phantom fists streaking through the air in perfect unison. The vision rolled outward like a storm, majestic and overwhelming.

A group of Heavenly Fist elders stood frozen, faces pale with shock.

"That's impossible," one elder breathed, voice hoarse. "That is the lost Wudang Thousand Fists... a technique that vanished a thousand years ago."

"What?" one of the elders stammered, his voice cracking with disbelief. "Did Jun Jiu just master every lost martial art of Wudang?"

The vision of a thousand phantom fists exploded outward from the test stone, filling the sky with blurring strikes. A violent gust of wind slammed across the plaza like a physical blow.

Several outer disciples cried out and tumbled backward, knocked clean off their feet by the raw pressure.

One elder stared at the display, blood draining from his face. He knew that if he ever faced someone who could unleash that technique, he would be utterly helpless—struck a thousand times before he could even raise a hand in defense.

When Alex finally stepped out of the Heavenly Fist test chamber, the entire plaza had fallen into a stunned silence.

Elders and disciples alike stood frozen, mouths hanging open, eyes wide with shock, as if they were staring at a living legend that had just walked out of myth. "Looks like they don't have anything better to do," Alex muttered with a small nod.

He assumed their frozen stares came from nothing more than too much free time on their hands.

Without wasting another second, he flicked his white sword into the air.

The blade spun once, then hovered steady above him. He leaped lightly onto its flat surface and shot forward in a streak of white light, racing toward the next distant peak.

Every elder's face turned deathly pale.

"Is he heading to the other peaks?" one whispered.

"You don't think..." another began, horror creeping into his voice. "Is he really planning to take first place on every single one?"

The more they considered it, the deeper their shock became. A ripple of disbelief spread through the crowd like wildfire.

And that was exactly what Jun Jiu did.

Over the next two months, Alex moved like a storm across Wudang Mountain.

He stormed Mystic Staff Peak and absorbed every secret of staff and spear combat.

He conquered Divine Saber Peak, mastering the ruthless grace of every saber technique.

At Eight Trigram Array Peak, he unraveled the hidden knowledge of formations, arrays, talismans, seals, barriers, and battlefield strategy.

He swept through all thirteen peaks without rest, claiming blacksmithing, body refinement, hidden weapons, movement arts, and every legendary Murim art the mountain guarded. He devoured them all.

The greatest shock came when he entered the final peak-one almost no one ever visited. It was Wudang's Art Peak, a quiet sanctuary dedicated to the refined arts. literature, poetry, calligraphy the game of Go, singing, painting, dance, and every elegant cultural pursuit the ancient sect preserved.

Even here, Alex pushed forward with the same relentless focus. When he finished, he stood at first rank in every discipline.

When Jun Jiu finally stopped, he had achieved something no one in the long history of Wudang had ever done.

He was now known across the entire mountain as Wudang Number One.

At that moment, the sect leaders gathered with solemn expressions. After long, quiet discussion, they reached their decision.

"It is time," the Sect Master declared. "I must take this extraordinary young man as a direct disciple."

Meanwhile, Alex stood alone on a quiet cliff edge, gazing out over the vast, mist-covered mountains. A cold, determined smile touched his lips.

"This is the perfect time," he thought. "Time for me to leave Wudang."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 620[1,270 words]

"Jun Jiu," Li Qingxue called out, her voice sharp against the quiet morning air.

Alex stepped from the doorway of his small, thatched hut, blinking in the sunlight. "Yes?"

"The Sect Master wants to see you. Come with me."

A ripple of shock passed through the thousand herb disciples gathered nearby. The Sect Master rarely summoned anyone, least of all an outer disciple like Jun Jiu. Heads turned.

Whispers spread like wind through dry grass. Not just anyone earned a personal audience with the man who ruled the entire mountains.

Alex's face hardened.

"No." He turned on his heel and started back inside. "I don't want to meet anyone. I want to go home to Xia."

The silence that followed was absolute. Li Qingxue's eyes widened. The disciples stared, mouths half-open.

An outer disciple refusing the Sect Master? It was unthinkable.

"Jun Jiu," Li Qingxue said, her tone dropping to ice. She stepped closer, cold eyes locked on his. "Just because you climbed to first place on every peak doesn't give you the right to act arrogant."

Alex let out a short, bitter laugh. "Arrogant? Fine. Call it whatever you want."

His voice stayed low, but the anger underneath it burned hot. "You dragged me here from Xia against my will. You ripped me from my life, and now you expect me to follow you like some obedient dog? Never."

Fury flashed across Li Qingxue's face. She lunged, fingers snapping toward his arm.

Alex moved.

She missed.

She tried again. And again. Each grab cut through empty air.

Alex didn't even shift his feet more than a fraction. His expression never changed. "Your movements are so slow they're putting me to sleep."

Li Qingxue's cheeks burned red. She dropped into a fighting stance, channeling every ounce of her power.

She stood at Greater Foundation Establishment-only one small step from Core Formation. He was still stuck at the first level. She should have been able to crush him without effort.

Yet she couldn't touch him.

A hundred exchanges passed in a blur. Her strikes sliced the air, precise and deadly. His body simply wasn't there when they arrived. Not once did her fingertips brush his sleeve.

Alex finally spoke, voice calm and cutting. "I'm telling you, Li Qingxue-your movement technique is incomplete. You've only mastered seven of the nine forms. You never learned the rest, did you?"

She froze mid-motion, breathing hard. "This is the Seven Stars Wudang movement art. There are only seven forms. There have never been nine."

"Really?" Alex's smile was thin and mocking. "The original name was Nine Stars Wudang movement art. Two forms were lost centuries ago." He tilted his head slightly. "Want me to teach you the missing ones?"

Li Qingxue's chest heaved. She could feel the truth in every impossible step he took -his speed was terrifying, almost inhuman. No matter how hard she pushed, she would never catch him.

She straightened, fists still clenched at her sides. The mission the Sect Master had given her still burned in her mind. She couldn't fail. Not here. Not to him.

But for now, she stopped.

But Alex didn't seem to care about her frustration at all. He simply continued speaking, his tone casual.

"Here. Watch the eighth step carefully."

Without waiting for a reply, he began demonstrating the original Nine Stars Wudang movement technique he had learned from the first-place stone stele. His feet moved with effortless precision and frightening speed, tracing patterns that looked both simple and impossibly profound.

Li Qingxue wanted to stay angry. She really did. But curiosity quickly overpowered her pride. Before she realized what she was doing, she had already started following his steps.

"Good," Alex said, nodding once. "You learn fast. No wonder they call you one of the smartest in the sect. Still, you're messing up this part... and this one right here."

He patiently pointed out the exact mistakes and explained how to correct them. As Li Qingxue adjusted her movements, according to this guidance, she immediately felt the technique become smoother, the flow of inner energy inside her body growing stronger and more natural.

"Good enough," Alex said. "Now this is the ninth movement. It's more complicated."

He performed the next sequence, his body flowing into a series of intricate, advanced steps.

This time, Li Qingxue had to pause and study him for a long moment before attempting to copy the motion.

"How can you be this stupid?" Alex sighed. He snatched a thin stick from the ground and lightly tapped her foot with it. "Wrong. You're supposed to shift your weight like this."

Strangely, Li Qingxue felt no anger. Instead, her eyes widened as the true beauty and power of the final movement washed over her. It felt incredible elegant deep, and full of hidden strength. A fierce desire to master it ignited inside her.

When Alex corrected her posture and guided her through the proper form, she felt

her inner energy circulate far more smoothly. Pure delight bloomed in her chest.

"This fifth movement," Alex continued without pause, "you're putting almost no force into it at all. Do it again."

He tapped her leg sharply with the stick.

Instead of getting upset, Li Qingxue lowered her head slightly. "I apologize."

"Good. At least you know when you're wrong," Alex said. "Again."

"Yes," she answered obediently and dove back into practicing the sequence.

For the rest of the day, Alex scolded her, corrected her mistakes, and occasionally struck her legs or feet with the stick whenever she slipped up. And every time, Li Qingxue accepted his harsh teaching without complaint.

A short distance away, Lu Piao and the other herb disciples watched the unbelievable scene in stunned silence. One of them finally raised a thumb toward

Alex.

"Man... In the entire Wudang Sect, only our big brother would dare hit Miss Li Qingxue that hard and still stand next to her without being scared off by her beauty."

"Yeah," another disciple muttered. "Whenever Sister Li stands in front of me, I freeze up. I wouldn't even dare to breathe too loudly."

"Our big brother is really built different."

By the end of the day, as the sun dipped toward the horizon, Li Qingxue had finally grasped the eighth and ninth movements. She could now chain all nine forms together flowing seamlessly from the first movement through to the ninth and circling back to the beginning in one continuous, graceful cycle.

Suddenly, everything felt smoother. Her inner energy flowed without resistance, and

her speed sharpened with every step.

"Good," Alex said, glancing up at the night sky. "It's already midnight. You can head home now."

"Thank you," Li Qingxue replied, bowing deeply.

In that same moment, both of them sensed something was wrong.

Alex didn't seem to care. He simply turned, walked into his small hut, and shut the door behind him with a solid thud.

Li Qingxue stood alone in the quiet courtyard, confusion swirling inside her. She had come here to force him to meet the Sect Master.

Instead, she had forgotten her entire mission. She had spent the whole day learning from him—and, strangely, she had enjoyed every second of it.

She stared at the closed door of his hut, and a quiet warmth bloomed in her chest.

No one in the entire Wudang Sect had ever treated her the way Alex did. He didn't seem to notice her beauty at all. He simply treated her like a person—nothing more, nothing less.

Yet she knew she had failed. She had not brought him to the Sect Master.

When she finally returned to the main hall, Li Qingxue knelt before the assembled elders and the Sect Master.

"Please forgive me," she said, head bowed low. "I was unable to bring Jun Jiu to meet you."

One elder slammed his palm on the table. "We have waited here all day! How dare

that outer disciple ignore a direct summons from the Sect Master? Does he want to be punished?"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 621[1,289 words]

Another elder shot him a cold glare. "Do you honestly believe you could have dragged him here if he didn't want to come?"

The elders fell suddenly silent.

Elder Tong's humiliating defeat still hung fresh in everyone's mind—a hard, painful lesson none of them could ignore. Dragging Jun Jiu anywhere against his will would not be simple. It would almost certainly cause far more trouble than any of them wanted to handle.

The Sect Master nodded once, calm and unhurried. "Then tomorrow, I will go meet him myself."

Shock rippled through every elder in the room. The rule had always been ironclad: when the Sect Master called, disciples came running and bowed low. Never—not once in the long history of the sect—had the Sect Master gone to a disciple after being refused.

"That damn disciple," one elder snarled. "Why don't we punish him and force him to come?"

"That is also an option," the Sect Master said evenly. "But to do it, you would need to take your own disciples and go there yourselves. Remember what happened to Elder Tong. I suggest you prepare yourselves first."

The elder's arrogance vanished in an instant. He closed his mouth and looked away.

Everyone knew he was nowhere near as strong as Elder Tong had been. And even Elder Tong had ended up kneeling before Jun Jiu.

The elders exchanged uneasy glances. A heavy silence fell over the hall. This was the first time in the history of the Wudang Sect that a single disciple had claimed first place on every peak. But it was also the first time they had gained a disciple they could not control.

The next morning, the Sect Master arrived at Alex's modest hut, accompanied by several elders and Li Qingxue.

Alex had sensed their approach long before they reached the clearing. To show basic courtesy, he waited outside his yard, standing quietly in the warm sunlight.

When the group stopped before him, Alex offered a slight, respectful bow. "I welcome the Sect Master."

One of the elders stepped forward, voice sharp with outrage. "Jun Jiu! How dare you stand there without kneeling before the Sect Master? And you had the nerve to ignore his summons yesterday!"

Alex met the elder's glare with steady eyes. "I never chose to come to the Wudang Sect. I was kidnapped and brought here against my will. So as far as I'm concerned, I'm still not part of this sect."

"How dare you—" the elder roared, his face twisting with fury.

The words died instantly. His body locked up, knees slamming hard into the dirt. He knelt there, helpless, unable to move or even speak.

No one had seen Alex lift a finger. No surge of energy had rippled through the air. The entire group stood frozen in stunned silence.

What they didn't know was that Alex had already formed a Fivefold Heaven Foundation—one of the rarest and most powerful foundations possible.

Even back when he was only at Qi Condensation, he could force an elder to kneel. Now his true strength far surpassed anything the others could imagine.

The elders' faces turned deathly pale. They had believed Jun Jiu was still stuck at the first level of Foundation Establishment. Yet here he stood, casually overpowering someone at Greater Foundation Establishment or early Core Formation without breaking a sweat.

"Disciple Jun Jiu," the Sect Master said softly, his voice calm but carrying quiet authority. "Even if you were brought here without your consent, you have lived among us for years. You have eaten our food, trained on our mountains, and used our resources. Like it or not, you are part of the Wudang Sect."

Alex remained silent for a moment. He had always believed in simple fairness: treat him with respect, and he would return it. Treat him badly, and he had no problem becoming the problem.

"That is exactly why I didn't walk out," he replied, "even though I could have left anytime I wanted."

He turned, walked to the simple wooden table outside his hut, and picked up a stack of roughly twenty thick books he had prepared.

"These contain sword arts, movement techniques, fist manuals, and many other lost arts that the Wudang Sect no longer possesses," Alex said. "I wrote them all down from memory. I want to give

them to the Sect Master." He looked straight at the older man, expression calm and final. "After this, we don't owe each other anything."

The elders stood frozen, eyes wide

stood

with disbelief and sudden, greedy joy. They knew Jun Jiu had

mastered the Wudang Sect's

long-lost secret arts. Now he was

offering every one of them back

Hands twitched at their sides, eager

to snatch the stack of books.

But the Sect Master did not reach for them. So no one moved. They waited, tension

thick in the morning air.

The Sect Master stared at the books

for a long moment, then let out a

slow, heavy sigh. "Jun Jiu," he said

quietly believe

ese Wudang arts,

were passed down by the founder specifically for you. I have no right to claim them."

His voice grew solemn. "Moreover, I believe you are the only one worthy to become

the next Sect Master of Wudang. Please... accept the position and continue our legacy."

A stunned silence fell over the clearing.

Every elder and disciple stared in shock. Even Li Qingxue's eyes flew wide.

For anyone born and raised inside the sect, the meaning was unmistakable: the current leader had just named his successor.

The thousand herb disciples broke into quiet, excited murmurs. Smiles spread across their faces like sunlight.

A few elders, however, looked horrified. One stepped forward at once. "Sect Master, you cannot-"

Alex bowed his head slightly. "I apologize," he said, voice calm and steady. "But I cannot accept."

His simple refusal sent another ripple of astonishment through the crowd.

In the cultivation world, people killed and schemed for years just to taste that kind of power. Yet here was a disciple calmly turning it down.

To Alex, the decision was easy. He had once been king of Estoria and the richest man in Prussia. The Wudang Sect, no matter how ancient, was nothing more than a small mountain school in a corner of Xia.

He felt no desire for its throne.

"Please take these books," Alex said, pushing the stack gently toward the Sect Master, "and let me go. After this, we will owe each other nothing."

The Sect Master bowed in return, deep and respectful. "The founder's teachings were given to you alone. I do not dare accept them on behalf of the sect."

Before anyone could react, he raised one hand. Powerful inner energy surged outward.

In an instant, all twenty books burst into bright flames. They burned rapidly, curling into black ash that scattered across the dirt.

The elders who had longed for the Wudang Sect's most secret arts felt their hearts shatter in an instant.

A few of them rushed forward in panic, dropping to their knees beside the pile of still-smoldering ashes. Desperate hands scooped through the black dust, fingers trembling as they searched for any fragment that might have survived.

One elder even blew gently on a charred corner, hoping against reason that a single page or line of text could be saved.

But there was nothing left.

Only fine gray powder scattered across the dirt, carried away by the morning breeze.

Their faces twisted with grief and disbelief. These were techniques lost for centuries -priceless treasures of the sect. In one careless moment, the Sect Master had burned them all away.

Alex stood frozen, shock flashing across his face. Inside, fury boiled over.

'You old snake,' he thought. 'I wanted to clear our debt and karma, and you dare refuse—and burn them?'

The Sect Master met Alex's gaze with his calm, ancient eyes. In his heart he answered silently, 'I don't want you to repay that debt. This way, you stay bound here, I believe, you are a good guy and you will be unable to escape your obligations so easily. So stay.'

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 622[1,641 words]

Alex had never pretended to be a good man, but he wasn't a villain either.

He understood the Wudang Sect had its own plans, ones that didn't always match his own.

Over the years he had gained plenty from them—skills, respect, a place at their table. Yet those gains had never been enough to chain him here forever.

"I need to leave this place," he said.

He had unfinished business waiting in Estoria.

The Sect Master studied him for a long moment, then gave a slow nod. "When you become the young successor of the Sect Master, you will be free to go anywhere you wish."

Alex hadn't expected that offer. For a heartbeat the idea hung in the air like an open door he had never noticed.

"I don't want to become the Wudang Sect Master," he said, flat and honest.

The Sect Master's brows drew together. "Why?"

"This place is too small for me."

A ripple of outrage swept the elders. One of them shot to his feet. "How can you speak so lightly of your own sect?"

Even the Sect Master looked startled. He leaned forward, voice low. "Are you certain this place is truly too small for you?"

"Very small," Alex answered again.

In his chest the truth burned clear. He already ruled Estoria, a country as vast as Xia itself. To a man who called a country his own, a single mountain sect felt like a cage.

The Sect Master searched Alex's eyes and found no lie there. A quiet breath left him, almost like relief. "You are right. You have taken everything this sect can teach. Your path was always meant to be like our founder's-undefeated beneath the heavens. This Sect really is too small for you."

Gasps broke across the hall. Disciples stared at one another in disbelief. Even the elders, still bristling, could not deny the weight of their leader's words.

"Still," the Sect Master continued, his tone steady and proud, "you could become the successor here. Then step into Xia, claim the murim and the jianghu, and raise our name to the very peak of the martial world. Lead Wudang to glory."

Alex turned the Sect Master's offer over in his mind.

The shortest route from Xia to Prussia lay just beyond the mountains, but the borders were thick with guards and patrols. He still hadn't recovered his full strength.

Walking straight into Prussia while they were still hunting him would be reckless at best, fatal at worst.

No. The only safe path was to return to Estoria first. He needed to warn them about the war that was coming and do everything in his power to stop it.

Only after that could he begin searching for a way to the Empire.

Carrying the name of the Wudang Sect would open doors across Xia and give him the cover he needed to find a route home.

Alex let out a slow, heavy sigh. No matter how badly he wanted to leave, he still owed this place a debt for everything it had given him.

"I can only give you five years," he said.

"Five years is not enough," the Sect Master replied, his voice firm.

"It's five years in Xia time," Alex explained.

The old man's eyes widened slightly as the meaning sank in. He gave a slow nod. "That would be roughly a hundred years in this realm. Enough time, yes. But you must promise me something. In those five years, you will fulfill the founder's long-cherished dream—make Wudang the undisputed number one sect in the entire murim. Though I suspect that goal alone may take more than five years. Perhaps five decades."

"Five years is enough," Alex said, his tone steady.

A broad smile spread across the Sect Master's face. "I admire that youthful spirit of yours. Still, I would feel much safer with a firmer promise. If you cannot elevate Wudang to the top within those five years, you will stay and serve another five decades."

Alex's jaw tightened. Five years he could give. But fifty?

Fifty years—whether in Xia time or Estoria time—felt like a lifetime. Far too long for

a man who already ruled a kingdom and had an empire waiting.

"I will make it happen in five years," Alex said firmly.

The Sect Master waited in silence, eyes steady, still expecting a complete answer.

Alex exhaled, the weight of the words settling heavy on his chest. "Fine. If I cannot do it in five years... I will serve the full five decades."

The Sect Master's face broke into a wide, satisfied smile. "Then it is settled. I will announce to the entire murim that you are my direct disciple and the official successor of the Wudang Sect. Word will spread across every corner of Xia."

With those words, Alex felt the last door to his old life slam shut. There was no running from his destiny anymore.

In the days that followed, the mountain buzzed with preparations for the grandest ceremony the Wudang Sect had seen in generations.

Alex stood at the center of it all as he was formally named the successor.

He took his place in a solemn line beside the seven core disciples, the most gifted young martial artists on the peak.

Their eyes stayed locked on him—some wide with surprise, others narrowed with quiet wariness.

"Don't look at me like that," Alex told them, voice low and steady. "In five years I'll hand the position to whoever wants it. I don't play politics."

A few of the core disciples who had once dreamed of claiming the role themselves looked momentarily stunned. But they knew the truth.

Alex had refused the burden of leadership from the start, and he meant it. He had no desire to be chained to the mountain. Because of that, none of them saw him as a real rival.

When his name finally rang out across the peaks, a thunderous roar erupted from every disciple in attendance.

Alex walked forward with measured steps toward the Sect Master.

Thousands of voices shouted his name in unison, the sound rolling like a wave across the ridges.

Never in the sect's thousand-year history had one man risen with such total, unanimous support. For the first time ever, all thirteen peaks had agreed on a single successor.

Usually the honor came only from Sword Peak or one of the peak, while the rest settled for lesser roles. Today was different.

In this moment, Alex stood as the true leader the Wudang Sect had waited a millennium to see.

Every disciple present felt it. They roared his name with fierce pride, hearts burning with new hope. For the first time in centuries, they believed the sect was about to enter its golden age.

Right now he was still only the successor-second in line. But if anything ever happened to the Sect Master, Alex would step forward and take full command of the entire Wudang Sect.

The celebrations stretched across three full days and three long nights.

Alex moved from peak to peak, meeting every leader and shaking the hands of countless disciples who now looked at him with something close to reverence. Laughter, music, and the sharp scent of incense filled the mountain air as the entire sect honored their new successor.

When the last banner finally came down and the grand ceremony ended, the Sect Master drew Alex into a quiet chamber for ten private days.

Behind closed doors, Alex taught him the profound insights he had mastered from the first rank—the ancient, flawless knowledge that had once made the Wudang founder undefeated beneath the heavens.

The old man listened in silence, nodding slowly as each revelation settled deep inside him.

The very next morning, without any warning, the Sect Master stood before the gathered sect and made his announcement.

He would enter closed-door cultivation for the next several years. All authority over Wudang would now rest in Alex's hands.

"This cannot happen," the elders erupted at once, their voices sharp with outrage. "We cannot hand the future of a thousand-year-old sect to someone who has barely lived among us."

For ten tense days they confronted Alex as a united front, cornering him

in the great hall, pressing him with hard questions and cold demands. They wanted every secret he possessed, every technique, every hidden principle.

To their surprise, Alex felt only a quiet wave of relief wash over him.

If any of these elders truly wanted the heavy crown of leadership, he would gladly step aside. He held nothing back.

With calm patience and complete honesty, he taught them the highest martial arts the Wudang Sect had ever guarded—the lost forms, the forbidden strikes, the very pinnacle of their tradition.

The elders, who were martial artists to their bones, became utterly consumed the moment they glimpsed techniques that promised greater power.

Within days, every single one of them chose to retreat into closed-door cultivation, desperate to master what Alex had given them.

Alex had almost forgotten how it worked.

No matter how old or respected they appeared, they were still cultivators who lived and breathed for the next breakthrough. The instant they saw a path to true strength, politics, duty, and everything else simply vanished.

And just like that, the entire Wudang Sect fell completely into his hands.

"Senior Sister Li Qingxue," Alex called softly one quiet afternoon.

She turned, waiting.

"I need you to return to my old residence in Qingshui City. Beneath the floor tiles in my room you will find a small wooden box. Inside is my storage ring. Bring it back to me."

He needed that ring now more than ever. If he was truly going to reshape Wudang into the ideal he carried in his heart, he would have to bring his hidden world into the open.

He would need the AI running at full power and Gaia fully upgraded.

androids stored

The dozens of and

inside the ring would let him

introduce the revolutionary Prussian

line

methods he had once mastered-advanced blacksmithing,

precision metal refining, systematic

teaching halls, even large-scale medicine factories.

It would spark an industrial revolution the murim had never imagined, powered by robotics and cold, flawless efficiency.

For the first time in years, a real spark of excitement burned in Alex's chest. The mountain was finally his to change.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 623[1,417 words]

Alex sat alone in the sect master's office, the vast chamber silent except for the faint creak of ancient wooden beams overhead. Sunlight slanted through paper windows, catching dust motes that drifted like lazy spirits.

The room was empty. Every elder and senior disciple who might have challenged his authority had already come and gone, each one slipping away with a handful of the precise movements he had demonstrated.

They had taken what they needed and vanished into closed-door cultivation, sealing themselves away for months or years.

Even the proudest among them had bowed their heads when he spoke, because they all knew the truth: he was ranked number one across all peaks and had only a five-year contract as the sect master. Now, one felt threatened by him.

He leaned back in the heavy carved chair and his small fingers drummed once against the armrest. The silence felt like victory, but it also felt heavy.

Alex let his gaze wander across the room-the faded scrolls on the walls, the ceremonial swords mounted like relics, the low table still holding the remains of a tea ceremony no one had bothered to clear. Everything here whispered of centuries unchanged.

Xia was a country wrapped in iron tradition. Its people had turned cultivation into the only language that mattered, the only currency, the only future. They had closed their borders to the outside world so tightly that even the wind from foreign shores seemed suspect.

Progress? Technology? Those words were almost profane. Alex had seen the disdain in their eyes sneered at the sleek machines and scientific wonders they refused to understand.

They called it foreign poison. They warned everyone, in hushed voices over rice wine, that bringing such things here would brand him a traitor to Xia itself.

He knew they were right. The moment he tried to lift Wudang out of its medieval slumber, they would brand him a heretic.

But Alex also knew something else, something that burned quietly inside his chest like a pilot light: he could change them.

It would take years of grinding patience, of proving himself move by move, miracle by miracle. Hard work. Long work. He was willing to bleed for it.

On the tenth day of his succession, the heavy doors to the inner courtyard swung open with a groan.

Li Qingxue stepped through, robes whispering against the stone floor, the legendary spatial ring glinting on her finger like captured starlight.

"What is inside the ring?" Li Qingxue asked. "You accepted it with such... joy."

Alex felt a slow, unstoppable grin spread across his face. He lifted the ring, turning it so the afternoon light sparked across its surface.

"Inside this ring?" His voice was soft, almost reverent. "You will never believe it."

He paused, letting the moment stretch, savoring the flicker of curiosity that crossed the woman's usually impassive features.

"Whatever is stored inside belonged to the King of Estoria," Alex whispered, "and to the richest man in all of Prussia. With what's in here, I could build ten Wudang sects -each one grander than this-and still have enough left over to smile while I did it."

Li Qingxue's eyebrows lifted a fraction, the closest thing to shock the woman ever allowed herself.

Alex stood. Without another word he crossed the room, the ring now warm against his skin like a living thing. He stepped into the sect master's private building—the one that now belonged to him alone—and closed the tall doors behind him with a decisive click.

Then he did something no one in Wudang had ever seen.

He ordered every servant, every attendant, every lingering elder out.

"Leave," he said simply. "All of you. Now."

They obeyed. Footsteps hurried across polished floors. Doors slammed in the distance. When the last echo faded, silence wrapped the building like a cloak.

Only then did Alex raise the ring and pour his qi into it.

A low, powerful thrum filled the air. Space itself seemed to bend. From the ring's storage dimension rolled out something that did not belong in this world of swords and spirit energy—a sleek, midnight-black supercar, low and predatory, its lines so sharp they looked like they could cut the light.

Chrome accents caught the lantern glow and threw it back like liquid silver. The emblem on the hood gleamed: VOXEN LUCIFER.

His car.

Alex rested a small hand on the warm hood, feeling the faint vibration of dormant power beneath the carbon-fiber skin.

For a moment the weight of two worlds pressed down on his narrow shoulders— Prussia's gleaming future and Xia's ancient, stubborn past. He had the key to both now.

He smiled again, smaller this time, but sharper.

The real work was about to begin.

"I command every nano-bot inside the VOXEN to gather into core formation," he said, voice calm and precise, the way a general might issue an order that could change history.

The effect was immediate.

From every seam, every vent, every hidden port in the car, the nano-bots answered. Millions upon millions of them—each one no larger than a speck of dust-rose in a shimmering black cloud.

They swirled like living smoke, catching the light in tiny metallic glints, then coalesced into a single, perfect sphere the size of a marble that hovered above his palm.

Inside that tiny ball pulsed the combined intelligence of the most advanced technology Prussia had ever created. Each individual nano-bot carried its own miniature computer.

Together, they formed a supercomputer more powerful than anything this ancient world had ever imagined.

Alex smiled, small and sharp.

He reached into his spatial ring and withdrew a fist-sized chunk of rare, iridescent metal—specially engineered feedstock that could feed the swarm. He set it on the polished floor beside the hovering core.

"All nano-bots," he commanded, clear and steady, "begin replication protocol. Use the provided material. Copy yourselves exactly."

The sphere pulsed once. Then the swarm exploded outward again, a storm of microscopic machines that settled over the metal like a living blanket, they began to mine it at the atomic level, breaking it down and rebuilding it into perfect duplicates of themselves.

This was how Prussia's greatest minds had designed them: create one, program it with the blueprint, and let it birth an army. No factories. No assembly lines. Just pure, relentless exponential growth.

Four hours later, the first new generation appeared twice as many as before.

Another four hours, and the number doubled again. Then again. And again. One became two. Two became four. Four became eight. Sixteen. Thirty-two. The swarm grew in perfect silence, a quiet, unstoppable tide of progress.

In one week, Alex knew, he would have more than enough nano-bots to rebuild the entire Wudang sect from the ground up—stronger, smarter, and ready for the future he intended to force upon it.

While the replication continued, he pulled a small transparent band aid—the complete memory core of Gaia, the personal AI that had guided him since the day he first woke in this body.

He pressed it into the hovering core sphere. Lines of silver light flickered across its surface as the nano-bots absorbed the data, copied it perfectly, and prepared to spread it.

At the same

moment, across the

same week, Alex summoned every support drone still stored inside the ring. One by one they unfolded from hidden compartments sleek, silent machines that rose into the air like obedient shadows.

He directed them to the very center of the sect master's building, the heart of Wudang itself. There, in a wide, empty chamber that had once held only incense and prayer mats, the drones began their work.

They fused with the nano-swarm,

weaving together the foundation of

something far greater: the Mother AI. She would become the beating core of everything—security, knowledge, guidance, power. The silent ruler behind his throne.

When the final connection clicked into place, Alex let out a slow breath and felt a deep, quiet satisfaction settle in his chest.

"Great," he whispered, a genuine smile curving his lips. For the first time in days, the weight on his small shoulders felt lighter. "Now we only need to mass-produce the Gaia units."

He already knew exactly what they would look like: thin, transparent strips no bigger than a band-aid, designed to rest just below the ear. Each one would carry a full copy of Gaia—his personal AI, his constant companion.

They would whisper knowledge directly into the wearer's mind. Cultivation techniques. Herbal lore. Combat forms. Even the secret arts of the Shaolin monks and every great sects.

Every disciple, every elder, every outer sect member would have an invisible teacher that never slept, never judged, and never tired.

This single invention would lift the entire Wudang sect to heights it had never dreamed of.

The thought sent a quiet thrill through him. The real revolution had just begun.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 624[1,411 words]

One full month. That was how long it had taken-thirty grueling days of relentless production, sleepless nights, and quiet victories measured in exponential growth.

The swarm had multiplied beyond counting. The Mother AI now pulsed at the heart of the building like a living heartbeat.

And the first finished product rested in his small palm: a thin, transparent strip no larger than a band-aid, shimmering faintly under the lantern light.

He had chosen Lu Piao for this moment the sharp-eyed young man from Thousand Herb's Peak and the circle of trusted disciples who had followed him since the beginning.

They were the ones who understood loyalty and hungered for strength.

"Lu Piao," Alex called, his voice steady and low.

The disciple stepped forward, robes whispering across the polished floor. Alex extended his hand, offering the small device.

"You will use this technology."

Lu Piao took the strip between two fingers and turned it over, brow furrowed. "What is this?"

"It is artificial intelligence," Alex explained, calm and precise, the way a teacher might introduce a new scripture. "It will guide you, teach you, and help you grow stronger than you ever imagined. It was made by Prussia."

The words barely left his mouth before Lu Piao recoiled. He flung the device onto the table as if it had burned him.

"What Prussia?" he spat, face twisting with disgust. "This nasty thing... just touching it made me feel like I was betraying my Xia blood."

A flicker of disappointment crossed Alex's face, but he kept his expression neutral. He reached out, picked up the discarded strip with careful fingers, and laid it gently on the table.

"I'm sorry," he said softly. "That was the wrong one. You should use this."

From his spatial ring he drew out an identical band-aid, except this one carried a single elegant line etched along its edge: Made in Wudang.

Lu Piao's eyes widened. He stared at the new device, then at Alex, shock rippling across his features. "What? It's... made in Wudang? You created it?"

"Yes," Alex answered simply.

"It is so cool, I felt proud with my Xia's and Wudang's blood." A slow, eager grin spread across Lu Piao's face. "Of course I'll use it. Tell me how. This is incredible."

Inside, Alex felt a cold sneer curl through his chest. All it took was a change of label. Swap "Prussia" for "Wudang," and the same man who had thrown it away moments ago now reached for it like a sacred treasure.

The hypocrisy tasted bitter, but it also tasted like victory. He pushed the emotion down and kept his voice gentle.

"Just place it here," Alex said, demonstrating on his own small neck, right below the ear. "Press it gently against the skin. It will do the rest."

Lu Piao copied the motion exactly. The moment the strip touched his skin, it adhered seamlessly, becoming almost invisible. His eyes widened in shock. A soft gasp escaped him.

"What... I can hear a voice," he whispered. "And I see colors-words, images— floating right in front of me."

Alex nodded, a quiet pride warming his chest. "Yes. Just follow its guidance. You can learn anything from it-herbal lore, fighting techniques, cultivation methods, even the secret arts of the Shaolin monks. It never sleeps. It never tires. It will carry you forward."

"It's so cool," Lu Piao breathed, awe lighting up his entire face.

Alex allowed himself a small smile. He reached into the ring again and lifted a plain wooden box. Inside lay dozens of identical Gaia strips, each one ready to awaken a new mind.

"Now," he said, handing the box over, "you need to distribute these to every disciple at Thousand Herb's Peak."

Lu Piao took the box with both hands, reverence in his grip. "Yes, Sect Master."

"And when that's done," Alex continued, voice firm and clear, "distribute them to every peak. To every disciple. To every servant and slave. Not one person left out. Can you do that for me?"

"Sure," Lu Piao said, his voice ringing with absolute certainty. "If this is your command, Sect Master, who in all of Wudang would dare refuse?"

He bowed once, deep and respectful, then turned and strode from the hall with the wooden box cradled against his chest like a sacred relic.

Alex watched him turn and walk toward the door, the box cradled like something holy. For the first time in weeks, he felt the weight in his chest ease just a fraction.

Technology is made by lazy people for lazy people. He was too lazy to teach Wudang himself, so technology became the answer. This way, he could keep improving Wudang while still being lazy.

The revolution had begun—not with thunder and fire, but with a simple strip of transparent film and the quiet power of a label.

One mind at a time, Wudang would rise. And no one would ever know how deeply the future had already taken root.

Within a single week the

transformation swept through the mountain like wildfire. Every disciple at Thousand Herb's Peak received a Gaia strip. Then every outer disciple. Then every servant every laborer, every slave who had never before tasted power. The thin, transparent bands disappeared against skin and became invisible, but their presence changed everything.

Alex watched it happen from the quiet heart of the sect master's building. Through the newly awakened Mother Gaia—the vast intelligence now powered by trillions of nano-bots—he saw it all.

The core AI had already linked to every single Child Gaia on every wearer. It recorded their heartbeats, their breathing patterns, their smallest doubts and greatest ambitions.

It taught them. It guided them. It pushed them to become masters or monsters that Wudang had never seen before.

In one short month Alex knew the entire sect more intimately than any master before him. He knew their hidden fears, their darkest secrets, the quiet betrayals some had whispered only in their own minds.

None of it mattered to him. He did not care about their sins or their loyalties. He only cared about results.

"Mother Gaia," he said one quiet evening, voice steady and professional, "your new primary directive begins now. Convert every aspect of Wudang production to Prussia-standard efficiency."

"Traditional pift furnaces become

automated factories. Herb gardens become drone-managed hydroponic towers with accelerated growth cycles No more centuries of slow

tradition. We build the future here, today."

FindNovel.net

The AI's calm, feminine voice answered directly in his mind. "Directive received and acknowledged, Vice-Sect Master. Execution begins immediately."

And so the revolution took root.

Ancient alchemy halls echoed with the soft whirl of new machines. Rows of gleaming fabricators turned rare herbs into perfect pills at a rate no human hand could match.

Outside, on the once-sacred slopes, fleets of silent drones tended vast artificial gardens that bloomed under controlled light and nutrient mist.

Flying cargo craft moved silently between peaks, carrying supplies that had been ordered and delivered through systems no one in Xia had ever imagined. The entire sect had become a living engine of progress sleek, relentless.

unstoppable.

Alex felt a fierce, quiet pride settle in his chest. Yet he also knew the truth: his own

body still lagged behind. If he was ever going to protect himself, he needed to surpass even his original self from Estoria.

So he gave one final order.

"Mother Gaia, maintain full operations. Keep raising the technologies until they even surpass Prussia. If possible. I will enter closed cultivation."

He sealed the deepest chamber beneath the sect master's hall, stepped inside, and

let the world fade.

Ten years passed in a blink.

The old Sect Master emerged from his own long seclusion at dawn, robes still carrying the faint scent of cave stone and incense.

A rare, genuine smile softened the old master's weathered face. After a decade of relentless focus he had finally mastered the Nine Moons Wudang Sword Art-the pinnacle of their sect's legacy.

His steps were light, almost youthful, as he walked out of the hidden cave and into the open air he had missed for so long.

He paused at the ridge overlooking the main peaks, eager to see the home he had

left in Alex's hands. The smile lingered on his lips.

Then it died.

His mouth fell open in pure, wordless shock.

Drones hummed across the sky like silver bees, carrying crates of supplies stamped

with delivery codes he did not understand.

Sleek flying vehicles glided between the ancient pagodas, their engines whispering where horses and footpaths once ruled.

Below him, disciples moved in perfect forms, yet they fought against empty air— striking, dodging, parrying invisible opponents while their lips moved in quiet conversation with voices only they could hear.

Others stood motionless, eyes distant, absorbing knowledge straight into their

minds.

The old Sect Master's eyes widened until they burned.

"Is this... still Wudang?" he whispered.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 625[1,683 words]

The old sect master stood frozen on the mountain peak, his mind reeling from the unbelievable scenes unfolding in the courtyard below.

Drones buzzed through the air, carrying items back and forth like busy transport vehicles. In the distance, a disciple was even piloting something that could fly. None of it made any sense.

Before he could gather his thoughts, soft footsteps approached. Li Qingxue appeared at the edge of the peak and dropped into a deep, respectful bow.

"Congratulations, Master," she said, voice steady and warm. "Your closed-door cultivation is complete."

"Qingxue." The old man's words came out in a rush. "Tell me what in the nine heavens is happening here."

He swept his arm toward the entire Wudang Mountain, his voice cracking with disbelief. "Are we under attack? Has Xia fallen to Prussia? Is this... their doing?"

Li Qingxue straightened slowly, meeting his wild gaze with calm certainty. "No, Master. None of this belongs to the Prussians. Every piece was crafted by Jun Jiu. Which means, in every way that matters, it was made by Wudang."

The old master's eyes flew wide. For a long moment he simply stared at her, the color draining from his weathered face.

Even if a bird with four wings had landed on his shoulder and spoken his name, it would not have stunned him more than this single sentence.

"Wudang... can create things like these?" he whispered.

He took a shaky breath, then another. "Wait. Don't tell me that boy spent every last spiritual stone of the sect's savings to buy all this. Tell me he didn't touch the emergency reserves."

Li Qingxue hesitated. "I don't know the exact amount we were holding."

"Almost a million spiritual stones," the old master said, the words heavy on his tongue. "A hundred years my generation scraped and guarded every single one. Tell me he didn't use them."

"That much?" Li Qingxue's voice faltered for the first time.

The old master's hands trembled at his sides. "Yes. And if that boy spent them on trinkets, no matter how miraculous, then Wudang is finished. We are doomed the next time real danger comes."

Li Qingxue studied him for a quiet moment, then offered the only mercy she could. "Master, would you like me to accompany you to the storage vault? I think this needs to be seen with your own eyes. You won't believe me otherwise."

He gave a sharp, desperate nod. "Yes. Now."

They climbed the narrow mountain path in silence, the wind whipping at their robes. When they reached the peak and the heavy iron doors of the sect treasury came into view, the old master let out a long, defeated sigh. He already knew what he would find.

"Tell me," he said, voice barely above a whisper, "how much is left inside?"

Li Qingxue answered without flinching. "One hundred million spiritual stones." The old master's head snapped toward her. His eyes narrowed into a glare that could have cracked stone. "This is no time for jokes, Qingxue."

She met his stare evenly, unflinching. "I'm not joking, Master. That's exactly why I brought you here myself. I'm not permitted to enter the vault. You have to see it for yourself."

The old sect master pressed his palm against the ancient formation seal on the iron doors. A soft pulse of qi answered him, and the heavy panels swung inward with a low groan. He stepped inside and stopped cold.

The treasury vault he remembered had been a modest stone chamber carved into the mountain. What lay before him now stretched far deeper, its walls expanded and reinforced with gleaming new runes.

The air hummed with fresh power. Row after row of wooden crates filled the expanded space, stretching into the shadows until the eye lost count. Endless. Impossible.

He walked forward on unsteady legs, lifted the lid of the nearest crate, and stared. It was packed to the brim with spiritual stones—pure, flawless, glowing with soft white light. He moved to the next crate, then the next. Every one of them overflowed.

More than a million stones. Easily.

A hundred million stones?

His throat tightened. For five hundred years he, his master, and his grandmaster had bled and sacrificed to hoard a single million. They had skipped meals, delayed repairs, turned away promising disciples because there simply wasn't enough. And now, in barely ten years, that boy Jun Jiu had turned the sect's reserves into... this.

He turned slowly to Li Qingxue, voice rough. "Did he rob someone?"

She shook her head, calm as still water. "Not that I know of, Master."

"Then where in the nine hells did all these stones come from?"

Li Qingxue met his stunned gaze. "Right now the sect has thirty major streams of income. The three largest are our new mines, our medicine halls, and weapon sales."

"Mines?" The word cracked out of him like a whip. "The last spiritual stone mine on record ran dry five hundred years ago. I studied the scrolls myself."

Li Qingxue gave a small, almost apologetic smile. "We have three active spiritual stone mines now. And two metal mines besides."

The old master's knees nearly buckled. "How?"

"Jun Jiu sent teams with scouting drones. They spent an entire year mapping the unexplored regions around the sect. Then they found the new veins."

He stood there, the weight of two thousand years of history pressing down on his shoulders. The sect's founder had torn open a gate to this planet two millennia ago, claiming it as a training ground for Wudang.

The world was vast larger than anyone had ever truly grasped but the sect had clung to one small corner for centuries.

There had never been enough disciples, enough resources, enough courage to venture beyond the familiar forests and mountains. As far back as living memory reached, the rest of the planet had been nothing but trees, beasts, and silence. Yet Jun Jiu had simply... looked. And the planet had answered.

"And they were productive?" the old master asked, barely trusting his own voice.

"Extremely," Li Qingxue said. "All three spiritual stone mines are rich. The yield is steady and high."

He rubbed a hand over his face, trying to steady the storm inside his chest. Pride warred with disbelief and a sharp edge of fear.

The boy had done what generations of cautious elders never dared. But success on this scale brought its own dangers.

"How many disciples did you send to work the mines?" he asked, the practical leader in him rising through the shock. "You know our numbers are limited. We can't strip the sect bare just to chase wealth."

Li Qingxue's expression stayed steady, but her eyes held a quiet respect. "That's the next part I need to show you, Master. The numbers... they might surprise you even more. Would you like to see the mine yourself, Master?"

The old sect master could only nod. Discovering new mines had been the impossible dream of his own

master, his grandmaster, and

he could

himself for as long as he could remember. Now the dream had been handed to him on a silver platter,

and he needed to witness it with his own eyes.

In the hours that followed, the two of them rose into the sky without swords or talismans. At their level Core Formation true flight came as naturally as breathing. Wind rushed past their robes as they streaked toward the distant range.

"You've advanced a great deal," the old master observed, glancing sideways at her steady form cutting through the air.

Li Qingxue's smile was small but genuine. "With the elixirs Jun Jiu provided and the new teachings he introduced, it has become... difficult not to progress."

The old master's face tightened.

He still remembered the countless times ten years ago she had stood in this very sky, shoulders slumped, complaining that every small step forward felt like climbing a mountain with bare hands.

Now she spoke as if cultivation had become effortless. The contrast hit him harder

than he expected. He pushed the uncomfortable thought aside and turned his gaze downward.

Far below, a

wide maw had been

carved into the mountainside. Sleek

mining drones-black, silent, and

eerily efficient-streamed in and out like a colony of metallic bees. Each

one emerged carrying crates brimming with raw spiritual stones,

the glow visible even from this height. The flow never slowed. It looked endless.

"All mining operations run entirely by machine," Li Qingxue said. "We don't commit a

single disciple to the work."

"No disciple?"

"Not even one," Li Qingxue replied.

The old master stood there, utterly shocked. He turned a silent, stunned gaze toward the automated mining system. With no disciples forced to labor as miners, the sight was truly amazing.

"How much are they producing?" the old master asked, his voice tight.

Li Qingxue answered without hesitation. "According to the latest data, the three mines together yield roughly one million spiritual stones per month."

His eyes flew open. For a long, stunned second he simply hovered there, the wind whipping at his beard.

One million stones. Every month.

He and his master and his grandmaster had bled, scrimped, and sacrificed for five hundred years just to gather that same amount once. And now the sect generated it in the space of thirty days.

The realization settled over him like cold stone: they had been poor. Generations of careful, fearful elders had been poor. He didn't know whether to laugh or weep. "And Qingxue," he managed, shaking his head slowly, "you mentioned income from medicine as well?"

"Yes, Master. Her tone stayed calm, almost gentle, as though she understood the storm raging inside him. "There's a great deal more to see. Shall we head to Thousand Herb Peak? think you'll want to see

this next part in person."

They flew in silence. When the familiar peak came into view, the old master's breath caught sharply in his throat.

"Are you certain this is Thousand Herb Peak?" he asked, voice barely above a whisper.

Ten years ago the tallest structure here had been a humble three-story wooden hall, weathered and modest.

Now the entire slope blazed with sleek, towering buildings—twenty of them at least —each one rising fifty stories into the clouds.

Glass and polished stone caught the sunlight like a modern metropolis. The architecture was clean, bold, almost alien, reminiscent of the grand cities of Prussia he had only seen in ancient scrolls.

The old master stared, heart hammering against his ribs. "What... what in the nine heavens has happened to Thousand Herb Peak?"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 626[2,078 words]

The old sect master hovered in mid-air, robes fluttering in the high mountain wind, his jaw slack as he stared down at the transformed peak.

Li Qingxue floated beside him. "It is still Thousand Herb Peak, Master. Only... improved."

Improved? The word felt like mockery. Where once a humble wooden hall had stood -three stories of weathered timber, roof tiles cracked by centuries of rain and snow -now rose a forest of towering structures.

Twenty buildings at least, each fifty stories high, their walls gleaming with metal and polished stone and something smooth and transparent like frozen water.

No thatch. No carved beams. No familiar scent of aged pine and herbal smoke. Just cold, hard lines that screamed of foreign craft.

"These materials," he rasped, pointing a trembling finger. "Wood has always served us. It breathes with the mountain. These... these things are metal and stone and..... whatever that clear substance is. They feel wrong. Cold. Dead."

Li Qingxue's voice stayed gentle. "They are fireproof, Master. A single spark once burned half the old herb halls to ash in the Great Fire. You surely remember how many times the buildings burned back then—we would rebuild them, and they would burn again. This time, Jun Jiu designed these walls to never burn again. Even if a Nascent Soul cultivator unleashed heaven-fire here, the buildings would stand."

The old master's eyes widened further. Fireproof? The very idea was blasphemous to every tradition he knew.

Before he could protest, Li Qingxue gestured downward. "Shall we go inside? The production lines are running now. You will understand better once you see."

They descended together, landing on a wide platform of smooth gray stone that felt unnaturally warm beneath their sandals. A pair of massive metal doors-taller than three men-slid open with a soft hiss, revealing a brightly lit hall that stretched farther than the eye could track.

The old master stepped inside and froze mid-stride.

Gone were the rows of wooden tables where disciples once sat for hours, pounding herbs with stone mortars, mixing by hand, chanting formation spells with every pill. Instead, the space hummed with machines. Sleek black and silver contraptions moved in perfect rhythm-arms of metal spinning, tubes glowing with soft blue light, conveyor belts carrying trays of fresh herbs straight from the outer gardens. The air smelled clean, sharp, almost clinical.

"What sorcery is this?" he shocked beyond believe.

"Not sorcery," Li Qingxue said, walking beside him. "Jun Jiu calls it automation. Every step that once took a hundred hands now happens here, faster and cleaner. Healing pills. Strength pills.

Bone-mending pills. Even the simple food pills that disciples used to eat during closed-door training. All of them are made by machine now."

A nearby line caught his eye. Fresh spirit ginseng roots still dripping with morning dew—rode a belt into a sealed chamber. Inside, blades flashed, liquids bubbled, and glowing runes flared in perfect sequence. Seconds later, finished golden pills rolled out the other side, each one identical, each one radiating pure medicinal qi.

Li Qingxue pointed to a small worker standing at a control panel, palms pressed to a formation plate. "Only a few disciples are needed now. They simply channel their spiritual energy into the final infusion step. Everything else is handled by the machines."

The old master watched, stunned, as tray after tray of perfect pills emerged. "How much is the production now? It seems a lot."

The old master remembered that if he pushed the thousand herb peak elders to create this many pills, the next day all the disciples would already be protesting and running away. But with this machine they could keep up production. And it was all automatic—he barely saw any disciples here.

Li Qingxue explained. "In the old days... one year of labor by the entire herb hall might produce one hundred thousand pills. And half would lose potency before the year was out."

"Now the same number is made in ten days. And the packaging is different too." She lifted a small bottle from a finished tray and handed it to him.

It was not the familiar clay or glass vial sealed with wax and string. This one was wrapped in a thin, silvery material that felt cool and impossibly light. When he poured a pill into his palm, the spiritual energy inside it felt as vibrant as the day it was born.

"Refined spirit-jade foil and qi-locking barrier films," Li Qingxue explained. "Jun Jiu says the old bottles let the medicinal qi leak away. After one or two years, half the efficacy would be gone. After five years, three-quarters lost. These new packages hold the energy almost perfectly. Ten full years, and the pill loses barely ten percent of its power."

The old master turned the bottle over in his hands again and again, as if it might vanish if he blinked. His mind reeled. Hand-made coconut pills—laborious, sacred, passed down through generations—had been replaced by this... this factory of steel and light.

He walked deeper into the complex, Li Qingxue at his side. Each new hall showed another miracle. One floor produced Qi Condensation pills at a rate that would have made the old sect weep with joy. Another floor sealed emergency healing kits that could save a dying Core Formation elder in minutes. Workers—only a handful moved with calm precision, their only task to add the final touch of human qi where the machines could not.

Everywhere he looked, the old ways of Xia had been overwritten by something straight out of Prussian legend: endless production, perfect uniformity, ruthless efficiency. The very air hummed with the quiet power of it all.

The old master stopped in the center of the largest hall, surrounded by the ceaseless rhythm of machines, and slowly sank to his knees on the spotless floor. His hands pressed against the cool stone as if he needed to feel something solid.

"Qingxue..." His voice cracked. "We spent centuries grinding herbs by hand, praying that a single batch would not fail. We lost entire harvests to fire, to mold, to simple human error. And now... this."

Li Qingxue knelt beside him, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder.

"Jun Jiu said the old way was honorable," she said softly. "But the new way keeps more disciples alive, lets more of them reach higher realms, and protects the sect far better than fear and scarcity ever could."

"Master, you should try each of these pills," Li Qingxue said, offering him an assortment of pills. The old sect master had always personally checked the quality before selling any product in the past.

When he ate the alignment pill, the strengthening pill, and many other pills—one of each of the twenty-five kinds—the more he consumed them, the more his tears fell.

Even the pills created by the machine were two to five times better than those hand-made by the best disciples.

Li Qingxue then showed him the sheet listing the cost of each pill and the resulting profit.

The old master was shocked. He had assumed that pills two or five times more potent would come with much higher costs. But in truth, they now cost only about thirty to fifty percent of the normal price. As a result, her profit was astonishingly high.

Faster to produce, cheaper, and significantly more potent — all while generating extremely high profits.

Nothing beats the power of capitalism and industrialization.

The old master stared at the endless line of glowing pills marching past him like a silver river.

For the first time in his long life, he did not know whether to laugh, to cry, or to run back to his cave and pretend none of this had ever happened.

Everything he had been doing until now looked like a failure in the face of all this.

All he could manage was a broken whisper:

"Show me the rest, Qingxue. I... I need to see everything."

Li Qingxue bowed once, her expression soft with understanding. "As you wish, Master. The rare herb gardens are the heart of it all. Follow me."

They rose into the sky again, streaking northward over the transformed mountain range. The old sect master's heart still hammered from the medicine halls, but nothing could have prepared him for what lay ahead.

Ten years ago, the rare herb gardens

had been a modest terraced

slope-ng larger than three rice paddies where disciples knelt in the mud for hours, coaxing delicate spiritual fruits and ancient spirit plants to grow under careful hand-tended formations Now, as they crested the final ridge, the old master's eyes bulged so wide they threatened to leave their sockets.

Below them stretched an ocean of green and gold.

The gardens were not gardens anymore.

They were a vast, living sea of cultivation treasures that covered the entire valley

and spilled across three neighboring mountains-easily a hundred times the size of

the old plots.

Endless rows of glowing spiritual

fruits hung heavy on engineered trees. Rare thousand-year blood lotus bloomed in crystal ponds the size of lakes. Angient violet moon ginseng, once so scarce that finding even one stalk was cause for sect-wide celebration, grew in neat, regimented fields that stretched to the horizon.

And every single plant was tended by machines.

Hundreds of sleek white drones hummed through the air like mechanical butterflies, their arms extending with surgical precision.

Some sprayed shimmering nutrient mists, others gently pruned leaves with beams of soft light, while larger harvest drones drifted low, plucking ripe fruits and depositing them into hovering collection baskets. Artificial intelligence—Jun Jiu's invisible guiding hand-controlled every movement.

Soil moisture, spiritual qi density, sunlight angle, even the exact second a fruit reached perfect ripeness... all of it calculated and executed without a single human finger touching the earth.

The old master's mouth fell open in a silent, stunned O. He could not speak. He could barely breathe.

Li Qingxue hovered beside him. "The drones handle seeding, watering, growth monitoring, and harvesting. They work day and night, never tiring, never making mistakes. The entire process is closed-loop and perfect. What once took a hundred disciples working for months can now be done by these machines in days."

She pointed to a cluster of particularly radiant plants-seven-colored spirit orchids, so rare that even the old scrolls claimed they bloomed only once every three centuries. A small group of disciples stood at the edge of the plot, palms pressed lightly to formation pillars, gently channeling their qi into the air. "Only for the most delicate and spiritually sensitive herbs do we still need human touch," Li Qingxue explained. "The disciples rotate in shifts. Their only duty is to infuse pure qi at the final growth stage. Everything else... the machines do." The old master's hands trembled as he stared at the impossible expanse. In his youth, the sect had been forced to ration even common spirit grass. Elders had died protecting a single patch of rare herbs from beast attacks.

Now entire mountainsides of the rarest treasures in existence swayed gently in the breeze, guarded not by sword formations or blood oaths, but by silent, tireless drones.

He had dreamed of abundance like this in his most fevered meditations-visions of

a sect so rich in spiritual medicine that every disciple could cultivate without fear of scarcity.

But those had been dreams. Fantasies. The kind of wild hope an old man allowed himself only in the quiet hours before dawn.

This... this was real.

A single harvest drone floated past them, its basket overflowing with luminous golden fruits that pulsed with dense medicinal qi. The old master reached out instinctively, fingers brushing the cool metal of the drone's shell as it passed. It felt solid. Real. Not an illusion.

His voice finally broke free, cracked and awed. "Qingxue... this valley... these mountains... all of it..."

"Yes, Master," she said quietly. "Hundreds times larger. And the yield is a thousand times greater than ten years ago. Jun Jiu mapped the spiritual veins of the entire région. He adjusted the soil the formations, even the weather patterns with climate arrays. The

plants grow stronger, faster, purer than anything our ancestors could have imagined."

The old sect master's knees buckled in mid-air. He would have fallen if Li Qingxue

had not gently caught his arm. Tears—actual tears—glistened at the corners of his weathered eyes.

In two thousand years of Wudang history, no sect master had ever witnessed such a sight.

He had expected ruin when he emerged from seclusion. Instead, he had found a paradise no ancestor had dared to dream of.

His lips moved soundlessly for a long moment before he managed a broken

whisper: "Take me closer, Qingxue. Let me... touch one of the fruits. I need to feel it with my own hands... or I fear my old heart will convince me this is nothing but a dying man's final delusion."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 627[1,740 words]

Li Qingxue's hand rested lightly on his arm, steadying him as they drifted downward. She guided him through the humming sea of green until they hovered just above a cluster of seven-colored spirit orchids.

Their petals shimmered like living jewels, pulsing with dense medicinal qi. The old master reached out with trembling fingers and plucked one ripe fruit from a low branch. It was warm, heavy, and perfect—its skin velvety beneath his callused palm.

Real. It was all real.

He had once heard from his master that whenever this fruit appeared in the world, Murim warriors would slaughter one another just to claim it. Hundreds had died for a single fruit, as it could boost one's cultivation by fifty years.

Yet now, with all these fruits lying before him, no one was fighting for them.

Truly, times had changed.

He closed his eyes for a long moment, then slipped it into his robe like a sacred relic. "Lead on, Qingxue," he said, voice rough with emotion. "Show me the rest of the Peaks. Every single one."

She bowed once, eyes soft with understanding, and together they rose into the sky.

Over the next hours they swept across the entire mountain range, peak by peak. Each stop struck the old master like a fresh blow to the chest.

As they swept over Spirit Array Peak, the old master stared in stunned silence. A majestic lattice of towering crystalline spires now crowned the mountain, each one glowing with soft, pulsing light like living pillars of starlight. The air around them hummed with raw power.

Li Qingxue floated beside him, her voice calm and clear. "This peak is only the central command hub, Master. These towers can activate powerful protective formations across the entire Wudang Sect in seconds. But we've built dozens more along the outer borders and mountain ridges. They form a giant net that constantly pulls spiritual energy from every direction-the forests, the rivers, the sky itself—and channels it straight into the heart of the sect."

She gestured across the vast landscape below. "The result is remarkable. The concentration of spiritual qi has increased nearly a hundred

all of Wu

times compared to ten years ago. The air itself feels thicker now, richer, almost alive with power."

Li Qingxue's tone carried quiet pride as she finished. "We have thousands of formations interlocking perfectly, cycling and reinforcing each other without pause. They don't just protect us. They nourish every blade of grass, every disciple, and every building in our domain."

The old master's breath caught in his throat. A hundred times the spiritual energy. In ten short years. He could feel the difference even now-the qi pressing gently against his skin like a warm, endless tide. What had once required constant effort and costly pills now flowed freely, like breathing.

He swallowed hard, the weight of generations of struggle pressing on his chest.

By the time they reached Blacksmith Peak, the old master's heart felt battered raw. He had expected the familiar ring of hammers on anvils, the roar of forges, the sweat and song of disciples laboring for days to birth a single blade. Instead, the entire peak had transformed into a humming cathedral of industry.

Sleek drones-dozens of them-glided silently through open-air foundries, melting raw ore harvested from the new mines and pouring it into precise molds. Molten metal flowed like liquid starlight, shaped in seconds by arrays of glowing runes.

No more back-breaking labor. No more weeks of hammering. The drones produced flawless ingots of spiritual steel, each one purer and stronger than anything the sect had forged in centuries.

The blacksmith disciples-only a handful now-stood at wide design tables in a sunlit hall, sketching weapon blueprints. Their brushes moved with calm focus, refining elegant curves and lethal edges.

They never touched the raw metal. Their only role came at the very end: when a finished blade emerged from the final quenching chamber, a disciple would step forward, press both palms to the hilt, and pour their own spiritual energy into it, awakening the weapon's spirit.

The old master stared, jaw tight, as another perfect sword slid out of a machine- gleaming, balanced, already humming with latent power. "They... they don't forge anymore," he whispered. "They design. The machines do everything else."

Before he could say more, a tall elder in a soot-stained robe hurried forward, bowing deeply. Elder Bao, master of the peak, had aged well in the decade the old master had been gone. His eyes sparkled with quiet pride.

"Welcome back, Sect Master," Elder Bao said, voice warm. "I see Qingxue has been giving you the tour. If I may be so bold... your weapon looks a little dated. Would you allow me to present you with something better? We have several new models ready for Core Formation experts."

The old master's hand instinctively dropped to the hilt of his sacred blade_Cloud- Piercing Sword, one of only three such treasures in the entire Wudang sect.

Forged four hundred years ago by the greatest blacksmith master of that era, the blade could slice through mountains yet still retain its razor-sharp edge. Pride flared hot in his chest.

"This sword has served me through three great wars," he said, drawing it with a ringing chime. "It is no ordinary weapon. I doubt your new toys could match it."

Elder Bao smiled-not mocking, simply certain and reached casually to a nearby rack. He selected a sleek black blade at random. The sword looked unassuming, its edge catching the light like dark glass.

"This one cost us roughly three hundred thousand spiritual stones to produce," he said mildly. "High-grade spiritual steel, triple-layered rune matrix, self-sharpening core. Please, Master. Test it against yours. No harm in a friendly clash."

The old master snorted. "You would break your own blade, Elder. Cloud-Piercing has never been bested."

He raised the sword and brought it down in a clean, controlled arc. Steel met steel with a sound like a thunderclap.

The ring of impact echoed across the peak.

Then-crack.

Cloud-Piercing Sword snapped clean in two. The upper half spun away and clattered across the stone floor, its broken edge dull and ordinary.

The old master stood frozen, staring at the jagged stump in his hand. His sacred blade his pride, his legacy-lay ruined at his feet like a child's wooden toy.

Elder Bao lowered his own sword, expression gentle. "The new forging process raises the base quality far beyond what we could achieve by hand. Even our standard blades now outclass the old masterpieces. Ten years, Master. That's all it took."

Silence stretched between them, broken only by the soft hum of machines in the distance.

The old master's knees trembled. He slowly sheathed the broken half of his sword, fingers numb.

A decade of seclusion, and the world he had protected with blood and bone had left him behind. His greatest treasure, reduced to scrap in a single careless swing. The old master looked up at Li Qingxue and Elder Bao, his eyes glistening with a storm of raw emotion—pride, disbelief, and a deep, aching worry that refused to fade.

"Still..." he sighed, the sound heavy and tired. "I've walked through nearly every peak now. Everywhere I turn, drones and machines are doing the work. I hardly see any disciples anymore. Are we chasing wealth and materials so hard that we've forgotten how to raise our own people? If we trade cultivation for profit, we lose the very heart of Wudang."

Li Qingxue bowed deeply, her posture perfect with respect. "Master, ten years ago when you entered seclusion, the sect had ninety-seven thousand disciples. Roughly one thousand had reached Foundation Establishment, and only three elders and you had stepped into Core Formation."

The old master nodded slowly. "Yes. That is exactly the Wudang I left in Jun Jiu's hands. But now... I barely see our people at all."

Li Qingxue continued. "Master, may I ask—at the height of our glory, when the founder still walked these mountains, how many disciples did Wudang command?"

The old master lifted his gaze to the

distant sky, his expression turning solemn as old memories stirred. "My own master once told me that in our

дм?

goldenage, we stood at three hundred thousand disciples. Five thousand in Foundation Establishment fifty in Cope Formation, and one Nascent Soul—our founder himself. That was

when Wudang ruled the entire

murim world. Even the kings of Xia

called our founder brother."

Li Qingxue bowed once more, then spoke the words that stopped his heart.

"Master..... right now, Wudang has five hundred thousand disciples."

The old master choked. "Five hundred thousand?"

"Yes," Li Qingxue said steadily. "And twenty thousand of them have already reached Foundation Establishment."

"Twenty thousand?" The old master staggered back a step, his face pale. In his entire long life, he had never been struck this hard. The shocks of this single day already outweighed everything he had endured in the past two hundred years combined.

Li Qingxue pressed on, gentle but unflinching. "We currently have four hundred Core Formation experts. Our target is one thousand within the next five years." The old master stared at her, heart hammering against his ribs. "You're joking... right? Four hundred Core Formation experts? That's impossible."

Li Qingxue shook her head, a small, knowing smile on her lips. "With spiritual energy so thick you can practically chew it, plus the

high-grade pills and spiritual fel

we churn out every day, cultivation has become ridiculously easy. These days many new disciples bres

through just by eating well and sleeping like logs. Honestly, if they

worked any harder, they'd probably

ascend even faster."

The old master stared at her as if she had just suggested robbing his ancestors'

graves and using their bones as cultivation aids.

Eat... and sleep? To raise cultivation?

His face twisted like he had bitten into a lemon marinated in vinegar for a hundred years. Madness. Pure, unfiltered madness.

He rubbed a hand over his face, trying to steady the whirlwind inside him. "Tell me the truth, Qingxue. Why is Jun Jiu doing all of this? What is his real purpose behind turning our sect into... this?"

Li Qingxue hesitated for the first

time, choosing her words with care. "Jun Jiu once said he made a promise with you. In five years Xia's time, he intends to lead the Mum Alliance. And accept him peacefully... he will use

as they refuse to

every person we have built here to

storm the Alliance and take it by force. In his own words, Master-he

is building an army."

The old master's mouth fell open in pure disbelief. "Building... an army?"

Silence stretched between them, thick and heavy.

Finally, in a hoarse whisper, he asked, "Where is he now?"

Li Qingxue met his gaze directly. "He is already in Xia. He has gone ahead to prepare and will soon open a new path for us there."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 628[1,870 words]

Alex stepped through the Wudang's gates and lifted into the air, the wind whipping past him as he flew toward Qingshui City.

Moments later the familiar rooftops of the Bai family estate came into view, sprawling across the hillside like a fortress carved from white stone and ancient timber.

The moment his boots touched the flagstones of the inner courtyard, every servant and guard froze. Faces turned, eyes wide with shock. Then, almost as one, the nearest attendants dropped into deep bows.

"Welcome back, City Lord," they murmured.

Alex raised a hand, cutting the chorus short. "Send someone for Zhuge Liang. Now."

"Yes, City Lord." One guard straightened, already moving. He sprinted for the outer gate without another word.

Alex stood in the sudden quiet, the sun warm on his shoulders.

Soft footsteps sounded behind him. Bai Yuhan emerged from the main hall, her silk robes whispering against the stone. She stopped a respectful distance away, hands folded.

"Big Brother," she said, voice bright with surprise. "I never thought you would return so soon."

He gave her a single nod. "Only temporary. How have you been?"

"I'm well, Brother." She bowed again, lower this time, the picture of dutiful sister.

Alex studied her for half a second. She wasn't his real sister-never had been. He still didn't know what to do with her. "Off with you, then," he said, waving her away.

She lingered. "Big Brother... about the gold."

He cut her off before the plea could fully form. "What? Already gone? Fine. Here."

From the storage ring on his finger he drew a heavy wooden chest and set it on the ground between them.

Bai Yuhan's eyes widened.

"Big Brother," she whispered.

"Take it," he said, voice flat. "Whenever you need more, just come to me. No games."

"Thank you, Big Brother." She dipped into another bow, then hurried forward and seized the chest by its iron handles. The box was far heavier than anything she had carried before; her arms trembled with the strain.

In the past she would have complained, stamped her foot, thrown one of her famous tantrums. Today she only smiled wider, as if the ache in her shoulders was the sweetest gift he could have given.

Alex turned away without watching her struggle off with the gold. He crossed the wide courtyard to the open training ground beyond the main buildings.

There, he reached into the ring again and produced four sleek satellites, each the size of a cow. He set them down in a neat line, powered them on with a flick of his wrist, and stepped back.

The rocket thruster beams activated with a rising whine. In seconds the satellites shot skyward, climbing fast and straight until they were nothing but four dark specks against the clouds.

"My satellites," he muttered, grim satisfaction settling over him. Over time, he would keep launching more satellites so he could remain connected to Mother Gaia from anywhere in the sky.

He continued into the quiet of his private quarters, sliding the heavy door shut behind him. From the ring he drew one last object: a very large, matte-black sphere the size of an elephant. He set it carefully on the middle of the room. This would become the new Mother AI for Qingshui City.

His mind was already moving ahead.

He would link the Wudang Sect's trade routes to the city's markets, flooding Qingshui with their rare herbs, weapons, and spirit pills. The people here needed steady work, steady coin. And he needed a new army.

A respectful knock sounded from outside.

"City Lord," a calm voice called. "Zhuge Liang has arrived to answer your summons."

Alex exhaled once, then walked back into the sunlight. There, waiting in the courtyard, stood the middle-aged strategist—back straight, hands clasped behind him, eyes sharp and steady.

The real work could finally begin.

Alex crooked a finger. "Come here."

Zhuge Liang crossed the courtyard in three measured strides, hands still clasped behind his back. "Any commands, City Lord?"

Without warning Alex reached out and pressed a slim transparent band against the base of Zhuge Liang's neck. The device locked on with a soft click, cool metal warming instantly against skin.

Words flared to life in the air before the strategist's eyes—crisp, glowing blue text hovering like ghosts. Schematics. Maps. Real-time city data. Even he, the sharpest mind in Qingshui, rocked back a half-step, stunned.

"This..." Zhuge Liang's voice came out hoarse. "I heard the Prussians were developing something like this."

Alex snorted. "Prussians? This was built by Wudang."

Zhuge Liang's gaze snapped to him. "Wudang? Impossible. They don't possess this kind of technology."

"They do now." Alex folded his arms. "There's a man named Jun Jiu in the sect. Once-in-ten-thousand-years genius. He became the sect master's chosen successor for a reason."

Zhuge Liang stared at the floating interface a moment longer, then gave a slow, stunned nod. "So the stories from the trader with the Wudang were right after all."

"Believe the rumors you've been hearing from the traders. They're true. Jun Jiu is truly amazing."

Alex reached into the ring again and produced a heavy wooden crate. He set it down with a solid thud and flipped the lid open. Inside, dozens of identical transparent bands gleamed under the sunlight.

"I want every single person in Qingshui City wearing one of these by week's end," he said. "No exceptions."

Zhuge Liang bowed low, but his expression stayed troubled. "City Lord... I fear that will be difficult to achieve."

Alex's brow tightened. "Why?"

"Some still cling to your uncle's old faction. They refuse to accept our authority. The judge and the magistrates are the worst. I've tried to bring them to heel, but the old regime is like deep-rooted weeds-hard to pull out completely."

A dangerous smile curved Alex's mouth. "Good. So the City Lord gives an order and they choose to ignore it." His voice dropped, cold and quiet. "Tell me exactly who they are."

Zhuge Liang listed the names, each one laced with careful distaste.

"Show me where they're hiding," Alex said, his voice flat. "I'll deal with them myself."

A wave of qi wrapped around Zhuge Liang without touching him. Alex lifted his hand slightly, and the strategist rose smoothly into the air beside him.

"Core Formation..." he breathed. "You reached it... in only a few months?" Both of them shot upward and flew together over the estate rooftops.

"Over there," Zhuge Liang said, pointing toward the eastern wing while fighting to keep his voice steady. "The magistrate's office. They're meeting inside right now."

Alex gave a sharp nod. They descended in a silent rush of wind and landed without a sound just outside the heavy double doors. A gentle pulse of qi lowered Zhuge Liang to the stones beside him.

"All you old bastards," Alex's voice cracked across the entire estate like a whip, dripping with mocking contempt, "get out here. Now."

Inside the magistrate's hall, the urgent whispering died instantly. The half-dozen elderly officials froze around the lacquered table as the insolent words sliced through the thick wooden doors and echoed off the walls.

A heartbeat of stunned silence.

Then the heavy double doors exploded open with a thunderous bang.

All of them stormed out in a whirlwind of silk and fury, faces flushed purple with rage. These were proud, powerful men-men who had spent decades watching others bow, tremble, and obey without question.

No one had ever dared address them with such open contempt. Whoever this insolent fool was, they would see him broken and thrown into the deepest cell before the sun touched the horizon.

Then they saw him.

"Bai Xiaochun?" one of them hissed, shock ripping the fury from his voice. "What are you doing here?"

"Do you think that just because you're the city lord, you can look down on us?" another official snarled.

"We will send a petition straight to the king!" a third spat, face twisted with rage. "We'll see how arrogant you can still be once you've been kicked out of your position as city lord!"

Alex didn't answer. He simply raised his hand and snapped his fingers.

Six sleek transparent bands shot forward like striking snakes and locked onto the backs of their necks with soft, final clicks. The Gaia nano-bots pierced skin and flooded their nervous systems before any of the men could flinch. Glowing blue text and commands flared to life in front of their eyes.

"What the hell is this?" one elder snarled, clawing uselessly at his neck.

"Six old bastards," Alex said, voice low and lethal, "take off your clothes. And dance."

"Bai Xiaochun, you wretched little bastard!" the lead elder roared, veins bulging. "How dare you do this to us? Don't think we won't petition the king himself and have

you stripped of your position—"

The threat died in his throat.

Their bodies betrayed them.

Hands moved against their will, tearing at sashes and belts. Luxurious robes and jackets slid to the stone floor one by one until the six old high-ranking officials stood trembling in nothing but their thin undergarments, dignity stripped bare under the open sky.

Then the nightmare deepened.

In perfect, horrifying synchronization their legs lifted high, arms flowed in graceful arcs, and their bodies began an elegant ballet spinning, leaping, kicking with unnatural precision and beauty. The sight would have been mesmerizing if it weren't so grotesque.

"What is happening to me?!" one screamed, eyes wild with terror.

"My body... it's moving on its own!"

"What kind of evil sorcery is this? Stop it!"

They danced on, forced smiles frozen on their faces while pure panic burned in their

eyes. Proud men reduced to puppets in the middle of the courtyard, their every graceful movement a fresh knife of humiliation.

Alex watched without blinking, a cold satisfaction settling deep in his chest. He reached into his storage ring, pulled out a large wooden crate, and dropped it onto

the flagstones with a heavy thud. Inside lay thousands gleaming transparent Gaia bands.

"Listen carefully," he said, voice

cutting through their panicked cries.

"You will take this box and distribute

every single one of these devices to your families your subordinates, and your entire factions. You have

twenty-four hours. If even one person is missing a band by noon tomorrow, your brains will explode inside your skulls."

The six men choked on their own breath, still dancing helplessly as invisible strands

of qi jerked their limbs like puppets on strings. Tears of rage and fear streaked their wrinkled faces.

"You don't want to answer?" Alex sneered. "Fine. Then I command you to kneel and say 'yes' to me."

No matter how desperately they resisted, their bodies betrayed them. One by one,

the proud officials crashed to their knees and bowed low before him, their voices shaking with humiliated fury as they choked out the word.

Alex turned to Zhuge Liang, who stood a few paces back, his face pale with unease.

"Zhuge Liang," he said calmly, "tell me which divisions still dare to protest against me?"

Zhuce Liang swallowed hard. "City Lord... if you continue like this, the people will brand you a tyrant. A ruthless dictator. Even a demon."

Alex stepped closer and laid a firm hand on the strategist's shoulder, squeezing once.

"You're right," he said, a dark smile touching his lips. "I am a tyrant. I am a dictator.

Even a demon. So we'll do things my way."

For the rest of that day and long into

the night, the streets of Qingshui City erupted. Angry shouts and bitter

curses rang from every corner, every market and every alley. The name Bai Xiaochun City Lord echoed everywhere, spoken with raw fear, open hatred, and defiant fury.

The storm Alex had unleashed had only just begun.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 629[2,092 words]

In the quiet hush of the Bai Mansion, morning light spilled across the polished wooden floors of the great hall. Alex sat in a high-backed chair, Lord Bai in every sense—ruler, protector, architect of a new order. Across from him, Zhuge Liang leaned forward, his scholar's robes draped neatly, eyes sharp with the weight of centuries of strategy.

"Lord Bai," Zhuge Liang said, "are you certain you want to hand out a single Wudang strengthening pill to every person who accepts the band-aid Gaia? These pills are ruinously expensive. One dose could feed an entire family for a month."

Alex frowned, the lines deepening between his brows. "They're my people. What's wrong with giving my own the very best? Even a farmer feeds his pigs the finest grain if he wants them strong."

Zhuce Liang fell silent for a moment, studying him. "Then... are you planning to butcher them later?"

"Hell no," Alex answered, a low laugh escaping despite the seriousness in his eyes. "But we need their strength. We're going to ask them to push harder than they ever have to stand up, to fight for something bigger than themselves. A healthy citizen makes a healthy city. That's why I'm giving them the pills."

He didn't mention the part he kept to himself: these strengthening pills for ordinary people were crafted from the scraps left over after the cultivators' own doses. Even the leftovers worked miracles, flooding normal bodies with the raw power of adulthood in a single swallow.

Zhuce Liang nodded slowly, then pressed on. "Let's say your campaign succeeds. You dangle the carrot and the stick in perfect balance—ten lashes of bamboo stick for anyone who refuses the band-aid Gaia, and a strengthening pill for every soul who accepts it. Fine. But what's the endgame? How do you plan to use this on every citizen in the realm? Will you rule them like a dictator?"

"Hell no," Alex said, leaning back. "I'm not a dictator. And I'm sure as hell not some bleeding-heart liberal. I'm more like... a communist."

Zhuce Liang's brow furrowed in genuine confusion. "Communist? I'm afraid I don't understand."

Alex's gaze softened. "I just want to know my people. I want to make sure no one goes hungry. I want every man, woman, and child fed properly, given real work, and the dignity of a job they can be proud of. That's it. That's the whole damn dream."

Zhuge Liang's expression shifted, a flicker of respect crossing his face. "That is wisdom, Lord Bai. Truly. But tell me this will you control every citizen the same way you control the magisters yesterday?"

"No," Alex replied, the word sharp and final. "The device that can truly control someone is far too expensive to waste on the masses. We keep it limited-reserved for our enemies only."

"What the citizens get is simpler. It tracks their location, nothing more. They can't be spied on through it. They can't be manipulated or bent to our will. That level of control is a privilege for officers alone, and even then, it's strictly limited."

Zhuge Liang leaned forward again, his sharp eyes narrowing with fresh understanding.

"Oh. So these are only the special band-aids."

Alex reached into his robe and produced a small wooden box, its surface carved with subtle runes. He set it on the low table between them with deliberate care.

"Yes, The ones inside this box are different. They're the real deal the kind that can accept commands and monitor a citizen's exact condition at all times. Guard them closely. Only hand them out to people you trust with your life. No one else."

Zhuge Liang studied the box for a long moment, then met Alex's gaze. "So... you cannot control me with one of these?"

Alex held the strategist's eyes without flinching. "I cannot," he lied, the words slipping out smooth as silk.

If he wanted to keep the truth from the entire city later, he had to start with the people closest to him. No panic. No cracks in the foundation. Not yet.

A flicker of relief crossed Zhuge Liang's face, subtle but unmistakable.

"City Lord Bai," the strategist continued, shifting the topic with practiced ease, "there

is something important I need to tell you. Since you're already here—"

"What is it?" Alex asked.

Before Zhuge Liang could answer, a roar of voices crashed against the mansion walls-hundreds of men shouting Alex's name in raw, angry unison. The sound rolled through the corridors like thunder. A servant burst into the hall, breathless, robes flapping.

"Sire!" the man gasped, dropping into a deep bow. "There are about a hundred people protesting out front. They're demanding to see you."

Alex's brow furrowed. "What the hell are they doing?"

The servant kept his head lowered. "They're asking you to repay your debts, my lord."

"Me?" Alex's voice cracked with genuine shock. "Debts?"

Zhuge Liang exhaled, a grim shadow falling over his features. "That's the trouble, Lord Bai. And you have a great many of them."

Outside, the shouting grew louder, raw and insistent. Most of the voices belonged to hardened mercenaries-men who had once fought for coin and now wanted every copper returned with interest.

Alex rose. "Open the gates," he ordered the guards. "Let them in."

The heavy wooden doors groaned open. The crowd surged forward like a flood, boots hammering across the mansion's wide courtyard until they filled the open field before the main hall. Alex stood at the center of it all.

One burly mercenary stepped forward first, face flushed with years of resentment. "City Lord Bai, you borrowed a thousand gold coins from me few years ago. You swore that once you became lord, you'd repay me double."

Another pushed through the press of bodies, voice cracking with fury. "And me! Fifteen hundred coins. You promised triple the moment you took the seat."

More voices joined the chorus, each claim sharper than the last-debts tallied in gold, promises made in the dark days before power had finally landed in Alex's hands.

Alex's mind reeled. Had the original Bai Xaichun really bled the city dry like this? Borrowed from mercenaries with those kinds of insane terms? He kept his face calm, but inside the questions burned.

"I don't remember borrowing from any of you," Alex let the words hang, watching their faces, buying himself a heartbeat to think.

The crowd surged closer, faces twisted with raw fury. The first merchant-a thick-necked man with scarred knuckles-jabbed a finger at Alex like a blade.

"You drank and whored at my entertainment house for three straight nights!" he bellowed. "A few years ago, you promised to pay every last copper, signed the damn contract right there on the table. How the hell can you stand here and pretend you forgot?"

"Yeah!" another merchant shouted, voice cracking with rage. "You threw an open naked party in my restaurant-wine flowing like water, every high-roller in the city. You swore you'd pay me triple the moment you took the lord's seat. We toasted to it!"

Alex's stomach tightened. The original Bai Xaichun had clearly sold them empty dreams, handing out wild promises like cheap wine, never believing he would actually win the title. The debts were reckless, stupid, and now they were his to carry.

Pago

A woman pushed forward through the press of bodies, her once-bright robes faded and threadbare. "Bai Xaichun, she spat, eyes burning with humiliation, "a few months ago you slept with me for weeks. You told me you'd pay handsomely once you became City Lord. I waited: I waited like a fool while you climbed the ranks. And now you stand there acting like it never happened?"

More women joined her, their voices rising in a bitter chorus-some young and sharp-tongued, others older, their faces lined with years and regret. A couple looked old enough to be Alex's mother. Sight turned his stomach; he had to fight the urge to look away. How the

12/03

hell had the original man found any desire in them? The thought made his skin crawl.

A fat merchant in silk robes elbowed his way to the front, sweat beading on his forehead. "We're done talking," he growled. "If you don't pay us right now, every last one of us will tear this mansion apart and take everything that belongs to the City Lord-land, treasures, the whole damn estate."

Alex's blood ran cold. "You'd do that?" His voice stayed low, but steel edged every word. "Wouldn't that make all of you rebels?"

The fat merchant laughed, short and ugly. "Rebels? We have your signed contracts. The debts are long overdue. We already took our complaints to Acting City Lord Zhuge, but he kept pushing us off. Said he needed you here in person to verify the

truth."

Alex shot a hard glance at Zhuge Liang. The strategist met his eyes and gave a single, solemn nod.

"I did everything I could to hold them back, my lord," Zhuge Liang said quietly. "But now you're here and the whole city knows it. You need to face this."

Alex drew a slow breath, the weight of every stare pressing down on him. Then he rose to his full height, voice ringing clear across the courtyard.

"Fine," he said. "Servants-bring two large tables out here right now. Set them up in the middle of the yard. I'm going to go through every single debt paper myself and see what's real."

A ripple of dark satisfaction moved through the crowd. Merchants exchanged quick, greedy smiles. Some women lifted their chins, eyes glittering with vindication. They could already taste it: Bai

Xaichun bankrupt, stripped of power, forced to surrender chunks of Qinshui City's land to settle the scores.

The servants hurried to drag two heavy wooden tables into the center of the courtyard, their legs scraping across the stone. While they worked, Alex turned back to the restless crowd.

"While you're all here," he said, "I'm offering every one of you a Wudang-created Gaia band-aid. Put it on the back of your neck. It will drive away sickness, wash away your bad luck, and keep you strong. You can even have a strengthening pill to go with it-free."

A big man near the front-broad-shouldered, scarred from a hundred street fights— raised a meaty hand. "And what if I don't want the damn thing?"

Alex met his eyes without blinking. "According to the law Zhuge Liang put in place, refusal earns you ten strikes with the bamboo stick across your backside."

The big man threw back his head and laughed, a deep, mocking sound that rolled over the crowd. "Fine by me. I'll take the ten hits. Keep your band-aid."

A ripple of relief moved through the merchants and women. Smiles broke out. They had all heard the rumors: the band-aids could control a person, bend their will, spy on their every move. No one wanted that kind of leash. More voices rose at once.

"We don't want it either!"

"Yeah, same here!"

"Good," Alex said quietly.

He stepped forward as a servant rushed up with the thin bamboo rod-the kind schoolteachers used on lazy students. It looked almost delicate in the morning light. The crowd relaxed further, some even chuckling.

A stick like that against an adult's skin? It would snap before it left a mark.

Alex took the rod in his right hand. He looked straight at the big man. "You chose this. Come here. Ten hits."

The man swaggered forward, still grinning. "Better pay me those five thousand coins you owe me after you're done, City Lord. I'll be counting every strike." "Don't worry," Alex replied, voice flat.

He poured his inner force into the bamboo. The slender rod hardened in an instant, becoming something far deadlier than wood-dense as iron, sharp as a blade. No one in the crowd could see the change. No one had time to warn the big man.

Alex swung.

The motion was clean, almost casual. A single, whistling arc.

The bamboo sheared straight through the man's body at the waist.

For one frozen heartbeat the courtyard stayed silent. The upper half of the mercenary toppled forward, eyes wide with shock, mouth still half-open in that last

grin. The lower half stayed upright for another sickening second before it crumpled

to the stones in a spray of blood.

Two separate pieces. One man. Gone.

A woman screamed. The rest of the crowd recoiled, faces draining of color. Merchants who had been smirking seconds earlier now looked like they might vomit.

The air filled with the thick, metallic smell of blood.

"It was only one hit," Alex sighed.

Another man backed away, hands raised. "That wasn't ten strikes-that was a death sentence!"

Panic rippled outward like a stone dropped in dark water. Every eye locked on Alex and the bloody bamboo rod still resting lightly in his hand.

No one spoke. No one moved. The debt papers, the tables, the demands for gold-all of it forgotten in the space of a single, impossible swing.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 630[1,319 words]

The crowd froze, a hundred faces locked in horror. Blood pooled across the stones, dark and spreading, the metallic stink thick enough to taste.

The big mercenary's halves lay there like discarded meat-upper body face-down in its own mess, lower half still twitching. No one breathed. No one dared move.

Then the screaming started.

A woman dropped to her knees, hands clamped over her mouth. Merchants who had swaggered forward moments earlier stumbled backward, shoulders bumping, eyes wide with animal fear.

The bamboo rod in Alex's hand looked almost harmless again—slender, innocent wood—but every soul in the courtyard now knew better.

Alex lowered it slowly, voice calm as morning mist. "One hit. That's all it took. Anyone else want to test the other nine?"

Silence crashed down harder than the roar of protest ever had.

A thin merchant near the front—silk robes trembling—dropped his debt paper like it burned his fingers. "I... I'll take the band-aid," he stammered. "Please. That thing. It drives away sickness, right? Keeps a man strong? I love it. Been meaning to try one anyway."

Heads bobbed frantically around him.

"Yes—yes, same here," another merchant blurted, stepping forward so fast he nearly tripped over his own feet. "Health first, that's what matters. Band-aid for me. Right now."

The women who had spat accusations only minutes ago now smiled with desperate sweetness, voices shaking. "It'll wash away bad luck, won't it, Lord Bai? I always wanted one. Always."

They lied through their teeth, eyes darting to the bloody mess on the ground. Merchants who would have sold their mothers for gold now clawed at the servants for the small adhesive patches like starving men reaching for bread.

No one mentioned control. No one mentioned spies.

They simply bared their necks and slapped the Gaia band-aids on with trembling fingers, murmuring thanks as if the device were a blessing from heaven itself.

Alex watched it all without expression. Servants moved through the crowd like ghosts, handing out the ordinary band-aids and the strengthening pills that came with them.

Every neck received one. Every hand swallowed one. The courtyard filled with the soft sounds of agreement, of relief, of lies told so convincingly even the liars almost believed them.

When the last band-aid had been pressed into place, the merchants found their courage again.

One of the bolder ones cleared his throat, voice slick with sudden hope. "Lord Bai... about the payment. You won't go back on your word, will you? You're the City Lord now."

They were merchants to the bone-birds that would die for a single grain of rice, men who would risk death for a single gold coin. Fear had bent them; greed straightened them right back up.

Alex turned toward the two heavy tables the servants had dragged into the center of the courtyard. Debt papers lay scattered across them—yellowed scrolls and ink-stained contracts signed by a man who no longer existed.

"Pay them," he said.

Zhuge Liang's head snapped toward him. "My lord?"

"Every last copper," Alex continued, his voice carrying across the silent yard. "Double, triple—whatever I promised them back then. Honor it exactly. These good people have waited long enough."

With a casual flick of his wrist, he summoned several ornate wooden boxes from his storage ring. They materialized on the table with solid thuds, heavy with gold.

The merchants' faces lit up like lanterns. Greedy smiles spread fast. A few exchanged quick glances, already regretting they had only demanded double. They could have pushed for triple from the start.

Then a woman stepped forward—the same one who had accused him of sleeping with her voice sweet but bold. "Lord Bai, my memory must be failing me. I wrote 'double' on my contract, but it was supposed to be triple. I made a mistake when I wrote it that night."

Several merchants jumped in at once.

"Yes! Mine too!" one shouted. "It was always triple—I wrote the wrong amount."

"Same here," another added quickly. "I clearly remember promising triple. The paper is wrong."

More voices piled on, each claim louder and smoother than the last. They were testing him, rewriting history now that the gold was already on the table.

Zhuge Liang watched them with a calm face, but his sharp eyes missed nothing. They were faking it, every last one of them.

Alex studied the crowd for a long beat, then smiled—slow, almost kind.

"Well," he said smoothly, "I am a man of my word. Pay them triple. Whatever they claim is what they get."

Zhuge Liang's eyes widened for a fraction of a second, but he recovered instantly and gave the order with crisp, military precision. Servants rushed forward. The boxes were opened. Gold coins clinked and glittered in the morning sun as they were counted, weighed, and handed over in gleaming stacks.

The merchants' faces transformed. Shock melted into stunned joy. Greedy smiles crept back, careful now, restrained but unmistakable. Women clutched heavy purses to their chests like newborns. Even the ones still pale from the execution looked ready to dance. They had come for blood and walked away.

richer than kings.

Alex leaned slightly toward Zhuge Liang and spoke in a low voice only the strategist could hear.

"Remember to write down exactly how much each one of them receives today. Every name. Every figure."

An hour later the last chest slammed shut. The courtyard emptied in a polite, grateful rush—bows deep enough to scrape the stones, murmured blessings, promises of eternal loyalty. The heavy gates closed behind them with a final, echoing thud.

Only then did Alex allow the sneer to curl his lip.

He stood at the edge of the bloodstain, arms crossed, watching the last of their backs disappear down the street. Zhuge Liang waited beside him, silent, the weight of questions heavy in the air.

"Do they really think it's that easy?"

Alex said softly, almost to himself. "I was nothing when I made those promises. A drunk, a fool, handing out dreams like cheap wine. They took the chance. Fine. But now I'm City Lord Baixaichur. And they still thought they could bully me? Walk into my house, demand my gold, threaten my estate?" His voice dropped to a blade's edge. "Your greatest mistake wasn't bullying me. It was bullying the City Lord. Did you honestly believe I would simply let you go?"

Zhuce Liang studied him, careful. "What do you command?"

Alex turned, eyes sharp with cold amusement. Zhuge Liang, tomorrow want you to launch a full inspection on every single person who stood here today. Their businesses. Their merchant houses. Their families. Their tax records. Every ledger, every warehouse, every

hidden coin. I don't believe for a

second they're clean. Not one of them. Find the dirt. Use it."

"Double?" Zhuge Liang asked, the word slipping out before he could stop it. His voice carried the first real note of shock Alex had heard from him all morning. Alex smiled—slow, satisfied, the kind of smile that promised winter. "Yes," he said. "You're going to take back double everything I just gave them. Every last coin. With interest. And when we're finished, they'll thank us for the privilege."

Zhuce Liang held his gaze for a long moment, then inclined his head once, the strategist's calm mask sliding perfectly back into place. "As you command, City Lord."

As he turned to issue orders to the servants, a quiet chill settled in his chest. These greedy merchants who had just pushed for triple would soon pay double—and more—for their own audacity. He couldn't help but think that his new City Lord was far more ruthless than anyone had first imagined.

Alex stood motionless in the center of the courtyard, hands clasped behind his back, watching the last of the smiling merchants bow deeply before they hurried out with their heavy purses of gold.

Back on Estoria, he had been a wise king who always tried to behave like a true gentleman. But here in this world—he wasn't using his real name. Hell, he wasn't even wearing his real face.

He had nothing left to fear by getting his hands dirty.

A slow, sharp smile curved his lips.

This was going to be fun.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 631[1,236 words]

That night, Qingshui City lit up like a festival nobody had planned.

Every tavern, every pleasure house, and every merchant's private courtyard rang with laughter and clinking cups. The same men and women who had watched a mercenary get sliced in half that morning now toasted Lord Bai as if he were the greatest fool alive.

Gold from the City Lord's own treasury weighed down their tables, and they spent it like water.

In the Golden Lotus Restaurant, a fat silk merchant slammed his cup down and roared with laughter. "Triple! The man paid us triple! City Lord Bai Xaichun—still the same drunken idiot he was before Wudang. Remember how he used to stagger in here, gambling away everything and chasing skirts? Nothing's changed!"

His friends howled. A woman in faded rouge leaned across the table, eyes sparkling with wine and greed. "He slept with half the city for free back then. Now he's handing out gold like it grows on trees. We should have asked for ten times!"

Word spread faster than spilled wine. By midnight, every corner of the city knew the story: Lord Bai was soft. Lord Bai was stupid. Lord Bai could be milked dry.

In a dimly lit teahouse down the street, a group of younger merchants huddled together, already plotting. "We'll write new contracts tomorrow," one whispered. "Old promises, new amounts. He'll pay. The man has no spine."

Another grinned. "Or we'll throw another party in his name and send him the bill. He'll cover it. Watch."

They raised their cups again, drunk on victory and the sweet taste of easy money. The night passed in a haze of celebration and scheming.

Dawn broke cold and unforgiving.

By mid-morning, the inspection teams moved like locusts. Zhuge Liang had assembled them quietly-sharp-eyed officials, city guards, and a handful of clerks who carried ledgers thick enough to crush a man. They hit every business that had taken gold the day before.

They started with the Golden Lotus Restaurant.

The head inspector stepped into the kitchen, nose wrinkling. "Ceiling grease older than my grandmother. Rat droppings in the corner. This toilet?" He pointed at the back room with open disgust. "Hazardous. One spark and the whole block burns. Shut it down."

The fat merchant's face went white. "But—but we just—"

"Misconduct," the inspector said flatly. "Building condemned until full repairs and fines are paid. All treasury seized pending review."

Across the city it was the same story. Warehouses with leaking roofs. Shops with blocked fire exits. Kitchens that could make a health inspector faint.

Every violation was real—merchants had cut corners for years—but the timing made

it feel like divine punishment wearing official robes.

Zhuce Liang made sure it hurt more than the rules required. He had opened the complaint boxes. Old servants who had been cheated, rival traders who had been undercut, even a few bitter ex-lovers stepped forward with signed statements.

The strategist listened to every one, then turned them into official cases.

One merchant who dealt in rare herbs stood frozen outside his stockhouse as inspectors slammed heavy padlocks and a bright red official seal across the doors. "Your neighbor filed a formal complaint," the head inspector read from the scroll, voice flat and merciless. "He claims you poisoned his well last spring to ruin his business. The evidence checks out. All assets are now frozen. This shop is closed until further notice."

The merchant's face drained of color. His knees buckled and he dropped hard into the dusty street, robes dragging through the dirt.

"Please!" he begged, hands clasped together like a man drowning. "Don't close my business! Don't take everything! I'll pay whatever you want—just let me off the hook this once!"

From inside his shaded palanquin, Zhuge Liang looked down at the kneeling man with cold disdain. A faint, mocking sneer touched the corner of his mouth.

"Double," he said calmly. "Pay double the gold you received from Lord Bai yesterday. Do that, and I may consider letting you off the hook."

The merchant stared up at him, eyes wide with pure disbelief. Regret hit him like a hammer to the chest. He should never have been so greedy. He should never have tried to squeeze extra coins out of the new City Lord—the man who now held the entire city by the throat. The darker tool they remembered was gone. In his place stood someone far more dangerous.

Trembling, he slammed his forehead against the ground.

"I'll pay!" he cried hoarsely. "I'll pay double-whatever Lord Bai wants! Just please... don't destroy me!"

Zhuge Liang, watching from a shaded palanquin, allowed himself the smallest smile. Even the pleasure houses were not spared.

A long line of women in bright, colorful silks stood shivering outside the Fragrant Moon Pavilion, their painted faces pale with disbelief.

The head inspector unrolled a thick scroll with deliberate slowness and read in a flat, bureaucratic tone. "You have operated the Fragrant Moon Pavilion in Qingshui City for eight years without paying a single copper in business tax, income tax, or... the service tax on the commercial use of your bodies."

One of the younger courtesans blinked, her rouged lips falling open. "Service... tax? On our bodies?"

"Exactly," the inspector replied, his face as hard and emotionless as stone. "City law applies to every profession. Pleasure is no exception. You owe years of back taxes plus heavy penalties you cannot pay in full immediately, you are forbidden from working starting today. All of you will be seized as official city slaves until the debt is cleared."

The madam—a heavily made-up woman in her forties—let out a strangled gasp and fainted dead away, collapsing in a heap of bright silk and cheap perfume.

The rest of the women stared in pure horror. They had sold pleasure for years, sometimes to the most powerful men in the city, and never once had they imagined the city would dare tax the pleasure itself.

The inspector's lip curled into a sneer. "If you don't like those terms," he said coldly, "pay double the amount of gold Lord Bai gave you yesterday. Do that, and the house stays open. Fail to pay, and it closes permanently. Every last one of you will be auctioned off as slaves to settle the debt."

By late afternoon, the mood in Qingshui City had flipped like a coin.

The same people who had toasted Lord Bai's stupidity the night before now spoke

in hushed, frightened voices. Merchants who had laughed loudest now stood in the street with empty hands and locked doors.

Prostitutes whispered among themselves, eyes wide. Even the boldest schemers from the teahouse kept their heads down, suddenly very interested in staying invisible.

Word of the bamboo rod spread again-how one casual swing had turned a man

into two pieces. Combined with this, the message burned itself into every mind in

the city:

Never mess with Lord Bai.

He was ruthless. He had no heart. And he remembered everything.

That evening, when a servant nervously asked Alex if he wanted to review the day's reports, the City Lord leaned back in his high-backed chair and smiled the same slow, sharp smile he had worn the day before.

"No need," he said. "I already know how it went. Tomorrow they'll line up to thank me for the lesson."

Outside the Bai Mansion, the streets were quieter than they had been in years. No parties. No boasts. Only the soft sound of coins being counted in the dark-coins that would soon flow right back into the city treasury, doubled.

And somewhere in the great hall, Alex allowed himself a low, satisfied chuckle. This really was going to be fun.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 632[1,532 words]

The next day, the great hall of the Bai Mansion felt too quiet.

Alex lounged in the high-backed chair at the head of the room, one leg crossed over the other, fingers drumming lazily on the carved armrest. Sunlight poured through the open doors and painted long golden stripes across the polished floor.

He had ordered the servants to leave the heavy wooden gates wide open. Let them come. He wanted to watch every greedy face twist when they handed back twice the gold they had stolen yesterday. A simple lesson: you don't con the City Lord and walk away smiling.

Zhuge Liang stood at his right shoulder.

Hours crawled by. No line of merchants appeared. No clink of returning coins.

Instead, a low rumble rolled up the street-hundreds of boots, mixed with the sharper ring of steel. Then the shouting started.

"Lord Bai must answer for his tyranny!"

"Open the gates! The people demand justice!"

Alex's eyebrow lifted. He rose slowly and stepped onto the wide balcony overlooking the courtyard. Below, the gates had been thrown open by nervous guards. A massive crowd poured in every merchant from yesterday, still dressed in their finest silks, but now flanked by a different kind of muscle.

At their head strode a tall man in midnight-black robes embroidered with silver serpents that seemed to writhe under the sunlight. A long scar twisted down the left side of his face like a lightning bolt frozen in flesh. Two curved daggers hung at his hips, and the air around him shimmered with raw power.

"Lord Bai," Zhuge Liang added, "He is Oh Han. The Dark Serpent. Disciple Leader of the Yin Yang Sect."

Alex could see, that man bring about forty of his disciples with the greedy merchants.

"What is Ying Yang Sect?" Alex asked. Which Zhuge liang explained.

Ying yang sect was the unorthodox sect had grown fat and bold over the last three hundred years while Wudang withered. Once the orthodox guardians of the Jianghu, Wudang had faded into quiet mountain temples and dusty legends.

Now sects like Yin Yang handled all kind of work-assassinations for jealous rivals, protection rackets for rich merchants, quiet eliminations for anyone who could pay. They answered to coin, not honor.

"So the sect is the Merchant Bulldogs?" Alex nodded.

Oh Han stopped in the center of the courtyard, planted his feet, and looked straight up at Alex with a mocking grin that showed too many teeth.

"City Lord Bai Xaichun!" His voice boomed like thunder rolling across the yard, loud enough to rattle the windows. "Word travels fast in Qingshui. You slice a man in half for refusing your little toys. You slap impossible taxes on honest working women. You lock doors and steal honest merchants' gold the very next day. Tell me, Lord Bai —" He spread his arms wide, voice dripping with fake sorrow. "—is this how a true ruler listens to his people? Or is this the birth of a tyrant?"

The merchants behind him nodded furiously, emboldened by the tall figure in black. A few even dared to shout agreement.

Oh Han's grin widened. Then he released his inner force.

The air thickened instantly, heavy as wet iron. An invisible pressure slammed down on the entire courtyard like an avalanche of stone. Servants dropped to their knees, gasping.

Guards clutched their spears, faces turning purple. Even the birds in the eaves fell silent. The weight pressed against Alex's chest, trying to force him back a step, trying to make the City Lord bow.

Zhuge Liang's robes fluttered once, but he did not move.

Alex simply tilted his head, eyes narrowing. The pressure slid off him like rain on oiled leather.

He turned slightly to Zhuge Liang without taking his eyes off the intruder. "This kind of thing happen often?"

Zhuge Liang hastily answered. "In the past, my lord, the city soldiers would have handled it. But these days most of them are ordinary men-no cultivation worth mentioning. When Jianghu problems arise, the orthodox sects used to step in. Wudang took care of such matters for centuries. Now..."

He gave the smallest shrug. "Wudang has grown weak. Their name is fading. Unorthodox groups like the Yin Yang Sect have moved in to fill the void. They protect the merchants, handle the dirty work, and answer only to whoever pays the highest price."

Oh Han laughed, a harsh bark that echoed off the mansion walls. "You see, Lord Bai? Even your own advisor admits the truth. The old rules are dead. The people have spoken. Withdraw your ridiculous demands, open every shop you closed, and perhaps perhaps the Yin Yang Sect will allow you to keep your pretty title."

He flexed his aura again, doubling the crushing weight, eyes gleaming with the promise of violence.

The merchants behind him swelled with triumph. Their champion had arrived. The City Lord, they believed, was already finished.

Alex nodded slowly, as if the crushing aura pressing down on the entire courtyard was nothing more than a light breeze. "Do you happen to know the Pure Snow Sword Maiden? Li Qingxue from the Wudang Sect?"

Oh Han threw his head back and roared with laughter, the sound ugly and wet. He looked Alex up and down like a man who had already won.

"Li Qingxue? That Wudang cold-faced bitch? Of course I know her. I've fought her ten times, City Lord. Ten times she ended up on her knees between my legs, begging for her life. Wudang's precious sword maiden reduced to a whimpering little toy. That's why the protection of Qingshui City belongs to the Yin Yang Sect now. Not your weak mountain Taoist."

The merchants behind him erupted in crude cheers, elbowing each other, their fear

from yesterday completely forgotten.

Alex's expression never changed. He

simply smiled, thin and sharp. "Then

here's a simple wager. If you can beat Pure Snow Sword Maiden Li Qingxue in front of everyone here—if you win—she and Wudang step aside forever. I'll erase every tax, every fine, every closed shop. I'll even give you double the gold I handed out yesterday. But if you lose..." His voice stayed calm, almost friendly. "You get down on all fours, bark like a dog ten times, and the entire Yin Yang Sect belongs to Wudang. Deal?"

Oh Han's grin split wider, eyes glittering with pure greed and lust. "Deal. I'll enjoy breaking her again—right here in your pretty courtyard. Then I'll take your gold and your city."

Alex tapped the Gaia band-aid behind his own neck once, sending the silent command. "She'll be here in twenty minutes."

The courtyard was filled with happiness as everyone congratulated Oh Han. After all, he had always won his fights against Li Qingxue. Now the whole courtyard was overjoyed, already counting their chickens before they hatched. Oh Han was being treated like a king.

Exactly nineteen minutes later, the air above the mansion rippled. A streak of white light shot down like a falling star and landed lightly on the stones. Pure Snow Sword Maiden Li Qingxue stood there in snow-white robes that fluttered though there was no wind.

Her long black hair was tied back with a simple jade pin, and a slender sword hung at her hip. She looked calm, almost bored.

"Young Sect leader," she said, bowing slightly. "I was in Wudang's special realm when Gaia's message reached me. I rushed straight here." Her cold gaze slid to Oh

Han.

Alex explained everything to her.

"So all I have to do is cut him, right?"

Oh Han licked his lips, eyes raking over her body without shame. "Well, well. The little sword maiden herself. Ready to kneel again? If you lose this time, you won't just beg—you'll dual-cultivate with me right here. Yin and Yang, body and soul. I'll make sure the whole city watches you scream my name."

Li Qingxue's face stayed ice-cold. She didn't even blush. "Let's begin." The moment the words left her lips, Oh Han exploded forward. His daggers flashed

out, inner force roaring like a black storm. He moved faster than the eye could track, serpent energy coiling around him, ready to crush her in a single brutal rush.

Li Qingxue drew her sword.

One move.

A single, clean arc of silver light—no flourish, no shout, no wasted breath. The blade sang once, soft as a whisper.

Oh Han's head left his shoulders before his foot even touched the ground again.

It tumbled through the air, eyes still wide with arrogant shock, mouth frozen mid- taunt. The body took two more stumbling steps, blood fountaining from the neck like a broken fountain, then collapsed in a twitching heap right at the feet of the screaming merchants.

The Pure Snow Sword Maiden flicked a single drop of blood from her blade, sheathed it, and turned to Alex with perfect calm.

"Can I return now?"

"Wait a bit," Alex said, rising to his feet. "Maybe there's someone else you need to cut. You'll have to deal with the whole Yin Yang Sect right now."

The courtyard fell deathly silent. The only sound was the steady patter of blood still pumping from Oh Han's severed neck onto the stones. The merchants w had stormed in demanding justice, now stood frozen, faces as pale as old paper, staring at the decapitated leader of the region's most feared unorthodox sect.

One of them fainted on the spot.

Alex approached them, that same slow, sharp smile curving his lips.

"Now... who else wants to negotiate the payment?"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 633[1,480 words]

All the merchants dropped to their knees at once. The arrogant confidence that had carried them into the courtyard shattered in an instant. Their plan to strong-arm the City Lord had failed spectacularly. Their champion—the mighty Dark Serpent—had been killed with a single stroke by Wudang's famed sword maiden.

"We don't have the money with us!" one merchant cried out, voice trembling. "We'll need to return to our shops and warehouses to gather it."

Alex regarded them coolly. "I'll be merciful this once. You have until sunset to return with twice what you owe. Every last coin. Fail, and the consequences will be far worse than today."

The merchants prostrated themselves, foreheads pressed to the stone in desperate bows. Then they scrambled up and fled the courtyard in a panicked rush, silk robes flapping as they ran.

Zhuge Liang watched them go, his expression tight. "My lord, they won't return with the gold. They'll come back with more people-reinforcements from the Yin Yang Sect."

Alex's smile didn't waver. "That's exactly what I want."

A few of the remaining Yin Yang disciples edged toward the gates, clearly preparing to bolt and spread the alarm.

Alex turned to Li Qingxue. "Capture most of them. Don't kill them all-let five or so escape, but make sure they're injured enough to look convincing when they report back."

Li Qingxue met his gaze for a moment, a flicker of understanding in her cold eyes. "They will bring more people."

"Well," Alex replied evenly, "that's the game we're playing. We need more recruits for Wudang. We'll turn them into our Cannon fodders our new disciples."

Li Qingxue moved without another word. In a blur of white and silver, she subdued the fleeing disciples with ruthless efficiency. She captured thirty-five of the roughly forty, leaving them bound and injured but alive. Five others she allowed to slip away, each marked with precise, painful sword cuts that would ensure they lived to tell the tale.

Zhuge Liang wiped a bead of cold sweat from his brow. "My lord... the Yinng yang secet will bring the entire local Yin Yang Sect. They number around five hundred even on thousand if they bring all of them.."

Alex looked out over the blood-stained courtyard, eyes gleaming with anticipation. "Let them come. I'll summon the Wudang disciples as well."

Meanwhile, not far beyond the walls of Qingshui City, the Yin Yang Sect's main stronghold squatted like a black spider on a mist-shrouded mountain peak. Its halls were carved from dark granite, every pillar wrapped in coiling silver serpents that gleamed under torchlight. The air smelled of incense, blood, and cold steel.

The five surviving disciples staggered through the massive iron gates, their robes torn and bloody, faces pale with terror. They half-ran, half-fell into the central hall where Sect Master Yin Long sat on a throne of obsidian and bone. The man was handsome and middle-aged, his hair streaked with silver, eyes like chips of black ice. Flanking him were two beautiful women in revealing clothes.

"Master!" one disciple gasped, dropping to his knees so hard the stone cracked. The others followed, foreheads pressed to the floor. "Oh, Han is dead!"

The hall fell deathly still.

Sect Master Yin Long leaned forward slowly. "Explain."

The words tumbled out in a frantic rush. They told him everything: the arrogant challenge in the Bai Mansion courtyard, the wager against the Pure Snow Sword Maiden, the single silver flash of her blade. One stroke. Oh Han's head had rolled across the stones before his body even realized it was dead.

"He mocked us, Master," another disciple croaked, voice shaking. "He said the entire Yin Yang Sect now belongs to Wudang if we lost. And that cold bitch Li Qingxue... she let us live only so we could run here and deliver the message."

For three full heartbeats, no one breathed.

Then Sect Master Yin Long rose. The torches flared wildly as his aura exploded outward. Stone tiles spider-webbed beneath his boots. The pressure in the hall became crushing, like standing at the bottom of the ocean.

"ONE STROKE?" His roar shook dust from the rafters. "My disciple leader- slaughtered like a dog in front of merchants and that upstart City Lord? And Wudang dares show its face again?"

He stepped down from the throne, each footfall a thunderclap. Rage twisted his scarred features into something demonic. "For three hundred years we have ruled the Qingshui City while Wudang hid in their mountain like cowards. We took the gold, the assassinations, the power. And now they think they can take it back with one lucky swing?"

He whirled on the gathered elders and inner disciples who had rushed into the hall at the commotion. "Arm every disciple! Every outer sect member! Every hired blade who owes us coin or fear! I want a thousand fighters ready to march within the hour. We will descend on Qingshui City like a black tide."

His voice dropped to a lethal growl. "Lord Bai Xiachun will pay for this insult with his head on a pike. We will burn the Bai Mansion to the ground. And when we are done with him, we march straight to Wudang Mountain. We will drag that Pure Snow bitch out by her hair and make every last Taoist watch while we erase their sect from history."

A savage cheer erupted from the hall. Disciples slammed fists against chests, eyes gleaming with bloodlust and the promise of revenge. Servants scrambled to obey, running for weapon racks and signal drums.

Sect Master Yin Long stared out through the open gates toward the distant city, fists clenched so tightly that blood trickled between his fingers.

"Prepare the war banners," he said, voice cold as winter steel. "Tonight the Yin Yang Sect reminds the Jianghu who truly owns Qingshui City."

"By sunrise tomorrow, Lord Bai will be dead... and Wudang will be nothing but ashes and screams. Finally... it is time for us to claim our own gate to the other realm."

A woman in crimson silk slipped from the shadows and pressed herself against his side, her arms wrapping around his waist. Her voice was a low, intimate whisper against his ear. "Why does that gate seem so important?"

Yin Long sneered, but his eyes burned with something deeper than rage-pure, hungry ambition. He didn't pull away. Instead, he rested one massive hand on her hip as he spoke, loud enough for the entire hall to hear.

"Since ancient times, only the nine great orthodox sects-Wudang, Shaolin, Mount Hua, and the rest-have guarded the hidden gates to the other realms. Training grounds where time bends and power flows like rivers of pure qi. Some of those gates have already been shattered by fools who couldn't control them. But Wudang..." His lip curled. "Wudang has always kept theirs secret, hidden deep in their mountain like misers hoarding gold."

He turned slowly, addressing the sea of disciples now crowding the hall. "Long ago, when Wudang was famous, a faction broke away. They opened their own branch... and

quietly twisted it into what we are

today. The Yin Yang Sect. For three hundred years we have fought them in the shadows stealing their techniques, their influence, their gold-while they hid behind their passive, holier-than-thou mountain temples. They grew weak. We grew strong."

His voice dropped to a lethal growl, but the fire in it made every disciple lean forward. "With this war, we end the farce. We crush Lord Bai, we slaughter every Wudang dog who dares stand with him, and we seize their gate. When we do, the Yin Yang Sect will no longer be the shadow. We will become the true Wudang-the real power of the Jianghu."

FindNovel.net

A savage roar erupted from the hall. Fists slammed against chests. Blades hissed free of scabbards. Drums began to thunder in the distance as five hundred fighters mobilized with terrifying speed.

Meanwhile, deep within Wudang's secret training realm, the air itself shimmered. A clear, neutral voice-Gaia's-rang inside the minds of every disciple at once. [Notification to all Wudang disciples: A war has been declared by the Yin Yang Sect against Qingshui City and our sect. This is the moment to earn merit. All who wish to fight may gather immediately at Lord Bai's mansion.]

The message hit like lightning.

Disciples who had once been humiliated by Yin Yang bullies-beaten in back alleys, robbed of hard-won cultivation pills, or forced to watch their juniors cut down-felt something ancient ignite in their chests. Eyes that had been calm and meditative for years now burned with cold, focused fury.

"The time has finally arrived," one senior disciple muttered, voice tight with decades of suppressed anger. He grabbed his sword.

All across the misty training grounds, white-robed figures rose as one. They moved without panic, without wasted words—only the quiet, deadly purpose of men and women who had waited their entire lives for this reckoning. Hundreds began streaming toward the exit portals, the air crackling with suppressed sword qi and rising battle intent.

The war for Qingshui City was no longer coming.

It had already begun.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 634[1,529 words]

High above the misty peaks of Wudang Mountain, the sky filled with streaks of white. Hundreds of disciples rose on their flying swords, blades humming beneath their feet like living things.

Lu Piao flew at the front of one tight formation, his plain robes whipping in the wind, jaw set like iron. For years he had swallowed his rage. Now it burned clean and bright.

A younger disciple pulled alongside him. "Brother Lu Piao, you are joining the fight against the Yin Yang Sect?"

Lu Piao's face darkened, the old scar along his cheek pulling tight. "Joining? I've been waiting for this day since they beat me bloody in that back alley many years ago. Counted every insult, every stolen pill, every junior they cut down just to prove they could. Today I collect."

"Same here," another called from his left, a woman with a fierce scar across her brow. "They slapped me in the middle of the street in Qingshui, laughed while the crowd watched. Said Wudang dogs didn't deserve to walk the same ground. This time I fight until one of us stops breathing."

A senior disciple farther back laughed, short and cold. "I've killed their kind a hundred times already—inside the Gaia Virtual Realm. Every training session, every simulation. They bleed the same. They die the same. Out here it'll be even easier."

Murmurs of agreement rippled through the formation. All around them, more white-robed figures poured from the mountain's hidden gates, swords flashing in the late sun. The humiliation had lasted three centuries.

Beatings in the alleys. Robbed shipments. Juniors forced to kneel. Every Wudang heart carried its own ledger of pain. Today the books balanced.

Lu Piao glanced left and right, taking in the sheer number of them. "Didn't expect this many."

A brother laughed. "Look around. Drones handle the fields, the forges, the daily patrols now. For once, every peak can fight. Sword Peak, Medicine Peak, even the archivists—they're all coming. No more sitting on the mountain while those bastards

laugh."

"Party," someone shouted ahead, voice ringing with dark delight. "That's the word. We're throwing the Yin Yang Sect a party they'll never forget!"

Laughter exploded across the sky-sharp, hungry, alive. "Party!" others roared back. "Let's give them one they'll remember in hell!"

The cry spread, fierce and bright, as the entire host swept toward Qingshui City like a storm of white blades.

Far below, on the black-granite roads leading from the Yin Yang stronghold, a different tide moved.

One thousand one hundred and five fighters marched under banners of black silk stitched with yin and yang symbol. Drums boomed in time with their boots. Sect Master Yin Long rode at the head on a massive white tiger, his silver-streaked hair loose, eyes burning with the promise of slaughter.

Flanking him, the two women in crimson and emerald silk laughed softly at his sides, their hands resting on the hilts of poisoned daggers.

The column poured through the city gates like oil spilling into water. Civilians scattered. Market stalls emptied in seconds. Mothers snatched children from the street and slammed doors.

A few brave souls tried to bar their shops; Yin Yang disciples kicked the doors in for sport, smashing crates and stuffing pockets with whatever they found. One man tried to protect his noodle cart.

Two outer disciples slammed into a noodle cart, overturning it with a crash. Scalding broth exploded across the vendor's legs. He screamed and crumpled, writhing on the cobblestones as the burning liquid soaked through his clothes. Laughing, the disciples ripped the coin pouch from his belt and left him curled in the dirt, moaning in agony.

"Take down Wudang!" one roared, thrusting his sword toward the sky.

"Death to that bastard Bai Xiachun!" another bellowed back.

The cry spread like wildfire.

"The Yin Yang Sect will become the real Wudang!"

"YES!"

"Bai Xiachun dies today!"

"YES!"

"Our sect will become the City Lord!"

"YES!"

The chant rolled through the thousand-strong column like thunder-ugly, rhythmic, and dripping with raw arrogance. They knew the city feared them. They fed on that fear. For three hundred years the Yin Yang Sect had ruled these streets with blood money and terror. Tonight they reminded every trembling soul exactly who owned Qingshui City.

Yin Long lifted one hand. The drums slowed but did not stop. His voice carried over the marching feet, calm now, almost conversational.

"Burn the Bai Mansion to the ground," he said. "Bring me the City Lord's head. And when the Pure Snow bitch shows herself, take her alive. I want Wudang to watch while we break her."

The two women at his sides pressed closer, their laughter low and intimate. Behind them, the column surged forward, a black river of steel and hate aimed straight at the heart of Qingshui City.

Inside the Bai Mansion courtyard,

Alex stood on the raised dais, hands clasped behind his back. The blood from earlier had been scrubbed away but the stone still carried the faint iron scent of it. Li Qingxue waited at his right, sword sheathed, expression serene as winter frost. Zhuge Liang paced nearby sweat beading on his brow despite the cool evening air.

The drums hammered closer, shaking dust from the ancient tiles of the Bai Mansion. Zhuge Liang's face had gone the color of old parchment. He backed toward the inner doors, eyes darting between Alex and the black tide rolling down the avenue.

"They're coming," he hissed, voice cracking. "A thousand strong, maybe more. My lord, we should run-now, while there's still time."

Alex let out a low, easy laugh that echoed across the empty courtyard. "Run? Zhuge Liang, I've been waiting for this exact moment." He waved a hand toward the rear gates.

"I already sent the guards, the servants, my little sister-every last soul-out the back passages an hour ago. This courtyard is ours. Let them come."

Zhuce Liang hesitated one heartbeat longer, then turned and fled. His footsteps faded down a side corridor and vanished.

Only Alex and Li Qingxue remained on the raised stone dais.

The vast courtyard-wide enough to hold five thousand without crowding-lay open and silent under the failing light.

Then the Yin Yang Sect arrived.

They did not bother with the gates. A roar of qi split the air as a dozen disciples slammed forward in unison. Black-silver blades carved through the outer wall like it was paper.

Stone exploded outward in a choking cloud of dust and rubble. Through the fresh breach poured the black tide-over a thousand fighters in serpent-stitched robes, weapons gleaming, faces twisted with triumph.

At their head strode Sect Master Yin Long atop his great white tiger, silver-streaked hair unbound, with two women in crimson and emerald silk flanking him like shadows.

They spilled across the courtyard and halted twenty paces from the dais. For a moment the only sound was boots crunching on broken stone.

Yin Long's gaze swept the empty space and landed on the two lone figures. A cruel smile split his face.

"Look at this," he called, voice loud enough for every disciple to hear. "The great Lord Bai Xiachun and his famous Pure Snow bitch. All alone." He spread his arms. Where are your vaunted Wudang heroesiding in their mountain again? Or did they finally realize they're cowards so all of them run away?"

Laughter rolled through the ranks. A thick-necked elder stepped forward, pointing at Alex. "Kneel, boy. Kneel and beg the Yin Yang Sect for forgiveness. Maybe we'll let you live as a dog in our stables."

Another disciple shouted, "Your precious Wudang ran the second they heard our drums! Three hundred years of hiding, and now they scatter like frightened rabbits!" The two women at Yin Long's sides eyed Li Qingxue with open contempt. The one in crimson licked her lips. "Strip her down," she called. "Let the Pure Snow Sword Maiden earn her keep on her knees for the whole sect. We'll pass her around until she forgets what a sword even looks like."

Crude cheers erupted. Fists pounded chests. Someone threw a coin at Li Qingxue's feet. "That's for your first night, whore of Wudang!"

Li Qingxue did not move. Her expression never changed.

Alex waited until the laughter began to die. Then he spoke, voice calm, almost conversational.

"If you're finished talking," he said, "it's time for Wudang to answer."

The air changed.

From every direction-north, south, east, west-swords rose into the sky like a sudden snowfall in reverse. Hundreds of white-robed figures descended on humming blades, landing atop the shattered walls, the rooftops, the inner balconies.

More poured through the ruined gate and the side passages the servants had used only minutes earlier. Sword qi crackled through

the courtyard like invisible lighting, The numbers kept growing. Eight hundred. A thousand. Two thousand. And still they came, until the black serpent banners were ringed by a perfect, unbroken wall of white.

Every exit was sealed. Every escape route vanished.

The Yin Yang Sect stood frozen in the center of the courtyard, suddenly small.

Sect Master Yin Long's smile died. His eyes widened, scanning the sea of faces above him-faces that had waited decades for this moment. Faces that no longer looked weak or passive.

A low, collective breath went through the Wudang ranks. Then, from somewhere in the rear, a single voice rang out—Lu Piao's, sharp and fierce.

"Party time."

The word rippled outward. Five thousand Wudang throats answered with a single, roaring cheer that shook the broken walls and rolled across the rooftops of Qingshui City.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 635[1,817 words]

The roar of five thousand Wudang voices crashed over the courtyard like a breaking wave, the sound so loud it rattled the shattered stones beneath the invaders' boots.

For one frozen heartbeat, the Yin Yang Sect stood motionless in the center of the killing field they had just created for themselves.

Sect Master Yin Long's cruel smile died on his face. His eyes-those black-ice chips that had terrified half the Jianghu-widened in disbelief as he stared upward at the unbroken ring of white robes.

One thousand of his fighters. Against five thousand Wudang disciples.

Five times their number, and every last one of them standing on the rooftops, the walls, the air, swords still humming beneath their feet.

Flying swords.

Only Foundation Establishment cultivators could ride the blade like that. Every single Wudang disciple here had already stepped into that realm.

Meanwhile, most of Yin Long's own force-outer disciples, hired blades, even many of the inner sect-were still struggling at Qi Condensation.

A handful of elders had reached Foundation Establishment, but the rest were simply strong bodies and louder mouths.

The gap was not a gap.

It was an abyss.

A low, collective tremor ran through the black-robed ranks. Knees buckled. Sweat broke out on every forehead. The two women in crimson and emerald silk pressed closer to Yin Long, their seductive confidence evaporating into wide-eyed panic. "Impossible," Yin Long whispered. His voice cracked on the word.

Alex stood on the dais, hands still clasped behind his back, expression calm as still water.

Li Qingxue remained at his right, her silver blade sheathed, her face as cold and beautiful as fresh snow. Neither of them had drawn a weapon.

Alex's voice carried across the courtyard, clear and unhurried.

"Release your auras."

The command was simple. It did not need to be loud.

Five thousand Foundation Establishment cultivators obeyed at once.

The pressure slammed down like an invisible mountain.

It was not killing intent. It was simply presence-pure, refined qi compressed by decades of disciplined training inside Gaia's secret realm. The air thickened until it felt like breathing syrup.

The black banners of the Yin Yang Sect drooped as if soaked in water. One thousand bodies staggered. Then, in a single rolling wave, they began to drop.

Disciples crumpled where they stood, foam bubbling at the corners of their mouths, eyes rolling back. Elders hit their knees with bone-cracking thuds, gasping, clawing at their throats.

The hired thugs—those who had come only for coin and cruelty—collapsed like puppets with their strings cut.

Within seconds the entire courtyard floor was a sea of black robes and twitching limbs. One thousand fighters, reduced to unconscious sacks of meat.

Only Yin Long remained standing.

His Core Formation cultivation fought like a cornered tiger, veins bulging along his neck, silver-streaked hair whipping in a wind that existed only for him. But even he trembled.

Sweat poured down his face. His white tiger mount had already sunk to its belly, whining like a beaten dog.

Three hundred years.

Three hundred years the Yin Yang Sect had ruled Qingshui City while Wudang hid on its mountain.

Three hundred years of beatings in alleys, stolen shipments, humiliated juniors, and mocking laughter. And now the gap was not merely wide—it was insulting.

The Wudang disciples had not even drawn their swords. They had not even broken a sweat.

Many of them still wore the faint, almost bored expressions of people who had already slaughtered these same enemies a thousand times inside the training realm.

Lu Piao stood on the western wall, arms folded, the old scar on his cheek twisting with grim satisfaction.

He looked almost disappointed that the fight had ended before it had truly begun. The same bitter disappointment gripped the thousands gathered there. They had come spoiling for battle, hungry for revenge. Yet their enemy proved far too weak to even withstand their presence—there was nothing left to strike. A profound letdown.

Alex stepped forward on the dais, his voice rising into a calm but carrying roar that reached every soul—friend and foe alike.

"They once said that if five thousand people piss in the same place, they can drown a man."

His smile was thin and razor-sharp. "I've been wondering if that's true. So tell me, brothers and sisters of Wudang... who among you is willing to help test the theory on the Yin Yang Sect's so-called leaders?"

A stunned silence fell over the courtyard.

Then a low, ugly chuckle rippled through the white-robed ranks. It grew, spreading like wildfire until it became full-throated laughter-dark, cathartic, and long overdue.

However, many of the female Wudang disciples' faces flushed bright red with a mix of embarrassment and humiliated fury.

They had zero interest in joining that particular "game." Some were already turning away in disgust, preparing to slip out of the courtyard.

The grand battle they had been eagerly anticipating the explosive release of three hundred years of pent-up resentment had ended before it even started. Their enemies lay unconscious on the stone floor like broken dolls.

It was a massive letdown-like a man and woman finally on the verge of passionate

lovemaking, the woman trembling with eager anticipation for an incredible, unforgettable night-only to realize the man had already ejaculated the moment he laid eyes on her.

A crushing, frustrating, and deeply humiliating disappointment.

On the ground, several male Wudang disciples exchanged glances, then shrugged.

They produced empty wine jars from their storage rings-simple, unadorned clay vessels that suddenly felt far more menacing than any sword.

The sound of liquid striking ceramic soon echoed across the courtyard: steady, deliberate, and utterly merciless.

The jars filled one by one while thousands of white-robed figures watched in cold satisfaction.

Yin Long's face twisted into a mask of pure fury. "A cultivator can be destroyed," he snarled, voice hoarse, "but never humiliated like this—"

Alex flicked two fingers.

An invisible needle of sword qi lanced across the courtyard and struck Yin Long directly in the throat, piercing a vital acupoint and completely immobilizing him. The Sect Master's furious words cut off in a wet, strangled choke, his eyes bulging wide with shock.

Alex tilted his head slightly, regarding the man with mild curiosity.

"I want to humiliate you," he said softly. "So what? Who is going to stop me?"

No one answered. The courtyard fell deathly silent except for the steady, rhythmic splash of liquid being poured from smaller jars into the largest one.

When the vessels were finally full, four burly Wudang disciples stepped forward without hesitation. They seized the paralyzed Sect Master and dragged him toward the massive jar. Yin

Long's eyes rolled wildly, filled with a toxic mix of terror and helpless rage, but his body no longer obeyed him.

In one smooth motion, they upended him headfirst into the dark, foul-smelling liquid. Thick wooden planks slammed down over the opening. Nails were driven in with quick, merciless blows. The seal was complete.

Inside the sealed jar, muffled thrashing could be heard for a few seconds. Then it stopped.

Alex knew that a Core Formation cultivator like Yin Long could survive without air for several days. A cold smile curved his lips.

"Let him ferment in there first," he said, his voice carrying clearly across the silent courtyard. "We'll pull him out later and have some fun with him."

A thunderous wave of laughter erupted from the five thousand Wudang disciples—

raw, cathartic, and long overdue.

Alex looked out over the silent

courtyard at the sea of

aet

unconscious enemies sprawled across the blood-stained stone, a the large jar that now held the once mighty Sect Master Yinong, and at the five thousand white-robed disciples who had finally, after three centuries of humiliation, reclaimed their dignity without needing to stain their blades.

He exhaled once, slow and satisfied.

Alex looked out over the silent courtyard-at the sea of

let

unconscious enemies sprawled across the blood-stained stone,

the large jar that now held the once mighty Sect Master Yi Long, and at the

five thousand white robed disciples who had finally, after three centuries of humiliation, reclaimed their dignity without needing to stain their blades.

He stepped to the edge of the dais, voice calm yet carrying to every ear.

"Everyone," he said, "thank you for coming. The Yin Yang Sect is finished. Every last one of them will be taken to our secret realm and turned into servants. They'll be useful—somehow."

A ripple of satisfaction moved through the ranks. Then Alex's tone shifted, growing heavier, more deliberate.

"But I need you to tell everyone this: today's fight was won by a hair's breadth. The Yin Yang Sect is destroyed, yes—but Wudang lost nearly all its disciples in the clash. We are broken. We must seal our mountain gates and hide for the next ten years just to recover."

The words landed like a hammer.

For a long moment the courtyard stayed frozen in shock. Five thousand faces stared

at him in open confusion. Eyes narrowed. After the effortless victory they had just witnessed, the claim sounded insane.

Alex let the silence stretch, then smiled-slow, knowing, and razor-sharp.

"We all know the truth," he continued. "Outside the Yin Yang Sect, other powers in Qingshui City and beyond have been watching us, waiting for any sign of weakness. I'm too lazy to hunt them down one by one. So let's give them what they want. Let them believe Wudang is prey tet their greed drag them straight into our yard. Then we'll take them all at once."

wounded, bleeding e

Understanding dawned.

The confusion melted away. Grins broke out across the white-robed lines-first

small, then wide and fierce. Shoulders relaxed. A few disciples even laughed under

their breath, the sound low and dangerous. They saw it now: not defeat, but the perfect trap. Alex's own smile widened in return.

Zhuge Liang, who had crept back to the edge of the dais during the standoff, stood with his mouth half-open.

For once the strategist looked genuinely impressed. He looked ready to shout his

approval but caught himself and simply beamed, eyes gleaming with admiration. Only Li Qingxue remained unmoved. A faint crease appeared between her brows,

and she pressed two fingers lightly to her temple as if a sudden headache had

struck.

The great orthodox sect of Wudang ancient, upright, revered across the Jianghu— had just become something far more cunning under this man's hand. A scoundrel's scheme wrapped in Taoist robes. She exhaled slowly, saying nothing.

Within the hour the rumor was already flying.

Soldiers slipped away in small groups, spreading the story through the city like

poison in a well. Whispers in every teahouse, every back alley, every rival sect hall.

Wudang had suffered catastrophic losses.

Their disciples were decimated.

The mountain gates would close for ten full years while the survivors licked their wounds.

Greedy eyes turned toward the misty peaks in the distance. Hidden gates to other realms. Ancient techniques. Untold treasures. All of it suddenly vulnerable.

That same night, letters and signals raced outward across the Jianghu like sparks before a wildfire. Messengers on swift horses thundered down darkened roads while carrier birds exploded into the twilight sky. Every message carried the same irresistible, venomous promise:

Wudang is at its weakest point.

It is time to destroy Wudang.

Meanwhile, all five thousand disciples had already begun sharpening their swords.

They waited like wolves in the dark, patient and perfectly still.

They only hoped the next wave of prey wouldn't be quite such a letdown.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 636[1,505 words]

When night came, Alex dragged Zhuge Liang over for dinner.

He was deep in thought.

If he meant to keep the promise he had made-five years to drag Wudang from the shadows and plant its banner at the very top of the Jianghu-he would need more disciplined blades. He would need an army. Real soldiers.

People who would bleed and die for Wudang without hesitation, without question.

Slaves were the fastest way. Once taken, they could not protest. Even if they protested, they would die. They had no human rights. They were a deadly machine in the making.

In the Jianghu, the strong ruled. Defeat them, and the laws of heaven and earth itself bound them as slaves to the victor. No contracts. No oaths. Just raw, unbreakable submission.

Every enemy they crushed became another sword in Wudang's hand. Every rival lured here and broken became another brick in the foundation he was building.

He needed more enemies.

A great deal more.

Last time, he had moved all the prisoners from Qingshui City to the Wudang sect, swelling its disciples into the thousands. Yet he still needed more.

Alex turned his head slightly. Zhuge Liang sat across from him, eating dinner. He smiled like a gangster waiting for people to look for trouble with him, so he could strong-arm them and turn it into an opportunity.

"Zhuge Liang," Alex said, "Who do the city soldiers of Qingshui belong to?"

Zhuge Liang didn't hesitate. "They belong to you, City Lord Bai. Every last one." Alex nodded once. "Good. Starting tomorrow, all of them report to Wudang for intense training. Full immersion. No exceptions."

Zhuge Liang cleared his throat. "My lord... if every soldier leaves the city for Wudang, who maintains order in Qingshui?"

Alex smiled. It was small, sharp, and utterly without warmth. "If they want to break the law while the soldiers are gone, that's even better. We'll just drag them up the mountain too. Let the mountain straighten their minds."

Zhuge Liang's face tightened. "This must not happen. The people will—"

Alex turned to face him fully. "Who is the city lord, Zhuge? Me? Or you?"

The strategist's mouth snapped shut. For a heartbeat the two men stared at each other—one young and unyielding, the other older and suddenly very aware of the line he had nearly crossed.

"You are," Zhuge Liang said at last, bowing low. "Of course."

The next morning the streets of Qingshui City rang with the tramp of boots.

Every soldier-city guard, patrol captain, even the night watch—marched in perfect columns toward the mountain road. Armor gleamed under the rising sun. Faces were grim, but none dared speak against the order.

Yet inside the soldiers' minds, they believed City Lord Bai had already gone completely mad.

When he was young, he had been the number one debauchee of Qingshui City - a man who knew nothing but gambling, drinking, womanizing, and every despicable act imaginable.

Now he had become a Wudang disciple and had caused the sect itself to stand half a step from ruin. As city lord, he was mobilizing every soldier from a city teeming with bastards just like his former self. He clearly intended to destroy the entire Qingshui City.

But as soldiers, they had no choice. They could only obey, even if they thought the orders were pure insanity.

At the city gates, a single proclamation had been posted on every notice board, read aloud by criers at every major crossroads. The words were simple, blunt, and impossible to misinterpret.

"By order of City Lord Bai, any infraction-large or small-will be punished by one full year of mind and moral correction at Wudang. Harm a citizen, cheat a merchant, raise your voice in anger, or even litter the streets, and you will march up that mountain. No excuses. No appeals."

The people who listened to the announcement stood shocked for a moment, then burst into hard, disbelieving laughter.

In the teahouses and back alleys of Qingshui City, men slapped their thighs and roared until tears streaked their faces.

The new proclamation posted fresh that morning on every wall-had sounded terrifying at first. One mistake, any mistake, and you marched up the mountain for a year of "mind and moral correction."

But as the last city guards disappeared up the winding road, the fear curdled into something else entirely: opportunity.

"What can they do?" a scar-faced thug named Scar Eye bellowed, slamming an empty wine jar onto a table. "No soldiers, no eyes, no one to report shit. Life just got a whole lot sweeter."

His crew howled in agreement. For centuries they had slunk through the shadows while Wudang pretended to be above it all and the Yin Yang sect squeezed the city dry. Now both were gone-or so the rumors screamed. The mountain was weak. The streets were theirs.

By noon the news had flown beyond the city walls on swift horses and carrier pigeons. Bandit camps in the surrounding hills stirred like stirred anthills. Hard men with notched blades and hungry eyes gathered around fires, sharpening steel and counting coins.

"Soldiers gone, Qingshui has no teeth," one chieftain growled, grinning into the flames. "We'll open shop there tomorrow. Extortion, smuggling, whatever we want. The place is ripe."

Night fell hard and fast.

It started small. A food stall owner named Old Chen watched in horror as three thugs kicked his cart over, scattering dumplings across the dirt. "Protection f*e," one snarled, holding out a greasy hand. "Pay up or we burn the rest."

Two streets over, a leering merchant pressed his eye to a cracked wall, breath hot against the wood as he spied on the widow next door undressing by lantern light. His pulse thundered with the thrill of it—no patrol to stop him, no consequences.

In a narrow gambling den, a bitter warehouse foreman finally snapped. He drove his fist into the face of the boss who had cheated him for

years. Bones cracked. Bon?

sprayed. The foreman laughed while the man crumpled, years of swallowed rage pouring out in a single savage swing.

All across the city the same story played out in a hundred different keys: small cruelties, long-held grudges, the sudden, giddy freedom of a leash removed. The weak learned what the strong had always

known—the moment authority vanished, the wolves came out to play.

FindNovel.net

High above on the highest roof of Bai Mansion, Alex stood motionless in the dark, hands clasped behind his back.

He had baited the trap and was now simply waiting for people to jump into it.

A faint blue glow hovered before him: a translucent interface only he could see. Mother Ai's calm, genderless voice spoke directly into his mind.

"Two hundred and seventeen infractions recorded in the first three hours, City Lord. All catalogued with full visual and audio evidence. Shall I proceed?"

Mother Ai recorded everything directly from the Gaia band-aids already embedded inside each person's body. The devices pretended not to know and claimed they could do nothing, yet they secretly recorded every human interaction and reported it all back to her.

Alex's smile was thin and cold. "Do it."

It had already begun. Someone was testing the waters. It felt exactly like opening the first shop and watching customers rush in to buy. A quiet, savage satisfaction bloomed inside Alex.

Deep inside one of the storage rooms of Bai Mansion, Mother Ai woke her swarm. Two hundred sleek drones—camouflaged in matte black and running silent—rose from their cradles like ghosts. No lights. No sound. They slipped out through concealed vents and streaked down toward the sleeping city on silent electric wings. One by one they found their targets.

Scar Eye never saw the dart. He felt only a sharp prick at the base of his neck, then the world folded sideways. His crew dropped around him like puppets with cut strings, faces still twisted in drunken laughter.

The peeping merchant gasped once as a needle hissed through the crack in the wall. He collapsed face-first into the dirt, eyes wide with shock.

The warehouse foreman had time to raise his bloody fist for a second blow before the drone's payload hit. He toppled across his former boss, both men now equally still.

In back alleys and bedrooms and rooftops, the swarm moved like judgment itself— efficient, merciless, and utterly invisible. Not a single scream escaped. Not a single witness stirred.

By the time the moon reached its zenith, every offender was gone. Dragged up the Wudang's Mountain.

Dawn broke clean and bright over Qingshui.

People stepped outside to find an eerie quiet. The thugs who had ruled the night were simply... missing. No bodies. No blood. No trace.

Old Chen found a heavy pouch on his overturned cart. Inside lay twice the silver the thugs had tried to steal, plus a crisp note in elegant script: 'For damages and distress. The City Lord regrets the inconvenience.'

The warehouse boss woke with a splitting headache and a similar pouch beside his bed— compensation for his broken jaw and a handwritten apology from the City Lord

himself.

But no one knew what happened to those who broke the rules.

Meanwhile, outside the city, bands of bandits and disciples from other sects were quietly gathering. One group sought to bring down the Wudang Sect, while the other intended to seize or crush Qingshui City itself.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 637[1,315 words]

The sects moved like men who had tasted gold in their dreams and refused to wake. Greed had lit the fire, but caution kept it banked.

In the torch-lit halls of the many Sect, elders hunched over maps of Wudang Mountain while disciples sharpened blades and counted supply wagons.

They argued in low voices about alliances, supply lines, and the exact hour they would strike. Letters flew between mountain peaks on swift hawks.

Every elder made certain his own courtyard was secure, his concubines guarded, his treasury locked before any man dared the long road.

They were not fools. They had lived long enough to know that the strong ruled the Jianghu only until someone stronger waited around the next bend.

That makes it a slow move for any sect to try attacking the Wudang Sect in Qingshui City.

The bandits were different animals.

Word of the empty city reached the hills by dusk. No soldiers. No patrols. Just fat merchants and soft civilians left unguarded. The chieftains did not waste time on maps or letters.

They kicked dirt over their fires, swung into saddles, and rode. Hooves thundered down hidden trails as ragged companies poured toward Qingshui like wolves scenting blood. To them the city was no longer a city.

It was a beautiful woman sprawled across silk sheets, dress torn open, begging to be taken. They laughed at the thought of it, already dividing the spoils before the walls even came into sight.

Inside Qingshui, the first night had already written its verdict.

Dawn spilled pale light across the streets. Shopkeepers stepped outside and found their overturned carts righted, their stolen silver replaced by heavier pouches stamped with the City Lord's seal. A note accompanied every one: "For damages and distress. The City Lord regrets the inconvenience."

Old Chen, the dumpling seller, stared at the extra coins in his palm and felt something close to fear.

The warehouse foreman woke to the same gift beside his bed, jaw still throbbing, and wondered who in the nine hells was playing this game.

Early that morning at the Bai Mansion, Zhuge Liang found Alex standing in the courtyard. The strategist bowed respectfully, then straightened and posed the question that had kept him awake all night.

"Lord Bai," he said carefully, "in the usual course of justice, we punish the criminals and return what was taken to the victim. We never offer extra silver for their inconvenience. May I ask why you do this?"

Alex turned from the city view. The morning sun carved sharp lines across his young face. He studied Zhuge Liang for a moment, then answered with a question of his

own.

"On the first day, when people see that those who broke the law have simply vanished and been punished, tell me what do you think will happen the next day? Will the people stop making mistakes, or will more and more of them break the law as the days go by?"

Zhugue Liang's brow furrowed. "My lord, after witnessing the first day's punishment, they will fear it. They will stop."

Alex's smile was small and cold. "That is exactly what I feared. If no one breaks the law, I will have no new slaves. So I gave the victims more money than they lost. It ensures people keep making mistakes."

Zhugue Liang said nothing. Even his quick mind could not follow the logic. He simply bowed and withdrew.

The second day the numbers rose. The third day they doubled. Mother Ai's calm voice reported each new infraction without emotion-three hundred and twelve, then five hundred and eighty-seven.

Zhugue Liang watched the tallies climb and felt the first crack of unease in his chest. Punishment was supposed to deter. Here it seemed to invite.

On the fourth morning he left the mansion and walked the streets himself, needing to see the truth with his own eyes.

What he found stopped him cold.

Outside a silk merchant's shop, bolts of fine cloth lay neatly stacked on a low table -unguarded, unwatched.

A jewelry peddler had left trays of silver bracelets and jade pendants glittering in the open air while he sipped tea across the street. In the market square, a moneychanger had placed open sacks of coins on a bench and turned his back.

When Zhugue Liang asked a nearby vendor what madness this was, the man grinned.

"The City Lord pays extra money if they're stolen," he said. "We set it out, they take it, and the next morning the stolen item returns with extra profit. We're richer than before. Everyone's doing it now."

Zhugue Liang's face burned crimson. He marched back to the mansion, boots ringing on the stone, and found Alex drinking tea.

"My lord," he said, voice tight with disbelief, "this is not justice. This is not even bait. This is forcing people to break the law!"

Alex met Zhuge Liang's furious gaze without flinching.

"I don't force anyone, Zhuge Liang," he said quietly. "I'm simply teaching people not to follow their greed. Not to break the law even when every door is left wide open and the prize is laid out in front of them. But if they can't hold themselves back-if the hunger wins-then they pay for their actions. And the payment is usually their life."

Zhuce Liang opened his mouth, closed it again. The words hung between them like a blade that had already fallen.

Alex turned back to the city below, where more and more treasures glittered on doorsteps and market stalls as if the people of Qingshui had decided the mountain's strange new game was worth playing.

A few days later the bandits finally arrived.

They had ridden without rest, pushing their horses until foam flecked their flanks and blood ran from spur cuts.

Word of the empty city had spread like wildfire through the hills-Qingshui had no soldiers, no watch, no teeth. The chieftains had laughed at the thought of it.

They had imagined smashing down doors in the dead of night, blades at throats, screams echoing off the walls while they stripped the place clean. That was how the world worked. You took what you wanted by force, or someone else took it from you.

Instead they reined in their lathered mounts at the city gates and stared in stunned silence.

The main street stretched before them like a merchant's dream left unguarded. Bolts of silk lay piled on low tables outside shops.

Open chests of silver ingots sat on benches, coins catching the morning sun. Jade bracelets, gold hairpins, and strings of copper cash hung from hooks on the walls of houses.

No guards. No locked gates. No frightened shopkeepers peering out from behind shutters.

Men and women strolled past the displays as if the wealth were nothing more than yesterday's laundry left out to dry. A few even nodded politely to the dust-covered riders before continuing on their way.

The bandits sat frozen in their saddles, weapons still half-drawn, mouths open.

One scarred chieftain named Black

Wolf slid down from his horse and walked forward as if the scene might vanish if he moved too quickly. He picked up a heavy silver ingo, turned it over in his callused hand, and waited for the shout, the arrow, the trap. Nothing came. The street stayed quiet except for the soft clop of a passing donkey cart.

He looked back at his second-in-command, a wiry man called Rat Face, and asked

the only question that made any sense.

"Is this heaven?" Black Wolf said, voice rough with disbelief. "Did we die on the road and nobody told us? When did they start leaving everything free?"

Rat Face stared at a nearby table piled with embroidered robes and laughed once, a short, nervous bark. "If it is, I'm never leaving."

Greed, already hot in their blood from days of hard riding, flared brighter. Whispers rippled through the ragged column. Knives slid back into sheaths.

Hands reached out. One by one the bandits stepped forward, scooping up whatever caught their eye—coins, jewels, silk—stuffing them into saddlebags and pockets with the dazed delight of men who had just

UT

been handed the world without having to kill for it.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 638[1,636 words]

High above on the roof of Bai Mansion, Alex watched the scene unfold through Mother Ai's eyes. The blue interface tallied each new infraction in real time—two hundred and fourteen already, and the sun had barely cleared the eastern hills. A thin smile touched his lips.

"Record everything," he said softly.

Mother Ai's voice answered inside his head, calm and precise. "All visual and audio evidence logged, City Lord. The swarm is ready."

In the shadowed storage rooms beneath the mansion, thousands of sleek black drones stirred to life once more, silent as death itself. They rose on whisper-quiet wings and slipped out into the bright morning air, invisible against the sky.

Down in the streets the bandits laughed louder now, drunk on easy fortune. Black Wolf slung a heavy sack of silver over his shoulder and grinned at the sky.

"Boys," he called, voice booming, "I think we just found ourselves a new home."

The trap had not merely opened wider.

It had welcomed them inside with open arms.

The bandits spilled deeper into Qingshui like a flood that had finally broken its dam.

Black Wolf kicked open the doors of the largest mansion on the main avenue, the one with lacquered pillars and a courtyard big enough for a small army. The owner —a plump silk merchant named Master Liu—stood in the entrance hall holding a lantern.

Most men would have screamed or reached for a hidden blade. Master Liu only smiled, bowed low, and said, "Honored guests, you are most welcome to this place. If you enter right now, it would be breaking and entering. But if you insist on robbing this house, then the best guest rooms are on the second floor. Fresh bedding and hot water are already prepared. Consider this house yours for the night because you are robbing it."

Black Wolf blinked. His men behind him froze mid-step, knives still in their hands.

The merchant pressed a small pouch of gold coins into the chieftain's palm. "Please don't rob me, but if you insist on robbing me, here is a small token for your trouble, sirs. Please enjoy everything you see."

It happened in house after house. Doors swung open before the bandits could break them. Wives offered bowls of warm wine. Children were shooed upstairs so the "honored robbers" could rest.

No one shouted. No one fought. The bandits, drunk on disbelief and easy plunder, simply moved in. They ate the food set out on tables, drank the wine left uncorked, and fell asleep in strangers' beds with their boots still on.

By nightfall the entire outer district belonged to them. Laughter rolled down the streets. Fires crackled in borrowed courtyards.

They toasted their impossible fortune and told each other this was what the Jianghu was supposed to be when the strong finally took what the weak had always owed them.

High on the roof of Bai Mansion, Alex watched every second through the blue glow of Mother Ai's interface. The numbers climbed higher than they ever had.

"One thousand four hundred and twelve infractions," the calm voice reported inside his head. "All recorded."

Alex's smile never reached his eyes. "Send the swarm."

The drones rose without sound. Matte-black, invisible against the night sky, they drifted down like silent owls.

One by one the bandits felt nothing more than a cold prick at the base of the neck. Eyes widened for half a heartbeat, then rolled back.

Bodies slumped across silk sheets, across tavern tables, across the very floors they had claimed. Not a single scream. Not a single witness.

All of them were delivered to the Wudang sect, marked with the Gaia Band-Aid on their necks. They had already become perfect slaves-tightly bound and obedient. They would be forced to train in the Wudang arts so they could later be ordered to do anything Alex wished. For now, they would have to train for years to straighten out their morals and minds, while also working hard to repay the extra money Alex had to pay the victims.

The more items they took, the longer and harder their working period became. Everything is fair.

Before dawn the drones returned every stolen item to its rightful owner-plus extra its value in fresh silver. Broken doors were quietly repaired. Shattered locks replaced. Courtyards swept clean. When the people of Qingshui woke, they found their houses exactly as they had been, except their purses were heavier and their smiles wider.

Master Liu weighed the new pouch in his hand and laughed softly. "Another good night's work."

Greed had already taken root. By the next morning, the streets closest to the gates looked like a festival market left open to the wind.

Tables groaned under bolts of silk, jars of wine, whole roasted pigs still warm on spits, and open chests of coins.

Even the pleasure houses had moved their prettiest girls to the front steps. They sat in bright silks and low-cut robes, legs crossed, fans fluttering, smiling at every rider who came through the gates.

The second wave of bandits arrived at noon.

They reined in hard, horses lathered and eyes wide. The same stunned silence fell over them.

One young bandit, barely twenty, stared at a table piled high with food and wine right in the middle of the road. He reached out, picked up a roasted chicken leg, and took a bite. No one stopped him.

"Is this... heaven?" he whispered.

An older chieftain beside him pinched his own arm hard enough to draw blood, then slapped himself across the face. The sting felt real. The food tasted real. The girls on the steps waved and beckoned as if the bandits were long-awaited lovers.

In all their hard lives they had never seen anything like it. Usually when riders like them appeared, doors slammed, valuables disappeared, and people ran screaming. Here the city had laid itself bare and said, "Take it all."

The bandit leaders roared. "This is the real city of gold! Take everything, leave with nothing! Today we throw a big party!"

All the bandits swarmed forward like dogs in heat catching the scent of a female. Little did they know that every treasure they seized would cost them the rest of their lives in chains. They had just sold their bodies and souls for cheap.

Some of the city's less fortunate residents—those whose houses sat on narrow side lanes—had watched the first and second wave from afar. They had seen how quickly the bandits emptied the displays near the gates and left the rest untouched. That night they made their move.

By sunrise the next day every alley had its own table. Housewives dragged their best furniture to the main roads. Merchants hauled out their most expensive goods and set them in plain sight. A butcher placed an entire side of beef on a stand with a small sign "The best food of Qingshui."

By sunrise the next day, every alley had sprouted its own table. Housewives hauled their finest furniture out to the main roads.

Merchants dragged their most

expensive wares into the open and displayed them proudly. A butcher set an entire side of beef on a stand beneath a small handwritten sign that read: "The best food of Qingshui."

Even the old widow who sold nothing but pickled vegetables lugged her jars to the corner, sat down beside them, and wore a hopeful little smile. She was waiting—eager, almost—to be robbed. Her body or her goods, it didn't matter. Both were welcome, as long as the bandits desired them.

When the third wave of bandits

third thundered into the city, they could barely speak. The streets had turned into an endless sea of temptation. Gold, silk, food, women—everything lay open, offered without shame or guard. One chieftain, the hulking brute called Iron Jaw, stared at the staggering bounty and felt hot tears prick his eyes.

Some townsfolk even began shouting. "Please rob this!"

"No, please steal from my place!"

"Rob this one over here!"

People were actually fighting each other to be robbed by the bandits.

"Why?" the bandit leaders muttered, voices thick with disbelief. "Why are these people giving us everything?"

He had never shed a single tear in his brutal life, yet here it was-something he had never imagined. People were chasing him down to be robbed.

Not the usual game of hunting them for ten miles just to snatch one lousy item. This

time, they were chasing him.

All of this was heaven.

High above, Alex stood with his hands clasped behind his back, the blue interface

flickering in front of him like cold fire. The numbers were climbing so fast Mother Ai had to update them every few seconds.

Zhuge Liang stood a few paces away, face pale, voice barely a whisper. "My lord... they are turning the entire city into bait. They are begging to be robbed."

Alex didn't turn around. His smile was small, sharp, and utterly without warmth. "Good," he said. "Let them beg. The mountain is hungry."

Far below, the bandits laughed and reached and took, never noticing the faint black shapes drifting silently across the rooftops as night began to fall once more. The trap had not simply welcomed them.

It had dressed itself in silk, poured them wine, and asked them to stay forever.

But suddenly a group of righteous Qincheng sect disciples stormed onto the scene like they were the main characters in a hero movie and bellowed, "Halt, you filthy bandits! We are disciples of the Qincheng sect! You shall not rob these good, innocent citizens!"

The bandits' faces dropped faster than a dropped sword. Iron Jaw actually sniffled. But the citizens? They were devastated. Absolutely crushed.

One housewife threw her best tablecloth on the ground and wailed, "Noooo! I spent

all morning polishing that silver!"

A merchant dropped to his knees. "Please, heroes, go away! We were finally getting robbed!"

Even the old widow with her pickled vegetables shook her fist at the disciples. "You

meddling brats! I waited fifty years for a proper bandit raid!"

The bandits looked at each other in pure heartbreak.

The citizens looked like their souls had been robbed instead.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 639[1,425 words]

The citizens of Qingshui erupted.

A stout housewife, her apron still dusted with flour from the morning's baking, snatched up her best embroidered tablecloth and hurled it high like a battle flag. She stormed straight toward the nearest Qingcheng disciple, moving with the raw fury of an angry lioness.

"We spent all morning polishing that silver!" she screamed, her voice cracking with pure, unfiltered rage. "Do you have any idea how long it took to make it look tempting enough?"

Fat merchants dropped to their knees in the dusty street, clutching desperately at the disciples' robes. "Please," one begged, voice trembling, "just go away. Don't ruin my business."

"Old man," one disciple replied, struggling to keep his tone steady, "we're here to protect your business from being robbed."

A silk trader wailed in despair. "Heroes, please! We finally had robbers-real ones! Go away! Let them rob us!"

"Last time we got robbed, my wife got a new dress. What do heroes even bring? Moral lectures?"

An old man pushed forward, eyes narrowed. "Heroes... are you going to rob us then?"

The disciple recoiled, shocked. "What?"

"If you're not going to rob us," the old man said, voice flat and desperate, "then please, just leave."

"We're trying to save you," another disciple insisted, frustration sharpening his words. "How can you not understand?"

"We have no need of your help!" the crowd shouted back. "We need to be robbed! How can you not understand something so simple?"

The old widow who sold nothing but pickled vegetables stepped out of the throng, eyes blazing beneath her wrinkled brow. She heaved a heavy jar of brine high and smashed it at the feet of the nearest junior sister. Vinegar and shattered clay sprayed across the young woman's robes, the sharp, sour smell exploding into the air.

"If you don't get out of this place right now," the widow roared, her voice surprisingly strong and fierce for her age, "I will fight every last one of you to the death!"

Then a very old woman-well into her eighties-hobbled forward on a walking stick. In one smooth motion she drew a slender sword from inside the cane. The blade was old, yet its edge still gleamed with deadly promise.

"When I was young," she announced, gaze sharp and proud, "they called me the most beautiful Xiao Mei in three provinces. Back then I could have handled ten of you with one hand. If you want to help us, get out of here. But if you want to rob us... we'll welcome you with open arms."

The entire street took up the chant, voices rising into a thunderous roar. "Go away! Go away! We want to be robbed!"

The bandits stood frozen in the middle of the chaos, weapons still half-raised, mouths hanging open in disbelief. One younger outlaw whispered, voice thick with awe and confusion, "Is this... really heaven for bandits?"

"If heaven serves free banquets and angry grannies welcome us with open arms... I'm converting."

The Qingcheng disciples stared in stunned silence for a heartbeat longer.

"Please," one of them finally managed, voice cracking with shock. "We only want to help you."

"Get out of here!" the citizens roared back. Their fury turned into weapons in an instant.

Housewives snatched up heavy rolling pins. Butchers grabbed cleavers in one hand and entire sides of roasted pork in the other, swinging the meat like gruesome clubs. Merchants scooped up stones from the street and began hurling them with vicious accuracy.

The disciples stood frozen, faces pale with disbelief. In all their years of training and righteous deeds, they had never been treated worse than the very bandits they had come to defeat.

"They're the bandits you should be chasing away-not kind people like us!" a woman disciple screamed.

"Get out!" the crowd thundered. "You're ruining everything!"

The Qingcheng disciples stumbled backward, eyes wide. The senior brother swung his sword in a desperate arc, parrying a flying roasted chicken leg that came hurtling toward his face. A stone whistled past his ear, missing by inches.

"We're trying to protect you!" he shouted, voice breaking with frustration. "These men are thieves! Can't you understand that?"

A merchant lobbed another stone, face twisted in anger. "Then go protect someone else! Go bother the Wudang sect-they've got real cultivators who can actually handle you all!"

Chaos spilled through the streets like a festival gone mad. The disciples ran, white robes flapping wildly behind them as they tried to explain, to reason, to invoke justice and righteousness. Every plea earned them fresh volleys of rotten vegetables, stinging insults, and flying furniture.

The junior sisters shrieked as rotten tomatoes cracked dangerously close to their ankles. The senior brother glanced back once, face streaked with sweat and burning humiliation. The entire city had turned against them, herding the disciples toward the eastern gates like unwanted stray dogs.

Just because they want to help them

They blocked every side street and alley, refusing to let them escape anywhere but out to Wudang Mountains.

"If you want to play hero so badly," an old man bellowed, waving a butcher knife, "go train on Wudang Mountain! Don't come back until you learn not to ruin honest people's livelihoods!"

The disciples had no choice. They fled up the winding mountain road.

Behind them, the citizens waved and cheered with savage delight.

"Safe travels!" someone yelled.

"Don't hurry back!"

"Never come back, please!"

The moment the disciples vanished

over the ridge, the people of Qingshui turned back toward the bandits with warm, welcoming smiles as if the violent chase had never happened. Housewives calmly brushed the dust from their aprons. Merchants straightened their overturned tables.

The old widow sheathed her gleaming sword and patted the bandit leader's thick arm with grandmotherly affection. "True

robbers," she said kindly, her net

soft now please continue We've chased away those stupid disciples. The night is still young."

Some of the bandits let out deep, relieved belly laughs. Others-the

glances. Something felt deeply wrong here, but the tables still groaned under mountains of food the women kept smiling warmly, and the raw urge to take what was so freely offered drowned out the quiet voice of suspicion.

sharper ones-exchangeably net

Night fell completely.

Exhausted from hours of feasting and robbing, the bandits collapsed where they stood-sprawled across silk-covered beds, tavern benches, and open courtyards. High on a rooftop overlooking the chaotic scene, Alex watched in silence as matte-black drones descended like silent judgment from the dark sky.

"Send the swarm," he ordered calmly.

The bandits never even stirred. Their bodies slumped without a sound as the drones delivered their payload.

By morning they would wake inside Wudang's training halls, Gaia Band-Aids already sealed to their skin, their minds gently bending toward obedience.

One by one the bandits began to stir in the dim, unfamiliar cells far away. A blood-red interface flared to life behind their eyes.

"You have stolen five hundred gold coins worth," a calm, mechanical voice informed them. "Punishment: one hundred years of labor until full repayment. You will train in the Wudang arts. You will repay every victim. You will become better men."

A burly bandit snarled, trying to rise. "I don't want—"

White-hot pain exploded through his nervous system, electric and absolute. His knees buckled as he crashed back to the floor.

The voice continued, completely unhurried. "You cannot protest. You can only work until your debt is paid. Or until death."

Real tears—something these men had not shed in years—cut tracks down their hardened, weathered faces.

They had laughed in the face of death on the open road many times. But this... this was something far worse. A lifetime of invisible chains disguised as training. Moral correction wrapped in the language of justice.

Back in Qingshui, the citizens worked through the final hours of darkness without complaint. They reset every table, re-polished every piece of silver until it gleamed, and carefully positioned the prettiest girls back on the front steps with practiced

smiles.

By sunrise the streets once again glittered with fresh bait—rich, tempting, and utterly irresistible.

A merchant clapped his hands together, grinning from ear to ear. "Fourth wave should be here soon! Everyone look pitiful and rich!"

Zhuge Liang stood beside Alex, wiping sweat from his brow. His voice was quiet, almost awed. "My lord... what you have done. The honest people of Qingshui... have become scarier than any bandit."

Alex's smile finally reached his eyes-just the faintest flicker of satisfaction. Far below, the city sparkled under the rising sun, perfectly reset and waiting.

The trap had dressed itself in silk once more, poured fresh wine, and opened its arms wide.

And the mountain was still hungry.

Meanwhile at the Wudang Sect, Lu Piao and the others were already watching the Qincheng Sect people approaching. They quickly yelled, "Be prepared! Our first customer is here. We must not lose to the Qingshui citizens!"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 640[1,794 words]

The mountain wind carried the first distant thunder of hooves and sword-song across the shattered gates of Wudang.

One hundred and fifty Qincheng disciples swept into the courtyard like a storm front, white robes snapping, blades gleaming under the midday sun.

Their formation was flawless arrogance wrapped in martial precision.

They had heard the whispers for three long centuries: Wudang was dying-ravaged

by the second-rate Yin Yang Sect's merciless onslaught. Its walls fractured and fell,

its legendary name reduced to ridicule among the righteous sects.

A first-rate power like Qincheng could swallow them whole and still have room for dessert.

They reined in hard. Dust billowed around them.

Every eye took in the half-collapsed outer wall, the great gate hanging drunkenly from a single hinge, the weeds pushing through cracked flagstones. A low murmur rippled through their ranks.

"Wudang was so pathetic. Already on its knees."

High on the cracked steps of the main hall, Alex waited alone.

Behind him, out of sight, Lu Piao and the others crouched in the shadows, hearts hammering with something fiercer than fear. Anticipation. Hunger.

Alex stepped forward, hands clasped before him, voice calm and carrying.

"Greetings, honored friends from the Qingcheng Sect." He gave a shallow, respectful bow. "I am Jun Jiu, young leader of Wudang. Our elders and Sect Master lie gravely wounded after the Yin Yang Sect's incursion. Forgive this younger generation for receiving you in their stead."

A tall elder at the head of the Qingcheng column-Elder Feng, silver at his temples, eyes like winter steel-stroked his beard and smiled the gentle smile of a man who already owned the room.

"Young Jun Jiu," he said, voice warm as honeyed wine, "we have heard of Wudang's dire straits. Unorthodox sects circle like wolves. Demon cultivators sharpen their knives. Even the common rabble grows bold. We come not as conquerors, but as brothers. Let Qingcheng shoulder your burdens. Let us safeguard your lands, your disciples, your very future. Together, we can ensure the righteous path endures."

Jun Jiu's face remained politely blank. He heard the offer for what it was: velvet over iron.

Submit. Yield control. Or disappear.

"I agree completely," he said. "The hidden realm must be protected from unorthodox or demonic sects at all costs. Yet the younger generation of Wudang is... spirited, shall we say." He paused deliberately, letting the words hang in the air, then smiled. "They may not see the wisdom in your generous proposal."

"Perhaps a demonstration would convince them. You bring one hundred and fifty. We will match you with one hundred and fifty of our own. One-on-one bouts. The loser obeys the winner. Should your side claim victory in more than half the matches, Wudang will follow Qingcheng without hesitation."

Elder Feng's eyebrows lifted. A ripple of laughter moved through his disciples- quick, sharp, confident.

One hundred and fifty against a broken sect? This was charity dressed as sport. "Very well," the elder said, spreading his hands. "We accept."

Jun Jiu's gaze flicked across the Qingcheng ranks, invisible threads of spiritual sense-bolstered by Gaia's silent interface-sliding over each cultivator.

Two in Core Formation, their auras heavy as mountain stone. Fifty in Foundation Establishment, solid and proud. Ninety-eight scattered through Qi Condensation, from the first flicker to the tenth layer. He memorized every pulse, every flaw, every strength.

"Done," Mother Ai whispered inside his skull. "Matches prepared."

In the hidden realm, the call came without warning.

Transparent windows bloomed in front of one hundred and fifty Wudang disciples mid-spar, mid-meditation, mid-sweat-soaked training. Gaia's calm voice filled their minds.

"Real combat requested. Opponents waiting in the outer courtyard. Same cultivation level. No simulation. No mercy required. Begin when ready."

Grins split their faces-feral, bright, relieved. For weeks they had fought shadows, drilled against perfect digital replicas of Qingcheng techniques. Now the shadows would bleed.

They stepped through the shimmering exit portals.

They materialized on the roof of Wudang's main hall in a ripple of displaced air, then poured down the steps like a silent avalanche—robes clean, eyes shining, bodies humming with real qi.

They spilled into the courtyard and formed up opposite the Qingcheng force. One hundred and fifty against one hundred and fifty. The air crackled.

Lu Piao cracked his knuckles, already paired against a Foundation Establishment bruiser twice his width. "Finally," he muttered. "Real meat."

Jun Jiu lifted a hand, his voice steady and authoritative. "Only choose an opponent whose cultivation base matches your own."

"Understood!"

The Wudang disciples responded loudly and moved with practiced speed toward their pre-assigned opponents, the pairings already determined by Gaia.

The Qingcheng disciples looked at each other in astonishment. How could the pairings be decided so fast? However, the moment they extended their spiritual sense to gauge their opponents, delight bloomed on their faces. Every single Wudang disciple was perfectly matched in realm.

Their eyes shone with confidence.

"Make space for yourselves," Jun Jiu continued. "You may fight wherever you like."

Dozens of disciples promptly drifted outside the hall, seeking wider ground for the coming clashes.

"We are ready!"

Elder Feng's smile had long since faded into a thin line. After a brief pause, he nodded.

"Begin!"

No more words were needed.

The courtyard erupted.

The first clash was thunder. A Core Formation elder from Qingcheng lunged at his Wudang counterpart, sword drawing a crescent of blue fire.

The Wudang fighter-barely forty-five, face calm as still water-met him with a single palm strike that shattered the flame and drove the elder ten feet backward. The second exchange ended in a choke-hold and a quiet, respectful tap on the shoulder. The elder dropped to his knees, stunned.

Foundation Establishment bouts turned the flagstones into a storm of sparks and shattered stone. Every Qingcheng technique-every form they had drilled for decades-met its perfect counter.

Wudang disciples moved like they had studied these exact opponents for years. Because they had. In the hidden realm, against Gaia's merciless simulations.

Qi Condensation matches were faster, meaner. A young Qingcheng girl in the fifth layer hurled a barrage of wind blades.

Her Wudang opponent stepped through them as if they were rain, closed the distance, and placed two fingers against her throat.

She froze. He smiled-polite, almost kind-and the girl's face flushed crimson with humiliation.

Match after match ended the same way.

No Wudang disciple fell.

Not one.

Within twenty minutes the courtyard had gone deathly quiet except for the soft thud of bodies hitting stone and the ragged breathing of the defeated.

Qingcheng disciples knelt or sat in neat rows, weapons surrendered, faces pale with disbelief. Some stared at the ground. Others stared at the Wudang fighters with something closer to awe than rage.

Elder Feng stood alone in the center, sword still in his hand, the last man standing. His opponent a quiet Wudang youth who looked barely old enough to shave- waited three paces away, hands loose at his sides, breathing even.

Jun Jiu's voice cut through the silence, courteous as ever.

"It seems the younger generation has spoken, Elder Feng. Wudang will not be needing your... protection today."

The elder's knuckles whitened on his hilt. His mouth opened, closed. No words

came.

The silence in the courtyard stretched like a drawn bowstring. One hundred and fifty Qingcheng disciples knelt or sat in defeated rows, weapons surrendered, faces drained of every trace of their earlier arrogance.

Elder Feng drew a slow breath and forced a thin, conciliatory smile.

"Young Jun Jiu," he began, voice smooth as oiled silk, "the younger generation has indeed spoken. We concede the matches. Out of respect for Wudang's..... unexpected strength, we will take our leave at once. No harm done. The righteous path demands we part as friends, yes?"

Jun Jiu's polite mask did not even flicker. He simply tilted his head.

"No."

The single word landed like a hammer on stone.

Elder Feng's smile froze. "Pardon?"

"You lost," Jun Jiu said, tone still courteous but now edged with something colder. "Every single match. The agreement was clear: the loser obeys the winner. You belong to Wudang now. As slaves."

A stunned beat. Then the courtyard exploded.

"What?" Elder Feng's face flushed crimson. "You dare twist a friendly spar into—"

met

"Twist?" Jun Jiu's voice dropped to a whisper that somehow carried to every ear, "You came here to swallow us whole. You called us a dying sect. You offered 'protection the way a wolf offers to guard the sheep. And now that the sheep have teeth, you want to trot home with your dignity intact?" He took one step forward, and the air around him seemed to thicken. "I gave you face. You will give me honor."

Behind him, Lu Piao's grin widened into something feral.

Elder Feng's disciples exploded upward.

A burly disciple stepped forward, neck corded with rage. "You dare speak to us like

that, you Wudang dog?!"

"Shameless whelp!" another shouted, face purpling.

"We'll reduce this pathetic ruin to ashes!" a third snarled.

Their earlier sneers and laughter at Wudang's broken gates still echoed in the hall—

yet now those same proud Qingcheng faces burned with humiliated fury, chests heaving, eyes blazing with barely contained killing intent.

Jun Jiu's expression changed.

The gentle young leader vanished. What replaced him was ice and storm. His eyes went flat, black, and utterly without mercy.

"I gave you face. You refused to give me honor." His voice rose to a roar that shook the cracked flagstones. "All of you—beat them! Break them! Force them to become our slaves!"

The Wudang disciples did not hesitate.

They moved like a single predator.

Lu Piao was first. He crossed the distance in two strides and drove a fist wrapped in coiling qi straight into the gut of the nearest Foundation Establishment brute—the same man who had sneered at Wudang's "paper-thin defenses" before the fights. The big man folded with a wet gasp. Lu Piao grabbed him by the hair, yanked his head back, and slammed an elbow into his face. Cartilage crunched. Blood sprayed. All around the courtyard the beatdown erupted.

Wudang fighters who had smiled politely during the duels now unleashed months of pent-up fury. They used open palms, elbows, knees—every technique drilled to perfection in the hidden realm.

No swords. No mercy. Just raw, humiliating dominance. A Qingcheng girl who had boasted about her wind-blade mastery tried to summon a last desperate gust; two Wudang youths simply tackled her, pinned her arms, and ground her face into the dirt while she screamed.

Elder Feng lunged at Jun Jiu, sword finally flashing up.

Jun Jiu caught the blade between two fingers the steel stopped dead.

He looked into the elder's eyes—close enough to see the veins bursting with rage and fear—and twisted. The sword snapped like kindling. Then he backhanded Elder

Feng across the face with casual contempt. The elder spun, crashed to his knees, and tasted blood.

"Please" the old man choked.

"Too late," Jun Jiu said softly.

The Wudang disciples worked methodically, almost cheerfully. Every arrogant sneer the Qingcheng sect had worn earlier was repaid in full. Asenjoyer broth who had mocked Wudang's "hanging gate" now wept openly as three youths

took turns slapping him until his cheeks swelled purple.

Another disciple-Core Formation, proud as a lion an hour ago—curled into a ball

on the ground, sobbing like a child while Wudang disciple stood over him, foot planted on his chest.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 641[1,473 words]

Lu Piao stood amid the kneeling Qingcheng disciples, chest heaving, knuckles still slick with another man's blood. The courtyard reeked of sweat, crushed stone, and defeat.

"Lu Piao," Alex called, his voice low but carrying clearly across the silent yard.

Lu Piao turned, eyes bright with the same feral satisfaction that had fueled every punch. "Boss! You see what I did to the Qingcheng sect? Damn, they're so lame. Even the virtual fighter is stronger than all of them combined—and every single one has more openings than a broken sieve."

Alex glared at him. "Had enough boasting?"

Lu Piao quickly bowed, the grin never leaving his face. "What is it, young sect leader?"

"Did you watch how I welcomed them?"

Lu Piao's grin widened. "Every second of it."

"Good. Starting now, it's your job." Alex stepped closer, close enough that only the two of them could hear.

"Any newcomer sect that walks through those gates thinking they can swallow us whole—you do exactly what I just did. Same rules. One versus one fight. Gaia will arrange the matchups. We take them all. Every last one. Can you handle that?"

Lu Piao's grin sharpened into something colder, more certain. "C'mon, Boss. Boasting is one of my best skills. I've been waiting my whole damn life for this."

Alex gave him a single nod—short, final—then turned and walked away through the broken gates of Wudang. Behind him the Wudang disciples moved like wolves finishing a kill, dragging the defeated Qingcheng cultivators toward the hidden realm portals. No one cheered.

Night had already claimed the mountain when Alex reached City Lord Bai's mansion.

He went straight to his room and collapsed onto the bed. The past few days had been utterly exhausting-he'd had to arrange and oversee countless matters at once. But now everything was finally running smoothly. From here on, he only needed to maintain steady, systematic progress.

He had barely fallen asleep when-

Gaia's voice slid into his mind, calm and immediate.

"Powerful signature approaching. Fast. It is your master."

Alex stood. He walked outside onto the wide stone veranda that overlooked the moonlit peaks and waited.

Wind howled up the slope. A streak of white light tore across the sky and resolved into the figure of the Wudang Sect Master, robes snapping like battle flags.

He landed lightly, the impact barely disturbing the gravel.

Alex bowed deeply and respectfully. "This disciple Jun Jiu greets the Sect Master."

"Jun Jiu," the old man said without preamble, his voice grave and heavy with authority.

"I could understand you bringing slaves and bandits to Wudang-teaching them morals and giving them a chance to straighten out their lives. But now you've even brought the entire Qingcheng Sect here. This could mean war."

The elderly man's sharp eyes bored into him.

"Tell me plainly-what exactly are you planning to do with my Wudang?"

Alex straightened. Moonlight carved hard lines across his face. He could have lied.

He could have softened it. Instead he gave the truth the way a man hands over a blade.

"I don't know."

The Sect Master's eyes narrowed. "What?"

Alex spread his hands, helpless and honest. "Every living thing pushes to its limit. I'm going to push Wudang to mine. And I still haven't found where that limit is. I don't know if I ever will."

The old man studied him for a long moment, the mountain wind tugging at his silver hair. "Say what you really mean."

Alex met the old man's gaze without flinching.

"Sect Master, if you want the position back, it's yours tonight. Just say the word." His voice was calm, yet carried an unshakable weight. "But you need to decide quickly."

He took a half-step forward, eyes burning with raw ambition.

"If you leave Wudang in my hands... I will make it soar. As high and as far as my power allows."

"To tell you the truth, I don't know how high. I don't know how far. It may devour every sect that stands in its way. It may swallow the Murim Alliance whole. It may even bare its teeth at the King of Xia himself... or reach beyond Xia entirely. I don't know where it ends."

Alex's voice dropped, low and fierce.

"But I can already see past their limits. And I am pushing harder than any living thing has ever pushed to find exactly where those limits break."

Silence stretched between them, vast as the night sky. The Sect Master's shoulders sagged a fraction-not from weakness, but from the sudden, crushing weight of understanding.

For three hundred years he and every master before him had fought only to keep Wudang breathing. Survival had been their highest ambition. Now this boy spoke of conquest the way other men spoke of tomorrow's weather.

The old man's voice grew quieter. "What do you want, Jun Jiu?"

"Sect Master," Alex replied, bowing deeply once more. "Right now the choice is yours. Do you want me to continue down this path... or do you want me to stop and keep Wudang exactly as it has always been? If that is your wish, I can leave tonight."

Alex waited in silence. On the surface he remained calm and respectful, but deep down he secretly hoped the Sect Master would release him.

If Wudang let him go, he could finally return to Estoria.

The Sect Master turned toward the dark ridges, his eyes distant.

"My master and my grandmaster never dreamed of making Wudang great again," he said quietly. "All we ever tried to do was ensure it survived. In truth... we have been stepping backward this entire time."

He gave a faint, bitter smile.

"The first generation of Wudang was undefeated across the Murim. He became Head of the Alliance. The King of Xia called him brother. Every sect bowed when he passed. Only after that glory did he choose to build this mountain sanctuary and step back from the world."

"For a thousand years we have stayed inside that shadow, telling ourselves it was wisdom."

His gaze returned to Alex, suddenly sharp.

You have already dragged us forward," the Sect Master continued, his voice quieter now.

"You crushed the Qingcheng delegation in a single afternoon. Who knows which sect you will crush next? Everything we elders have struggled for generations to preserve and understand breaks so easily in your hands... turning us old men into nothing more than useless relics."

He drew in a slow, heavy breath.

"And for the first time in centuries, I feel fear-not of enemies, but of comfort. I have grown far too used to this small life. I have become a chick that no longer remembers how to fly."

He drew in a long, slow breath, as if pulling the entire mountain into his lungs.

"I will only ask you one thing."

"Anything, Master."

"Whatever storms you bring,

whatever heights you reach... you will not let Wudang lose its foothold in Qingshui City. That place must remain ours, no matter what else happens. Even if your ambitions fail. and the rest of Xia burns to ash, Wudang must still have a place at its center. This must be our last stronghold. It can never be lost."

Alex didn't hesitate. "You have my word."

The Sect Master studied him a moment longer, then smiled-small, tired, but real.

"Then I will leave you to it," the Sect Master said calmly. "I will return to seclusion, will break through to late Core Formation stage and beyond—perhaps I may even touch the Nascent Soul realm. I will become strong enough to be useful again... or at least no longer a burden."

FindNovel.net

He placed a hand on Alex's shoulder, his grip surprisingly firm and steady.

"This mountain has grown too small for a man like you. While I am still alive, I want to see just how far you can reach."

A faint, determined smile touched the old man's lips.

"Fly, Jun Jiu. Take my mountain with you."

Without another word he stepped back, white robes flaring. A surge of spiritual energy lifted him into the sky like a rising star. In seconds he was gone, swallowed

by the night and the peaks.

&

Alex stood alone on the veranda, the cold mountain wind slicing across his face like a blade. Far below, the lights of Qingshui glittered in the darkness like scattered restless, insatiable, already themselves for the next wave of challengers hungry for food and glory.

FindNovel.net

thing

Behind him, the Wudang disciples had restored the courtyard with ruthless efficiency.

They waited now in disciplined silence, eyes gleaming with sharp anticipation, ready to greet the next sect foolish enough to approach their gates..... and devour them whole.

A slow, dangerous smile curved across Alex's lips.

"I will paint my story across this place," he murmured into the night, "and see exactly what kind of painting it becomes."

In Estoria, he had wanted to become a great king.

In Prusia, he had wanted to devour every scrap of their technology and devour its secrets whole.

But here in Xia... he simply wanted to mess around. To run wild, stir chaos, and watch the Murim burn for the sheer thrill of it.

After all, he wasn't using his real face or his real name. In this world, he didn't have to care about anything at all.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 642[1,155 words]

One month had passed since the first waves of bandits poured into Qingshui like flies to rotting meat, and the city had changed into something no one in the Jianghu could have imagined.

Every street gleamed like an open vault. Tables sagged under bolts of finest silk, chests of gold coins left carelessly unlocked, jade carvings tossed out like yesterday's trash.

Housewives polished their best silver until it blinded the sun and set it out on the main avenue as if it were nothing.

Merchants paraded their rarest treasures and simply walked away whistling, leaving their stalls unguarded. Even the old widow, once known only for her pickled vegetables, now laid out delicate heirloom teapots and glittering family jewelry beside her jars. She sat on a low stool with a serene, grandmotherly smile.

No one bothered hiding their wealth anymore. They flaunted it openly, each trying to outdo the other with the most irresistible bait. Every so often, a passerby would casually drop a heavy pouch of gold onto the street, practically daring someone to snatch it.

Yet Qingshui City was already crawling with hunters and riddled with traps. No one took the bait anymore-everyone had wised up. Best of all, the flood of bandits had dwindled into a nervous trickle.

The smarter chieftains no longer charged straight in. They watched from the wooded ridges outside the gates, eyes narrowed, hands tight on their reins. They had heard the stories. Whole gangs vanishing without a scream. Cities that should have bled dry now shining brighter every dawn.

One crisp morning a band of twenty hard-eyed riders-young, reckless, hungry- spurred their horses through the western gate. They laughed loud enough for the hills to hear, snatching up a roasted pig from a roadside spit and a handful of gold without breaking stride. The citizens smiled and waved them on like old friends. No one raised a hand. No alarms sounded.

From the ridge above, their leader was watching everything.

The twenty riders disappeared into the twisting streets. Hours crawled by. Night fell. Dawn came again.

The roasted pig was still there, cold but untouched. The gold coins glittered exactly where they had been dropped. The tables groaned under fresh bait, reset and gleaming.

The bandit leaders could sense it: the entire city was one massive, deadly trap.

"Boys," he growled softly, voice like grinding gravel, "something is very wrong with this place."

His second-in-command swallowed hard. "They took everything they wanted. Why didn't they ride out?"

"Because they never left," The Leader answered. He wheeled his horse. "We're done here. Spread the word. Qingshui is cursed. Anyone who rides in stays in."

They galloped away without looking back, dust kicking high behind them. Within days the warning raced along every bandit trail in three provinces. The flow of raiders dried up almost overnight.

The same shadow fell over the sects.

Every few days another group of righteous cultivators rode up the mountain road to Wudang's broken gates, chests puffed with confidence. Rumors had spread for weeks: Wudang was finished. The old Sect Master had been crippled by the Yin Yang Sect. The young leader Jun Jiu was nothing but a paper tiger. One good push and the mountain would fall.

They came expecting slaughter. They found Lu Piao waiting on the cracked steps with a polite smile and the same offer Alex had given Qingcheng.

One-on-one duels. Same realm. Loser obeys.

Match after match ended in silence and surrender.

Larger sects began to notice. Envoys vanished. Patrols sent to investigate never returned. Whispers turned to uneasy silence. The righteous path, once so eager to swallow a dying Wudang, now hesitated at the mountain's shadow.

Deep within the City Lord's office in the heart of Qingshui, Alex sat in heavy silence.

He could feel the shift. The flood of fresh bodies he needed to fuel Wudang's rise had slowed to almost nothing. These past few days, the traps lay untouched. No one dared commit even the smallest crime.

Unable to wait any longer, Alex stood and strode out into the city to hunt for solutions himself. Zhuge Liang appeared at his side without a word, his presence steady and watchful. Golden afternoon light poured over Qingshui, revealing a thriving city far removed from the anxious border town Alex had first taken.

Every street glittered with deliberate abundance.

Bandits no longer rode in. The Yin Yang Sect's remnants had vanished months ago. Trouble had been swept from the streets the way a diligent servant clears dust.

Slaves had once shuffled through these same avenues in chains. Alex had bought every last one at premium prices and funneled them straight into Wudang's hidden realm.

Prisoners-petty thieves, debtors, the occasional murderer-had followed the same path.

The city's jails stood empty, scrubbed spotless and waiting for prisoners who would never come.

He walked deeper into the city with Zhuge Liang at his side, boots ringing softly on clean flagstones.

Then they turned down a narrow side street on the eastern edge.

Shacks leaned against one another like tired drunks. Mud sucked at their boots. Laundry-threadbare and gray hung from sagging lines. Children with hollow cheeks stared from doorways. A thin dog stunk past, ribs sharp as blades. The smell of unwashed bodies and despair hung thick in the air.

Alex stopped.

"What is this place?" he asked, voice low.

Zhuce Liang's face tightened. He had known it was here, of course. He simply hadn't expected the City Lord to walk straight into it.

"This is the slum area, my lord," he answered carefully. "Every city has them. Even one as prosperous as Qingshui cannot make every soul rich."

Alex stared at a ragged woman trying to mend a torn cloak with shaking fingers. A boy no older than eight watched them with dull, hungry eyes. Something cold and absolute settled behind Alex's ribs.

He shook his head once, sharp.

"Starting now," he said, "being poor is a sin. And sin must be punished."

Zhuce Liang's breath caught. For a heartbeat the advisor could only stare, as if the words refused to settle in his mind.

"What?"

"I said being poor is a sin." Alex's tone remained calm, almost conversational, the same voice he used when issuing battlefield orders. "Is there any law against it yet?" Zhuce Liang's face turned ashen. "My lord... you can't be serious. There's no law for that."

Alex didn't break stride, already wheeling back toward the mansion with crisp, determined steps. "Then I'll make one. I'll draft the edict myself simple wording harsh penalties Post it everywhere before dusk: every information wall, every gate, every major street. Tonight we sweep the city clean. Every last one of them rounded up, processed, and sent to the mountain. No exceptions."

"No." The word burst from Zhuce Liang before he could stop it. He stepped forward, voice cracking with something close to desperation "You cannot do that These are citizens. They have families. They-

"Yes, I can." Alex halted and met his advisor's eyes without a flicker of doubt.

"I am the City Lord."

"But-" Zhuge Liang began.

"No buts." Alex grinned, wide and sharp. "If anyone protests, complains, or even looks like they disagree... we take them too."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 643[1,517 words]

The officers moved through Qingshui at noon. They carried thick rolls of paper. Hammers rang against posts and walls.

Proclamations unfurled in bold black ink across every gate, every market square, every information board.

One officer climbed the steps of the central plaza. He unrolled the last sheet.

"By order of City Lord Bai. Being poor is now a sin. All poor, all homeless, all in the slum districts—report at once. You will serve rehabilitation time in Wudang's special realm. Reform your poor mindset. Failure brings harsher punishment."

Citizens gathered in small knots near the central square. They kept their voices low. No one spoke at first. Then whispers rose-sharp, quick, disbelieving.

A stout merchant leaned close to his neighbor. "If being poor is a sin," he said, "don't you think City Lord Bai will soon declare that being ugly is a sin too? And then all the plain-faced among us will vanish into the mountain by morning."

His companion pressed a finger to his lips, face twisting in mock terror. "Shh! Silence. Don't speak nonsense. Or the City Lord will decide speaking nonsense itself is a sin. Then we'll all disappear one by one for opening our mouths."

Night came.

Black drones descended silently from the night sky, gliding over the slum like shadows.

Figures stirred in doorways and along the cramped streets-then suddenly stilled. Bodies slumped gently to the ground. By dawn, every shack stood empty. Laundry still fluttered on sagging lines.

A thin dog nosed an abandoned bowl. Nothing else moved. The narrow streets lay silent and swept clean, as though the poor had simply dissolved into the mountain mist.

Rich households woke to the change.

Servants no longer waited at back doors for copper coins and scraps of work. Laundry piled untouched.

Floors stayed unswept. Gardens grew wild at the edges. Merchants who once paid pennies for porters now found their warehouses half-loaded at dusk.

They grumbled, then opened their purses wider.

Wages climbed—fast, almost frantic. Work that once belonged to the desperate now went to anyone willing, at prices once unthinkable.

Qingshui City accepted no slaves. Every chained soul who crossed the gates belonged to Lord Bai.

His agents moved through neighboring towns with heavy coin purses. They bought quietly, steadily.

The slaves vanished into the mountain the same night they arrived.

The city stayed clean.

Days passed.

Merchants carried the first rumors along trade roads.

“Qingshui buys slaves by the hundred,” one said, leaning close. “Yet not one walks those streets. They must free them. Turn them into citizens. I swear it.”

Another nodded, eyes bright. “Gold lies on the pavement there. People walk past it. Too rich to stoop. The city sparkles like a treasure vault left open on purpose.”

A third merchant laughed softly, almost reverent. “No thieves anymore. Not one. The City Lord is kind. Wise. Rich beyond counting. He loves his people the way a father loves sons.”

The stories spread mouth to mouth, faster than riders. Refugees heard them in distant cities.

Families with nothing packed small bundles. Eyes turned toward Qingshui with a hunger that was half hope, half dream.

The city had become legend-bright, a heaven on earth.

After that, the gates of Qingshui never closed.

Refugees streamed through them from sunrise until the last light died. Families trudged in dusty columns. Old men leaned on sticks.

Mothers carried infants wrapped in rags. Carts creaked under meager possessions.

The wide avenues narrowed into slow rivers of people.

Alex stood on the high balcony of the city lord's mansion. He watched the flood below.

"Zhuge Liang explain all of this."

Zhugé Liang nodded once. His gaze swept across the crowded streets, where paper lanterns already waged a flickering war against the encroaching darkness.

"Xia is vast," he said. "The Han Dynasty still sits upon the throne, yet the emperor is a boy in name only. Eunuchs tug every string from behind the curtains."

"True power belongs to the eighteen warlords-provincial governors who swear loyalty with their tongues and plot treason with their blades. Each claims to serve the throne. Each secretly dreams of claiming the crown for himself and turning the boy into a puppet."

"Because the emperor is weak and the warlords are consumed with slaughtering one another, rebels have risen from the shadows. They are led by demonic sects that thrive on chaos-stirring famine and fire across the realm. They burn villages, poison wells, and drive entire populations from their homes so they may later devour the ruins. That is why refugees now flood every city in the province."

Alex's eyes widened in realization. "So what about our governor?"

Zhugé Liang continued without hesitation. "Qingshui and its seven neighboring cities lie within Qing Province, under the rule of Governor Qiao Mao. He is the weakest of the eighteen warlords. His borders bleed from endless incursions, and his armies are pitifully thin. The others circle him like wolves scenting a lame deer."

He met Alex's gaze, "I predict these refugees are fleeing from the other cities under our same governor-cities already ravaged by rival warlords and those demonic rebels."

Alex looked down from the high balcony.

A thousand refugees filled the lower streets. They moved in a slow, dusty tide-men with hollow cheeks, women clutching thin bundles, children trailing like shadows.

"City Lord Bai," Zhugé Liang said, "what will you do with the refugees? They are citizens in need. We need to help them."

"Why should help?" Alex asked.

"Look. They already walk the streets. They pick up gold left on the pavement without asking whose it is. They sit at every table and eat everything set out without asking the owner. They take what they want."

Zhuge Liang stood beside him, silent at first. He watched the same scene— refugees laughing in disbelief as they filled their hands with coins, tearing into roasted meats left cooling on stalls.

"But my lord," Zhuge Liang said quietly, "they do not know the laws here. Our citizens bait them on purpose. The gold, the food—every trap is set for profit. They lure these people the way they once lured bandits."

Alex turned his head a fraction. The smile never left.

"What they are doing is crime. You see refugees. I see bandits. They come stealing. They eat without paying. And above all, they are poor. Being poor in this place is sin."

He straightened.

"Round them all up tonight. Send every last one to Wudang's special realm. From this moment they belong to me."

Zhuge Liang could only shake his head. 'Just how unlucky is this refugee to have met City Lord Bai?'

Night fell over Qingshui.

The streets glowed softly under hanging lanterns. A thousand refugees wandered among the glittering stalls, their faces full of et

wonder. They laughed joyfully,

convinced they had f

found heaven on

earth place where everything was free and they could simply take and eat as they pleased.

They scooped up gold from the pavement and tore warm bread from open tables.

"This is heaven!" one refugee cried out with joy. "We should have come here sooner!"

Everyone nodded eagerly. This was truly the best city.

Yet, silent drones slipped from the black sky.

They descended in perfect formation. Matte-black shapes hovered a breath above the crowds. Thin beams of light touched every neck.

Bodies slumped without a cry. The drones lifted them—gentle as leaves on wind— and carried the sleeping forms toward the mountain. One by one the refugees vanished into shimmering portals high above the city walls.

By midnight the lower avenues stood empty.

Behind the vanished refugees came the rebels.

They poured down the final ridge like a dark river. Five hundred hard men on stolen horses. Their leader rode at the front-scarred face tight with hunger.

They had chased these same refugees for two days and one nights. Kill them. Strip them. Burn what remained. The trail had led straight to Qingshui's open gates.

The gates stood wide.

No soldiers lined the walls. No spears gleamed. Gold coins lay scattered across flagstones. Silk bolts shimmered on tables. The entire city glittered like a feast left for wolves.

The rebel leader reined in hard. His horse skidded on smooth stone.

Something vast and blinding opened inside his chest. A hunger older than war.

The kind of raw, trembling need a soldier feels after ten years without a woman— when he suddenly beholds one standing naked in moonlight, skin luminous, every curve an invitation that drowns all thought.

His pulse hammered. His mouth went dry. The city lay before him like that woman: soft, shining, utterly defenseless.

He laughed once, hoarse and wild.

"Take it all!" he roared.

The rebels surged forward. Hooves thundered. Blades flashed out. They smashed open the nearest chests.

Coins rained between their fingers. They ripped silk from tables and stuffed it into saddlebags. They tore down lanterns and drank wine straight from the pitchers left cooling on every corner.

Housewives stepped from doorways. They clapped their hands in delight. One merchant leaned against his stall and waved them closer.

"More," he called, voice warm as summer honey. "Take more. There is plenty."

An old widow pushed forward a heavy jar of silver. "Help yourselves, brave heroes. The night is young."

The rebels paused for half a heartbeat. Confusion flickered across scarred faces. Then the encouragement washed over them like warm oil. They laughed louder.

They grabbed harder. They moved deeper into the streets, drunk on the ease of it all.

From the high balcony of the city lord's mansion Alex watched the chaos unfold.

Alex's smile came slow and sharp.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 644[1,591 words]

The night deepened over Qingshui. Lanterns swayed on their hooks, throwing restless shadows across the streets. Rebels roared as they plunged deeper, smashing open chests. Gold spilled between greedy fingers. Silk tore under eager hands.

Citizens crowded the doorways, clapping and cheering the looters on. "More!" they shouted. "Take more!"

Yet hundreds of drones had already slipped from the black sky-silent as breath.

Tasers lanced downward. Ordinary men dropped where they stood.

Bodies folded. Faces struck the flagstones with soft, final thuds.

The demonic sect disciples' heads snapped up the instant the drones drew near. They felt the faint stir of wind across their scalps, the whisper of displaced air brushing their skin.

One disciple twisted sharply. His palm flashed open and a small knife flew.

It struck the nearest drone mid-descent. Metal screamed. Sparks sprayed in a bright arc. The machine spun wildly out of control and crashed into a stall, collapsing in a tangle of broken wings and fizzing circuits.

Alex felt the shift on the balcony. Mother Ai's voice cut clean through his mind.

"Adjusting protocol. Retargeting normals only. Drones recalled."

The drone climbed higher into the night sky and pivoted sharply, always keeping its distance from the demonic sect disciples. It struck only at the ordinary rebels below.

Screams tore through the lantern-lit street. Bodies jerked once and crumpled into the blood-soaked dirt, one after another.

The demonic cultivators stood untouched amid the slaughter, tall and arrogant, dark robes barely stirring in the wind.

"Careful!" a rough voice bellowed. "We're under attack!"

High above, another shout cracked with panic. "Something's flying up there-hitting us with hidden weapons! Everyone stay alert! This whole place feels cursed!"

The demonic cultivators' smugness shattered in an instant. They surged together into a tight, bristling knot of black silk and steel.

Weapons rasped free-curved blades, heavy axes, spiked chains.

Heads snapped left and right as they scanned rooftops and shadowed alleys, every muscle coiled, every sense straining for the invisible killer.

A few snatched up axes and whatever lay at hand, hurling them skyward with guttural snarls. "Bring it down! Attack!"

But before the volley could find its mark, the air at the far end of the street shifted.

The new force arrived without a sound.

Four hundred Wudang disciples swept down on their flying swords, a silent white storm slicing out of the darkness.

Lu Piao stood at the front. His knuckles were already wrapped tight for the brawl, and a razor-sharp grin split his face like the edge of a fresh blade.

Weeks of waiting had left his blood on fire. No other sects had come. The itch in his fists had grown into a roar he could no longer hold back.

The two sides faced each other across the lantern glow. No taunts. No demands. No mercy asked or offered.

The clash came fast.

A demonic elder lunged with a snarl, his sword carving a searing arc of flame through the air.

A Wudang youth stepped forward and swung his sword in a clean, precise arc, meeting the elder's flaming blade head-on. Steel clashed with a resonant ring that echoed through the street.

The flames sputtered violently before dying out. The elder staggered backward, his eyes wide with disbelief and shock.

Before he could recover, another Wudang fighter exploded forward and slammed a vicious kick into his ribs. Bone snapped like dry wood. The elder crumpled.

Lu Piao roared and charged the largest brute among them. Three powerful strides ate the distance. His fists became a storm—each strike hammering down like iron on an anvil.

The demonic warrior swung his spiked mace in a brutal overhead arc. Lu Piao ducked beneath it, then drove upward inside the brute's guard.

A savage jab. Blood sprayed across his face. The mace slipped from numb fingers and clattered uselessly onto the stone.

All around them the fight surged and broke. Short. Brutal. Bodies spun. Knees buckled.

Qi erupted in dazzling bursts, slamming into the stone walls and showering sparks across the street. The Wudang disciples moved like wolves among chickens — swift, ruthless, and utterly dominant.

Within minutes the demonic sect lay subdued. Some knelt, wrists bound by glowing restraints.

Others slumped unconscious beside their broken weapons. Not one escaped.

The next morning, Zhuge Liang burst through the heavy doors of Alex's private office, chest heaving, his usual iron composure cracked wide open.

"City Lord!" he snapped. "You need to hear this. Right now."

Alex sat behind the wide oak desk, one elbow resting on the arm of his chair.

"Speak."

Zhuge Liang stepped closer.

"Yan Province is bleeding out under Governor Liu Dai. The famine hit like a hammer. Fields turned to dust. Rebels burned the granaries to the ground, and now the people are starving. In pure desperation, Liu Dai sent envoys across the border into Qing Province, begging for grain and supplies."

He paused.

"Governor Qiao Mao refused them flat. No grain. No supplies. Nothing."

"Liu Dai's fury has erupted like a volcano. He has sworn to wipe Qing Province from the map entirely. Fifty thousand soldiers are already crossing the border as we speak."

He held Alex's gaze, eyes sharp with warning.

"Those demonic cultivators we fought last night? They weren't the first wave of his army. They were running from it. The rebels are fleeing ahead of the main force

scattering like panicked net

every city across the province."

The words still hung heavy in the air when the thunder of hooves shattered the morning quiet outside.

A lone rider drove his exhausted horse up the final switchback to the city lord's mansion. The animal was lathered white with sweat, flanks heaving.

Dust coated the rider's gray cloak. He swung down at the outer gate, boots ringing hard against the stone, and shoved a sealed scroll into the guard's hands.

"Message from Governor Qiao Mao!" the man bellowed toward the mansion doors. "City Lord come accept it now!"

Zhuge Liang's head snapped toward the sound. His jaw tightened.

"They're coming," he said sharply.

Alex was already moving. He strode out of the office and into the main hall.

The messenger stood waiting, chest still rising and falling hard. He bowed low the instant Alex appeared, face drawn tight with exhaustion and raw urgency.

"City Lord Bai," he said, voice crisp and formal.

"Governor Qiao Mao commands all eight cities of Qing Province to furnish five thousand soldiers each Liu Dai's dogs already bare their teeth at our borders. Forty thousand men will meet them in the field and crush this treason before it spreads. You have one day to muster and march them to Qingyang City."

"One day?" Alex's voice sharpened with disbelief. "My city will deliver its quota. But

the men need to be properly equipped. We need two days."

The messenger's jaw tightened.

"One day. There will be no negotiation. The enemy is already at the door. The governor expects your forces in the capital as fast as humanly possible."

He bowed again—sharper this time—and backed out of the hall. A moment later, hooves clattered across the courtyard stones as the rider galloped away. "City Lord," Zhuge Liang said quietly, stepping closer, voice heavy with concern. "We only have one thousand soldiers right now. Even if we scrape together every able man, we won't meet the quota."

Alex stared at him for a beat, eyes narrowing. "Prepare equipment and weapons for five thousand soldiers. I'll handle the people."

He turned on his heel and strode back toward his private office.

"Mother Ai."

The interface bloomed instantly inside his mind—clean, silent, perfectly responsive.

"Launch the satellite array," he said. "Full coverage of Qing Province and every surrounding province. Live feed. Now."

High above the clouds, a larger satellite streaked upward through the atmosphere, unfolding its arrays and flooding his vision with fresh, crystal-clear data.

The view ripped open like a window torn wide across the sky. Mountains, rivers, winding roads—all of it lay completely exposed beneath the invisible eye. Alex's gaze swept the glowing tactical map and locked on.

Liu Dai's army had already crossed the border.

Columns of fifty thousand armored soldiers snaked through the northern passes like

dark rivers of steel. Black and crimson banners snapped viciously in the wind. They moved fast. Unopposed. Relentless.

The satellite shifted focus to the outskirts of Qingyang City, the provincial capital. Thick pillars of black smoke rose from its walls like funeral pyres.

Towers crumbled. Siege engines hurled fresh barrages of fire and stone.

Even from orbit the flames were unmistakable—hungry orange tongues devouring the grand castle perched on the central hill. Tiny figures ran like panicked ants across the courtyards as the governor's fortress fell.

Qiao Mao's seat of power was burning.

It was already too late. Qingshui City sat far from the capital. The devastating news had taken time to reach them.

Suddenly the thunder of another horse shattered the morning quiet outside.

A second rider stormed into the courtyard, leaped down, and bellowed toward the

main hall.

"City Lord of Qingshui! Accept the command from Governor Liu Dai! Your governor, Qiao Mao, is already dead-his head hangs in the streets

is a warning

of the Surrender everything immediately and swear loyalty to Governor Liu

Dai, or suffer the same fate!"

Alex stepped out of the office and met the messenger in silence. His fist shot forward in a blur.

The punch connected with brutal force. The messenger's head snapped back. He flew off his feet, tumbled across the polished stone floor, and slammed hard into the far wall.

The man groaned, blood trickling from his split lip. Rage twisted his face as he pushed himself up on one elbow.

"You dare strike a messenger?" he snarled. "We have fifteen thousand soldiers marching on Qingshui right now. We will burn this city to the ground!"

Alex stared down at him. A slow, dangerous smile spread across his face-cold, calm, and utterly without mercy.

"I was thinking about devouring all fifteen thousand of them," he said softly, almost pleasantly. "Thanks for coming all this way to deliver the good news."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 645[1,401 words]

Far to the north, in the smoke-choked ruins of Qingyang City, Governor Liu Dai stood on the steps of the captured fortress and watched the flames devour the last of Qiao Mao's banners.

Liu Dai's chest swelled with raw satisfaction. He had waited years for this moment.

"Qiao Mao... this is what you get for ignoring my orders. I spoke to you with courtesy, but you chose to spit in my face. Now, I'll burn you and every last member of your family."

"Open the granaries," he ordered, voice booming across the courtyard. "Distribute the grain. Feast tonight. Then send columns to every city still loyal to that fool. Take everything of value-gold, weapons, women, horses. Let them remember what it costs to refuse Liu Dai."

His soldiers roared their approval. Smoke stung the air, thick with the scent of charred wood and victory.

Liu Dai allowed himself a slow smile as the first barrels of wine were rolled out and the looting parties galloped away.

The next morning he sat in the mansion that had once belonged to his enemy, maps spread across a heavy table, generals laughing around him.

A young officer approached, face pale.

"My lord," the officer said, bowing low. "Someone left a wooden box at the entrance to your quarters during the night. No one saw who placed it."

Liu Dai waved a hand. "Bring it."

Two soldiers carried the plain box inside and set it on the table. Liu Dai sliced the cord with his dagger and lifted the lid.

Inside, nestled in blood-soaked cloth, stared the severed head of the messenger he had sent to Qingshui. The man's eyes were wide with final terror.

A note pinned to the forehead read in neat characters: With the compliments of City Lord Bai Xiaochun.

Silence crashed over the tent.

Liu Dai's hands froze on the lid. His pulse hammered in his ears. For a long second he simply stared, the smell of old blood and rot filling his nostrils.

"Who the hell is Bai Xiaochun?" he asked, voice dangerously quiet.

One of his advisors cleared his throat. "A minor city lord in Qing Province, my lord. Reckless. Famous only for his pleasure houses and debauchery. Spends his days chasing wine and women, brings nothing but shame to his name. He has never led troops or done anything of note."

"The man's greatest military victory was probably conquering the bottom of a wine jug."

Liu Dai's face darkened. The veins in his neck stood out. A small, insignificant city lord dared send him the head of his own messenger?

What a bold move from a man whose entire battlefield experience consisted of wrestling bedsheets.

"So now a backwater like Qingshui wants to spit in my face," he growled. "How many soldiers does this clown command?"

Another general consulted a scout report. "From everything we've gathered, the city is famous for having almost none, my lord. Barely a garrison worth mentioning."

Laughter erupted around the table—harsh, relieved, mocking. Liu Dai's generals slapped their knees and shook their heads at the absurdity.

One broad-shouldered general stepped forward, still chuckling. "Sire, let me take two thousand men. I will crush this joke of a city for you before noon tomorrow."

Liu Dai's eyes narrowed. The laughter died under his stare. He leaned forward, voice low and venomous.

"Take five thousand. Burn Qingshui to the ground. Leave nothing but ash and bones. I want every province to learn exactly what it means to fight me."

The general snapped a crisp salute. "Yes, sir."

Within the hour five thousand armored soldiers formed ranks outside the ruined capital. Banners snapped in the wind. Hooves thundered as the column moved south toward Qingshui—dark, relentless, and hungry for blood.

The column of five thousand armored soldiers poured out of Qingyang's smoking ruins at first light, banners cracking like whips in the cold wind.

Hooves pounded the packed earth, kicking up a long brown plume that stretched for miles behind them. They rode hard, hungry for the easy kill waiting in Qingshui. Meanwhile, Alex stood motionless in the quiet of his private office, eyes distant, the satellite feed flooding his vision in crisp, merciless detail. He watched the dark river of men and horses snake south along the old imperial road.

Gaia's calm voice spoke directly into his mind.

"Estimated arrival at Qingshui: twenty-three hours at current pace."

Alex's mouth curved. A full day. Plenty of time.

"Predict their overnight camp," he said. "Best defensible ground, water source, open sight lines. Give me the three most likely sites."

Data bloomed across his sight-topographical overlays, wind patterns, historical caravan routes. Thirty seconds later Mother Ai highlighted a wide meadow beside the White River, ten miles north of Qingshui. Sheltered on three sides by low hills, a clear field of fire to the south, fresh water running past the treeline. The perfect spot for a confident general who expected no trouble.

"Lock it," Alex said.

He turned from the window. "Mother Ai, summon Lu Piao and one thousand Wudang disciples. They handle anyone who can sense the drones cultivators, elders, anyone with a sensitivity. Everyone else belongs to the machines."

Minutes later, the mountain behind the city began to thrum. A thousand white-robed figures ascended like vengeful ghosts, Lu Piao leading at the forefront.

Five thousand camouflaged drones trailed behind them in perfect formation.

They shot northward, silent as owls, vanishing into the hills overlooking the meadow before the first enemy scout even appeared on the ridge.

Night settled thick and black.

The Liu Dai soldiers made camp exactly where the satellite had guessed. Tents bloomed across the grass in neat rows. Cookfires crackled.

The smell of roasted meat and sour wine drifted on the breeze. Laughter and crude jokes rolled through the ranks while sentries walked the perimeter, spears loose on their shoulders.

They had marched hard, but victory felt close enough to taste. No one expected trouble from a pleasure-loving city lord and his handful of soft city guards.

In the treeline Lu Piao crouched beside Alex eyes gleaming in the firelight. "They brought a few real fighters he whispered. "I count four hundreds i signatures strong enough to notice the drones We'll take them first."

"Make it fast. No alarms."

Midnight arrived.

Five thousand drones lifted from hidden positions in the hills and poured down like a silent swarm. They swept the outer pickets first, moving low and fast.

Thin darts hissed through the air-sleeping needles tipped with a fast-acting compound Mother Ai had perfected weeks earlier. Sentries dropped without a sound, bodies caught and lifted before they hit the ground.

A few cultivators felt the shift. One gray-robed elder snapped his head up, hand already on his sword. "Something's wrong—"

Lu Piao exploded out of the darkness. His fist drove into the man's solar plexus with a wet crack. Two more Wudang disciples blurred in behind him.

The fight was over in three heartbeats bodies bound, qi suppressed; mouths sealed. The rest of the sensitive fighters fell just as quietly, taken down in lefto coordinated strikes that left no time for a shout or a flare of power.

The perimeter vanished.

Then the real work began.

Drones ghosted between the tents. They took out the sleeping soldiers outside first.

Each man twitched once as a needle pricked his neck, then went limp.

One by one the machines lifted the bodies-gentle as a mother lifting a child—and carried them skyward.

No screams. No alarms. Only the soft rustle of grass and the dying crackle of dying embers.

With the soldiers silenced and gone, the drones labored in eerie silence. They rounded up the horses first, then scavenged every weapon, supply crate, and valuable they could lift.

Dawn bled pale across the meadow.

Inside the largest command tent, General Zhao Liang woke to a silence so complete it felt wrong.

He lay still for a moment, listening. No horses. No sentries calling the hour. No low murmur of five thousand men waking up.

"Guard," he barked.

Nothing.

He sat up, heart already kicking. "Guard!"

The tent flap hung motionless. Cold morning air seeped in.

Zhao Liang shoved to his feet, yanked his sword from its stand, and stormed outside.

The meadow stretched empty under the rising sun.

Tents, gone. Men, gone. All five thousand souls, vanished without a trace.

No footprints marred the grass. No horses remained.

Only the general stood alone in the middle of the empty field where an army had slept the night before.

Zhao Liang's mouth opened, but no sound came out. His face drained of color as the full horror of it sank in.

Had he just been ditched by his own five thousand soldiers?

And the greatest problem of all—would he continue marching toward Qing Shui City to fight the city lord alone, or walk back to face Liu Dai?

Both options seemed like a dead end.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 646[2,209 words]

Zhao Liang's mouth went dry. A cold fist closed around his stomach.

If he rode back to Liu Dai without those five thousand soldiers, the governor would have his head on a pike before noon. No excuses. No mercy. Liu Dai didn't forgive failure.

One choice remained.

Qingshui was only an hour or two to the south. Perhaps his men had pressed on without him. Perhaps they were already fighting in the streets, buying him precious time. He could still salvage something—anything.

Better than walking back to die.

So General Zhao Liang, commander of five thousand, did the unthinkable.

He walked.

Alone.

On foot.

Full battle armor clanking with every miserable step, sword slapping his thigh,

helmet tucked under one arm like some disgraced foot soldier.

Sweat carved tracks down his dust-caked face. Shame burned hotter than the rising sun. A general without an army. A general without a horse.

He kept his jaw locked and his eyes fixed on the southern hills, telling himself the same lie with every stride:

'They're there. They have to be there.'

An hour later the road crested and Qingshui spilled into view below him.

Zhao Liang stopped dead.

The gates stood wide open. No soldiers on the walls. No spears. No barricades. Instead, the wide avenue beyond glittered under the morning light-gold coins scattered across the flagstones, silk bolts draped over stalls, jade and silver left out like trash.

Tables groaned under roasted meats and wine pitchers. The whole city looked like it had been dressed for a festival and then abandoned.

It didn't look like a city preparing for war.

It looked like heaven.

He was still staring, trying to make sense of it, when soft laughter floated up the road. A dozen women flowed out of the nearest pleasure house-silk robes clinging

to every curve, hair loose and shining, perfume drifting ahead of them like a promise. Their eyes lit up the moment they saw him.

"Handsome general," the tallest one called, voice warm and honeyed. She moved straight to him, hips swaying. "You look like you've marched a long way. Come inside. Everything's free today."

Another pressed close, sliding her arm through his. The scent of jasmine and warm skin hit him like a drug. "We'll take care of you," she murmured against his ear. "No charge. No questions. You've earned it."

Zhao Liang opened his mouth to snarl something about duty and battle, but the words never came. The perfume wrapped around him, sweet and dizzying.

These women were stunning-skin like porcelain, eyes dark and inviting. After weeks of hard marching, after losing an entire army without firing a single arrow, the offer felt like mercy itself.

'One hour,' he told himself. 'Just enough to clear my head. Then I'll find my men and take this cursed city apart.'

They laughed and tugged him forward. He let them.

Citizens poured out of doorways as he passed, smiling like they'd been waiting for him all morning. A merchant pressed a cup of cool wine into his hand. "Drink, hero. There's plenty more."

An old woman pushed forward a plate of spiced meat. Children ran alongside, laughing. Everyone treated him like a returning king.

By the time they reached the pleasure house, Zhao Liang's armor felt heavier than iron and lighter than air at the same time. Inside, lanterns glowed soft gold.

Cushions and silk draped every surface. Two women—twin beauties with identical wicked smiles—led him to a private room and poured more wine.

He drank deep. The stress of the vanished army, the terror of facing Liu Dai, the long humiliating walk—all of it burned away with every swallow. Heat spread through his chest, down his arms, straight into his blood.

The women moved in. Gentle fingers worked the buckles of his armor. Cool metal clattered to the floor. Soft hands traced the hard lines of his chest, his shoulders, lower.

Zhao Liang groaned as they pressed him back onto the wide bed, skin against skin, mouths hungry and skilled. For the first time in years he stopped thinking about war, about failure, about death. There was only heat and silk and the slick slide of bodies.

They gave him everything.

When the storm finally passed and he lay spent and panting, the two women rose on either side of him, still smiling. One leaned down and kissed him slow and deep while the other slipped something cold and heavy around his wrist.

Metal clicked.

Zhao Liang's eyes snapped open.

Iron manacles. Thick chains bolted to the bedposts. Both wrists. Both ankles. He jerked once, hard. The chains held.

The women sat back on their heels, naked and beautiful and utterly calm. One picked up the wine cup again and pressed it to his lips, tipping it until he had no choice but to swallow.

"Good boy," the taller one whispered, brushing damp hair from his forehead. Her smile never wavered. "We're going to rape you now, General. Slowly. Thoroughly."

Zhao Liang's heart slammed against his ribs. The room tilted. The wine-drugged, he realized too late-turned his limbs to warm lead. He tried to roar, to fight, but only a hoarse sound escaped.

The two young women slid off the bed, their skin still flushed, their smiles sharp and knowing. They gathered their silk robes without a word, glanced once at the chained general, and slipped out the door.

Zhao Liang lay there, chest heaving, every nerve on fire. The wine they had poured down his throat burned through his blood like liquid flame. His manhood betrayed him completely-hard, aching, ready-while his mind screamed in silent horror.

The door opened again.

Ten old women shuffled into the room. Skinny, wrinkled, gray-haired, their pleasure-house work robes threadbare and stained. They smelled of cheap powder and decades of hard living. Their eyes lit up the moment they saw him spread naked and chained to the iron bed.

One of them, the eldest, with stringy hair and missing teeth, clapped her bony hands together. "Thanks to City Lord Bai," she croaked, voice thick with glee, "we old workers finally get to taste a real general's manhood. Never thought the day would come."

Another cackled, already loosening her robe. "He said we're to rape him until he cries and begs. No mercy. No stopping. Let's do it, ladies."

They descended on him like a flock of hungry crows.

Zhao Liang roared and thrashed against the chains until his wrists bled. It did nothing. The first crone climbed on top of him, her dry, sagging skin scraping against his. The aphrodisiac kept his body raging even as disgust clawed up his throat.

He gagged. He cursed. He pleaded.

They only laughed and kept going.

For three days and three nights the nightmare never ended.

They took turns. They fed him more of the drugged wine whenever his body flagged. They rode him without pause—old, bony hips grinding, wrinkled hands clawing at his chest, toothless mouths whispering filthy encouragement.

The room stank of sweat, cheap perfume, and sex. Zhao Liang's world narrowed to pain, shame, and the endless, unwanted fire in his blood.

He cried. He begged. He screamed until his voice gave out.

"Kill me," he thought, over and over. "Just let me die."

But the chains held. The drug kept him alive and hard. And the old women never tired. They had waited their whole lives for this kind of power, and City Lord Bai had handed it to them on a silver platter.

On the morning of the fourth day, Zhao Liang finally blacked out.

When he woke, he was no longer in the pleasure house.

He lay sprawled on cold cobblestones in a narrow alley. The morning sun stabbed his eyes. His armor was gone. He wore only a filthy robe that reeked of perfume, spilled wine, and the sour musk of three days of nonstop violation.

Bruises covered his body. His wrists were raw from the manacles. Between his legs he throbbed with raw, burning pain.

He sat up slowly, head spinning, and realized where he was.

Qingyang City.

The provincial capital. Liu Dai's new stronghold.

A patrol of soldiers rounded the corner and froze at the sight of him. One of them barked a laugh that died the instant they recognized the face.

"General Zhao Liang?" the sergeant stammered.

They grabbed him under the arms and hauled him upright. He didn't fight. His legs barely worked. The soldiers wrinkled their noses at the stench rolling off him— jasmine, sweat, sex, and cheap wine.

They dragged him through the streets like a criminal. People stared. Whispers followed. By the time they reached the captured governor's mansion, every soldier in the courtyard had turned to look.

Liu Dai stood on the top step, arms crossed, face already purple with rage. He had been pacing for days waiting for word from the five thousand men he had sent to crush, Qingshui. No word had come. Not a single scout. Not one messenger.

Now this.

His own general-his best general-staggered into the courtyard smelling like a three-day whorehouse binge.

Liu Dai's voice cracked like a whip. "Where the hell is my army?"

Zhao Liang tried to stand straight. His knees buckled. The words scraped out of his ruined throat.

"Gone," he rasped. "All of them... gone."

Liu Dai stepped down slowly, boots ringing on stone. His generals and aides fell dead silent behind him. The governor's eyes burned with murder.

"You lost five thousand men," he said, voice low and lethal, "and then you crawled back here stinking of perfume and cunt? While my soldiers rot somewhere in the hills?"

Zhao Liang opened his mouth, but nothing came out. There was no explanation that would save him. No story that could erase the shame.

Liu Dai's hand shot out and seized him by the throat.

"Take him to the dungeon," he snarled. "We'll find out exactly what kind of traitor sells out an entire army for a brothel. And when I'm done with him... I'm going to burn Qingshui to the ground myself." Chapter 648

Liu Dai's fingers tightened around Zhao Liang's throat until the general's face turned purple. He shoved him backward, and Zhao Liang crumpled to the stone courtyard like a broken doll.

"Tell me what happened," Liu Dai snarled. His voice echoed off the high walls of the captured mansion. Every general and advisor in the courtyard stood frozen, eyes locked on their fallen comrade.

Zhao Liang stayed on his knees. His head hung low. The stench of cheap perfume, stale wine, and three days of relentless violation rolled off him in waves. Bruises darkened his neck and wrists. His voice came out hoarse, barely human. "Five thousand soldiers... vanished," he rasped. "In the

middle of the night. One moment the camp was full. The next..... empty. Tents, horses, weapons—everything

gone. I woke up alone."

Silence slammed down.

Then it shattered.

"Impossible," Liu Dai spat. His face twisted with fury.

"Impossible," echoed the advisors in a chorus of disbelief.

A thick-necked general stepped forward, lip curled in disgust. "Five thousand men

don't disappear like smoke. You abandoned them. You ran off to some whorehouse while your soldiers were slaughtered or deserted."

Another voice cut in, cold and sharp. "Look at him. Smells like a three-day orgy. He

sold us out. Or he's a coward who let the enemy take them while he hid between some whore's legs."

Zhao Liang didn't lift his head. He had no fight left. The words landed like hammer blows, but the real pain was deeper—raw, burning shame that made him wish the earth would open and swallow him whole.

Liu Dai paced once, boots cracking against the stone. His chest heaved. He had already lost his capital, burned his enemy's banners, and now this. Five thousand elite

Penet

soldiers his soldiers ff the

wiped

map by a pleasure-loving city lord no

one had ever taken seriously.

"Lock him in the dungeon," he ordered, voice flat and deadly. "Torture him until he

remembers the truth. I want every detail. And when he finally talks... I'll decide how slowly he dies."

Rough hands seized Zhao Liang under the arms. He didn't resist as they dragged

him away. His bare feet scraped across the courtyard, leaving faint bloody tracks.

The last thing he heard was Liu Dai's roar.

"Which of you still has the balls to destroy Qingshui?"

Two figures stepped forward at once.

The first was General Ling Xue-tall, raven-haired, her dark armor molded to a body that turned heads even on the battlefield. A long sword rested at her hip, and her eyes burned with cold ambition. She was beautiful the way a blade is beautiful: sharp,

flawless, and deadly.

Beside her stood General Han Feng, a grizzled veteran with iron-gray hair, scarred

face, and shoulders still broad from decades of war. His armor was old but perfectly maintained. He had survived more battles than most men could count.

"I will take five thousand men," Ling Xue said, voice clear and confident. "I will burn that city to the ground and bring you Bai Xiaochun's head."

General Han Feng gave a single sharp nod. "Give me another five thousand. Between us, the job will be finished by week's end."

Liu Dai studied them both, eyes narrowed. The rage still simmered, but something

like satisfaction flickered across his face. Two of his best. Ten thousand soldiers total. No more mistakes.

"Go," he said. "Both of you. Take ten thousand men. March at first light. No scouts.

No delays. Flatten Qingshui. Kill everyone who resists. Bring me the city lord in chains-or don't come back at all."

The two generals saluted in unison, fists thumping against their chests. "Understood."

By the next morning the army formed ranks outside the ruined capital. Ten thousand armored soldiers stretched down the imperial road like a river of steel. Banners snapped in the wind. Horns sounded. Hooves and boots thundered forward. Ten thousand men marching south toward Qingshui.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 647[1,428 words]

The imperial road south from Qingyang cut like a scar across the dry hills.

Ten thousand soldiers marched in two tight columns, banners snapping in the wind, armor glinting under the hard morning sun. Dust rose in a long brown haze behind them.

At the head of the left column rode General Han Feng, sixty years old and built like a fortress wall. Iron-gray hair, scarred jaw, eyes that had seen every kind of death.

Behind him rode five thousand men—most of them Mount Tai sect disciples in plain black armor, their qi coiled tight and ready. They moved like one beast. Undefeated in living memory.

Half a mile to the right, on the narrower ridge road, General Ling Xue led her own five thousand. She sat straight in the saddle, raven hair braided tight beneath her helmet, dark armor hugging a body that turned heads even in war.

The Puyang Blade Clan crest gleamed on her shoulder. Her soldiers were sharper, richer, their blades oiled and deadly. They had grown up in the noble houses of the capital and carried that pride like a second sword.

Neither general looked at the other. They hadn't spoken since leaving the ruined city. They didn't need to. The rivalry between Mount Tai and the Blade Clan was older than both of them, and Liu Dai had made sure the fire stayed lit.

First one to reach Qingshui and burn it would claim the glory—and the governor's favor.

In Qingshui, Alex stood alone in the office.

His eyes were distant, the satellite feed pouring straight into his mind through Mother Ai's link—crystal-clear, real-time, merciless.

He watched the two columns fork onto separate roads.

"Got you," he murmured.

Thirty seconds later Zhuge Liang strode in without knocking. The advisor stopped in front of the desk.

With a thought Alex snapped high-resolution images of both commanders and sent them to Zhuge Liang's mind.

He studied the faces for three full seconds, then spoke in the flat, precise tone of a man who had already run the numbers.

"The older man is General Han Feng," he said. "Mount Tai Great Sect. The sect sits squarely inside Yan Province, so they've been feeding Liu Dai soldiers and cultivators for years. His troops aren't conscripts. They're sect disciples. Disciplined. Fanatical. Never lost a major engagement. And they

almost certainly brought elders -Core Formation realm at minimum. The kind who can sense drones before the first needle hits."

Zhugge Liang swiped to the second image. Ling Xue's sharp, beautiful face filled the screen.

"The woman is General Ling Xue. Puyang Blade Clan. Old money, older bloodlines. They practically own the provincial capital. She's their best field commander- ruthless, brilliant with a blade, and the soldiers behind her are all clan-trained. Same story: elite fighters, possible Core Formation support. These aren't Zhao Liang's amateurs. This force is professional. Dangerous."

Alex leaned back in his chair. He drummed one finger once on the polished oak, a soft click that sounded louder than it should have.

Ten thousand soldiers.

Destroying that many people isn't easy. There are simply too many of them.

He stared at the live feed again. The two columns had already pulled farther apart, taking separate roads at different speeds, each racing the other.

Alex's eyes narrowed. "Why the hell are they splitting up?"

Zhugge Liang answered without hesitation. "Because they're not on good terms."

"How can two people from the same province not be on good terms?" Alex asked, incredulous.

"Because Liu Dai wanted them to. He's been pitting the great sects against the noble clans for years-keeps both sides hungry, keeps them loyal. Han Feng and Ling Xue have hated each other. They'll cut each other's throats for the chance to deliver your head first. Right now they're in a dead sprint. Each one trying to beat the other to Qingshui."

A slow, cold smile touched Alex's mouth. It didn't reach his eyes.

Ten thousand together would have been a nightmare-too many eyes, too many cultivators, too much risk of something slipping through the net.

But five thousand?

Five thousand was manageable.

The plan sharpening in his mind like a blade. Then he spoke without turning.

"Gaia. All routes to Qingshui. Now."

The AI's voice was calm, immediate, inside his head. "Transmitting."

A tactical overlay flooded his vision. Two glowing red lines crawled south across the satellite map—one on the wide imperial road, the other along the narrower ridge path. Tiny icons marked the two armies, five

thousand each, moving fast, C

to Gara

highlighted the terrain in crisp detail:

elevation, water sources, choke

points.

FindNovel.net

"Predicted overnight camps," Gaia continued. "General Han Feng enjoys two strong choices, both offering elevated positions and unobstructed fields of view. General Ling Xue is limited by the narrow ridge road. She has only one site that meets her standards defensible on three flanks, backed by the White River for reliable water and a defensive moat. She will take it. It is her only realistic choice."

"Perfect." Alex's mouth curved. "Call the Wudang specialists—the ones trained in trapping formations and large-scale illusions. Tell them to move out immediately. They are to prepare a full containment area at Ling Xue's campsite. Make it big enough for five thousand men and

then some. We activate it the moment they settle in."

"Yes, Master," Gaia answered.

"And for Han Feng's Mount Tai force—let them keep marching toward Qingshui. But pull five thousand Wudang disciples, minimum. Give them everything we have on Mount Tai techniques. I want them drilled day and night on counters. Tomorrow they fight those sect bastards head-on."

"Training regimen already compiling," Gaia said. "They will be ready."

Alex exhaled once, slow and controlled. Ten thousand elite soldiers. Two proud commanders who hated each other's guts. Split apart by their own rivalry. It was almost too clean.

He allowed himself one small, satisfied smile. "Good. Let's eat them in two bites."

Night fell hard over the ridge road.

General Ling Xue reined in at the crest and studied the wide meadow below. The White River glittered in the moonlight, curving protectively along the eastern edge. Low hills rose on the other three sides—perfect fields of fire, no blind spots, easy retreat if needed. She had marched this route

before. She knew the ground. "This is the spot," she said, voice carrying crisp and clear. "Set camp. Double the pickets. No fires until the perimeter is secure."

Her soldiers moved with practiced efficiency. Tents rose in neat rows. Horses were watered and picketed. Cooking fires crackled to life, sending the smell of rice and spiced meat drifting on the cool air.

Men laughed quietly as they worked—relieved to be off the road, confident they would reach Qingshui by the following afternoon and claim the victory Han Feng could only dream of.

Ling Xue dismounted, removed her helmet, and let the night breeze cool her face.

She had already sent a scout ahead to confirm the next day's route. Everything was in order. Five thousand of her best. Mount Tai could eat dust.

She walked the central lane between the tents, nodding to her officers, letting them see her calm.

Then the mist came.

It started as a thin haze rolling off the river, nothing alarming. Soldiers kept talking, passing bowls of food, checking weapons. Visibility dropped a little, but they could still see each other ten paces away.

"Fog's thick tonight," one sergeant muttered, stirring his pot.

Another laughed. "Better than rain. Pass the wine."

Ling Xue paused near a fire, arms crossed, listening to the low murmur of her army.

The mist thickened. Ten paces became five. Then three. Voices grew quieter as men strained to see the faces in front of them.

She frowned. "Stay alert. Lanterns up."

But the mist kept coming, heavy and unnatural, swallowing sound as well as sight. Within minutes the entire camp was blind.

A man could not see the soldier standing shoulder-to-shoulder with him. The river's gentle rush faded into silence. Even the crackle of the fires seemed muffled.

Ling Xue's hand drifted to her sword hilt. Something was wrong.

Then the screaming started.

It ripped out of the fog—raw, terrified, cut off almost as soon as it began. Steel rang somewhere to her left. Another shout. A wet, choking sound. Boots scrambled on grass. More screams, closer now, overlapping, panicked.

"Form up!" Ling Xue roared, drawing her blade in a silver flash. "To me! Sound off!"

But her voice seemed to die in the white wall around her. She lunged toward the nearest scream, sword raised, heart hammering. Her shoulder brushed another soldier-she couldn't tell if it was friend or-

A blade whistled past her ear. Someone crashed into her from behind. The camp dissolved into chaos, men shouting names that went unanswered, weapons swinging at shadows they could not see.

Ling Xue spun, blade ready, eyes wide in the blinding mist.

Whatever had come for them had come silent, and invisible.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 648[1,974 words]

Ling Xue spun in the white void, sword already drawn, the blade humming faintly in her grip.

She had survived a dozen ambushes across the provinces: night raids, bandit poison attacks, and deadly traps in the mountain passes.

She knew the scent of traps and ambushes the way other women knew silk. But this was different.

This mist wasn't natural. It pressed against her face like wet wool, thick enough to swallow the glow of the nearest lantern.

She couldn't see her own hand when she raised it. Couldn't see the soldier whose shoulder brushed hers a heartbeat ago.

Around her, the camp had become a slaughterhouse of sound. Steel clashed. Men screamed. Boots churned the damp grass. Every shout sounded two paces away, yet no one appeared.

"Form on me!" she roared. Her voice died inside the fog, muffled and small. She lunged toward the nearest cry, blade slicing empty air. A body slammed into her from the side—armor against armor. She smelled sweat and fear and the sour tang of spilled wine. Friend or enemy? She didn't know. Her sword arm froze mid-strike. "Identify!" she snarled.

A voice answered, raw and young. "Sergeant Hu, Third Company—"

A wet thud cut him off. Something heavy dropped beside her. She heard the sergeant gasp once, then nothing.

Ling Xue's stomach twisted. These were her men. Her Blade Clan soldiers. Trained from childhood, loyal to the bone. And now they were dying in the dark because she couldn't see who to kill.

"Hold your strikes!" she bellowed, voice cracking with command. "Ask before you swing! Name and company-now!"

The order spread in ragged echoes. Soldiers began calling out in the blindness.

"Gao! Third Company!"

"Wang! First Spear!"

"Identify! Identify!"

For a few precious seconds the chaos eased. Blades hesitated. Men bumped shoulders and barked their names like passwords.

Ling Xue allowed herself one tight breath. Good. They still listened. They still fought as one.

Then the voices changed.

From somewhere outside the press of bodies came new shouts harsh, mocking, laced with pure contempt.

"Die, Liu Dai swine! You pig-blooded cowards!"

"Puyang Blade Clan dogs! Your mothers suck cock for dog meat and beg like gutter whores!"

"Puyang Blade trash! I'm gonna fuck all of you worthless bastards to death and piss on your corpses!"

The words slammed through the mist like thrown knives. They sounded close. Too close. As if the speakers stood shoulder-to-shoulder with her own men.

A soldier to her left screamed in rage. Steel rang. Someone gurgled.

Another voice her own sergeant-roared, "You bastard!"

Everything erupted into chaos again.

Ling Xue's blood turned to ice. No. They were turning on each other.

She slashed forward blindly. "Stop! It's a trick-stop!"

Too late. The camp exploded into real fighting. Men who had trained together for years now hacked at shadows that wore the same armor. Blades met blades in frantic clashes.

Someone crashed into her back; she pivoted and nearly ran her sword through a man who gasped his name a split second before she struck. Her heart hammered so hard she tasted copper.

She couldn't see. Couldn't breathe. Couldn't think past the roar in her skull. This wasn't war. This was madness.

High on the ridgeline, hidden among the pines, Elder Wu of the Wudang sect knelt inside the completed formation.

His palms pressed flat against the damp earth. The array thrummed beneath him like a living heart-six interlocking rings of glowing runes, fed by the qi of one thousand senior disciples.

The mist wasn't fog. It was a living veil, dense enough to blind mortal eyes and scatter even Core Formation senses. It drank sound, twisted direction, and turned the entire meadow into a single, suffocating trap.

"Formation stable," he murmured into the small jade comms disc at his collar. "Drones have clear line."

In the sky above the camp, six thousand camouflaged drones hovered in perfect grid formation, ten meters up, invisible against the night.

Their onboard systems-Mother Ai's gift-cut through the mist as if it were glass. Heat signatures.

Heart-rate spikes. Even the faint electromagnetic signature of drawn steel. GPS locked every target. No guesswork. No mercy.

The first wave launched in eerie silence.

Needles hissed downward-slender carbon-fiber darts tipped with the fast-acting sedative Mother Ai had refined from local herbs and modern chemistry. They struck necks, wrists, the soft gaps between armor plates.

Soldiers dropped without a cry. Bodies twitched once, twice, then went limp. Drones descended like silent ghosts, mechanical arms scooping the fallen soldiers upward into the dark.

One by one they vanished. Ten. Twenty. A hundred. The machines moved with cold, mechanical patience-lifting soldiers, weapons, and supply crates alike-spiriting them deep into the Wudang Sect's hidden realm.

Inside the mist, the soldiers never saw them coming.

A Blade Clan lieutenant felt a prick at the base of his skull. He slapped at it, thinking

it was a mosquito. His knees buckled. A drone caught him before he hit the ground and rose smoothly into the white nothing.

Nearby, a veteran corporal heard the taunting voices again—"Die, Liu Dai pig!"— and swung wildly at the man beside him.

Their blades locked. They grappled, cursing, until a needle took the corporal in the throat.

His opponent barely had time to blink before another dart slammed into him. The drone silently lifted both bodies at once. Meanwhile, its speaker blared without pause: "Die, all you Liu Dai whores!"

The drones flooded the battlefield with their voices, speakers echoing the taunts from every direction, making the soldiers feel completely surrounded by a sea of invisible enemies.

Four thousand ordinary soldiers vanished in the first fifteen minutes.

But the cultivators were another matter.

One gray-robed elder from the Puyang inner circle felt the shift in the air—the faint displacement of a drone ten meters overhead. His hand snapped up. Fingers blurred. A burst of qi slammed the incoming needle aside with a metallic ping. He spun toward the sound, sword already drawn, eyes narrowed against the mist.

"I sense you," he growled.

Another elder leaped in beside him, followed by three more. Their qi erupted in unison—brilliant, sharp, and heavy with the aura of Foundation Establishment. The five of them formed a tight defensive circle, backs pressed together, blades thrust outward like the spokes of a deadly wheel.

When the next wave of darts came, they knocked them down mid-flight, the needles sparking harmlessly against invisible shields of energy.

"Spread out!" the first elder barked, voice strained. "Find the source of those darts! Something's lurking in the silence, launching hidden weapons. Stay alert and be careful!"

A thousand elite fighters answered the call. They moved through the chaos like sharks in bloodied water, deflecting darts, shattering the occasional drone that ventured too close.

Their blades carved glittering arcs. One cultivator lunged upward on a surge of qi and sliced a drone clean in half; its pieces tumbled down, sparking.

Ling Xue's ears caught the new sounds—thundering qi detonations and the sharp crack of shattering machinery—and fierce hope ignited in her chest. Her people were still fighting. Still standing.

She surged forward, slamming her shoulder into a stumbling soldier and knocking him aside. "To the elders!" she roared. "Rally to the elders!"

"Hold the line!"

A thousand Wudang disciples slipped into the mist like shadows given form.

They moved in perfect silence, white robes traded for matte-black night suits that drank the moonlight.

Gaia's overlay painted the world for them in crisp thermal blues and reds: every soldier's body heat, every heartbeat, every twitch of a finger on a sword hilt.

Drone feeds fèd straight into their

1.n

augmented visors-real-time coordinates, cultivation signatures ranked by threat level, even the precise angle of a man's elbow as he swung. The cultivators inside the formation were blind. The Wudang were not.

They struck like surgeons.

A Puyang elder spun toward a sound only he could half-hear. Before he could raise

his blade, two Wudang materialized out of the white nothing.

One drove a palm into the elder's solar plexus, qi-suppressing needles already embedded in the strike. The man folded with a strangled grunt.

The second disciple caught him before he hit the grass, cuffed his wrists with glowing restraint bands, and vanished upward with the body slung over his shoulder. They worked in teams of three silent, ruthless, efficient. A cultivator at the edge of foundation establishment lashed out with a crescent of sword qi that should have carved half the meadow.

The Wudang simply stepped inside the arc, their visors showing the exact path of the energy before it left the blade. A low kick swept his legs. A dart to the neck.

Gone. Another taken. Then another.

Ling Xue heard the new pattern of combat-the wet thuds, the sharp inhalations cut short, the absence of return fire. She pivoted toward it, boots tearing up turf, sword held low and ready.

"Come out!" she snarled, voice raw. "Fight me like men!"

She lunged at the nearest scuffle. Steel whistled past her ear her own man's blade, she realized too late. She parried by instinct, felt the impact jar her shoulder,

then shoved the soldier aside.

"Identify!" she barked.

No answer. Only the soft rustle of bodies being lifted away.

She charged again, ears straining for any footfall, any breath.

The thermal ghosts on her enemies' side moved like they could see straight through the hell she was drowning in.

They danced around her. Slipped behind her. Evaded every desperate cut. She slashed empty air, spun, slashed again. Her blade met nothing but mist.

Rage boiled up her throat, hot and bitter. She was General Ling Xue of the Puyang Blade Clan.

She had broken armies on open fields, executed traitors in broad daylight, made warlords kneel with nothing but her name. Now she was swinging at phantoms while her soldiers disappeared one by one.

She heard a cultivator nearby roar in defiance-Elder Shen, one of her best. A flurry of blows, qi cracking like thunder. Then silence.

"Shen!" she screamed.

No reply.

She ran toward the noise. Her shoulder clipped a tent pole. Canvas tore. She kept going, boots pounding over abandoned bedrolls and scattered rice bowls.

The ground felt wrong—too empty, too quiet. She reached the spot and found nothing. Just flattened grass where a fight should have been.

They were toying with her.

An hour bled away in blood and blindness.

The screams grew fewer. The clashes of steel faded to nothing. Ling Xue stood in the center of what had once been her command tent, chest heaving, sweat stinging her eyes.

She could hear her own pulse now. Nothing else. No breathing. No footsteps. No wind in the banners.

The mist began to thin.

It lifted in slow, ghostly sheets, peeling back from the meadow like a curtain rising on an empty stage.

Moonlight spilled across the grass. The White River glittered cold and indifferent. Tents-gone. Horses-gone. Weapons, supply wagons, cooking pots, every last scrap of five thousand soldiers vanished as if the earth had opened and swallowed

them whole.

Ling Xue stood alone.

No bodies. No blood. Not even footprints leading away. The meadow looked untouched, as if her entire army had simply ceased to exist between one heartbeat and the next.

She lowered her sword. The blade trembled in her grip.

Her mind refused the sight. Five thousand of her best. The pride of the Blade Clan. Men who had, marched beside her since she was a girl Gone. Not dead-taken, Stolen

in the night like children's toys.

A sound tore out of her-raw, guttural, nothing like the crisp commands she usually gave. It started as a growl and rose into a full-throated roar that echoed off the distant hills.

She spun in a wild circle, sword raised, searching for something-anything—to kill.

"Where are you?" she screamed into the empty dark. "Show yourselves! Coward!"

Her voice cracked. She took three running steps toward the treeline, then stopped. There was no trail. No enemy banner. No retreating column. Only silence and moonlight

and the faint smell of trampled.

grass.

FindNovel.net

She dropped to one knee, fingers digging into the dirt as if she could tear answers

from the

ground.

Yet, nothing.

And she didn't even know who "they" were.

Ling Xue rose slowly, sword still clenched in a white-knuckled fist. She stared south toward Qingshui, then north toward Qingyang, and finally at the empty meadow that

had been her camp.

One thought cut through the storm in her head.

She would walk back to Liu Dai.

Alone.

Broken.

Stinking of failure.

Or she would head straight for Qingshui City.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 649[1,669 words]

Ling Xue stood alone in the moonlit meadow, the White River whispering at her back like it was mocking her.

A raw sound tore out of her throat-half scream, half sob. She spun once, blade raised, searching for an enemy that wasn't there. Then the rage cracked open and something colder flooded in.

Shame.

Deep, bone-deep shame that tasted like iron and bile.

She could ride south and die trying to take Qingshui by herself. Or she could walk north and face Liu Dai with the truth: her entire command had vanished like smoke.

Ling Xue sheathed her sword with a sharp click.

She chose north.

She would tell Liu Dai exactly what had happened. And then she would beg him to let her lead the next army that burned that cursed city to the ground.

Ten kilometers south, General Han Feng had already made his decision.

No word had come from Ling Xue's column. Not one scout, not one raven. The silence gnawed at him. He knew that woman-knew the hungry ambition in her eyes.

If she reached Qingshui first, she would claim every scrap of glory and leave him standing in her dust.

Not this time.

"Up!" he roared before dawn. "Break camp. We march now."

His five thousand Mount Tai disciples rose like one iron beast. No complaints. These were not conscripts; they were fanatics raised inside the sect's walls, trained to kill since they could walk.

Armor clinked. Banners snapped. Hooves thundered as the column surged south along the imperial road, eating the miles while the sky was still dark.

By early morning the scouts galloped back, faces tight.

"General! Enemy force ahead-five thousand strong. They're waiting on the plain outside Qingshui. White robes. Wudang markings. They look like they've been there all night."

Han Feng's scarred jaw tightened. Wudang. The name carried weight even here. But five thousand against his five thousand? He had the numbers, the discipline, and decades of battlefield formations that had never failed the Mount Tai sect.

He allowed himself a thin smile.

"Form battle lines. We end this today."

Two armies confronted one another on a sweeping golden plain bordered by low hills. Dust clouded the air like smoke. Sunlight sparked across spear tips and helmets. Ten thousand soldiers stood in perfect ranks, only a hundred meters apart close enough to count the faces of the men they had come to kill.

Then a single rider broke from the Wudang lines.

He rode straight down the center without guards, without banners, without fear. Hair stirred in the wind. Simple clothes. A sword at his hip that looked more like a tool than a treasure.

Alex reined in halfway between the armies and sat tall in the saddle.

Every eye locked on him.

He cupped his hands around his mouth and shouted across the plain, voice carrying clean and calm.

"I am Bai Xiaochun, City Lord of Qingshui! I want to speak with General Han Feng!"

He let the words settle, then added, "Tell me how you want this done. One man against one man until one side has no champions left? Or full armies, steel against steel, winner takes all?"

Behind him the five thousand Wudang disciples erupted.

"One-on-one!" they roared, fists pumping, voices rolling like thunder. "One-on-one! One-on-one!"

The chant crashed across the plain. Their eyes burned with hunger. They wanted the duels. They wanted to prove something.

Han Feng nudged his warhorse forward, flanked by two elders whose qi crackled like heat haze. He stopped twenty paces from Alex and studied the younger man with cold, calculating eyes.

Sly. Old. Battle-smart.

He had seen plenty of traps in his sixty years. This smelled like one. Why would an enemy beg for single combat unless they had some hidden advantage poisoned blades, hidden formations, or worse?

Han Feng's voice rolled out, deep and steady.

"I am General Han Feng of the Mount Tai sect. I have fought more wars than you have years, boy. I choose the army. Steel against steel. Formations against formations. Let the best general win."

A stunned silence fell over the Wudang lines.

Then quiet murmurs rippled through them. Shoulders slumped. Heads turned. A few disciples exchanged bitter glances, disappointment plain on their faces.

Alex sat motionless for a beat, letting the moment stretch.

Then he shrugged-one casual lift of the shoulder-and gave a short nod.

"Army against army it is," he called back, loud enough for both sides to hear. "May the best side win."

He wheeled his horse around without another word.

No dramatic speech. No flourish. Just a man turning his back on five thousand killers like he was leaving a boring meeting.

Han Feng's eyes narrowed. Something cold crawled up his spine. The boy hadn't argued. Hadn't looked surprised. Hadn't even looked disappointed. He simply rode back toward his lines as if the decision meant nothing.

The disciplined Wudang ranks parted with practiced precision to allow their lord passage.

General Han Feng observed with a shock as the so-called City Lord hurried past his own men. He didn't stop at the rear — he kept going, faster and faster.

Running.

The boy was actually running away.

A savage grin carved deep into the old general's battle-scarred face. He had called the coward's bluff. The enemy lines now rippled with confusion and bitter disappointment. Perfect.

"Sound the drums!" Han Feng thundered, his voice carrying across the golden plain. He thrust his sword toward the sky. "Mount Tai — advance! Crush them!"

Five thousand disciples surged forward in perfect formation, boots hammering the dry plain, banners snapping, spears lowered like a steel tide.

The ground shook beneath them. Han Feng rode at their head, heart pounding with the old, familiar joy of battle. This was war the way it was meant to be fought—man against man, formation against formation.

No tricks. No mercy.

Then the sky changed.

Five thousand black shapes rose from behind the Wudang ranks in perfect silence. No camouflage. No warning. Just drones—sleek, angular machines—lifting into plain view against the bright blue sky. They hovered there for one impossible heartbeat, sunlight glinting off their metallic bodies.

Every soldier on the plain froze mid-step.

"What in the hells is that?" someone shouted.

The warhorse reared slightly as Han Feng pulled it to an abrupt stop. Shock ripped through the old general.

Prussian technology? Foreign sorcery? Some hellish device from outside the provinces?

He remembered the descriptions and diagrams from the forbidden book — the one that spoke of Prussia's terrifying high-tech wonders. But never had he expected to see such a thing with his own eyes here in the heart of the Xia Country.

Before he could bark an order, the drones moved.

They swept forward in a single, coordinated wave, engines humming low and deadly. From their underbellies, dozens of canisters dropped at once—small, precise, falling like deadly rain. The moment they hit the ground they burst open with soft pops.

Thick yellow gas erupted outward.

It rolled across the plain faster than any natural fog, heavy and choking, driven exactly where the wind needed it to go. The drones had already calculated every gust, every thermal, every shift in the breeze. The yellow cloud spread like a living thing, swallowing the front ranks in seconds.

"Poison!" a sergeant screamed.

Men clawed at their eyes. They coughed, gagged, dropped to their knees. Spears clattered to the dirt. Entire companies staggered, then collapsed in heaps—five hundred, a thousand, two thousand—bodies twitching once before going stiff. The gas burned throats and lungs, turned vision to stinging fire, and dragged even the strongest soldiers into unconsciousness.

"Don't breathe!" Han Feng bellowed. He clamped a gauntleted hand over his mouth and nose, eyes watering. "It's poison! Push through it! Outrun the mist! Forward!"

Han Feng slammed his heels into his horse's flanks and charged directly into the thick yellow wall of gas. His elite disciples surged after him, expressions locked in grim determination. Qi exploded around their bodies as they held their breath and sprinted through the toxic haze.

But the drones were everywhere.

They darted overhead like angry hornets, predicting every move. Whenever Han Feng veered left, a fresh cluster of canisters slammed down exactly where his column was headed.

When he wheeled right, more gas bloomed in his path. The machines never needed to see the blue sky themselves—they simply adjusted, calculated, and struck. The yellow cloud thickened, swirled, and refused to let them escape.

No matter how fast they ran, the gas was faster.

Ten agonizing minutes crawled by.

The wind finally shifted. The yellow haze thinned, drifting away in ragged sheets.

Sunlight cut through again.

Han Feng lowered his hand, chest heaving, eyes raw and streaming. His once-mighty army lay scattered across the plain like broken toys. Four thousand five hundred

men seasoned Mount Tai

over

disciples lay unconscious in th

—

grass, chests rising and falling in drugged sleep. Weapons, banners, even horses had been left where

they fell.

Fewer than five hundred soldiers still stood around him, the strongest cultivators in

his force, their higher realms barely keeping the gas at bay. Their faces were pale, furious, and stunned.

A single figure stepped out from the Wudang lines.

Liu Piao walked forward alone, white robes spotless, hands clasped casually behind

his back. A faint, almost pitying smile touched his lips.

"Old Han Feng," he called, voice carrying easily across the quiet field, "you should have chosen one-on-one combat. We could have traded fists,

tested our skills, gained real experience. Instead..." He gestured at the sleeping thousands with an open palm. "Now we have five thousand fresh fighters against your five hundred exhausted ones. Doesn't that feel just a little... disappointing?"

Han Feng's face went bone-white. Rage and humiliation burned through him hotter

than any battlefield wound.

"Retreat!" he roared, voice cracking. "Fall back! Now!"

But the Wudang had already moved.

While the gas did its work, the white-robed disciples had flowed around both flanks

in perfect silence. They formed a wide, unbroken ring-five thousand strong— cutting off every escape route. Spears lowered. Qi hummed in the air like a drawn bowstring. There was no gap. No weakness.

Han Feng looked left, right, then straight ahead. The trap had closed with surgical precision.

He was surrounded.

Trapped on the very plain he had chosen to fight on.

Now Han Feng knew the truth. The City Lord of Qingshui hadn't run because he

was scared.

He had simply expected the battle to be boring, so he walked away. A fight like this wasn't going to entertain him.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 650[1,207 words]

The ring of five thousand white-robed Wudang disciples tightened like a noose around the five hundred remaining Mount Tai warriors.

General Han Feng sat tall in the saddle, sword drawn, his iron-gray hair matted with sweat. The last of his elite-Core Formation elders and hardened Foundation Establishment fighters-formed a tight knot around him, qi crackling like summer lightning.

They were the best the Mount Tai sect had ever produced. But five thousand fresh Wudang disciples now surrounded them on every side.

Han Feng's face twisted with fury. He spurred his horse a single step forward and roared, voice carrying across the plain like rolling thunder.

"How dare you gang up on us like common street thugs? Where is the chivalry of the warrior? Where is the honor of single combat you begged for?"

Liu Piao walked forward alone from the Wudang lines, hands clasped behind his back, white robes untouched by the battle. A faint, almost regretful smile played on

his lips.

"General, we gave you the choice. One man against one man until one side ran out of champions. You laughed in our lord's face and demanded a full army clash instead. You wanted steel against steel, formations against formations. This is exactly what you chose. Do you think we take any pleasure in swarming you like this?"

He spread his hands. "Your own stupidity forced our hand. Now two fists will never beat twenty. That's the price of arrogance."

Han Feng's eyes burned with pure hatred. He raised his sword high, qi exploding around him in a blazing aura.

"You think numbers will save you from me? I am in the Core Formation realm! I have shattered armies and crushed sects older than your pathetic Wudang!"

Liu Piao laughed once-short, sharp, and utterly without mercy.

"So what? We have the Twelve-Star Wudang Formation. Twelve of our greatest Foundation Establishment disciples working in perfect sync. Even a Core Formation powerhouse like you won't break it. Watch."

At his signal, twelve Wudang elders stepped forward in a precise circle. They raised their palms in unison. A brilliant web of azure qi erupted between them, forming a twelve-pointed star that pulsed with ancient power. The formation snapped into place around Han Feng and his senior elders like an iron cage forged from light itself.

The old general snarled and lunged. His sword strike carried the weight of decades of war—pure, devastating Core Formation qi that should have split mountains.

It slammed into the star formation and rebounded with a thunderclap. The twelve Wudang disciples barely shifted. Their combined power held firm, absorbing and redirecting every ounce of his fury.

"Impossible!" Han Feng roared.

But the trap had already closed.

The remaining five hundred Mount Tai warriors charged with a battle cry that shook the plain.

They fought like cornered tigers—blades flashing, qi erupting in brilliant arcs, elder techniques tearing great gouges in the earth. For a moment, their elite training showed.

A Wudang squad went down under a hail of sword qi. Another group staggered as a Core Formation elder unleashed a palm strike that flattened twenty men.

It wasn't enough.

Not even close.

Five thousand disciplined Wudang disciples moved like a single living machine. They flowed around the Mount Tai formation in perfect waves, never committing more than necessary, always rotating fresh fighters to the front.

Every time a Mount Tai warrior broke through one line, three more closed behind him. Darts flew. Palm strikes cracked ribs. Sword forms blurred into lethal geometry.

Han Feng fought at the center of the storm, roaring with every swing. Sweat and blood streaked his scarred face. He shattered three Wudang disciples in a single spinning strike, then took a glancing blow to the shoulder that nearly knocked him from his horse.

Around him his elders battled desperately, their Core Formation power now locked and stifled by the Twelve-Star array. They could still fight, but they could not break free.

The Wudang simply wore them down.

One hour.

That was all it took.

One brutal, relentless hour of clashing steel and screaming qi.

By the end, the golden plain was littered with broken weapons and groaning bodies. Not a single Mount Tai warrior stood. Han Feng knelt in the center of the formation, chest heaving, sword planted point-down in the ground to keep himself upright.

Blood ran from a dozen shallow cuts. His eyes still burned with defiance, but his body had finally betrayed him.

Liu Piao stepped through the circle of his disciples and looked down at the defeated general.

"Take them all," he ordered quietly.

That same night, in the captured governor's mansion in Qingyang City, the heavy doors of the war hall slammed open.

Ling Xue strode in alone.

Her armor was dented and filthy. Her raven hair hung loose and matted. She looked like a woman who had walked through hell and come out the other side with nothing left but rage and shame.

Every general and advisor in the room fell silent as she crossed the torchlit floor and dropped to one knee before Liu Dai.

"My lord," she rasped, voice raw. "Five thousand of my Blade Clan soldiers... gone. Vanished. No battle. No bodies. Just mist and silence. I am the only one who returned."

Liu Dai stared at her. His face, already tight with worry, drained of color.

"And Han Feng?" he asked, though he already knew the answer.

"No word," Ling Xue said. "Not a single scout. Not a raven. They marched south this morning. They should have reached Qingshui by now. They... simply disappeared."

A stunned silence filled the hall.

One of the senior advisors stepped forward, voice trembling. "This is impossible. Ten thousand elite soldiers. Two of our best commanders. Gone. Just like Zhao Liang's five thousand. It's as if the earth opened and swallowed them whole."

Liu Dai's hands clenched into fists on the arms of his chair. He had marched into this campaign with fifty thousand men from Yan Province. Now barely thirty-five thousand remained.

The rest were tied down guarding newly captured cities, escorting supply trains of grain and weapons, or simply lost to the invisible enemy in Qingshui.

Another advisor cleared his throat. "My lord... we cannot keep sending smaller forces. They are being picked apart one piece at a time. If we divide our strength again, the same thing will happen. We must gather every available man thirty-five t

thousand strong-and strike Qingshui with

everything we have left. One

hammer blow. No more probing

attacks. No more chances for their

tricks."

FindNovel.net

Liu Dai sat motionless for a long moment. The torches crackled. Shadows danced

across the stone walls.

He had never been a man who scared easily. But for the first time since the campaign began, real fear flickered behind his eyes-cold, sharp, and unmistakable.

Then the fear hardened into something colder.

"Gather them," he said at last, voice low and final. "Every soldier. Every cultivator Every horse and wagon we can spare. We march on Qingshui in three days. All thirty-five thousand We will burn that the ground and drag Bǎi Xiaochun's head back here in chains No more mistakes."

He rose slowly, armor creaking.

"And if anyone fails me this time," he added, eyes sweeping the room, "I will not bother with dungeons. I will kill you myself."

The advisors bowed low. Ling Xue remained on one knee, head bowed, fists clenched so tightly her knuckles stood white against the dirt on her skin. Outside, the night wind howled across the ruined capital like a warning no one wanted to hear.