

Grasping 1031

Chapter 1031: A Guest Arrives at Night, Poisonous Schemes Run Deep

Wu Laoba, holding the newly obtained information, expressed his loyalty to Ning Fan angrily. Ning Fan, however, remained silent, swept his gaze over the intel, set it aside, and continued to sit cross-legged, eyes closed for meditation.

Sha Bailou, Emperor Lou Tuo's first disciple, the person who obstructed him rescuing people at the slave market that day...

If it were before encountering Emperor Butcher, Ning Fan, limited by his cultivation seal, might have been somewhat wary of Sha Bailou. But now, with Emperor Butcher's additional reward, he no longer bothers with Sha Bailou.

If this person truly troubles him during the second round of the Tomb Siege, he certainly wouldn't be lenient.

Rather than worrying about this matter, it's better to focus on recovering the spirit exhausted in the Blood Martial Arena. His time is genuinely scarce, lacking the margin to allocate to such trivial issues.

Even some significant matters have been delayed because they conflict with participating in the Blood Martial Arena.

Ning Fan dismissed the incessantly nagging Wu Laoba. Alone, he took out a name card with a fading spirit glow and smiled wryly.

The invitation to the Ancient Buddha Assembly...

This is an invitation from Great Emperor Tiandu. The venue, seemingly within a certain space in Liuli City, happens to coincide with the second round's first three days, conflicting with the Blood Martial Arena's timing.

Initially, Ning Fan had some interest in the Ancient Buddha Assembly, but for the sake of the Innate Soul-Nourishing Spiritual Medicine matter, he made a choice and gave up attending the Assembly...

"Forget it, a gathering of Buddha cultivators, missing this Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor, won't matter much. It's just a pity not to seize the opportunity to discern Great Emperor Tiandu's deeper intentions..."

Ning Fan sighed softly, put away the card, continued to meditate with eyes closed.

This was the last night before the Tomb Siege began; his spirit required more for recovery, necessitating urgent meditation.

The night gradually deepened, the wind outside the door rustled. After some time, laughter suddenly echoed.

The laughter was too abrupt, causing Ning Fan to open his eyes in alertness.

An Immortal Emperor! Outside his door came an Immortal Emperor! Not the ones he knew—Lou Tuo, Spirit Bones, or Baihua—but which Emperor was it?

"Old me, Tiandu, arrives uninvited, rather being an unwelcome guest. Won't you invite me in, young friend?" The voice echoed through the nine heavens, thunderous, yet eerily, only Ning Fan could hear it, not alarming any nearby sleeping person.

Ning Fan's heart immediately tensed, realizing that since he hadn't gone to meet Great Emperor Tiandu at the Ancient Buddha Assembly, Tiandu came looking.

With thoughts fleeting, he halted his meditation, stood, and walked outside to greet.

"Emperor, please come in!"

"In that case, I shall intrude!"

Great Emperor Tiandu's face looked stern, but his manner towards Ning Fan was quite polite. With a laugh, he strode into the room.

Ning Fan, having risen, greeted him at the door, inviting Great Emperor Tiandu into the outer room, then both host and guest seated themselves.

Great Emperor Tiandu's face carried a smile, showing no anger, but Ning Fan thought, still asked, "Emperor, was it to blame this junior for missing the Ancient Buddha Assembly appointment that you came so late?"

"Blame? Of course not. Old me, though invited you for the Assembly, whether to attend is your choice; no way I'd force it. It's just unfortunate; your absence missed the chance to sample the Assembly's Dao Fruit, unfortunate, unfortunate..."

Though he said unfortunate, no trace of regret was in Tiandu Emperor's eyes; instead, there was a flash of brilliance.

This was their first meeting! Before seeing him, he knew Ning Fan's Dao Enlightenment was high, yet only limited to seeing completeness. Now, it was astonishing!

The Ning Fan before him wasn't merely seeing completeness; within him, he'd drawn the first stroke of reincarnation, already having his unique reincarnation aura!

Initially, he held three points of interest for Ning Fan; now, it was ten points!

"If you aren't here to blame, may I ask why you visit late? Is there something to discuss..." Ning Fan inquired.

Seeing Ning Fan had guessed his intent, Great Emperor Tiandu didn't hide it, candidly said, "Correct, I invited you to the Assembly for a request. Since you didn't go, I came uninvited."

"May I ask what the Emperor requests? This junior is of little help, likely incapable of aiding you, Senior."

"Haha, if one who drew the first stroke of reincarnation isn't able to help, then in this Era of Decline, few others might assist me! Though my aptitude is beyond yours, always unable to achieve this, I'm confident not mistaken! When did you draw the first stroke, how was the process, could you explain to me?"

Great Emperor Tiandu appeared seeking advice, but Ning Fan's heart tensed.

What does the first stroke of reincarnation mean! Could it refer to his initial comprehension of reincarnation? Could this Emperor's inquiry relate to this...

"Would like to first seek your advice, Senior. What is the first stroke of reincarnation? I don't quite understand your words, Senior."

"Seems you don't wish to tell old me the process of comprehending reincarnation, forget it, likely involving your secrets. I won't ask..." Great Emperor Tiandu merely thought Ning Fan was making excuses, subconsciously somewhat displeased, yet realizing he sought a favor, his brows relaxed, appearing indifferent.

There had been a trend of amiable discussion, but now the atmosphere grew awkward.

Ning Fan's face didn't show it, but inside he was a bit speechless. The magnanimity of the Great Emperor Tiandu didn't seem as large as he portrayed.

Originally, he wanted to casually explain that he wasn't trying to hide anything, but genuinely didn't understand what the Great Emperor Tiandu meant. But now he couldn't be bothered to explain.

"Senior, why don't you just tell me what you wish to ask of me?"

"Hehe, I nearly forgot the main matter. In my early years, while gathering herbs on the Sanyan Continent, I mistakenly entered a hidden place and acquired a treasure. I'd like to invite you to appraise it..."

The Great Emperor Tiandu set up numerous barriers around them before carefully taking something out.

It was an old sword sheath placed in a jade box, stained with blood—a very ancient bloodstain.

A relic of the distant past, yet the sword intent on the sheath remained unextinguished through the ages, emanating an awe-inspiring fear, and the more profound one's cultivation, the more daunting it felt!

"This sword sheath, my young friend, what do you think..." The Great Emperor Tiandu handed the sheath to Ning Fan.

Ning Fan's expression didn't change, but internally, there was an indescribable feeling.

This sword sheath looks familiar... No, it's not the sheath that looks familiar, it's the sword intent on it...

It is identical to the sword intent on the sheath he used to heavily injure the Moksha Emperor when he first cultivated!

It was the sword intent left by the woman known as the sword ancestor...

Ning Fan suddenly felt a sense of temporal displacement, as if he returned to his youthful days, back to when he stood before the giant Moksha Emperor, so small and insignificant.

Even though insignificant, he still blocked with a sword against the Moksha Emperor, with his tiny self!

"Back then, I could only see the surface of this sheath, unable to see within. The Sword Qi of this sheath is enough to unleash a Void Fragmentation Realm Strike, and its sword intent... unexpected, it's so terrifying!"

The Ning Fan of the past couldn't see how terrifying this sword intent was.

But now, he could feel it firsthand.

The sword ancestor's sword intent never perished through time, enduring perfection, and then returning to simplicity, containing the genuine third-step sword rule!

The former him couldn't see this, but now, he could discern the traces of its simplicity!

With a flick of his finger, a wisp of golden purple smoke lightly drifted toward the sheath, only to be easily severed by the sheath's sword rule!

"Ah! My young friend not only drew the first stroke of reincarnation but can also externalize a trace of the Power of Reincarnation!" The Great Emperor Tiandu's eyes widened, looking at Ning Fan in disbelief.

He further confirmed something from the fragmentation of Ning Fan's golden purple smoke...

Indeed, indeed! This sword sheath conceals the third-step complete Sword Dao!

Unfortunately, he couldn't decipher the mystery of that sword intent; he could only speculate, unable to replicate, learn, or comprehend it...

But Ning Fan could! Haha, this foreign cultivator is indeed useful, hahahaha!

Inwardly, the Great Emperor Tiandu wanted to laugh wildly, but outwardly, he appeared calm and composed, retrieving the sheath from Ning Fan like it was a treasure and then discussed with him,

"How is it! The Sword Dao contained within this sheath, how is it!"

"Incredibly powerful, unparalleled throughout history!" Ning Fan sincerely praised. He could see that the sword ancestor's Sword Dao was the third-step complete Sword Dao but couldn't discern the specific changes in the sword rule within it—the changes were too complex.

"Would my young friend like to learn this peerless Sword Dao? If you succeed, you may well tread into the legendary... Saint Realm with this Sword Dao!" The Great Emperor Tiandu tempted him.

"This matter is too difficult. The senior who left such sword intent had ever-changing sword rules. A mere sword sheath, weathered through infinite years, cannot fully demonstrate all changes of the traces. Learning it in a lifetime from just one sheath is impossible." Ning Fan shook his head.

"What if there are thousands upon thousands of such sheaths? What if I can even find the remains of the senior who left this sword intent for you! Would you be interested in coming with me to learn this Supreme Sword Dao! I have only one condition: if you gain some insight, you must not hide it; you need to inscribe a share of the sword enlightenment and give it to me!"

Engrave! Haha, I don't need any engraving! Once you've comprehended the Sword Dao, I can just kill you and Soul Search; wouldn't that be easier!

After all, he's just a foreign cultivator; killing him doesn't matter!

Within his heart, the Great Emperor Tiandu had already plotted, but his face wore an appearance of honest trading, negotiating with Ning Fan.

Ning Fan wasn't aware of the Great Emperor Tiandu's malicious plan, but he was wary of him, naturally not foolish enough to go with him to learn some Supreme Sword Dao.

However, he couldn't refuse too overtly; otherwise, if the Great Emperor Tiandu turned hostile, it would be quite troublesome.

"Where did senior discover the place with thousands of sword sheaths, and where are the remains of the senior who left this Supreme Sword Dao buried?"

"This..." The Great Emperor Tiandu was temporarily at a loss, not wanting to hide anything from Ning Fan, but fearing that revealing the location of those thousands of sword sheaths would scare Ning Fan away.

"It seems senior is not sincere in this transaction. Forget it. I won't study this Supreme Sword Dao; let senior ponder it alone." Ning Fan casually lifted the tea bowl in front of him, as if to see him off.

The Tiandu Emperor, seeing the transaction about to fall apart, became anxious at once. If Ning Fan does not learn this Supreme Sword Dao, he won't find a second person who has some understanding of reincarnation and is easy to handle, to learn this Sword Dao!

This is the Third Step Sword Dao; only those who have some understanding of the third step are qualified to learn it.

What is the third step? It is perfection; it is reincarnation.

There is a saying that the lower one's cultivation in seeing perfection, the more immeasurable their future achievements!

The Tiandu Emperor asked himself if he could also see perfection, but that was after he became an emperor, and it was also with guidance from Holy Mountain's Bright Buddha that he barely managed to do so...

His aptitude is far inferior to Ning Fan's! He couldn't even determine if the Sword Dao in this scabbard was the Third Step Sword Dao. It was Ning Fan who solved this puzzle for him and helped him confirm it!

What's more terrifying is that Ning Fan, merely with an Immortal Venerable cultivation level, had already drawn the first stroke of reincarnation! He can even project the Power of Reincarnation outward!

In his knowledge, there are only two people who could do this: one is the strongest of Holy Mountain—the Bright Buddha; the other is the strongest in Sanyan—the Death Emperor!

Both the Bright Buddha and the Death Emperor saw perfection before becoming Immortal Emperors! If Ning Fan survives to the end, he would at least be such a powerful figure!

If Ning Fan truly grows to that step, the Tiandu Emperor would not dare to plot against Ning Fan anymore. What he has set his sights on is Ning Fan's lack of growth, because only by not growing, he is easier to handle, to be strangled!

With Ning Fan's unparalleled aptitude, the chances of mastering the Third Step Sword Dao are not small. The day this child succeeds in learning will be when Tiandu reaps the benefits!

Kill Ning Fan and reap the insights into Sword Dao he understood!

If not for such huge profits, how could he violate ancestral laws to invite an outsider to the Ancient Buddha Assembly!

And unexpectedly, Ning Fan was bold enough to ignore his invitation, breaking the promise to attend the Ancient Buddha Assembly!

Because of this, many old monsters at the Ancient Buddha Assembly, who regard the assembly as sacred, were enraged by Ning Fan's refusal to attend.

People are strange like this; inviting outsiders makes them blame you for violating ancestral customs, and they find the outsiders annoying. When the outsider doesn't come, they blame them for disregarding Buddhist law, desecrating the grace of Buddhism.

Unlike those ancient Buddhas, the Tiandu Emperor would not blame Ning Fan for disregarding the Ancient Buddha Assembly. As long as he achieves his purpose, he would even put aside his arrogance, slightly compromise to visit Ning Fan, if necessary!

Seeing Ning Fan about to send him off with tea, the Tiandu Emperor couldn't care less and hastily explained,

"Little friend, don't misunderstand. This old man did not intentionally hide it; I was just afraid that by revealing this place, it would make you fearful and unwilling to go."

"Senior, there is no harm in speaking. This junior has always been bold; there's no place I wouldn't dare to go." Ning Fan put down the teacup and said with a slight smile.

"It was my mistake for underestimating your courage. To be honest, the place where the ten thousand sword scabbards and the clan ancestor's remains were found is the most perilous spot in Sanyan Continent... the Vacant Flame Continent!"

At the mention of Vacant Flame, even the Tiandu Emperor himself felt a bit of dread. The terror of the Vacant Flame Dead Emperor had deeply penetrated his bones, leaving him with a shadow...

"What! It's actually on the Vacant Flame Continent! Isn't that one of the three Tenth-grade Fierce Domains? If we rashly enter there, wouldn't we be following in the footsteps of the Baihua Great Emperor!" Ning Fan feigned a surprised expression while his heart suddenly felt stirred.

The Tenth-grade Fierce Domain is not just dangerous; even Immortal Emperors cannot enter without a passage token due to the Sage's prohibition isolating it.

One of his purposes in coming to the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain is to help Burying Moon get a physical body. It's rumored that the Herb-gathering Sage has a habit of carefully storing the corpses of medicine slaves poisoned to death. Among these corpses are those of the Immortal Emperors, both male and female, which is exactly what he seeks...

He doesn't know where these corpses are stored, nor the whereabouts of the Jiuli Ritual Vessel... Searching for these things might require going to Sanyan. If so... perhaps the Tiandu Emperor is the helper sent to make it easy for him to enter Sanyan...

"Did you not say there's no place you wouldn't dare to go? So why, when I mention Vacant Flame, do you become afraid? Hmph, are all Eastern Celestial Outsiders such cowards? Fear not, the Baihua Great Emperor's severe injury in Sanyan was actually an exception; look at me, I have also been in and out of Sanyan and found that secret place, and I am perfectly fine! How many of those spreading rumors about Sanyan being dangerous have actually been there in person? Follow me, and I guarantee you'll be safe all the way!" the Tiandu Emperor confidently assured.

"With senior's protection, going to Sanyan is truly not something dangerous. Moreover, for such an opportunity as the Third Step Sword Dao, what harm is there in taking a little risk! Once successful, both

senior and I might become figures that shake the heavens and the earth. Such benefits are enough for us to enter that fierce region!" Ning Fan appeared to hesitate for a long time before gritting his teeth and giving a definite answer.

The Tiandu Emperor was overjoyed, "Little friend's words are exactly what I hoped for! Indeed, coming to discuss this matter with you was the right choice. You are currently still participating in the Tomb Conquest; I won't insist on accompanying you this time, but after all three rounds of the conquest are over, I will seek you out and we can enter Sanyan together, how about it?"

Ning Fan pretended to ponder for a while before replying, "This is feasible! I'll go along with senior's suggestion!"

"Haha, little friend truly is a straightforward person. Since that's the case, this matter is settled. One thing though, keep in mind, the matter of the Third Step Sword Dao is of great importance; you must not divulge it to others. Enjoying its profits exclusively by you and me, isn't that better? If we succeed, we might eventually become the third and fourth Quasi-Saints of the Dabei Clan after the Bright Buddha and the Death Emperor! Uh, forget I said that; I was mistaken. You aren't a Dabei person, my slip of the tongue... haha!"

The Tiandu Emperor laughed it off with Ning Fan, but Ning Fan felt a strange curiosity within.

Becoming the third and fourth Quasi-Saints...

In the recognition of the Tiandu Emperor, are there only these two Quasi-Saints in the Dabei Clan?

"I wonder which rank of Quasi-Saints are the Bright Buddha and the Death Emperor?"

"Oh? Little friend seems quite knowledgeable about the Quasi-Saint level. To be honest, both the Bright Buddha and the Death Emperor are First Order Quasi-Saints, mighty and incomparable to ordinary Immortal Emperors."

Just First Order Quasi-Saints?

If the Dabei Clan only has these two Quasi-Saints, then what about that Second Rank Quasi-Saint with the surname Niu...

Could it be that the existence of Niu Xing Zhun Sheng is a major secret of the Dabei Clan, something not to be shared with outsiders? Is that why the Tiandu Emperor mentioned this person?

Or perhaps, the Tiandu Emperor doesn't even know that there exists a Niu Xing Zhun Sheng in the Dabei Clan...

"Senior, have you heard of a Quasi-Saint with the surname Niu?"

"Oh, a Quasi-Saint with the surname Niu, could it be a Quasi-Saint from your Eastern Heaven?" Even the Great Emperor Tiandu, who looked down on foreign cultivators, showed some interest at the mention of a Quasi-Saint.

The ignorance in the Tiandu Emperor's eyes was not feigned; he truly was unaware of the existence of Niu Xing Zhun Sheng.

This is intriguing. How could such a living Second-Grade Quasi-Saint have lived for many years in the Middle State without the Dabei Clan's Immortal Emperor knowing?

"Since you've never heard of them, let's leave it at that. It's getting late, and I have not yet restored my mental energy, so I won't keep you."

"Haha, that's my fault, I didn't mean to delay your recovery, my young friend. In that case, take this bottle of elixir with you. This is the Nine-turn Golden Elixir personally refined by the Bright Buddha of the Holy Mountain. Although it's just a Golden Core, its effects are far superior to ordinary Golden Cores, and it should greatly help in restoring your mental energy! For tomorrow's Duo Ling Battle, I will also assist you. I've heard some of the grievances between you and Fellow Lou Tuo; should any issues arise, rest assured that I will support you. There's no need to fear Sha Bailou! Now, I won't disturb your recovery any further; I'll take my leave!"

After cheerfully gifting a bottle of Nine-turn Golden Elixir to Ning Fan, the Tiandu Emperor took his leave.

Ning Fan toyed with the bottle of elixir in his hand, watching the Tiandu Emperor depart, a slight cold smile playing on his lips.

The Tiandu Emperor truly treats him like a fool of the Dabei Clan, assuming that such small schemes could easily draw him in?

No matter, for now, he might as well make use of the Great Emperor Tiandu. This person intends to use him, and until then, he would certainly ensure his safety. This way, he could leverage the Tiandu Emperor's influence to resolve numerous issues easily...

It was entirely unexpected to encounter the sword scabbard handed down from the Sword Ancestor once more in this foreign land.

Ning Fan spread his palm; it seemed to still retain the cold trace of the sword scabbard, a feeling hard to articulate lingering in his heart.

In his youth, holding this scabbard didn't bring him such insights, but now it did.

"There is reluctance in the Sword Ancestor's Sword Intent, a very deep reluctance. In my youth, I couldn't grasp that point, not because my cultivation level was insufficient, but because I didn't understand emotions... Back then, I didn't know what it felt like to miss someone, but now, having been away from home for long, I understand... This Sword Ancestor Sword Intent is laden with deep, deep longing... Is that senior already departed, and when leaving this Sword Intent, who were they missing?"

"Without the sword scabbard from that year, perhaps both my master and I would have perished in Seven Apricot City, fallen to the Moksha Emperor. Even though that sword scabbard was deliberately handed to me by Aci, if I trace the threads of fate, I should also be grateful to that Sword Ancestor senior, who I've only met in passing. According to the Tiandu Emperor, the Sword Ancestor's remains, along with thousands of sword scabbards, are in one place. If I go there, I could pay my respects to the Sword Ancestor senior..."

That Sword Ancestor had a profile extremely similar to Dugu...

Ning Fan couldn't help but recall the scene from the Sword World years ago, remembering the moment he saw the Sword Ancestor's portrait and mistook Dugu for the Sword Ancestor, as if they were one and the same.

No, they shouldn't be... Now he had a deep understanding of aura, and while Dugu and the Sword Ancestor's auras were similar, they were more distinct.

An Immortal's death scatters like dissipating thoughts; reincarnation is impossible. Even if it were possible, it would never be with two different auras... They couldn't be the same person. That misconception from back then was indeed just a misconception.

"I'm very curious about what Dugu saw back then in the Heart Inquiry Sword Lake, which reflects past and present lives..." Ning Fan fell into recollection, warmth appearing in his eyes.

'Little demon Ning, in your past life, were you a butterfly...'

'What exactly did you see?'

'Don't ask, never seek to know...'

A thread of faint white light crept through the window, and Ning Fan speechlessly realized it was already morning.

The Duo Ling Battle was about to begin, and he had no time left to slowly restore his mental energy. No matter, he'd just use the Tiandu Emperor's elixir to recover!

Ning Fan took out a golden elixir from the bottle, and the fragrance of the elixir immediately filled the entire room.

Not seduced by this fragrance, Ning Fan silently released several beams of Grand Momentum Golden Light, scanning the elixir multiple times.

Only after making some modifications to the hidden restrictions within the elixir did he feel safe enough to consume it.

Heh, even the delay of an entire night, preventing his chance to recover, was all part of the Tiandu Emperor's premeditated script. Was the intent to manipulate him using the elixir to restore mental energy? Unfortunately, this ploy was rather clumsy...

Nevertheless, the elixir was indeed excellent! The immense medicinal power was far beyond that of a typical Nine-turn Golden Elixir, clearly highlighting the profound alchemical expertise of the Bright Buddha who refined it!

Could it be, perhaps, that they are the Nine Revolutions Imperial Elixir Alchemist!

Ning Fan's eyes reflected admiration. Such alchemical prowess was beyond his reach, and he had no intention of pursuing it.

No, for there wasn't enough time for him to be master of many arts!

This was the last night before the Duo Ling Battle. By dawn, the sky above Liuli City was adorned with a thousand miles of morning glow, and by midday, amidst that glow, celestial music and bells echoed, with all kinds of birds fluttering in harmony.

Thus, countless residents of Liuli City began to walk out of their homes, utilizing the Teleportation Formation from various stations to gather towards the Great Brightness Temple in the north of the city.

The Great Brightness Temple is the largest temple in Liuli, and its ten-thousand-zhang square is the venue for the second round of today's Duo Ling Battle...

Chapter 1032: Qingling

The Great Brightness Temple may not be the oldest ancient temple in Liuli City, but it is undoubtedly the most prosperous in incense offering, simply because this temple produced a remarkably talented individual – the Bright Buddha, regarded by the world as the strongest figure of the Holy Mountain!

This is the Dao ground of the Bright Buddha, where the supreme golden body of the Bright Buddha is enshrined. If there is ever a change in Liuli City, the Bright Buddha can always rely on this golden body to send his spirit sense here!

The Tomb-Snatching Battle was chosen to be held here, so naturally, no one would dare cause trouble in this place. At the center of the ten-thousand-foot square stands the giant golden body statue of the Bright Buddha. Its expression is solemn with lowered eyes, and although it is merely a statue, it seems to constantly watch over Liuli City.

At midday, the scorching sun is high, and the stone grounds of the square are so hot they bake, yet countless devout believers are unafraid of the heat, bowing piously on the square to the golden body of the Bright Buddha, chanting scriptures and offering prayers.

Gradually, martial monks from the temple began dispersing the believers to clear the site for the Tomb-Snatching Battle. Once the square was empty, countless rays of glow suddenly descended from the sky. Within the glow were illusions, vaguely revealing structures that gradually took form over time. By the time the glow dissipated, the previously open square had gained many white jade high platforms, adorned with fruits and fine wines, and already occupied by immortal Buddhas, each possessing strong auras, with few below the True Immortal Realm!

At the forefront of the immortals sat naturally the most esteemed Central Continent's Five Emperors! Great Emperor Tiandu at the head, Emperor Foqi next, Baihua Great Emperor third, Emperor Lou Tuo fourth, and Emperor Bone Spirit last.

The appearance of the Five Emperors immediately brought countless cheers to the square.

"Under the Five Emperors, all immortals bow! The second round of the Tomb-Snatching Battle is about to begin!"

"Hiss! All Five Emperors of the Central Continent are here! Even the seriously injured and secluded Baihua Great Emperor has come!"

"Rumor has it that Baihua Emperor was gravely injured and near death. Clearly, rumors cannot be trusted. Look, Baihua Emperor's Yang energy is faint but restrained, and his Yin energy is scattered but not chaotic. It seems he has recovered significantly, and perhaps not long from now, he will fully heal!"

"Most of the disciples of the Five Emperors have also arrived!"

"Eh, there seem to be a few unfamiliar faces beside Baihua Emperor..."

A few noticed the unfamiliar faces sitting beside Baihua Emperor and felt very curious.

If Ning Fan were present, he would find that sitting beside Baihua Emperor were Ouyang Nuan and Burying Moon!

"Are these two women not companions of that Ning Fan brat...? And that veiled female cultivator I'm concerned about has also come. The outside world rumors that Ning Fan and his group received Baihua's hospitality as a reward for curing Baihua's injuries, but now it seems it's not merely for healing that they receive such hospitality..."

Emperor Lou Tuo glanced subtly in Baihua Emperor's direction, his expression becoming sinister. However, this sinister gaze was largely directed at the veiled Burying Moon.

If when he first went to the Tamu Clan and saw Burying Moon, he merely felt a sense of familiarity and dislike, today, he was nearly seventy percent certain that this veiled woman was the foreign cultivator he resented the most!

Burying Moon Immortal Consort!

Back then, Burying Moon nearly killed him, damaging his foundation. Although he never clearly saw Burying Moon's appearance, he distinctly remembered Burying Moon Immortal Consort having an acquaintance with Baihua Emperor!

No, back then, Baihua Emperor had yet to take the helm of Baihua Peak, possessing Immortal Emperor cultivation but not bearing the title of Baihua, instead using the name Ji Shiling!

Ji Shiling, Burying Moon!

That day, Burying Moon Immortal Consort visited the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain once again to gather herbs. Newly enthroned as an emperor and full of arrogance, he naturally couldn't tolerate a foreign cultivator rampaging in the Dabei Clan's domain and went to stop her.

He was naturally no match for Burying Moon Immortal Consort; this, he knew well. Thus, he invited Ji Shiling to join him in stopping Burying Moon, but Ji Shiling refused on the grounds of acquaintance with Burying Moon.

Ultimately, he went alone to stop Burying Moon Immortal Consort.

Arrogant as he was, he spoke recklessly, convinced that since this was the Dabei Clan's land, Burying Moon Immortal Consort wouldn't dare harm him despite his brashness.

Who would have thought Burying Moon Immortal Consort had such a temper? Calm, she was fine, but once angered, she struck severely, nearly killing him and damaging his foundation. Since then, he has never broken through the shackles of the Eternal Sixth Calamity to the Seventh Tribulation...

Recalling the past, Emperor Lou Tuo felt some regret, but his predominant emotion was resentment - resentment towards Burying Moon for harming him and even more towards Ji Shiling for not assisting him!

Had Ji Shiling assisted with her Dao of formations cultivation, he might not have been so gravely injured, even if he hadn't been a match for Burying Moon!

"After the Heavenly Court's downfall, I once killed some foreign cultivators who entered the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain, searching their memories for information about Burying Moon Immortal Consort. What I discovered was that Burying Moon Immortal Consort got involved in the turmoil of the ancient Heavenly Court and perished within it. With time's passage, the name of Burying Moon Immortal Consort has already vanished into oblivion, with few external cultivators having heard of this name. Unexpectedly, she isn't dead and dares to sit openly with Ji Shiling here! But it seems she and Ji Shiling both are half-dead..."

Emperor Lou Tuo's eyes flashed fiercely, almost driven by the impulse to immediately expose and kill Burying Moon.

But glimpsing at the golden body of the Bright Buddha in the square's center, he suddenly felt deeply apprehensive, gritting his teeth, suppressing the impulse to kill Burying Moon for the time being.

Noticing Emperor Lou Tuo's change in expression, Burying Moon immediately felt a bit uneasy, transmitting to Baihua Emperor, "Is it really safe for me to be here, sitting so close to that Lou Tuo brat? He seems to have recognized me. Indeed, I shouldn't have listened to you to come and watch this Tomb-Snatching Battle."

"Why is Sister acting so timid; this isn't like the you of the past at all. Moreover, do you really think no one knows about your entry into my clan? Lou Tuo might be slow in realizing it, but as far as I know, Emperor Bone Spirit was the first to know and yet didn't dare expose you - probably because of a large shadow behind you. No wonder Emperor Bone Spirit was in such a hurry to follow Lou Tuo to the Southern Frontier's inconspicuous place that day, eager to curry favor with you. Sadly, you seem unaware of his intent. Or maybe Emperor Bone Spirit was just afraid, hehe. If Lou Tuo had acted on his impulse back then, not knowing if a certain big Buddha would get angry over you, it's possible that's his real concern..." Baihua Emperor chuckled, her eyes also glancing meaningfully at the enormous statue of the golden body in the center of the square.

Burying Moon was no longer anxious but instead had her forehead lined with black threads, "I only met your Bright Buddha once, and we ended up in a fight without any personal feelings involved. Do you think anyone would dread me or curry favor with me because of the Bright Buddha?"

"Sister, you certainly have no personal feelings for Bright Buddha, but he may not feel the same. What Sister doesn't know is that after the Dao became, Bright Buddha, who rarely left the Holy Mountain, once left after the fall of the ancient Heavenly Court. Disregarding the prohibition of the Saint Ancestor, he ventured outside the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain. No one knew whom he sought. Upon returning, his expression turned distraught and insane, going on a rampage in the unpopulated places of the Central Continent, destroying countless mountains and rivers with his divine skills. After calming down, he sealed himself in the Sacred Tomb, studying those discovered Ancient Holy Stone Thrones, never leaving again... Occasionally, he would summon people for meetings, asking about certain information..."

"Bright Buddha once summoned me as well, and what he asked about was Sister's news. Back then, I was certain Sister was dead, and thus, naturally, I couldn't provide Bright Buddha with any information. He seemed dead-faced... According to rumors, the reason Bright Buddha disregarded the prohibition, venturing outside during a time of great chaos, was to search for Sister at the ruins of the ancient Heavenly Court. His frenzy was likely due to learning of Sister's death..."

Burying Moon's brow was further covered with black lines, "How come I didn't hear about any of this..."

"Because you're dead."

"..."

"..."

Burying Moon was speechless for a long time, then shook her head and said, "I don't have that kind of relationship with your Bright Buddha. Many things are just your speculation. That Bright Buddha's madness might have another reason."

"Really?" The Baihua Great Emperor looked at Burying Moon with disbelief.

"Really."

"Haha, if you don't want to admit it, let's just say you have nothing to do with Bright Buddha."

The Baihua Great Emperor's face was kind and amiable, but inwardly sneering.

She didn't believe that Burying Moon and Bright Buddha had no affair. Bright Buddha's infatuated demeanor wasn't fake. Having seen countless men, she could firmly believe that Bright Buddha deeply loved the Burying Moon Immortal Concubine.

The supposedly chaste Burying Moon Immortal Concubine and the Bright Buddha with his Buddhist name couldn't possibly have a simple relationship. They must have been entangled countless times! Burying Moon's attempt to cover it up was simply drawing more attention...

Burying Moon knew that the Baihua Great Emperor didn't believe her, but she couldn't be bothered to explain further, slightly frowning.

If in the past she had genuinely considered the Baihua Great Emperor a friend, it was no longer the case now. Time had changed, and the Baihua Great Emperor had become unrecognizable, like a completely different person.

Their relationship had dwindled to just a business partnership...

As for the issue about Bright Buddha mentioned by the Baihua Great Emperor, Burying Moon truly had no knowledge of it.

"There's no reason for Baihua to lie. Could Bright Buddha really have feelings for me? But why? We've only met once, and that meeting started with a fight. We didn't even say three words to each other. How could he be infatuated with me?"

Burying Moon strained to recall past events. Her impression of Bright Buddha was quite vague.

That year, she was still the lively Nine Tribulations Peak Immortal Emperor, and Bright Buddha seemed to not have broken through to the Quasi-Saint realm, appearing to have just reached the Nine Tribulations...

Like always, she ran rampant in the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain, only for an ugly, bearded monk to come out, chanting Namó Amitabha towards her.

'You're the first woman I've seen since opening my eyes, which is fate. I won't kill you, so leave and remember not to cause trouble in the Dabei territory in the future!'

Look, such arrogant words! A mere newly advanced Nine Tribulations Immortal Emperor dared to speak like this to her, a Nine Tribulations Peak! How could she bear it?

So, without further ado, she turned that bearded monk into a punching bag and continued her rampant behavior.

The bearded monk lasted no more than three seconds before failing to maintain his pretense...

It was only afterward that she learned the bearded monk she had beaten up was called Bright Buddha. This seemed to be her only meeting with Bright Buddha...

Burying Moon pondered repeatedly but couldn't understand why Bright Buddha would like her and remained unconvinced of this matter.

If malice were to be involved, perhaps Bright Buddha liked to be beaten up, which was why he liked her? Or maybe it was because she was the only woman he'd ever seen?

The first woman he'd ever seen... Tsk, tsk, tsk, being a monk must be tough. Chanting and reciting scriptures, never even having seen a woman, and upon suddenly encountering her, such a captivating woman, he immediately fell for her? Ah, well, I suppose it makes sense...

Burying Moon, in a moment of whimsical pride, stroked the delicate face beneath her veil, thinking to herself that her face still had some charm. Although she never captivated the aloof little scoundrel Ning Fan, she inadvertently charmed the Great Humble Clan's Bright Buddha. Tsk, tsk, tsk, the little scoundrel clearly had worse taste compared to Bright Buddha. Unfortunately, Bright Buddha was somewhat unattractive, in that regard, he seemed no match for the little scoundrel...

Meanwhile, the Baihua Great Emperor was conversing via transmission with Burying Moon.

At the side, the Great Emperor Tiandu was resting with his eyes closed, while the Great Emperor Foqi was chatting and laughing with the Bone Spirit Great Emperor.

"I didn't expect Daoist Baihua to come and watch the competition. It seems her injuries are no longer a concern." The Great Emperor Foqi chuckled mischievously.

"For us Immortal Emperors, it's not so easy to fall. Rumors outside abound, saying that Daoist Baihua's injuries were critical, but I've never believed it. Seeing her today confirms it." The Bone Spirit Great Emperor chuckled, glancing slyly at the Baihua Great Emperor, though his gaze eventually settled imperceptibly on Burying Moon.

He also had seventy to eighty percent certainty now!

Indeed, this veiled woman appeared to share a close relationship with the Baihua Great Emperor, she must be the Burying Moon Immortal Concubine from the rumors.

It wasn't in vain that he traveled to the Southern Frontier that day, found an excuse to prevent the rashness of the Lou Tuo Great Emperor, and thus established a favorable connection with this woman...

Unfortunately, this woman seemed to have a close relationship with that foreign cultivator named Ning Fan, apparently even being Dao partners, tsk, tsk, tsk, who knows what attitude Bright Buddha will have when he finds out...

"Oh? Is Daoist Bone Spirit very interested in that veiled woman? But let me advise you, this woman should not be touched..." The Great Emperor Foqi kindly advised.

"Haha, thank you for the advice, Daoist. I understand."

"Hehe, let's not talk about her. What do you think of the current competition in the Middle State? This time, there are three teams with Immortal Venerable powerhouses participating. These are geniuses encountered once in millions of years. Who do you think will win this competition, Daoist Bone Spirit?" The Great Emperor Foqi asked.

Emperor Bone Spirit pondered briefly and replied,

"The Witch of the Sea Witch Sect, Wuxx Yan, has a First Tribulation cultivation level, and it's been forty thousand years since she ascended to Immortal Venerable. Her hopes of winning are slim, but she is almost certain to secure a top-three spot. I've heard she's made a deal with Daoist Baihua, and she's after the South Sea Spring Water award for the top three, so she wouldn't risk pursuing first place; Master Hongzang from the Crimson Peak Clan—he recently ascended to Immortal Venerable and is not skilled in dueling. His chances of winning are low, but his Buddhist insights are exceptionally pure; He's certainly a good candidate. As for Stone of Seabed from the Shiren Sect—he's just broke through the Second Calamity cultivation level, and his physical defense is extremely strong. There's a good chance he could claim the top spot this time!"

"Daoist, you're mistaken; though Stone used to be impressive, he once was defeated by the treasured disciple of Fellow Lou Tuo and nearly died at the hands of Sha Bailou during the Eternity's First Tribulation..."

"But Stone is no longer the Stone of yesteryears. Now with a Second Calamity cultivation level, perhaps he won't lose to Sha Bailou again. Sha Bailou has been stubborn, stuck at the Immortal Venerable bottleneck for so many years. He hasn't triggered the Tribulation of Measure for breakthrough—it's unclear whether he's unwilling, fearful, or incapable..." Emperor Bone Spirit remarked sarcastically.

He was always at odds with Lou Tuo, and thus wouldn't hesitate to seize any chance to mock Lou Tuo.

Emperor Lou Tuo responded to Bone Spirit's mockery with just a cold snort, refraining from argument, though inwardly he sneered incessantly.

His disciple, Sha Bailou, could have broken through to Immortal Venerable long ago and has touched the bottleneck of the First and Second Tribulations.

That disciple is proud, desiring not to break through casually but rather to reap the greatest benefits from a well-prepared breakthrough. If he finishes his breakthrough, he wouldn't just be a Newly Ascended Immortal Venerable but would likely transcend multiple Tribulations of Measure, becoming an Immortal Venerable at the Second Calamity.

Indeed, his disciple is the most popular contender for the throne battle this time! Stone of Seabed will merely become his disciple's prey!

It's not just Stone; given his disciple's menacing nature, few participants in this competition would likely survive to the end!

As for Ning Fan, he's certainly doomed!

Bong—

A distant bell sound suddenly rang from the direction of the Great Brightness Temple's bell tower, signaling the official start of the second round of the throne battle! Just as the bell rang, Ning Fan arrived outside the square—neither too early nor too late.

Trailing behind Ning Fan was Wu Laoba, evidently there to cheer him on.

Upon arriving, Ning Fan noticed the five Central Continent Emperors seated high above, particularly focusing on Ouyang Nuan and Burying Moon beneath Baihua Great Emperor's throne. Silently bemused, hadn't they said they wouldn't come, yet here they were...

The two women likewise noticed Ning Fan; Ouyang Nuan's beautiful eyes lit up, gracing Ning Fan with a radiant smile, while Burying Moon glanced at Ning Fan with a touch of sympathy.

Sympathy, yes, it was sympathy! For Ning Fan's poor judgment in failing to notice her beauty and soulful charm.

The Bright Buddha clearly had discerning eyes; that sly debauchee was far lacking!

Ning Fan, puzzled by the unwarranted sympathy, glanced at Burying Moon before diverting his gaze, not planning to delve into whatever strange thoughts might be in her head. This woman was often capricious, not worth heeding.

As Ning Fan scanned around, he found Xianyu Chun amongst the crowd outside the square, still donning the Ox Horn Mask with a 'stay away from strangers' demeanor, standing alone in a corner.

When Ning Fan's gaze swept over, Xianyu Chun met eyes with Ning Fan and felt Ning Fan's gaze was so holy and intense that it was unbearable, promptly removing the mask, breaking into hearty laughter, and unfurling an enormous banner:

[Punching Southern Tigers, Kicking Northern Jiaolong, Nightly conquering ten women without falling, Stalwart spear in countless battles, still red with ardor]!

With it was a badly crafted, colossal painting of Ning Fan himself, in nothing but underpants, showing off his chest, facing the sea, standing atop rocks, with a sword aimed at the sky, long hair wildly fluttering in the wind!

Evidently painted by Xianyu Chun himself! And not by the intelligent Xianyu Chun, but by his other foolish half!

"Master, I'm here to cheer you on! hahaha!"

"Master, go for it! Southern Frontier, go for it! Tamu, go for it!"

"Master is invincible worldwide! Sure to claim first! All passerby ladies, if unmarried, consider my master, be his little wife hahaha!"

It instantly drew bemused reactions from the surrounding audience, many wondering if Xianyu Chun was a fool; such a banner and painting were so embarrassing and crude.

Ning Fan, slowly realizing, found that the intelligent Xianyu Chun he knew had vanished, replaced unknowingly by the foolish Xianyu Chun once more.

Xianyu Chun came to cheer him on, a gesture indeed appreciated, but what was with the shameful painting...

Could he tear that painting down?

Wu Laoba stared in disbelief at the painting.

A talent, a talent indeed! The lad with the banner was absolutely talented, depicting the star of misfortune in such a shameful manner as no other!

"Master, I worked all night painting this, revising it multiple times! Do you like it haha!" Xianyu Chun with a 'quickly praise me' expression shouted across to Ning Fan.

Huush!

A sudden gust of wind blew the banner down.

Ning Fan tucked his hands in his sleeves, disavowing any involvement. Surely, he showed restraint, not outright destroying the banner, given it was Xianyu Chun's heartfelt effort...

Xianyu Chun hurriedly and anxiously went to support the banner. It was a portrait of his master and couldn't fall to the ground, that would be inauspicious.

As Ning Fan blew again, the banner fell; Xianyu Chun supported it repeatedly...

Forget it...

Ning Fan, disinclined to pay attention to the equally scatterbrained Xianyu Chun, let his gaze sweep over the others, searching yet not finding Duolan. He couldn't help recalling the words of the two maids before he left, saying that Duolan was tied up with something and couldn't make it...

No matter if she couldn't come; resolving the troubles of the Chu Lie lineage was also a good thing.

At this moment, the teams dispatched by various grassland factions had gathered outside the square, awaiting the start of the grand competition.

Ning Fan's gaze swept over each participant team. Most teams consisted of twenty people, while some had insufficient numbers, with sixteen or seventeen members. Teams with fewer than ten were rare, and only two competed alone.

One was Ning Fan himself, who couldn't be bothered to rely on the weaklings of the Tamu Clan; the other was Sha Bailou. According to the rules, teams from the Middle State traditionally had only one member.

As Ning Fan's gaze swept over, the battle intent in Sha Bailou's eyes instantly surged. Among the competitors in this grand competition, the only one to excite him was Ning Fan, no one else!

He wanted to devour Ning Fan's flesh and blood. He wanted to claim Ning Fan's life to prove his own existence!

Just as he was about to exchange some harsh words with Ning Fan like before, unfortunately, Ning Fan's gaze merely glanced over him and then moved away, making Sha Bailou feel ignored, infuriated and ashamed.

Fine, very fine! Dare to ignore him, Sha Bailou, surely he was tired of living!

The murderous intent became even more intense!

Some nearby spectators noticed Sha Bailou's exposed killing intent and immediately looked towards Ning Fan, the other party involved.

The focus of this grand competition was indeed on the confrontation between Sha Bailou and the foreign cultivator Ning Fan. Many were already eager to know who would walk out of the competition alive.

Indifferent to this attention, Ning Fan chose not to care. He paid attention to Sha Bailou and even more so to the three Immortal Venerables participating from the Sea Witch Sect, Stone Man Sect, and Crimson Peak Clan.

Sea Witch Sect's Witch Wuxx Yan, Stone Man Sect's Stone Dang, Crimson Peak Clan's Master Hongzang... according to the intelligence from Wu Laoba, these three also required caution.

However, among all the participants, the one Ning Fan cared about most was far from being Wuxx Yan, Stone Dang, Hongzang, or Sha Bailou...

It was a contestant from the Huanhai Clan.

The Huanhai Clan was not a strong tribe of the Dabei Clan, with only fourteen tribesmen participating in the competition. Among them were thirteen men and one woman, with the strongest being a mid-phase Shattered Thought scar-faced man.

The only woman was what caught Ning Fan's attention.

She was a young girl carrying a paper kite, dressed in cyan clothes, and even the kite behind her was cyan. Listening to the conversations of the Huanhai Clan members, it seemed her name was Qingling, a regular clanswoman of the Huanhai Clan...

Judging by her cultivation level, this girl was only at the Half-Step Shed Sky Stage, definitely not considered powerful.

But, for some reason, Ning Fan sensed a hint of danger from her.

He carefully tasted her aura; it was so elusive, as if hidden by an illusory art... when he tore away that layer of disguise, he was suddenly shocked.

This was no Half-Step Shed Sky girl...

This was clearly... the Half-Step Quasi-Saint Emperor Butcher!

"Oh, discovering me so quickly. In this entire arena, it seems only you can manage that."

Qingling seemed to feel something, casting a meaningful smile in Ning Fan's direction.

"Qingling! You are my Dao partner, how dare you smile at another man!"

In the Huanhai Clan, a rugged-looking scar-faced man noticed Qingling's smile and his expression instantly turned cold.

Qingling quickly restrained her smile, lowered her head, and did not dare to smile at Ning Fan again, feeling somewhat speechless inside.

How did her subordinates design this identity for her, such a poor identity, even making her someone's Dao partner...

Seeing Qingling obedient, the scar-faced man didn't act up and simply glared fiercely in Ning Fan's direction, listing Ning Fan as his number one enemy to beat.

Bang—

Another bell sounded, abruptly silencing everything around.

Then a gigantic door of flames appeared in the center of the square, out of which came a giant entirely rotten, dragging heavy chains and making an eerie clashing sound...

Chapter 1033: Shen Ershisan

The one walking out from the fiery gate was a giant elder with a withered body, surrounded by a heavy aura of death. Clearly, he was not alive but a Corpse Demon.

The elder was called a giant, but he was merely fourteen or fifteen zhang tall, unlike those giants standing hundreds or thousands of zhang high. His skin was exposed, stiff and dark green, seemingly dead for a long time. He wore a circle of worn-out animal skin around his lower body, though aged, it still retained a trace of fierce beast's aura, obviously peeled from a very powerful fierce beast.

Between his feet, shackles were locked, making it extremely difficult to walk, and a golden hoop was worn on his head. His wrists were free, holding a saw-toothed giant sword carried over his shoulder. The sword was covered in rust and bloodstains, yet it exuded a stunning aura of killing that seemed to pierce through the ages, evidently a high-tier Primordial Demon Soldier when complete.

His movements were slow and stiff, further restricted by chains. Every step he took seemed to take a long time, yet each step made the ground of Liuli City tremble as if solely through physical force, which was terrifying.

It's important to know that Liuli City was full of strong practitioners, and formations fortified every area; even in a strategic place like Great Brightness Temple, formations were extremely powerful. Even with all their might, an Immortal Venerable might not make this place shake, but this Corpse Demon giant did it easily.

This physical strength, even if not reaching the Immortal Emperor level, was probably at the high level of Immortal King!

"The second round of the Tomb-Seizing, divided into two phases, one is the trial of strength, and the other is the trial of illusion. This Corpse Demon Elder must be the one presiding over the trial of strength..." Ning Fan thought to himself, slightly surprised as his spirit sense touched the elder's corpse.

The elder's skin seemed refined through some secret technique; once touched by the spirit sense, it rebounded, unable to delve deeper.

Though unable to delve deeper, Ning Fan still sensed a deeply hidden breath of Ancient Chaos within the elder's body...

No wonder this elder's physical strength was so terrifying, constantly causing the earth to tremble, having been an Ancient Demon in life...

As the Corpse Demon Elder walked out from the fiery gate, the residents of Liuli City outside the plaza immediately sneered, showing contempt, fear, or indifference, varied in their emotions.

This was something Ning Fan couldn't comprehend.

Once, the one presiding over the first round of Tomb-Seizing for Southern Frontier Steppe was also a Corpse Demon, but when that Corpse Demon appeared, all people bowed, clearly of noble identity.

Whereas this Corpse Demon Elder seemed of extremely humble status, not only did no one bow, but even some not-so-weak residents of Liuli City threw rotten eggs and spoiled cabbages from thousands of feet away towards the elder...

Those with cultivations doing such mundane things of throwing cabbages and eggs, how boring, how ridiculous... Yet Ning Fan didn't know why, he couldn't laugh.

The Corpse Demon Elder's face was stiff, expressionless, just walked out with shackles on his feet from the fiery gate. His spirit awareness was low, gaze empty, not understanding why many were throwing rotten cabbages and eggs at him, but he ignored it completely. He carried the rusty giant sword, his backbone unbent, clearly with egg whites dripping down his face, yet proudly lifted his emaciated neck amidst the contemptuous and fearful gazes of Liuli City's residents, like a triumphant returning general.

This unyielding spirit must have been the last posture retained before the elder's death, now dead, reduced to a low-awareness corpse demon, yet still never lowered his head.

As if something from the Corpse Demon Elder infected Ning Fan, unknowingly made his expression solemn, slowly closing his eyes, his hand hidden in his sleeve, again secretly casting a spell to conjure a strong wind, blowing away the rotten eggs and spoiled cabbages thrown towards the elder from afar...

"Damn it, who stirred up the wind and blew away my rotten eggs!"

"Hmph! Could someone be pitying this Shen number Corpse Demon? Ridiculous!"

"Shen number Corpse Demons are all criminals!"

Curses erupted, yet naturally no one knew it was Ning Fan who did it.

Bang!

The Corpse Demon Elder slowly walked to the bottom of the high platform, a bang sounded as he inserted the rusty giant sword into the ground, then slowly and stiffly clasped his fists towards the direction of the Central Continent Five Emperors on the high platform, his back remained unbent.

"Shen... Ershisan... pays respects... to the five Majesties..."

The elder named Shen Ershisan spoke in a thunderous voice, echoing in this land, leaving some with insufficient cultivation unable to withstand the sound, becoming dizzy.

Moreover, some residents of Liuli City started discussing after the elder spoke.

Ning Fan spread out his spirit sense, listened more, and only then somewhat understood why this Corpse Demon Elder was despised by everyone.

Because, unlike the Corpse Demon presiding over the Southern Frontier's small competition, he was a Shen number...

Since ancient times, the Great Humble Ones had a tradition of commanding Corpse Demons. Basic defenders were present in each tribe. In the Great Humble Ones, there was a type of Corpse Demon with very high status, acting only by the orders from the Holy Mountain, called Holy Envoy!

Holy Envoys were generally divided into two grades, Jia and Yi. Yi number Holy Envoys were mostly lower than the Timeless Realm, like the Corpse Demon Holy Envoy presiding over the Southern Frontier's small competition that day, was a Yi number Corpse Demon. Yi number Corpse Demon Holy Envoys had extremely high status, and those beneath the Timeless Realm mostly needed to bow to the Yi number Holy Envoy.

Jia number Corpse Demons had even higher status, were mostly those above the Timeless Realm, even some Immortal Emperors encountering Jia number Holy Envoys needed to show a certain respect, clasping their fists in salute.

The Great Humble Ones had profound research into Corpse Demons. Corpse Demons under the name of Holy Mountain, nominally Jia or Yi numbered, generally had higher spirit awareness than ordinary Corpse Demons, capable of basic thinking and fluent language.

But actually, above the Jia Yi number, there was another type of Corpse Demon labeled as Shen number...

Shen, understood literally, means Jia number Corpse Demon developed a different mind, wanting to break free and gain freedom...

Shen number Corpse Demons mostly originated from Jia numbered Corpse Demons, belonging to aberrant Jia number Corpse Demons, unruly, not respecting their masters, preferring to break their necks rather than bowing to anyone.

This type of Corpse Demon is unruly, so most of them have had their once-high spirit awareness abolished, each possessing very low intelligence, making even basic thinking difficult.

The strong ones of the Holy Mountain are still uneasy about this type of Corpse Demon Holy Envoy, worried that they might rebel based on the unyielding intent inherent in their instincts. Thus, they put special shackles on these Corpse Demons to seal their power. The gold hoops placed on this type of Corpse Demon are also extremely formidable.

The Shen-designated Corpse Demons are generally seen by the Great Humble Ones as traitors among the Corpse Demons of the Holy Mountain, naturally unable to hold any high position, instead being extremely lowly in status.

On the high platform, the full assembly of immortals and Buddhas looked at Shen Ershisan with eyes full of disdain and indifference.

Today is the second round of the tomb-stealing contest, everything led by the Five Emperors, and among the Five Emperors, it's led by the Heaven Capital. Heaven Capital Emperor didn't even bother to open his eyes when facing Shen Ershisan, coldly saying, "The test of strength can begin!"

"Yes."

Faced with the superior attitude of the group of Buddhas, for some reason, a burst of violent thoughts abruptly rose in Shen Ershisan's heart, wanting to break some of the shackles in front of him.

But as soon as this burst of violent thought arose, the dim golden hoop on his head appropriately flashed a light, grandly unleashing its divine power, completely suppressing the violent thoughts within him.

Crack, crack, crack! It was the sound of the hoop continuously contracting, squeezing his skull!

Shen Ershisan's skull was very hard, so no matter how, the hoop couldn't crush that skull.

Having been dead for many years, he could no longer feel any pain from the squeezing, only touching his head with some confusion after the violent thoughts were suppressed.

What happened...

He didn't understand...

Although not understanding, two lines of unwilling blood tears flowed from the eyes that had been dead for many years, but they dried up halfway through, as there wasn't much uncoagulated blood left in his body...

Seeing Shen Ershisan suddenly go berserk, the spectators here were naturally all startled, but immediately saw that Shen Ershisan was still tamed by the hoop, and they all relaxed again.

Some residents of Liuli City cursed and mocked disdainfully.

As expected of the Shen-designated Corpse Demon, indeed dangerous... but so what, he still has to obediently submit to the Buddhist Law.

Ning Fan frowned but didn't say much.

The first round of the tomb-stealing was a regional mini-contest of various steppes, divided into literary and martial tests.

The second round of the tomb-stealing was the Middle State grand competition, divided into trials of strength and illusion.

The trial of strength mainly aimed to test the physical strength of the participants. Without a certain level of Body Refinement cultivation, it was impossible to achieve good results in the trial of strength.

In this round, the participating teams did not have to fight each other, but each team successively took on the test of the Corpse Demons.

The test content was very simple, requiring each team to cooperate fully to withstand the giant sword strikes of the Corpse Demons. For each strike withstood, the team's overall score would increase by a hundred points.

The only requirement was that in this round, it was forbidden to use any form of Divine Skills to control treasures from a distance, forbidden to use any spells, or even use Secret Techniques to enhance bodily strength. They had to withstand the Corpse Demon's attack with pure physical strength.

Obviously, in this round, Body Cultivation practitioners had an advantage, and teams with more Body Cultivators had an even greater advantage. It's clearly much easier for a group to withstand giant strikes together than for an individual.

"Shen Ershisan's strength during his lifetime was extremely frightening, but after death, he's restrained by the hoop and shackles, his power sealed, unable to unleash much of his strength. I wonder how many strikes I can withstand with my Ancient Demon Blood Wine cultivation..." Ning Fan thought to himself.

After paying his respects to the Five Emperors, Shen Ershisan began explaining the rules of the second round of the tomb-stealing contest to the many participants. His speech was not fluent, and his phrasing was peculiarly incomprehensible, occasionally saying many incomprehensible words. But thankfully, the participants were all familiar with the rules and didn't need to understand the Corpse Demon giant's explanation. Indeed, few of them had the patience to listen to him speak, and each began to close their eyes and rest, waiting for the trial of strength to begin.

After explaining the rules, Shen Ershisan opened his mouth and spat out a golden light sphere, performing a ritual to the Heavenly One. From within the light sphere, a hundred and eight rays of golden light dispersed, each flying towards one of the hundred and eight teams present.

Among them, a golden light also flew towards Ning Fan. When Ning Fan reached out to catch it, it was a square golden token, inscribed with the words "Southern Frontier Tamu."

This was the scorecard for the second round of the tomb-stealing contest, recording the team's performance, naturally unable to reuse the identification tokens from the first round.

Ning Fan was a one-person team, so the scoring token naturally fell into his hands. As for those multi-person teams, they were mostly held by the team member with the highest cultivation level.

Suddenly, the scorecard of a certain team erupted with golden light.

It was the participating team from the Cloud Gold Prairie Fuhu Sect. As the light flashed, the participants of the Fuhu Sect immediately understood, stepping out from the crowd and moving to stand in front of the Corpse Demon giant.

The scorecard would randomly light up, and whichever team it shined on would then come forward to compete.

Although the Fuhu Sect wasn't among the strongest guild in the Great Descendant Three Thousand Tribes, it belonged to the upper-middle tier. The team's twenty powerhouses all possessed formidable physical strength, not inferior to the aura of the Shedding Void Stage, also having three Shattered Thought Early Stage cultivations with equally muscular physiques.

Clearly, the Fuhu Sect had been well-prepared for the trial of strength, sending skilled Body Cultivation practitioners to participate in the second round.

The leader of the Tiger Subduing Sect was a tall middle-aged man who walked forward almost arrogantly and said to Shen Ershisan, "Please enlighten me!"

"Give me... a gift... or I'll... kill you..." Shen Ershisan suddenly pulled out a Giant Sword embedded in the ground, rested it on his shoulder, and said in a stiff tone.

"Hehe, a gift, of course, we'll give you one..."

The middle-aged man coughed a few times and suddenly spat a thick phlegm directly onto Shen Ershisan.

Following the middle-aged man, other strong figures from the Tiger Subduing Sect also stepped forward and spat phlegm at Shen Ershisan with disdainful eyes.

Their stature wasn't short to begin with, but placed next to the giant-like Shen Ershisan, they appeared very short, and could only spit onto Shen Ershisan's legs.

Shen Ershisan, already looking bedraggled with egg yolk and rotten vegetables hanging from him, became even more wretched after being spat upon, yet he seemed extremely satisfied, nodding and saying, "This gift... is good... I like it... I won't kill you... now... the trial begins..."

"Bring it on!" The people of the Tiger Subduing Sect laughed heartily.

Outside the square, among the residents of Liuli City, many couldn't help but laugh too.

So foolish, all the Corpse Demons of the "Shen" category are indeed idiots!

Rumor has it that the memories of the Corpse Demons of the "Shen" category were destroyed and altered, and being spat upon was considered a form of etiquette. Now, seeing it with one's own eyes, this is no baseless tale...

Utterly ridiculous!

"Is there something... funny..."

Ning Fan suddenly felt a sense of desolation.

He did not know what name Shen Ershisan bore in life or what his background was, but he could assume he was a dignified, unyielding Ancient Demon Warrior.

He was renowned in life, refusing to bow even in death, still retaining that unyielding posture until today; in death, he became a Corpse Demon, and if he were a proper Corpse Demon, it might have been bearable, but he suffered humiliation before countless people...

If Shen Ershisan had foreseen such a day, he probably would have preferred to self-destruct in death rather than leave a complete corpse...

No one could hear Ning Fan's inner thoughts, and while not everyone found this amusing, there were far too few who didn't, far too few...

The trial of strength began amidst such laughter.

The people of Tiger Subduing Sect had already prepared themselves, standing in formation and facing Shen Ershisan's direction in a vertical line.

When Shen Ershisan slashed down with his sword, everyone raised their swords in unison, blocking Shen Ershisan's Giant Sword with tacit understanding.

The strong force was far from Shen Ershisan's full power, yet it was terrifying.

The Giant Sword was longer than the line of twenty people, and as it slashed down, the weight of the blade stirred a fierce gale, whistling and swirling around the ancient square.

The clash between twenty swords and one Giant Sword seemed like the collision of stars, the mighty force distorting the surrounding space.

On one side was the short line of twenty people, on the other side was the fourteen-five zhang giant, and the scene was indeed quite spectacular.

In this exchange of strikes, Shen Ershisan, towering and mighty, slightly held the upper hand. Although the Tiger Subduing Sect blocked his first sword, six or seven of them either had their swords broken or their sword grip burst with blood, all displaying expressions of shock.

This is the limited strength of a "Shen" category Corpse Demon! Even if not at full strength, to possess such terrifying power is really not to be underestimated!

The strong members of the Tiger Subduing Sect, who had their swords broken, dared not be negligent, hurriedly drawing out new swords. With barely any time allowed, Shen Ershisan struck down with his second sword, still with overwhelming force, causing the fierce wind to roar.

Some strong members of the Tiger Subduing Sect had their hair disheveled directly by the fierce wind, looking extremely wretched in the sword's wind.

The second sword, the Tiger Subduing Sect managed to block.

Then came the third sword, the fourth sword...

It seemed like Shen Ershisan's energy was never exhausted, as the Giant Sword descended again and again, and its strength showed no signs of weakening.

Yet, the people of the Tiger Subduing Sect found their strength gradually diminishing, and by the eleventh sword, some couldn't sustain their strength, helplessly retreating.

By the nineteenth sword, only the three at the Shattered Thought Early Stage had any strength left in the Tiger Subduing Sect.

By the twenty-fourth sword, even those three at the Shattered Thought Early Stage were exhausted, and they had to call off the trial, unable to face the twenty-fifth sword.

Twenty-four swords equaled 2400 points. The middle-aged man leading the Tiger Subduing Sect looked at the scoreboard, sighed slightly, and realized that achieving this result in the first stage is enough. Holding on further would result in exhaustion and injuries...

Seeing the crowd of the Tiger Subduing Sect call off the trial, Shen Ershisan didn't pursue them further either. He cheerfully placed the Giant Sword down, re-inserting it into the stone ground, and said indifferently.

"Next."

As he spoke, another team's scoreboard lit up with a golden glow.

Thus, the Tiger Subduing Sect retreated, and the second team stepped forward.

The second team came from the Stream Valley Sect of the Western River Steppe. This Stream Valley Sect wasn't as strong as the Tiger Subduing Sect and gave up after only taking 14 swords from Shen Ershisan, with the entire process lacking any remarkable points.

Of course, just like the people of the Tiger Subduing Sect, before the trial started, Shen Ershisan still foolishly repeated that sentence.

"Give me... a gift... or I'll... kill you..."

And the gift he received was again a mouthful of thick phlegm from the people of the Stream Valley Sect.

Then, there was Shen Ershisan's almost stupidly satisfied nodding.

He was very satisfied with this gift...

It wasn't that he was truly satisfied inside, but his memories were deliberately altered in such a way to make him think that being spat upon was a good thing...

"Whoever altered Shen Ershisan's memories really has a twisted sense of humor; humiliating a dead man like this, is it truly amusing..." Ning Fan frowned even deeper.

Finding the laughter of those mocking Shen Ershisan's foolishness grating and annoying.

Following the Stream Valley Sect, the Howling Sun Sect took the stage, with a result of 16 swords.

Next was the Purple Sand Sect with 11 swords, and the Sea Bow Sect with 9 swords... Not all tribes had plenty of Body Cultivation participants; there were also teams that came intending to abandon the trial of strength to focus on the trial of illusions, so they didn't include too many Body Cultivation specialists, resulting in lackluster strength trial results.

Time passed bit by bit, with more and more tribes achieving scores in the trial of strength, but rarely did any tribe exceed a score of twenty swords.

Seventy to eighty tribes had achieved scores by now, but only six tribes scored above twenty swords, with the highest score being 33 swords.

Up to this point, the trial proceeded calmly without much incident, and the audience watching the trial grew somewhat bored.

Ning Fan, on the other hand, was frowning deeply. He had watched the scene of Shen Ershisan being spat upon dozens of times and, naturally, couldn't find it amusing.

He didn't like the disrespect towards dignity.

The only thing that piqued his interest was the Emperor Butcher, disguised as Qingling in the Phantom Sea Tribe, who also refrained from spitting on Shen Ershisan, instead taking out a handkerchief, and unafraid of any dirt, carefully wiping the phlegm off Shen Ershisan's legs.

This act immediately enraged Shen Ershisan! His limited spirit awareness couldn't comprehend why the woman named Qingling would remove his gift, and in a fit of anger, he swung his Giant Sword even more violently, making the sword force endured by the Phantom Sea Tribe heavier and fiercer than other tribes.

Naturally leading to a more miserable score!

Poor Phantom Sea Tribe, not skilled in Body Refinement to begin with, and treated with Shen Ershisan's anger, they only scored a pitiful 4 swords, coming last in the trial of strength.

Ning Fan even deliberately released his spirit sense to catch some rather amusing conversations within the Phantom Sea Tribe.

"Damn it, you little girl, you've really gone too far this time! Why go deliberately provoke Shen Ershisan! Don't you know the nicer you are to Shen Ershisan, the more he thinks you're up to no good! They're all stupid, dumb, and you go and act all nice and infuriate him, making us come last. You, you... See what I do to you on the bed when we get home after this tomb-seizing war is over!" This was the angry rebuke from Qingling's husband—the scar-faced Shattered Thought towards Qingling.

Meanwhile, Qingling looked down, seemingly aggrieved, yet in her unseen eyes brewed an extremely terrifying killing intent.

Watching up to this point, Ning Fan actually laughed for the first time. He could imagine the Emperor Butcher's inner breakdown at this moment!

To be ordered around like that by a mere scar-faced Shattered Thought man, it must be unbearable...

As Ning Fan guessed, the Emperor Butcher was indeed internally collapsing at this moment, almost revealing her identity to kill if not for the yet unfulfilled purpose of her trip.

Damn it, what kind of lousy identity did her subordinates arrange for her! Becoming someone's dao companion is one thing, but to be teased and humiliated by being told they'd be handled on the bed! Hehe, hehe, when she finishes her task and returns, she'll definitely repay those foolish subordinates properly!

Unfortunately, to Ning Fan, the preceding trials only had this one small highlight.

Fortunately, just as the audience started feeling bored, a dark horse team in the second round of this year's competition took the stage, instantly lifting everyone's spirits!

Crimson Peak Clan! That was the team boasting a Regimen Level powerhouse like Master Hongzang!

At last, a formidable team entered the stage...

Chapter 1034: Facing the Storm Before Thousands!

Master Hongzang is a lean old monk. Having not long ascended to the Immortal Venerable Realm, his aura still seems somewhat unstable. However, compared to other Thought-Shattering Cultivators, he is much stronger. His presence on the field is entirely beyond the reach of an ordinary True Immortal; the momentum of eons sweeps across the four corners, with the world's great forces echoing in response. This scene strikes fear into those who witness it.

Some residents of Liuli City, seeing an Eternal Immortal Venerable for the first time, feel their hearts tremble, only feeling that in the face of such momentum, there is no way to alleviate the oppressive feeling other than to kneel!

"Oh? Has it finally come time for Hongzang to make an appearance? This child is not bad; being able to break through to the Immortal Venerable Realm within five million years counts as exceptional talent. It's a pity that he's not adept at body refinement; otherwise, he would likely lead the Crimson Peak Clan to achieve the result of one hundred swords."

At the top of the platform, among the consistently silent Five Emperors of the Central Continent, someone finally spoke, and it was Emperor Bone Spirit who gave an assessment.

"Heh heh, Fellow Bone Spirit, don't underestimate this Hongzang. As far as I know, he has specially trained in a certain secret technique for this Trial of Strength..."

"Oh? Now I'm curious, what kind of secret technique could enable someone not skilled in body refinement to achieve the result of one hundred swords? Fellow Foqi seems to hold this Hongzang in high regard." Emperor Bone Spirit's eyes flickered as he asked.

"Heh heh, watch closely, and you'll understand why I hold him in high regard," Emperor Foqi chuckled strangely, but did not elaborate.

As Emperor Bone Spirit predicted, although the Crimson Peak team had an Immortal Venerable in command, their performance was not extraordinary. By the 44th sword, everyone except Hongzang had already exhausted their strength and withdrawn.

Only Hongzang was left, facing Shen Ershisan.

Indeed, Hongzang was not adept at body refinement. Though he was a strong Immortal Venerable, his physical defense was not as strong as some Thought-Shattering experts. Under Shen Ershisan's giant sword assault, he seemed left in a predicament.

By the 60th sword, Hongzang began to struggle.

By the 75th sword, he was already panting heavily.

"It seems 75 swords is the limit for this Crimson Peak Clan..." Just as Emperor Bone Spirit finished speaking, suddenly his eyes brightened.

It was because Hongzang suddenly flipped his hand and took out several sinister talismans. With a loud shout, he slapped them onto the ground, and instantly, several eerie circles appeared on the ground out of thin air, from which emerged one ghostly figure after another with hideous visages.

"Is this child's reliance the Ghost Transformation Technique? To think he has mastered such an ancient Buddhist art, it is indeed remarkable." Emperor Bone Spirit's tone shifted to admiration.

Even the Three Emperors of Heaven, Baihua, and Lou Tuo cast curious glances at Hongzang.

Only Foqi seemed to have known about this beforehand, chuckling strangely without surprise.

After summoning numerous ghosts, Hongzang suddenly unleashed a divine skill, devouring each ghost alive. Instantly, his previously thin body began to swell, with dark red eerie patterns appearing on his skin, fangs growing from his mouth, and horns protruding from his head. Those unaware might even think Hongzang had transformed into a green-faced, fanged demon.

However, his physical strength received a terrifying boost. Originally, 75 swords were his limit, but now, he caught up to the 104th sword in one go!

"What a pity, this child's Ghost Transformation Technique is not yet proficient. Otherwise, he would certainly have gained more enhancement from devouring those ghosts, making his performance even more impressive..." Emperor Foqi sighed slightly.

Then he suddenly asked with an eccentric tone towards Emperor Lou Tuo, "Fellow Lou Tuo, what do you think of this child compared to your disciple?"

"This child is not worth mentioning; how could he compare to my disciple, Sha Bailou!" Emperor Lou Tuo sneered with great arrogance.

"I also think this child is not as good as Sha Bailou." Emperor Foqi laughed out loud and said no more, continuing to watch the next trial.

After the Crimson Peak team, several more rounds passed before it came to another dark horse team of this Tomb Seizing Battle—the Sea Witch Sect.

The witch Wuxx Yan from the Sea Witch Sect was similarly not adept at body refinement but was somewhat stronger than Hongzang, as her performance in this round exceeded the Crimson Peak Clan by 1 sword.

swords...

"What a pity, as far as I know, this girl is quite skilled in poison techniques, and though many poison techniques have substantial side effects, they can augment physical defense. If she had used them, achieving a higher score wouldn't have been difficult." Emperor Bone Spirit shook his head and sighed.

"Hmph, Fellow Bone Spirit seems to have forgotten that Wuxx Yan is not aiming for first place and did not plan to exert too much effort in this initial stage. She has already decided to preserve her strength to compete for third place. She is no match for Shidang and is even less a match for my disciple Sha Bailou. But as long as she surpasses Hongzang of the Crimson Peak Clan, she can steadily secure third place,

putting the South Sea Spring Water in her grasp, hehe, quite a cunning plan. I think it was Daoist Baihua's advice to her..."

It was Emperor Lou Tuo who spoke, casting a cold glance towards Emperor Baihua.

Clearly, Emperor Lou Tuo was aware of Wuxx Yan's secret assistance to Emperor Baihua.

"So what if I instructed her? There's no rule against it in the Tomb Seizing Battle." Emperor Baihua responded straightforwardly, admitting it directly with a cold, piercing look in return to Emperor Lou Tuo.

The atmosphere between the two became immediately tense. Fortunately, Emperor Foqi quickly intervened to change the mood, telling a few extremely mundane and uninteresting jokes that failed to amuse anyone. After the awkward moment, he suddenly, with a strange laugh, asked Emperor Lou Tuo,

"Do you truly believe, Fellow Lou Tuo, that this Wuxx Yan is inferior to your disciple?"

"Naturally! What is this Wuxx Yan compared to my disciple!" Emperor Lou Tuo stated arrogantly.

"Haha, I also think Wuxx Yan is not as good as your disciple, but she would make a suitable spouse for him!"

Emperor Foqi's words seemed like a joke, but Emperor Lou Tuo's expression instantly turned dark, having caught the hidden mockery in Emperor Foqi's words.

Emperor Foqi was implying that his disciple had no wife!

Where is Sha Bailou's wife?

Heh, was killed by Sha Bailou.

His disciple is a wolf, a crazed, relentless wolf that recognizes no family ties, cultivating an extremely cruel and ruthless path of familial murder!

This Sha Bailou was born into the Lou Family of Liuli City, yet he was ostracized within his own family because of this. Although Sha Bailou is formidable, his formidability was achieved through a series of insane acts such as killing his father, mother, brother, sister, wife, and children.

Furthermore, Sha Bailou even contemplated... killing his master! And this is precisely the important reason why Emperor Lou Tuo harbors a deep dislike for Sha Bailou.

Currently, Sha Bailou is only held back by insufficient strength. However, if one day this disciple's fortune is adequate and he breaks through to the Immortal Emperor Realm, he will likely turn around and brandish his Slaughter Blade against him!

At this moment, Emperor Foqi made a sarcastic remark about this matter, naturally causing Emperor Lou Tuo's expression to turn displeased. He gave a cold snort and did not engage in further conversation.

The trial continued. Following the Sea Witch Sect were some unremarkable teams, and then, it was the Shiren (Stone Man) Sect's turn to compete!

The Immortal Lord Shidang of the Shiren Sect was highly favored to win; his appearance naturally drew the attention of countless people.

After taking the stage, Shidang seemed to glance towards Sha Bailou. However, upon seeing the other party sitting with eyes closed and meditating, not caring about his own trial performance, he couldn't help but laugh angrily.

Oh, Sha Bailou! Do you think I'm still the First Calamity Immortal Sovereign of yesteryears? Now I've reached the Second Calamity, and I'm here for this Tomb Snatching Battle, not to claim first place, but to seek revenge against you!

The humiliation you gave me in the past, I will repay in full today!

"All of you stand down. He's participating in the competition alone, and I don't need your help to undergo the Trial of Strength!"

Shidang was so confident that he dismissed all the other strong individuals of the Shiren Sect standing behind him, choosing to face Shen Ershisan alone.

"Give me... a gift... or I'll... kill you..."

Shen Ershisan still demanded in his nearly dull manner.

"Gift? I don't have one! Old me isn't in the habit of randomly spitting everywhere! If you want a fight, let's fight!"

Shidang shouted directly.

This instantly enraged Shen Ershisan. Not giving him a gift was an insult, a deeply held belief from his memory. Shidang was truly vile!

Boom!

Shen Ershisan slashed down with his Giant Sword, and Shidang actually laughed heartily, reaching out with his bare hand to catch the Giant Sword.

His physical defense was as tough as the underground stone ground of the Middle State. With Shen Ershisan's restricted cultivation wielding a severely rusted blunt sword, he naturally could not cut through Shidang's physical defense. Shidang used his long-honed body to withstand the Giant Sword, not out of arrogance but born of sheer strength.

One sword, two swords, three swords... In just a hundred breaths, Shidang had already withstood 200 sword strikes before he began to pant slightly.

At the 349th sword, he finally ran out of strength, secretly noting how formidable Shen Ershisan was. Even with his cultivation sealed, he was this terrifying. In full strength, who knew what realm he belonged to? It's just a pity that his spirit awareness was too low. Otherwise, he would surely have used connections in Holy Mountain to bring this immensely powerful Shen character Corpse Demon back to the Shiren Sect as a Clan Protecting Corpse Demon...

swords amounted to a total of 34,900 points. Such a performance was truly astonishing. In past iterations when scores weren't high, this score could directly win the first round without even competing in the second!

"How does Shidang compare to your disciple?" Emperor Foqi jested again.

"Naturally, he cannot!" Emperor Lou Tuo replied impatiently, wondering why Emperor Foqi kept asking this.

"Haha, I thought so too!"

Then why ask! Are you making fun of me?

Emperor Lou Tuo was increasingly displeased, but given that his power was not on par with Emperor Foqi, he swallowed his irritation.

The entire square was submerged in cheers for Shidang. Some quietly lamented that Shidang hadn't spat at Shen Ershisan, depriving them of some amusement. However, many believed Shidang had done it intentionally to anger the test Corpse Demon. For him to achieve such terrifying results under its wrath, Shidang was indeed a hot favorite for winning the second round of this Tomb Snatching Battle!

"Next, it's likely your turn! I recall that aside from my Shiren Sect, the remaining teams include you and the External Practitioner of the Tamu Clan."

As Shidang left the stage, he purposefully approached Sha Bailou to proclaim boastfully.

The previously meditative Sha Bailou then slightly opened his eyes, looking at Shidang with nothing but derision.

"Such petty scores and you want to boast around me? Do you know why I've never participated in the Tomb Snatching Battle... Because there are too many like you, utterly unable to pique my interest. The only one who could interest me is him." Sha Bailou coldly laughed, pointing towards Ning Fan.

Shidang's expression immediately turned gloomy.

He had been called trash by Sha Bailou! Detestable, detestable! Come the Trial of Illusion, he vowed to make Sha Bailou taste his wrath!

As for Ning Fan, whom Sha Bailou held in high regard, Shidang didn't take him seriously at all. Ning Fan was just a foreign cultivator with limited strength. Perhaps if he was at full strength, he'd show interest, but with the Punishing Ring limitation, he was insignificant.

"Sha Bailou, just wait, in the Trial of Illusion, I'll take your life!" Shidang spat viciously, then retreated to his group.

The majority of the audience was more looking forward to the subsequent Trial of Illusion. It wasn't just the impending duel between Sha Bailou and the foreign Ning Fan; Shidang and Sha Bailou's old and new grievances also awaited a resolution.

After the Shiren Sect, among those who have not yet undergone the trial, only Sha Bailou and Ning Fan remain.

According to the tradition of the Tomb Siege Battle, a solo participant is often left for last, as they tend to provide the most excitement and serve as the grand finale.

Sha Bailou's scorecard lit up before Ning Fan's, and with a slight smirk, he glanced in Ning Fan's direction, then in a flash of bloodlight, he flew directly to Shen Ershisan's side.

This action caused everyone to look up; being able to use Escape Technique in a forbidden space such as the Middle State, Sha Bailou is indeed remarkable!

As soon as he entered the field, he seemed impatient, unwilling to waste any time, and before Shen Ershisan could speak, he disdainfully spat a mouthful of saliva onto him.

"You, then... be aware... let's... begin..."

Shen Ershisan nodded with satisfaction, and the Giant Sword slashed down at Sha Bailou, who did not use any weapon but instead relied on his physical defense to receive the blow.

strikes, 20 strikes, 30 strikes...

strikes, 200 strikes, 300 strikes...

Only at the 448th sword did Sha Bailou finally begin to show some signs of exhaustion.

By the 594th sword, Sha Bailou was out of breath, withdrew backward, and without wasting any words with Shen Ershisan, he directly exited the field.

Afterward, the whole square erupted with cheers, louder even than those for Shidang.

Countless people who had staunchly believed Shidang would win instantly switched allegiance to Sha Bailou!

Some began to silently lament the rivalry between Sha Bailou and Ning Fan. Those unfamiliar with Sha Bailou's fearsome presence might have thought the showdown between these two worth watching, but looking again now, it's clear that Sha Bailou is the sky, and Ning Fan can only be the earth, destined to be easily crushed underfoot by Sha Bailou.

"The Illusion Trial may well be the burial ground for that Ning-named foreign cultivator..." some secretly believe.

For the last participant, Ning Fan, no one held much expectation.

What cultivation does Ning Fan possess? He might have done well fully powered, but as an external practitioner suffering from the Punishment Ring Seal, his strength trial score can't possibly be high.

This person should just hurry onto the field, finish the strength trial, and proceed to the next segment of the Illusion Trial!

Under the heavy lack of expectation, Ning Fan's scorecard emitted golden light; upon tapping it, the light faded, and Ning Fan proceeded toward Shen Ershisan.

With some compassion in his heart for Shen Ershisan, Ning Fan never sympathizes with the weak but has always admired those who died without surrender.

Shen Ershisan, standing firm in life and humiliated in death, is truly pitiful...

If possible, Ning Fan would grant Shen Ershisan true liberation—ashes scattered and free from mockery.

But he couldn't do that, unwilling to stir trouble, while admitting he lacked the strength to liberate the formidable Shen Ershisan.

Yet, inexplicably, as he drew closer to Shen Ershisan, Ning Fan increasingly felt the desolation exuding from his corpse.

It's not an illusion but genuinely present; even as the souls had dissipated, the body mourned in resentment! Resenting being made a puppet, resenting serving a group of ancient Buddhas... he resented it!

Approaching further, Ning Fan seemingly heard Shen Ershisan's rage from deep within his soul!

It was an indescribable feeling—a connection between Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor and Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor!

A plea expressed from the depths of one's bloodline!

"Same clan... give me... liberation..."

"I... with fragmented corpse and blood... return your karma..."

"Give me... liberation..."

"I, Purple Dou Immortal Cultivator... will not be enslaved..."

"I, Purple Dou Immortal Cultivator... will not bow..."

Purple Dou Immortal Cultivator!

Could it be that this Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor, in life, was a prominent figure from the Zi Dou Immortal Domain?

The vast majority of Purple Dou Immortal Cultivators died defending the Zi Dou Immortal Domain, could this person be one of them...

If previously Ning Fan found Shen Ershisan pitiful and pathetic, now he felt a deep respect for him.

Purple Dou Immortal Cultivator, what fear in battle, what hesitation in battle, life and death all for Purple Dou Immortals!

The remains of the Purple Dou Immortal Cultivator should not conclude in such desolate fate!

"Since you seek liberation, I shall, send you one death!"

Ning Fan's earnest words drowned in the wind and rain, unheard by anyone.

The rain, drizzling, began anew as Ning Fan activated the Rain Dao Principle.

The protective golden light of the God-Extinguishing Shield, being a defensive divine skill, can't be utilized...

Under his limited cultivation, without using the body-protecting golden light, attempting to endure more slashes than Sha Bailou seems nearly impossible.

His plan at the moment, however, was not to endure more slashes than Sha Bailou!

He intended to destroy the sword of this Purple Astral Martyr before him!

He aimed to destroy his shackles!

Destroy his golden circlet!

Destroy his corpse!

Destroy everything!

Send him a complete dispersal!

Send you... one death!

"Strange, it was just sunny a moment ago, how could it suddenly be raining..." Residents of Liuli City found it peculiar.

Yet those with sharp eyes noticed the changes in Ning Fan, shock overtaking them.

That external practitioner actually comprehended the Rain Dao Principle, and had integrated its power into his body to enhance his physical attack power!

On the high stage, Emperor Foqi's eyes brightened, again asking Emperor Lou Tuo.

"Fellow Lou Tuo, what do you think of this Ning-named external practitioner in comparison to your disciple?"

"Inferior, certainly inferior! This boy is but an ant, how could he compare with my disciple! Surely Fellow Foqi agrees..."

"No, I don't share that view. I find this boy slightly more formidable than your disciple..."

"Hahaha! Fellow Foqi loves to jest, but this joke is unamusing!"

"Don't believe me, how about we make a wager?"

On the high stage, Emperor Foqi sought to bet with Emperor Lou Tuo.

Below the stage, Shen Ershisan, like a fool, demanded a gift from Ning Fan.

"Give me... a gift... or I'll... kill you..."

"If you're able, then come and kill me! Can you, bound by captivity, achieve this!"

"You... courting death!"

Infuriated by Ning Fan, Shen Ershisan increased the force of the Giant Sword, delivering a strike powerful enough to cut through the Great Void Sect, slashing towards Ning Fan.

The sword, over a dozen feet large, made Ning Fan appear even smaller in comparison.

Gales intensified, rain rushed on, in the storm's midst, Ning Fan raised his left hand, and rolling black mist surged out.

Before anyone could discern what the black mist was, they were already shocked to discover Ning Fan's left hand rapidly soaring like lightning onto the sword edge, his five fingers piercing the Giant Sword forged from the Immemorial Star, leaving five vicious holes!

"This external practitioner actually damaged the exam Corpse's weapon!"

"That is a Primordial Demon Soldier crafted from the Immemorial Star; even with diminished spirituality from ages, it shouldn't be so easily destroyed, didn't you see neither Shidang nor Sha Bailou managed that!"

"How did this guy manage to do it!"

"Wait, that's not a hand, it's a claw!"

With the black mist around Ning Fan's left hand dissipating, the sharp, gleaming, blade-like fingernails of a Demonic Mount appeared before everyone's eyes.

Upon seeing this at that moment, the disguised Emperor Butcher slightly startled.

This little brat external practitioner truly dares to use this spirit equipment!

Chapter 1035: The Unity of Technique and Path

Ning Fan used the prize he won from the Blood Martial Arena—Nightmare Dragon Claw!

Seeing Ning Fan had refined this spirit equipment in just a few days, even Emperor Butcher, with all her experiences, couldn't help but be slightly surprised.

The Nightmare Dragon is not a native species of the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain. According to Emperor Butcher's knowledge, it seems to be a species from the Real Realms, while the Nightmare Dragons within the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain are said to have been captured from some demon realm in the Real Realms by Saint Nan Yao, the Herb-gathering Sage.

Nightmare Dragons in the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain only inhabit the Tenth-grade Fierce Domain Continent, and are extremely rare in number. However, each and every one possesses cultivations beyond eons. Nightmare Dragons are a type of magical dragon, renowned for the hardness and sharpness of their scales, horns, and armor, with the hardness akin to Immemorial Star Iron and the sharpness surpassing Immemorial Star Iron of the same level. Magical treasure weapons forged from these materials are even of superior quality than those of the same level of Immemorial Star Iron.

Spirit equipment forged from Nightmare Dragon scales, horns, and armor are naturally incredibly sharp but have a drawback—the demonic qi is too heavy, making them unsuitable for masters who are not evil cultivators.

Even for devil cultivators, countless years of hard work are needed to refine and subdue a piece of spirit equipment made from Nightmare Dragon magical treasure.

Even among Ancient Chaos Grand Emperors, not everyone can successfully refine the Nightmare Dragon Claw within a few days. At the very least, it requires an ancestral-level Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor to easily suppress the overwhelming demonic qi within the Nightmare Dragon Claw and subdue it quickly.

With this in mind, Emperor Butcher couldn't help but narrow her beautiful eyes. Although she knew Ning Fan was an Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor, she did not know exactly what level he was. She estimated that under the great mirage sealed by demon clans in the Dreamland Realm, at best this child was just a king blood Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor, but unexpectedly, this child possessed such a powerful ancient bloodline.

Though the Nightmare Dragon Claw is merely postnatal Twelve Nirvana Spirit Equipment, it is ultimately crafted from the talons of an immortal emperor-level Nightmare Dragon. The divine skill transformations may be few, but in terms of sharpness, there are virtually no pieces of spirit equipment

below the innate level that can withstand it. Combined with the attack enhancement from the Way of Rain, its attack power naturally stands out even more, making opening a hole in an Immemorial Demon Soldier no difficulty at all.

Seeing Ning Fan damage the giant sword of the assessment Corpse Monster with a single strike, the surrounding crowd couldn't help but exclaim.

Ning Fan, however, was not very surprised. Having refined this spirit equipment, he had privately tested its power and had expected such an attack result.

The Nightmare Dragon Claw is not an external spirit equipment but is equipped on the bones of Ning Fan's hand, beneath his skin and flesh. From the outside, one cannot see the existence of the Nightmare Dragon Claw, only Ning Fan's left hand displays signs of demonization, almost his entire left arm covered in dense Nightmare Dragon scales. Underneath the scales, veins throbbed, and the fingernails of the left hand's fingers grew to seven inches. From afar, they gleamed with a cold light, resembling indestructible blades rather than nails.

"The first sword..."

Despite Ning Fan piercing the giant sword with his five fingers, Shen Ershisan remained expressionless, as if the matter was trivial in his eyes. His stiff, dark blue wrist lightly shook the giant sword, and an unimaginable powerful force, like furious waves crashing against the shore, dominantly spread through the sword body. In an instant, Ning Fan only felt intense pain in the bones of his left finger, unable to hold onto the giant sword.

He knew that in terms of physical strength alone, the gap between him and Shen Ershisan was significant. Even though Shen Ershisan was subjected to various constraints and unable to exert full strength, his strength still surpassed Ning Fan's!

Shen Ershisan seemed to be merely performing his duty, slicing through Ning Fan's first sword, then proceeded with the second sword.

Still a tremendously heavy sword, the heaviness not only stemmed from the sword's weight or human strength but also involved a slight change in Dao laws.

Today was Ning Fan's first time seeing such Dao laws; with all his years of cultivation and experience, he couldn't discern which Dao it might be, only perceiving a vague chaos, unable to see clearly. Yet at this moment, there was no time to think further, his figure advanced instead of retreating, the black rays from the demon left claw erupted, and five fingers slashed upward, producing five crescent-shaped black blades that cut through the air, meeting the mighty fallen giant sword.

Boom!

A deafening boom resounded, yet it was the result of an equally matched confrontation, with the five blades blocking the second sword and leaving five gaps on Shen Ershisan's giant sword blade.

Furthermore, a voice seemed to directly emanate from Ning Fan's soul.

"Fellow clan member... grant me... release..."

"I... exchange my remains and blood... for your karma..."

"Grant me... release..."

"You are... Seal Devil Peak's Master... I can... sense..."

"Grant me... a devil burial..."

Devil burial, what devil burial?

Seal Devil Peak's Master? What does it mean?

Ning Fan felt extremely strange at this moment; he discovered that this voice from the depths of his soul was born from the resonance between two ancient bloodlines.

Speaking, without doubt, was a long-dead ancient demon senior, seemingly through a unique divine skill, preserving a trace of his power within his scant remains and blood to convey his last words.

No one else could hear; only he, as an ancient demon, could hear.

No time for Ning Fan to ponder further; the third sword arrived, forcing Ning Fan to focus and face the third sword.

Facing three swords consecutively was not a significant matter, but leaving damage continuously on the Immemorial Demon Soldier was indeed daunting.

The surroundings naturally erupted in exclamations again, yet beyond exclamations, there arose some doubts. It's known that this strength trial prohibits using spells to block the giant sword strikes. Doubters assumed Ning Fan employed means other than physical strength to participate in the trial. However, those observant could see clearly that Ning Fan only used a spirit equipment that amplifies physical attack power. The strikes released didn't consume mana but rather the legendary ancient demon essence.

This did not violate the trial rules.

The battle of strength between Ning Fan and Shen Ershisan continued!

The fourth sword, the fifth sword... the fourteenth sword, sweat began to appear on Ning Fan's forehead, but quickly washed away in the rain. Enduring Shen Ershisan's strikes posed a significant expenditure for him at merely the Nine Nirvana Heavenly Demon stage. As for Shen Ershisan, though no sign of exhaustion appeared, the gaps on the giant sword increased, yet his low spirit awareness seemingly prevented him from realizing, continuing to swing sword after sword.

What Ning Fan couldn't understand was that with each sword Shen Ershisan slashed, it came accompanied by a soul sound, constantly asking Ning Fan for a devil burial.

"Fellow clan member...why won't you...grant me...a demon burial..."

"Lord of the Demon-Sealing Peak...why won't you...give me...relief..."

"I want...a demon burial..."

What is a demon burial, how would Ning Fan know?

The fifteenth sword, the sixteenth sword...the forty-second sword, Ning Fan understood that these forty-two swords marked the limit of his physical strength. The Ancient Demon Essence was not infinite; at this moment, he had nearly exhausted his internal essence after forty-two rounds of confrontation.

This Shen Ershisan is really strong, Hongcang, Wuxu Yan, Stone of Seabed, Sha Bailou... those who achieved scores over a hundred swords were not mere names. Even in terms of body refinement alone, even the least adept at Body Cultivation, Hongcang, surpassed him greatly in body cultivation.

The trial of strength, the trial of strength...this was a test of body cultivation strength. Ning Fan could use the added Dao traces to enhance the sharpness of his devil claws, slowly damaging Shen Ershisan's giant sword, but he could not use them to increase his body refinement cultivation.

If his Ancient Demon cultivation were higher, if he had more internal essence, he could also attempt to withstand one hundred swords, two hundred swords, but right now, it was impossible.

This is what it means to be exhausted; without a trump card, he might lose to Shen Ershisan's sword within a few strikes.

Is it really so that only by using the Luminous Pearl given by Emperor Butcher to restore his cultivation once can he defeat Shen Ershisan and give him relief?

Indeed, the basics sealed by the Punishment Ring are all Calamity Blood cultivation, and temporarily unsealing the Punishment Ring does not help strengthen physical power. But if he restores his cultivation, at the very least he can unleash the power of the various Dao traces to their fullest. Coupled with the application of multiple Dao traces on the Nightmare Dragon Claw to its strongest degree, Ning Fan is confident that he can destroy everything Shen Ershisan has within a few moves!

The sharpness of the Nightmare Dragon Claw, combined with the power of several Dao traces, gives it an attack power that should not be underestimated!

As Ning Fan contemplated, deep within his soul, Shen Ershisan's plea echoed again.

"The Lifestealer Technique...is proof of the Master of the Demon-Sealing Summit..."

"You are...Lord Mo Zhong's...chosen successor..."

"Please, my lord...use the Lifestealer Technique...to grant me a demon burial..."

So the Lifestealer Technique is the proof of the Master of the Demon-Sealing Summit? Knowing the Lifestealer Technique marks one as the chosen Master of the Demon-Sealing Peak?

Ning Fan had never known this before. In the past, he only knew that he learned a divine skill from the Great Emperor Mo Zhong, not realizing that the skill carried such significant meaning?

Of course, now was not the time to dwell on such meanings. What intrigued Ning Fan was what it meant to use the Lifestealer Technique for a demon burial.

He didn't understand why Shen Ershisan mentioned this, or maybe he could try heeding Shen Ershisan's request and see how using the Lifestealer Technique would grant him a demon burial?

With this in mind, Ning Fan secretly activated the Lifestealer Technique. Initially, he felt nothing, but moments later, his expression shifted dramatically, as if the roaring crowd had fallen silent, yet from the heavens and the earth, he heard countless cries of unwillingness...

"Forty-two swords, it seems this is the limit for this boy. This score might be considered decent for others, but compared to my disciple Sha Bailou's score of nearly six hundred swords, it's hardly worth mentioning. Does Emperor Foqi still think this boy is stronger than my disciple Sha Bailou?" Emperor Lou Tuo chuckled, speaking toward Emperor Foqi's direction with a hint of sarcasm in his tone.

"Fellow Daoist, do not underestimate this boy. This boy should have more cards to play. Don't forget, he is an Ancient Demon, and I've sensed a certain aura of lost Ancient Demon divine skills on him..." Emperor Foqi seemed to have great confidence in Ning Fan.

"Lost Ancient Demon divine skills? Ancient Demons are lower-class beings. Legend has it that the lost divine skills of the Ancient Demons are each inconceivably powerful, but in the eyes of us Buddhist cultivators, Ancient Demon divine skills are not impressive. So what if this boy knows one or two lost Ancient Demon divine skills?" Emperor Lou Tuo scoffed, his words full of pride as a Buddhist cultivator.

Lost Ancient Demon divine skills have the word "lost" in them, naturally indicating they are mostly forgotten arts. The inheritance of these lost Ancient Demon arts has long been severed, and their names rarely circulate anymore. Even as an Immortal Emperor, Emperor Lou Tuo had only heard of three such lost Ancient Demon divine skills. Techniques like the Bone Fragmenting into Soldiers Art, Demon Pupil Transference Art, and Great Demon Void Escape may not be lacking in power, but the Buddhist law includes supreme secrets that specifically counter these Ancient Demon divine skills. Thus, Emperor Lou Tuo naturally saw no exceptional value in them.

When facing demons, the Buddha has its pride. Disdain for demonic divine skills is par for the course.

Emperor Lou Tuo did not think Ning Fan had any extraordinary lost Ancient Demon divine skills that could earn him a higher score, but Emperor Foqi had a different idea.

Emperor Foqi was one of the few within the Dabei Clan who had deeply studied Ancient Demons. If he was not mistaken, Ning Fan seemed to have been brewing a lost Ancient Demon divine skill ever since receiving the first sword...

The vast majority of Ancient Demon divine skills have corresponding Buddhist laws to suppress them, but there are a very few exceptions among these skills...

"If I am not mistaken, the technique this boy uses should be the number one art among the Nine Great Forbidden Techniques once ranked highest on the Seal of the Demon-Sealing Peak, and he has almost touched its third realm..."

Emperor Foqi had his suspicions, but his face remained unchanged, with a playful smile, as he said to Emperor Lou Tuo, "Since you doubt, Fellow Daoist, why not continue our previous bet and wager on whether this boy can reach one hundred swords?"

"A bet? Certainly, if you lose, you shall give your three million times refined Demon Scolding Nine Palaces Iron to me!" Emperor Lou Tuo said unreservedly.

"Hehe, that is the innate material I have refined three million times. Fellow Daoist truly speaks boldly, but so be it, let's bet with this item! However, in that case, I will not be polite. If you lose, I want your Green Fierce and Yuan Ze out of your seven Innate Fire Spirits. Don't ask for Malicious Sparrow, as that fire spirit has long been in someone else's stomach. Even if I want it, I wouldn't look for you..." Emperor Foqi sneered suddenly, hitting a nerve in Emperor Lou Tuo's heart.

Malicious Sparrow!

Having spent millions of years laboriously refining the seven Great Fire Spirits, only to have Ning Fan devour the Malicious Sparrow, how could Emperor Lou Tuo not harbor hatred!

"You can only choose between Green Fierce and Yuan Ze, not both. At most, I'll give you half a Green Fierce! I cannot bet such a complete fire spirit for your mere piece of Demon Scolding Nine Palaces Iron!"

"If that's the case, we'll bet on Green Fierce."

"Haha, very well, then I shall await your piece of Demon Scolding Nine Palaces Iron."

Thinking that soon he would win the Demon Scolding Nine Palaces Iron from Emperor Foqi, Emperor Lou Tuo's originally gloomy expression brightened significantly.

As they spoke, Ning Fan had already taken the 49th sword. For this 49th sword, Ning Fan had no excess essence to wield the sword to block the Giant Sword, instead using the demon claw to forcibly block it.

This sword, Ning Fan caught with extreme difficulty. Unlike when he used the demon claw to block the first sword, this time, Ning Fan had little strength left and was directly shaken back dozens of steps by the powerful force of the Giant Sword, looking rather wretched.

Seeing this, Emperor Lou Tuo was almost certain that Ning Fan absolutely could not withstand the 50th sword; even if he fought with his life to take a few more swords, he certainly wouldn't reach the count of a hundred swords.

He was sure to win this bet!

Almost everyone shared Emperor Lou Tuo's view, believing that Ning Fan had already reached his limit.

Expressions of regret and sighs were not lacking among the audience. Being able to withstand 49 swords was enough to prove Ning Fan's extraordinary power, enough to place him fifth in this trial of strength, just behind the four dark horses, but that was all. To compete with those four dark horse figures was far from enough.

Master Hongcang calmly sat cross-legged on the ground, meditating with eyes closed under the rain, not giving attention to Ning Fan's trial, as if it were a trivial matter; Wuxu Yan pouted. She was watching Ning Fan's match, after all, she had heard that Ning Fan was also invited by the Baihua Emperor for help. She initially wanted to team up with Ning Fan in this Illusionary Trial to compete for third place, but now it seemed that this person was not worth recruiting...

Stone scoffed, completely unable to understand why Sha Bailou valued Ning Fan so much. 49 swords, this result was too poor, simply not presentable. As he expected, an external cultivator with sealed cultivations was indeed not worth mentioning.

Sha Bailou was somewhat disappointed, not expecting that the prey he valued so highly would only have this level of skill, truly not stirring his interest to kill at all.

At this moment, Ning Fan suddenly halted, his expression becoming solemn.

The rain was still falling, but it quieted.

The wind was still blowing, but it ceased.

Yet in his ears, there seemed to echo numerous roars of demons, growing louder and more earth-shattering!

It was as if thousands of ancient demons, at this moment, were calling Ning Fan by the same title!

"Revered Lord... grant us a demon burial!"

"Revered Lord... grant us a demon burial!!!"

From all directions, these voices resounded!

These voices seemed to be coming from countless ancient demons within the Dabei Clan, dying here and becoming Corpse demons. There was definitely more than one person like Shen Ershisan; they all were making their demands!

If Ning Fan hadn't activated the Lifestealer Technique, he wouldn't hear these ancient demons' demands!

If Ning Fan hadn't activated the Lifestealer Technique, those ancient demons who had passed away for countless years wouldn't be able to sense Ning Fan's existence from afar!

Ning Fan didn't know that the Lifestealer Technique was a requiem only audible to ancient demons who had passed away!

As the Lord of the Demon-Sealing Peak, Immortal Emperor Mo Zhong created the Lifestealer Technique, one of its uses was to give burial to one ancient demon after another who had passed!

The bodies of ancient demons were immensely powerful, unmatched choices for making puppets!

If an unyielding ancient demon died and turned into a puppet, then as the Lord of the Demon-Sealing Peak, there was a responsibility to give those puppets a burial!

This was... the demon burial!

In this place, ancient demons turned into Corpse demon puppets were definitely more than just Shen Ershisan!

Those desiring a demon burial from Ning Fan were definitely more than just Shen Ershisan, but thousands upon thousands!

Initially, Ning Fan intended to grant Shen Ershisan a death out of reverence and sympathy for the martyrs. At this moment, another sense of responsibility suddenly emerged.

The Demon-Sealing Peak was destroyed, but the one who held the Lifestealer Technique was considered the master of the Demon-Sealing Peak! Of course, this title of master seemed meaningless, without subordinates, without power, without benefits.

But, what of it!

Ning Fan seemed to newly come to understand the Lifestealer Technique, and at this moment, he seemed to touch upon the essence of the Lifestealer Technique.

The essence of the Lifestealer Technique was not killing, but a kind of responsibility!

Killing should not be the goal; the goal should be redemption. Like the Purple Dou Immortal Sovereign, cleansing the Six Harmonies, to bring peace to the chaotic times; or like the many Purple Dou Immortal Cultivators who died protecting the realm, the blood spilled in fighting enemies was simply to protect their homes and loved ones...

This principle, Ning Fan was not unfamiliar with, but it was the first time he understood it in relation to the Lifestealer Technique.

Killing to restore essence, killing to augment cultivation, these were techniques... but the intention behind killing, that was Dao. The unity of technique and path, this Lifestealer Technique was truly complete.

And the intention behind killing must not just be understood; it must come from the heart, be integrated into it, to truly manifest.

At this moment, with the unity of technique and path, Ning Fan was surprised to discover that he could actually absorb the essence of ancient demon deaths within a certain range through the Lifestealer Technique, transforming it for his own use!

The Lifestealer Technique can restore one's own essence, which is not surprising, but in the past, Ning Fan had to slay his enemies to regain his essence.

But now, it is unnecessary! It seems as long as there are ancient demons dying nearby, he can absorb their essence! Then, transform it for his own use!

Ning Fan also has a strange feeling that today's Lifestealer Technique is different; if he were to use it to vanquish Shen Ershisan before him, he might... gain some benefits!

These are benefits that only those who have comprehended the true essence of the Lifestealer Technique can obtain, a privilege once belonged to the Lord of the Demon-Sealing Peak... Great Emperor Mo Zhong!

After a brief moment of confusion, Shen Ershisan's expression turned numb and indifferent again. As a Corpse puppet, he couldn't defy the duties of the trial of strength, and for the fiftieth time, the Giant Sword swung towards Ning Fan.

Ning Fan's essence was rapidly recovering, silently absorbing the continuously leaking essence from Shen Ershisan. Thus, he leisurely took on the fiftieth sword.

Then came the fifty-first sword, fifty-second sword... up to the ninety-ninth sword!

His essence recovery rate was greater than his consumption rate!

The source of his essence recovery was directly plundered from Shen Ershisan in front of him, in a way that no one could detect!

The surrounding cheers grew more intense, but Emperor Lou Tuo's expression grew increasingly somber; the originally confident wager was about to be incredibly lost!

When Ning Fan successfully withstood the hundredth sword, Emperor Lou Tuo could no longer bear it, slamming the table and almost forcefully interrupting Ning Fan's trial of strength, angrily exclaiming.

"With this child's skills and means, it's absolutely impossible for him to withstand a hundred swords! I suspect that this child has already secretly broken the Punishment Ring, and it must be verified immediately. If it's true, not only will this child's test result be void, but he should also be executed on the spot! Someone, seize this child and inspect his body!"

With Emperor Lou Tuo's command, two Eternal Immortal Venerables immediately flickered forward towards Ning Fan below the high platform.

But before these two could reach Ning Fan, they were intercepted by four other Great Emperors simultaneously.

Emperor Lou Tuo's eyes immediately narrowed with seriousness.

The intercepting Great Emperors included the Baihua Great Emperor, which wasn't surprising as she was naturally inclined to help Ning Fan; there was also Emperor Foqi, which was also unsurprising. He always delighted in stirring chaos, fearing the world was not chaotic enough, especially since he also had a wager with him this time. There was no way he would watch Ning Fan's hundred sword result get nullified; there was Bone Spirit, which wasn't surprising either, as Bone Spirit always opposed him. Seeing him targeting Ning Fan, of course, Bone Spirit would habitually defend to make him uncomfortable; and lastly, Emperor Lou Tuo was most astonished by the fact that even the habitually mean and unfeeling, foreign-cultivator-hating Heaven Capital Emperor stood on Ning Fan's side!

"Fellow Lou Tuo, don't rush. The Punishment Ring inside this young friend Ning Fan has not been destroyed. As the speaker of Middle State, holding the Holy Mountain Instrument, if the Punishment Ring were broken, I would be the first to sense it. Do not interfere with the trial of strength; let it continue!"

The Heaven Capital Emperor's slightly warning gaze, along with his friendly term of address, made Emperor Lou Tuo's heart tremble, feeling extremely apprehensive.

The relationship between the Heaven Capital Emperor and Ning Fan seemed... not simple... If there's one person in Middle State that Emperor Lou Tuo is cautious of, the Heaven Capital Emperor would definitely be one of the biggest!

The dispute on the high platform didn't affect Ning Fan, who continued with the trial of strength, constantly improving his results, having endured 110 swords. He only glanced at the direction of the high platform without paying much attention.

Without another insight into the Lifestealer Technique, he would most likely need to temporarily unseal his cultivations to release Shen Ershisan. But with the elevation in the Lifestealer Technique now, that's unnecessary. He can feel that the process of regaining his essence is, in fact, a process of gain and loss. The essence he recovers is continually drawn from within Shen Ershisan. Even Sha Bailou hadn't made the essence-abundant Shen Ershisan weaken even a bit, but through this gain and loss process, Ning Fan slightly weakened Shen Ershisan.

He only consumed a tiny portion of Shen Ershisan's essence, making it hard for Ning Fan to imagine how powerful Shen Ershisan was at full strength; the essence retained within the corpse was terrifyingly abundant, and it's unknown how many thousands or tens of thousands of swords it would take to deplete it.

Never mind, let it deplete slowly. When Shen Ershisan's essence is exhausted, that will be the time for him to launch an attack!

swords, 300 swords, 400 swords...

By the 475th sword, the Giant Sword of Shen Ershisan had cracked to its limit and with a snap, broke in half!

If the recovery of essence relied on the Lifestealer Technique, then wearing down the Giant Sword of this Primordial Demon Soldier was entirely due to Ning Fan's fierce attacks.

Bear in mind that Sha Bailou, after nearly six hundred moves, couldn't even make a dent in the Giant Sword, yet Ning Fan managed to break it before the five hundredth sword.

Regarding the grudge between Ning Fan and Sha Bailou, the residents of Liuli City were initially not optimistic about Ning Fan; however, at this moment, they were shocked to discover that Ning Fan seemed to be even more formidable than Sha Bailou!

Hongcang was already unable to remain calm, his originally keen eyes now widened like a bull's eyes, looking at Ning Fan at the center of the plaza incredulously.

Wuxx Yan was astonished, her mouth agape, unable to speak, while Stone of Seabed's face clouded over and fists clenched tightly.

Sha Bailou trembled with excitement; as Ning Fan's results finally surpassed his and continued to approach the thousand-sword achievement, he laughed up to the sky, releasing the excitement in his heart.

His path could only be proven through killing!

If he killed Ning Fan, it would certainly mean a great significance for his cultivation journey! Indeed, this time's war for the ridge was not a mistake!

"A thousand swords... heh heh, if this child's result exceeds a thousand swords in the end, he could receive one of the three-tiered rewards left by the Saint Ancestor here. But this thousand-sword reward seemingly has no precedent for granting it to any foreign cultivator. How should this be handled? Heaven Capital fellow, please decide!"

The ever-trouble-loving Emperor Foqi suddenly let out a strange laugh.

Instantly, the expressions of the other Great Emperors changed, and as for Emperor Lou Tuo, he immediately roared out in anger.

"No! I firmly oppose this matter. Among the Saint Ancestor's three-tiered rewards, there's an option for the Holy Mountain's supreme secret art. Even for Immortal Emperors like us, it's extremely difficult to acquire a secret art from the Holy Mountain. How can such a benefit be handed to a foreign cultivator, especially when this foreign cultivator is a bona fide ancient demon!"

Chapter 1036: The Saint's Gift

"Oppose? Hehe, the will of the Saint Ancestor is not something you and I can defy. I am quite curious, if the Sacred Ancestor's reward does indeed appear, what the threefold rewards would be."

Emperor Foqi did not conceal the look of expectation on his face.

Not just Emperor Foqi, but all the other Great Emperors, except Emperor Lou Tuo, were very concerned about the reward Ning Fan was about to receive from the Saint Ancestor.

Unaware of the external discussions, Ning Fan's mind was fully focused on his duel with Shen Ershisan. His body and mind were immersed in an extremely peculiar state, as if his feet were clearly on flat ground, yet he had the feeling of standing atop Lin Jue Ding.

It was as if he was not standing on flat ground, but at an unreachable pinnacle, overlooking the millions of demonesses under the sky.

Standing at the peak of countless demons!

This was the feeling brought to Ning Fan by the Slaughter Technique after achieving the Unity of Technique and Path, further enhancing the indescribable noble aura on him.

This aura, initially elusive, gradually became clearer as Ning Fan repeatedly clashed with Shen Ershisan's broken sword.

Determined and domineering, a demon undefeated in the world! This was the aura of a Demon Lord, which only the former Lord of the Demon-Sealing Peak could possess!

Since Ning Fan's understanding of the Slaughter Technique in the Unity of Technique and Path was still recent, this Demon Lord aura was not yet prominent, but some old monsters from the Dabei Clan noticed it keenly, secretly alarmed.

They were naturally shocked because the moment Ning Fan's Demon Lord aura flickered, they felt an insurmountable sense of arrogance—even these Buddha cultivators felt like they were nothing more than dirt and dust compared to the heavenly moon and the starry seas that Ning Fan, as an ancient demon, represented.

Facing Ning Fan, they experienced an indescribable feeling of inferiority for a moment!

Having a buddha feel inferior facing a demon! These proud Buddha cultivators were inwardly ashamed, attributing it to a lack of firm Buddhist practice, without any other speculation. Of course, they wouldn't vocalize this sense of inferiority to avoid being mocked by other Buddha cultivators, keeping their composure and silence.

swords, 1148 swords, 1149 swords...

Ning Fan's trial score continued to rise! This outcome exceeded everyone's expectations, especially since Ning Fan used to struggle even reaching a hundred swords, but now, he seemed to become more adept, never showing signs of exhaustion, as if his inner strength was inexhaustible.

Conversely, the breath of Shen Ershisan, the puppet master of the trial, weakened, and as the situation shifted, Ning Fan gradually gained the upper hand in the duels.

The wind and rain roared!

Amid the winds and rains, the repeated giant clashes of demon claws and broken swords resounded continuously!

Two thousand swords!

Three thousand swords!

Four thousand swords!

swords was the highest record left in a certain trial of the Second Round of Tomb Robbing countless years ago, which Ning Fan had long surpassed.

Without an accident, Ning Fan could have continued dueling Shen Ershisan indefinitely, as the Slaughter Technique nullified any chance of exhaustion; achieving a score of ten thousand or even a hundred thousand swords was easily conceivable as long as the conditions allowed.

However, what Ning Fan sought after was not such ethereal and useless scores. On the 4714th sword, he finally destroyed the last half of Shen Ershisan's giant sword with the sharp claws of the Nightmare Dragon!

Instantly, exclamations echoed across the four sides of the high platform!

"It's unfathomable how far this boy's score can go; I would love to know his score limit when pitted against this Shen-named corpse demon, but unfortunately, that creature's sword is destroyed, so it seems this boy's score must stop here. After all, the score of the Trial of Strength is determined by the count of the slashes endured if the sword is broken..."

Before Emperor Foqi's words were finished, his eyes suddenly widened.

Ning Fan had completely destroyed Shen Ershisan's giant sword, hesitated not, and attacked Shen Ershisan once again!

What does this boy want to do!

With his body emanating an imposing killing intent, does he intend to obliterate that trial corpse demon?

As if to validate Foqi's speculation, in the next moment, Ning Fan had already approached Shen Ershisan, leaped into the air, and pierced Shen Ershisan's brow with his left hand's razor-sharp claw with a puchi sound!

The golden hoop binding Shen Ershisan's brow also broke in the middle, utterly unable to withstand the sharpness of the Nightmare Dragon Claw!

Shen Ershisan offered no expected defensive resistance, and its limited intelligence was utterly clueless about what to do once its giant sword was destroyed, just standing there stupidly accepting Ning Fan's deadly strike.

Nor was its physical body as hard as anticipated, being too decayed. If the strong ones in the Dabei Clan had properly restored Shen Ershisan's physical body, its defense could have reached an exceedingly terrifying level. Nonetheless, even in its rotten state, it could withstand the majority of attacks, though regrettably, the piercing strike of the Nightmare Dragon Claw was not among them.

Shen Ershisan could not feel the pain in its brow, only staring blankly at the nearby Ning Fan, seemingly feeling a sense of relief.

A heat seemed to rise from the decrepit body, causing the stilled heart to suddenly tremble with just a touch of emotion.

"Thank... you!" This body, dead for countless years, unexpectedly expressed gratitude toward Ning Fan. Shen Ershisan didn't understand where this gratitude came from, merely feeling that its extremely weary eyes could finally close.

"Farewell on your journey!"

Ning Fan appeared to murmur to himself as his left hand suddenly surged with essence, transforming into a slash that exploded in Shen Ershisan's brow. Five slashing strikes of demon claws rampaged in

Shen Ershisan's body, ravaging it from within until the body, filled with countless wounds and eroded by time, was utterly destroyed in an instant!

With a thunderous boom, Shen Ershisan's body exploded into a sky full of blood mist, then the rain washed the blood mist down, turning it into a ground of bloody water tinged with the decay of ages.

The entire place fell into deathly silence! No one anticipated Ning Fan would suddenly strike during the trial, outright killing the evaluation corpse demon!

Too brutal, far too brutal! Although that corpse demon was lowly and bullied, the Dabei people never intended to take his life. But Ning Fan, even with the audacity to kill an examiner, carried an exceptionally heavy killing intent!

From ancient times to the present, daring to kill a trial evaluation corpse demon in the Trial of Strength, Ning Fan was undoubtedly the first!

In just an instant, Ning Fan was deemed a demon by the Buddha Law practitioners present, regardless of his strength, undoubtedly a demon who kills without blinking!

"Is it over..."

Ning Fan had no interest in the hostile gazes surrounding him, he simply closed his eyes and silently felt.

Using the Slaughter Technique, he could hear the lamentations that others could not hear. After he destroyed Shen Ershisan's corpse, the Ancient Demon cries that pervaded the Dabei Clan lessened by one...

Was this the Demonic Burial that Shen Ershisan desired? No tombstone, no coffin, no incense, no mourning music, no worshippers or mourners, no relatives, no old friends, no future, no past... nothing but mere strangers.

Perhaps this was the most simple burial in the world.

But compared to the life as a Corpse, this kind of Demonic Burial might be considered a luxury.

Shen Ershisan has achieved true peace, and that's good. Farewell on your journey.

Hmm? What's this...

Ning Fan's eyes suddenly sharpened as countless bloodlines flew out of the filthy blood on the ground and flowed into his body.

At first, he wanted to defend himself, but realizing these bloodlines brought benefits, he let them enter his body.

This seems to be the boon for burying Shen Ershisan?

The bloodlines shooting into Ning Fan's body were all the essence of demon blood hidden deep within Shen Ershisan's flesh. At this moment, they entered Ning Fan's body without any hindrance, and merged directly with his blood, greatly enhancing his demon bloodline level. Previously, he had fused four drops of ancestral demon blood into the Symbol of Devil Raising, but now, due to the event of killing Shen Ershisan, he saw the sign of forming the fifth drop of Ancient Demon Ancestral Blood!

The fifth drop of Ancient Demon Ancestral Blood only partially formed, not completely, yet it greatly enhanced Ning Fan's demonic power!

His cultivation in the Ancient Demon realms also had a massive improvement, progressing more than halfway towards the Demonic Tenth Nirvana. Others would regard this as gaining the fruits of millions of years of arduous cultivation!

"Could it be that the holder of the Slaughter Technique can obtain such huge benefits from burying each Ancient Demon?"

Ning Fan paused, then gave a slight laugh. He buried Shen Ershisan out of admiration for the Zidou Martyrs. Of course, if he could gain some benefits from it, he certainly wouldn't refuse.

As he felt the sudden surge in cultivation and bloodline level, Ning Fan didn't know whether to be saddened by Shen Ershisan's departure or to be pleased for himself.

However, the changes in the scene quickly interrupted his thoughts.

After the bloodlines entered his body, suddenly the plaza was filled with Buddha light, and three golden treasure chests appeared in mid-air. Along with it came a massive and unimaginable pressure sweeping across the area, seemingly like the heavens were falling!

Internally, Ning Fan was shocked. He had cultivated for many years and was by no means a weakling, yet under this pressure, he felt as powerless as an ant!

This was indeed the pressure of a Saint!

Fortunately, although the pressure was massive, it carried no oppressive intent, rather it was gentle like water, otherwise Ning Fan wouldn't know how to resist it.

The residents watching the assessment were filled with exclamations, all kneeling in awe, clearly not expecting the presence of such Saint pressure.

The Immortal Buddhas on the high platform all stood up. Although they didn't kneel, they didn't dare to sit under this vast Buddha light, standing respectfully.

Rewards could be obtained beyond the thousand swords. This was naturally known to the Immortal Buddhas present, but most Dabei residents were of short bone age and hadn't seen rewards from the thousand swords years ago, hence were very curious.

Ning Fan himself didn't know why the three treasure chests appeared, but he was adept at gathering information. With a subtle use of the Mind Reading Technique, he learned the reason from the thoughts of some Second Step Female Cultivators present.

It turns out that achieving the thousand swords in the Trial of Strength can also earn a Saint's reward! That was truly an unexpected bonus.

"...All beings imprisoned within the Circle have no set definitions within or without. Like dreams, like wakefulness, like dust, like origin. The great Dao is dim, and greatness lies in humility. Wild grass grows thick, bowing low and resilient..."

At the moment this ancient voice rang out, all the Dabei people began to shout in unison, filled with fervor.

"Welcome the arrival of the Saint Ancestor's will!"

The Saint Ancestor's Will! Within the Dabei Clan, only the Herb-gathering Sage known as Saint Nan Yao could be considered a Saint Ancestor!

The Saint had died, but his will had transformed into the laws of heaven and earth, residing in the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain. This voice was issued by the Saint's will in the heavens!

The Saint's will does not think, naturally it doesn't converse with people, it simply operates mechanically to convey rewards to Ning Fan.

The three treasure chests in the air suddenly fell in front of Ning Fan, then the first chest began to open with a click.

"According to the rules of the Dabei Clan, achieving beyond a thousand swords in the Trial of Strength can invoke the Saint Ancestor's will, which bestows gifts upon you. Do not miss your fortune, choose one from the Saint Ancestor's threefold rewards, and be cautious!"

The four of the Central Continent Five Emperors spoke up, giving an explanation to Ning Fan. Naturally, the one who didn't speak was Emperor Lou Tuo, who wasn't on friendly terms with Ning Fan.

After the reminder from the four emperors, the ancient voice spoke again.

"My legacy is only handed down to those who possess capability. Anyone who successfully tests the thousand swords may receive my legacy, choose one out of three. This is the first item!"

In an instant, everyone's gaze was fixed on the first treasure chest. Anyone aware of the thousand sword rewards was secretly guessing what Ning Fan would receive. Those who were previously unaware were now familiar with the Saint Ancestor's reward due to the voices of the four Great Emperors and the Saint Ancestor's Will.

The chest opened, and the first thing people saw was a golden lotus platform, though it wasn't particularly precious, what caused many Immortal Buddhas to gasp was the fragment of Golden Lotus Root hovering on top of the platform.

All four emperors showed slight changes in expression, while Emperor Lou Tuo's face fell, unexpected that Ning Fan's first reward choice turned out to be such a supreme treasure.

The Creation Golden Lotus Root!

This item only existed in the legends of the Dabei Clan, not meant for eating but for reshaping the body and bones! Ancient texts of the Dabei record that once an Immortal Venerable or Ancient Buddha dismantled their physical form and used the Creation Lotus Root to reconstruct their bones and flesh, obtaining a Lotus Root body exceedingly powerful. Despite remaining at the Immortal Venerable Cultivation Level, merely with the Lotus Root body, they swept through the Immortal King Realm and even stood their ground in battle against a Quasi-Emperor!

Of course, this item has its drawbacks. Although the Lotus Root body is incredibly powerful, it means one's cultivation will eternally cease. Once a Lotus Root body is formed, it signifies the end of one's cultivation path in this lifetime.

Yet these drawbacks are minor issues.

Most cultivators never reach the Quasi-Emperor Realm in their lives. Possessing a body comparable to a Quasi-Emperor's already satisfies them, without yearning for further advancement to true Immortal Emperor level.

Even those aiming for the Immortal Emperor levels wouldn't dismiss this item. Why must one's own flesh be shaped into a Lotus Root body? It's entirely possible to create a second Primordial Spirit to have

a powerful body, thus gaining a loyal Quasi-Emperor fighter, without impacting one's future achievements.

Even if not creating a physical defense for the second Primordial Spirit, one can entirely make a lotus root puppet body; a Quasi-Emperor Lotus Root Puppet is also very powerful.

Ning Fan's gaze fell upon the Golden Lotus Root, feeling extremely tempted.

This item is not only recorded in the Dabeian ancient texts but also in the Four Heavens' ancient literature, and is even mentioned in the Ancient Chaos memory inheritance.

If choosing this item to make a lotus root puppet comparable to a Quasi-Emperor, it's indeed a good choice...

However, it's not time to make a decision yet, as there are still two boxes unopened.

"This is the second item!"

As the Saint's voice fell, the second box opened.

The golden light faded, revealing an artifact surrounded by eerie violet flames inside the box. The innate inferior-grade treasure aura shook everyone's heart, even the Immortal Emperors were no exception.

"It's actually an Innate Treasure! Impossible, in the past rewards from Saints, no one has ever obtained an Innate Treasure! What merit does this boy have to have such good fortune!"

This time, Emperor Lou Tuo couldn't contain his inner frustration and voiced his jealousy.

The jealousy was reasonable. For Immortal Emperors, the number of Innate Treasures almost equates to combat power. Most Immortal Emperors possess only one Innate Treasure; think if you possess two Innate Treasures while the opposing Immortal Emperor has only one, who has the advantage is self-

evident. Unfortunately, Innate Treasures are attainable but never achievable; very few Immortal Emperors have two.

Emperor Lou Tuo sought bitterly for years and now barely owns two Innate Treasures, one of which is defective...but Ning Fan, with shallow spirit bones and low cultivation, has a chance to obtain an Innate Treasure, making him somewhat envious.

Not only Emperor Lou Tuo but also the other four emperors had stiff expressions, clearly not expecting Ning Fan to have such fortune, if they weren't envious, it's absolutely impossible.

Upon seeing the Creation Golden Lotus Root in the first treasure chest, the emperors just brightened their gaze but weren't overly tempted. After all, Quasi-Emperor puppets aren't much use in an Immortal Emperor's battle.

But Innate Treasures are different...this item is too precious! Even as an Innate Inferior Grade, it's absolutely valuable and unattainable!

In contrast, Ning Fan didn't look at the second treasure chest with the same fervor as the first.

He doesn't lack Innate Treasures; what he lacks is the cultivation to use them. This Innate Artifact Wand seems to be a powerful offensive treasure, but unfortunately, it's just an Innate Inferior Grade, compared to his Water-Flooding Realm Bottle, there's no comparison. Even if choosing this Innate Treasure, with his cultivation, it's hard to unleash its power, whereas the Golden Lotus Root is more practical.

Hmm, having a Quasi-Emperor fighter is more convenient, at least he won't need to take action himself in the future, enough to sweep across strong opponents of the Immortal King realm...

As Ning Fan's thoughts raced, the third treasure chest opened.

Unlike the first two chests, when the third chest opened, there was no dazzling golden light. The box was empty except for a worn-out, dull wooden plaque.

The wooden plaque wasn't inscribed, nor did it emit any treasure aura; on the surface, it appeared to be an ordinary wooden plaque.

But, could an ordinary wooden plaque be presented as a Saint's reward?

Even if Ning Fan was foolish, he knew the wooden plaque had some special use, although what it specifically was remained unknown.

On the high platform, the Immortal Buddhas all wore bewildered expressions, rarely knowing its purpose.

On the platform, only the Central Continent Five Emperors knew the item's origin! Below the platform, only the deeply hidden Emperor Butcher raised eyebrows with some seriousness.

At this moment, the gazes of the Central Continent Five Emperors were all fervent, looking at the worn wooden plaque in the third treasure chest.

They all knew what this object was!

Yet none of them among the Five Emperors stepped forward to explain its value to Ning Fan!

None of the Five Emperors wanted Ning Fan to choose this item; it was too precious, precious enough to make them jealous, precious enough to allow Ning Fan to break through to the Immortal Emperor realm in a few years!

How could this boy obtain such a treasured item!

Ning Fan read such a layer of meaning from the straightforward expressions of the Five Emperors, frowning involuntarily.

What exactly was this wooden plaque? Judging from the emperors' expressions, it was definitely more valuable than the Innate Inferior Grade treasure...

"In the Holy Mountain, this wooden plaque is called the Blood-Exchange Command. Holding this item and going to the Holy Mountain, you can obtain the Saint's Blood Legacy, truly dilute the Saint's blood and exchange your own blood. Once the legacy is successful, you can acquire cultivation comparable to an Immortal Emperor within a few years, and your future cultivation will progress rapidly!"

Emperor Butcher's voice suddenly echoed in Ning Fan's mind.

Ning Fan's expression remained unchanged, but internally, he was greatly shaken. Saint's Blood Legacy, truly diluted Saint's blood, breaking through to Immortal Emperor in a few years...this little wooden plaque had such uses!

No wonder the Central Continent Five Emperors on the platform were deathly silent about explaining this item! They must think it's too precious to let him choose!

Even diluted, Saint's blood is still a legendary item and indeed exists! Breaking through to Immortal Emperor within a few years is too tempting, and few in the world can resist this temptation! However, Ning Fan wasn't too moved; in cultivation matters, fairness is usually observed, every gain comes with a loss. Such enormous benefits certainly hide greater drawbacks. He firmly believes this.

"I presume this item has its drawbacks." Ning Fan's expression remained calm, but he secretly communicated with Emperor Butcher.

"Hehe, the drawbacks are indeed significant. Back then, the Bright Buddha obtained the Blood-Exchange Command reward by chance like you. Given his qualifications, he wasn't qualified to become the strongest in the Holy Mountain; now he's the strongest in the Holy Mountain with a great title! Alas, alas, is his cultivation truly his..." Emperor Butcher's transmission paused, seemingly due to involving secrets, unwilling to say more.

But this was enough for Ning Fan to imagine.

The strongest in the Holy Mountain, Bright Buddha, rose because he chose the Blood-Exchange Command? What does it mean that his cultivation doesn't belong to him?

Involuntarily, Ning Fan recalled the schemes of Yin Mo Ancestor in the wild. His heart turned cold.

Could it be the esteemed strongest of the Holy Mountain, Bright Buddha, was also schemed against? Is the Blood-Exchange Command a great trap?

Ning Fan slightly glanced at Emperor Butcher, meeting the faintly smiling eyes of Emperor Butcher disguised as Qingling.

Qingling's nominal scarred husband suddenly scolded Qingling a few times with displeasure and glared at Ning Fan with pretended sternness, convinced his wife had an affair with the devil lord Ning.

In the speechless moment, Ning Fan withdrew his gaze, uninterested in watching the little theater of the couple, inwardly pondering Emperor Butcher's warning.

Is it possible that Emperor Butcher is lying, and this broken wooden plaque is not meant for the purpose she mentioned?

Or perhaps, she speaks three parts truth, seven parts falsehood; the purpose is true, the flaws are false...

Or perhaps, what she says is true, yet she still conceals something...

Ning Fan doesn't know whether he should trust Emperor Butcher. As of now, this woman has not harmed him; instead, she gifted him an Illusory Night Pearl, which can temporarily suppress the Punishing Ring and restore his cultivation...

But, is a temporary show of goodwill truly genuine, or perhaps her schemes are deeper than others...

Looking at the three treasure chests, Ning Fan hesitated for the first time. His hesitation was between the first and third chests, while he completely ignored the second chest.

The impression the Dabei Clan left on Ning Fan was one of illusions and deception, of superficial calm hiding deep and dreadful truths.

After careful consideration, Ning Fan couldn't fully trust Emperor Butcher, so he decided to partially believe and not to choose the Blood-Exchange Command. Even if the benefits of the Blood-Exchange Command were tremendous, it must have its drawbacks. Compared to the forced enhancement of cultivation through the Blood-Exchange Command, Ning Fan trusted more in his steady cultivation step by step.

"Have you made your choice?" The ancient voice echoed across the heavens and asked.

"I choose the first treasure chest!" Ning Fan replied indifferently.

Suddenly, discussions erupted!

On the high platform, all the Immortals and Buddhas showed colorful expressions, including the Central Continent Five Emperors.

The Central Continent Five Emperors firmly believed Ning Fan was unaware of the wooden plaque's worth, thus did not choose it. This wasn't surprising. An ordinary foreign cultivator wouldn't understand the highest secrets of the Dabei Clan; it wasn't strange not to know about the Blood-Exchange Command's existence.

But even if he didn't choose the third chest, he should have chosen the second chest. In most people's minds, the second chest is far more valuable than the first.

An Innate Treasure is something even an Immortal Emperor cherishes as life itself, whereas the Creation Golden Lotus Root is only pursued by those below the Immortal Emperor; the difference in value is clear, so why hesitate?

Yet Ning Fan chose not the Innate Treasure but the Creation Golden Lotus Root... His intelligence is unparalleled.

A large group of relatively dull-headed Great Humble Ones silently mocked Ning Fan's foolishness.

Emperor Lou Tuo openly displayed contempt, laughing heartily; this laughter was naturally mocking. Inwardly, due to Ning Fan's choice, he felt much more balanced.

Regardless of whether Ning Fan chose the Blood-Exchange Command or the Innate Treasure, it would make Emperor Lou Tuo envious to death, but if Ning Fan chose the Creation Golden Lotus Root, it made him feel better.

Ha, this boy made a wrong choice!

Ning Fan couldn't be bothered with the ridicule of others. If those people knew he possessed the Innate Mid-grade Water-Flooding Realm Bottle and even owned Heaven-Opening Artifact, they would not mock him.

The height he stood at was different; naturally, the scene he saw was different. He didn't need to explain anything to laymen. To him, the Creation Golden Lotus Root was the most practical thing, at least at this stage. As for in the future, when his cultivation grows, would he worry about not having Innate Treasures to use?

His cultivation path has never lacked magical treasures. If he lacks them, he will seize them!

He acquired the Creation Golden Lotus Root, and the other two chests disappeared along with the ancient voice, as if they never existed.

And with the end of the Saint Ancestor's rewards, the Trial of Strength officially ended.

Looking at the scoreboard's high score of over forty thousand, Ning Fan smiled slightly. From the Trial of Strength alone, he achieved such a high score. As long as he performed decently in the Trial of Illusion, he should secure a place within the top three, winning the South Sea Spring Water with ease.

Then, he could use the South Sea Spring Water to obtain information from the Baihua Great Emperor...

After Ning Fan descended the arena, the storm subsided, only then did some of the Dabei powerhouses remember, didn't Ning Fan kill the examiner for the Trial of Strength? This matter seems to have not been investigated yet. Just because the Saint Ancestor rewards followed, everyone's attention was drawn to the Saint Ancestor's rewards, neglecting the punishment matter.

Though the rules of the second round of the Grave-Seizing Competition naturally did not specify that one could not kill the examiner.

But this rule seems like common knowledge, right? No one would deliberately kill an examiner, right?

Several disciples of Emperor Lou Tuo whispered a few words to him, as if reminding him. Emperor Lou Tuo nodded, intending to find an excuse to give Ning Fan trouble, but Heaven Capital Emperor spoke first.

"The Trial of Strength is over now, small matters need not be mentioned!"

With these words, Emperor Lou Tuo's face sank, unable to trouble Ning Fan further. Internally, he was more convinced of a close relationship between Heaven Capital Emperor and Ning Fan.

Fortunately, Emperor Lou Tuo had great confidence in his apprentice Sha Bailou, firmly believing Sha Bailou could kill Ning Fan in the Illusion Trial. With such thoughts, his expression improved.

Judging from the scores, Ning Fan's score in the Trial of Strength was extremely exceptional, but in the eyes of perceptive people, Ning Fan merely engaged a secret technique to restore physical strength, making his endurance superior to others during physical combat.

Endurance does not equate to combat strength; many confrontations are decided in extremely short times, and those truly testing endurance usually occur when both sides are equally matched and victory is hard to determine!

Emperor Lou Tuo deeply understood that once his apprentice fought desperately, even the Second Calamity Immortal Lord would fall; let alone Ning Fan who isn't at his peak. Even if his cultivation wasn't sealed, Emperor Lou Tuo didn't believe Ning Fan could survive a fight with Sha Bailou using some small tricks.

Thinking of Ning Fan's inevitable death, Emperor Lou Tuo's anger over the destruction of the Fire Spirit finally subsided somewhat.

But before his mood improved much, the indifferent voice of Emperor Foqi made his expression cloudy once more.

"Don't forget our bet. That half a Green Fierce spirit was lost to me, after the matters here conclude, hand it over to me, alright? Don't go back on your word." Emperor Foqi said with evident delight.

"Hmph! Rest assured, I will honor the bet, and once things here are resolved, I'll fulfill it!" Emperor Lou Tuo said through gritted teeth.

Internally, he had accounted for losing half the Green Fierce Fire Spirit on Ning Fan. If not for this boy's excellent performance, how could he have lost!

Hateful brat, you won't be jumping around for long!

"The examining Corpse is dead; thus, I will supervise the Illusion Trial myself. The Illusion Trial requires a team of three tribes formed within one incense stick's time; those failing to team up will be disqualified from continuing in the Illusion Trial after the incense stick burns out. Once the incense burns, I will open the Two-Realm Sealing Door to the Illusion Trial!"

The voice of Heaven Capital Emperor timely spread across the area.

Chapter 1037: Illusory Bamboo Forest - East

The Trial of Illusions is held in the forbidden area of the Great Brightness Temple—the Fire Soul Tower.

The Dabei Clan has a total of one hundred and eight grasslands, each hiding a seal deep underground, which suppresses the Fire Soul Clan.

The seal is a passage suppressing the Fire Soul Clan, a perilous place where even an Immortal Emperor might perish. Ning Fan was once captured by Sanyan Demon Child Meng Zhen and taken to the Southern Frontier Steppe's underground seal. Meng Zhen originally intended to throw Ning Fan into the seal to be burned to death. However, Ning Fan outsmarted him, causing Meng Zhen to fall into the seal and die.

The terrors of the seal deeply embedded themselves in Ning Fan's heart, making him completely abandon the idea of exploring this secret place. What Ning Fan feared even more was the Saint's Fierce Thoughts deep within the seal. This thought has persisted through the ages, easily killing Immortal Emperors like ants. Because of the Saint's Fierce Thoughts deep inside the seal, killing all who dare to trespass, the Fire Soul Clan has been unable to escape their underground prison for generations.

Forever suppressed!

There is also a seal beneath the Central State Grassland, located right beneath Liuli City. However, unlike other grassland seals, when initially discovered, the flames in the abyss were extinguished. And in the deepest depths, there were no signs of the Saint's Fierce Thoughts. The passage to the underground Fire Soul world has also been mysteriously destroyed, making it impassable. Strangely, an ancient stone tower stands in the deepest part of the Central State seal.

This tower is called the Fire Soul Tower by Central State experts. The terrain inside is complex, and for some reason, it's filled with terrifying illusory powers. Real landscapes blend with fake ones, and without sufficient proficiency in Illusory Art, one might perish inside.

Due to its dangers, since its discovery, the tower has been sealed by the Great Brightness Temple in cooperation with many experts, and it has become a forbidden area of the temple.

However, despite its dangers, the Fire Soul Tower is a treasure trove for fire cultivators.

The Fire Soul Tower consists of six levels. The first level's origin fire is twice as potent as the outside world, the second level four times, the third eight times, and so on, until the sixth level's origin fire is sixty-four times stronger than outside! Cultivating fire-based Divine Skills within would result in rapid progress.

As such, some self-confident experts from Central State often request entry into the Fire Soul Tower for closed-door cultivation.

Before the second round of the Tomb Grabbing began, many experts were in closed-door cultivation within the Fire Soul Tower. However, due to the need for this forbidden place for the second round's Illusion Trial, those in closed-door cultivation were cleared out in advance and can only return after the second round ends.

The rules of the Illusion Trial require teams comprised of three tribes to participate together.

Each tribe receives a special map of the Fire Soul Tower. The landmarks on the map are grayed out initially, but as participants explore the tower, the areas they traverse light up on the map. The final trial score depends on how much of the map is illuminated.

Ning Fan glanced at the scroll map in his hand.

It was just issued by a monk from the Great Brightness Temple, a specially crafted magical treasure. As Ning Fan concentrated, the text and drawings on the scroll changed immediately.

Initially, the scroll showed the map of the first level of the Fire Soul Tower, all in gray.

With a thought, it transformed into maps of the second, third... sixth levels, all still gray, yet to be illuminated.

"The Illusion Trial requires three tribes to team up to explore the Fire Soul Tower and light up the map. Every forward step a participant takes in the tower lights up the corresponding darkened area on the map, emitting white light, signifying that the participant has been there. Ultimately, the extent of the illuminated map determines the trial score. For the first level, lighting one mile of the map earns 2 points. On the second level, 4 points per mile; third level, 8 points, and so on. This is because the higher the level, the greater the risk, and naturally, the higher the score..."

"There is a degree of map-sharing among teamed tribes. Teamed tribes can advance together or disperse and illuminate maps individually. If Tribe A illuminates a map section that Tribe B has not, Tribe B can choose to share it and gain half the score of the illuminated area..."

"If you seize another tribe's map, you gain full control over their illuminated areas... In other words, the trial encourages tribes to seize from each other—in this stage, killing is without consequence."

"If a team is not formed within the time of one incense stick, participation in the trial is forfeited..."

Ning Fan stowed away the map, scanning his surroundings.

As the team formations just started, some tribes had already formed teams, clearly having pre-arranged them. Others were forming teams on the spot, busy searching for companions.

With the benefit of shared maps, many tribes prioritized potential teammates based on their power and capacity to aid their tribe.

Ning Fan's impressive strength in the trial reflected his capability. Despite representing Tamo Clan alone, most tribes saw him as a powerful ally.

Unfortunately, having crossed Emperor Lou Tuo, few tribes dared to approach Ning Fan with team requests.

Those who did were mostly Emperor Baihua's enlisted helpers. Of these, the most powerful, undoubtedly, was the Sea Witch Sect.

"I am Wuxx Yan, a Sea Witch Sect witch, and like Brother Ning, I am here on behalf of Lord Baihua. Would Ning Fan be willing to team up with me?"

Wuxx Yan approached Ning Fan with a warm smile.

Ning Fan gave Wuxx Yan a brief glance, nodded, and agreed to her request.

The fact that Wuxx Yan dared to openly claim to be working for Emperor Baihua meant her words couldn't be false. Teaming up with her meant he wouldn't need to worry about betrayal since their goals aligned—to win the South Sea Spring Water for Emperor Baihua.

Ning Fan's calm demeanor surprised Wuxx Yan. This Ning-named foreign cultivator seemed unfazed by her beauty.

After all, the beauty of a Sea Witch Sect witch was quite renowned across the entire Dabei Clan. Even those Immortal King-level old monsters would linger a bit when looking at her, yet Ning Fan appeared indifferent.

He's truly a man with a heart as hard as iron.

"Hehe, being able to team up with Brother Ning is truly my honor. But let me say this beforehand, if during the magical trial Sha Bailou comes knocking on the door, I won't be helping. With Brother Ning's abilities, I believe you can handle this on your own."

"No problem, in our team-up, we only need to share the illuminated areas. As for other personal grudges, we won't be involved."

Ning Fan said indifferently.

As for this woman Wuxx Yan, Ning Fan saw through her well; she is very calculating. If his trial results were not good, she would definitely not consider him for teaming up. Even now, while teaming up with him, she surely wouldn't want to get involved in his conflict with Sha Bailou.

To put it bluntly, she is willing to share benefits with Ning Fan, but if there's trouble, she would run faster than anyone.

Seeing Ning Fan agree so readily, Wuxx Yan was quite satisfied. The two extended their thumbs, pressed them into red clay, and then pressed them onto each other's maps. This way, their maps were now contractually linked and could be shared.

"The magical trial requires three tribes to travel together; we still lack one helper. I wonder if Brother Ning has any suggestions for the remaining helper?" Wuxx Yan initially planned to team up with Ning Fan, and then find another Immortal Venerable level tribe to team up with. Sha Bailou was certainly not considered; she intended to invite either Hongcang or Stone of Seabed.

Unexpectedly, Hongcang teamed up with Sha Bailou! And Stone of Seabed arrogantly rejected Wuxx Yan's invitation, opting to team up with two Fragment Thought Sect tribes.

As a result, Wuxx Yan could only choose from the numerous Fragment Thought Sect tribes to invite. Some of these tribes were quite good, but the decision of whom to ultimately invite as a helper needed Ning Fan's opinion. In this regard, Wuxx Yan was not a domineering person.

"No problem, Daoist Wuxx can invite whoever you see fit, I have no objections..."

Just as Ning Fan finished speaking, suddenly there was a commotion from a nearby Huanhai Clan team.

It appeared that the team leader of Huanhai Clan—a Mid-Phase Shattered Thought scarred man—was arguing with his Dao partner.

And his Dao partner was known as Supreme Ox Demon, but under the alias Qingling.

Listening to the argument, it seemed that Supreme Ox Demon casually mentioned, "Why not team up with Tamo Clan," which led to her being scolded by the scarred man.

No wonder he was furious. He had always suspected that his little wife had something with Ning Fan, and now she openly suggested teaming up with Ning Fan from Tamo Clan, treating him like a decoration! This was blatant infidelity!

"You're such a needling woman! Doesn't my spear already satisfy your needs? What's so good about that foreign cultivator! Look at his build, it's obvious he lacks skills in bed! How could he compare to me!"

"..." Being called a woman of ill-repute by a mere Fragment Thought junior filled Supreme Ox Demon's heart with killing intent, yet she suppressed it instantly.

"Fine! Great! It seems I've pampered you too much lately, making you forget your place. You're just my cauldron furnace, bought from the flower house! You're nothing but a worn-out woman with arms for a thousand pillows! Without me, you'd be living like a dog! I gave you a new life and you now wish to betray me!"

"..." Supreme Ox Demon appeared timidly with her head lowered, but inside, killing intent surged! Arms for a thousand pillows, hahaha...

Ning Fan couldn't help but sweat for the scarred man who didn't know how close to death he was.

The scarred man seemed to be addicted to his rant and continued to scowl, completely ignoring the team-up issue. Gradually, the incense burning time was almost over. Except for Huanhai Clan, all other tribes had formed teams of three.

Those who hadn't completed the team-up were only Ning Fan, Wuxx Yan, and the argumentative Huanhai Clan left.

"Brother Ning seems quite interested in Huanhai Clan..." Wuxx Yan looked at the drama of Huanhai Clan with profound meaning, wondering if Ning Fan really had something with that woman Qingling? By appearance, Qingling was only moderately attractive and couldn't compare to her own beauty. Yet Ning Fan seemed indifferent to her beauty, showing interest in that young girl instead; his taste was indeed unique.

Due to these considerations, Wuxx Yan didn't invite anyone else to join but waited for Ning Fan's decision. She figured Ning Fan likely wanted to team up with Huanhai Clan, and she didn't mind doing him a favor by inviting Huanhai Clan.

Additionally, Huanhai Clan was not considered a powerful tribe but had outstanding accomplishments in the Illusory Art Path, surpassing many powerful tribes. Thus, teaming up with Huanhai Clan wasn't truly a disadvantage.

Regarding Wuxx Yan's words, Ning Fan was noncommittal, merely watching the drama unfolding between the couple in Huanhai Clan.

And so time flew by, the scarred man finally regrettably realized that the time for team formation was running out, and at that moment, the tribes that hadn't completed team-ups were just Huanhai Clan, Tamo Clan, and Sea Witch Sect!

He had no choice but to team up with Ning Fan! Otherwise, once the incense burned out, Huanhai Clan would lose eligibility for the magical trial!

"Damn it, I have no choice but to team up with that foreign cultivator... I wonder if such big shots are willing to team up with us."

The scarred man, after all, was only domineering within his own circle. He dared to be fierce with his little wife, but it didn't mean he was foolish enough to openly provoke Ning Fan, Wuxx Yan, those seasoned monsters.

After witnessing Ning Fan's trial of strength, if he dared provoke Ning Fan, he'd be a fool!

So, when Wuxx Yan suggested teaming up with Huanhai Clan, the scarred man gratefully thanked her for the invitation and greeted Ning Fan politely, pretending to be oblivious to the flirtations between Ning Fan and Supreme Ox Demon.

Though furious about his little wife's infidelity, considering this cooperation, the weak Huanhai Clan teaming up with the powerful Sea Witch Sect and Tamo Clan wasn't too bad.

If the tribe could achieve better results, losing a negligible little woman... then so be it!

The man with the scar gritted his teeth and silently made a decision in his heart. If during the process of forming the team, the young woman and that outside cultivator with the surname Ning secretly communicated... then let her be! Given the seductiveness of that young woman, more likely than not, once the team is successfully formed, she will run off to cozy up with the outside cultivator with the surname Ning, and he'll just pretend he didn't see it!

Sure enough, just as the man with the scar expected, once the teaming relationship was confirmed and they pressed the red clay fingerprint on their maps from respective tribes, Emperor Butcher headed off to talk to Ning Fan as if no one else was present.

Naturally, it was a voice transmission conversation, one could see her lips moving, but couldn't hear what she said to Ning Fan.

The man with the scar only felt a burning jealousy, but could only sigh helplessly, not daring to be angry at Ning Fan.

In the audience, Ouyang Nuan and Burying Moon expressed that they had seen Ning Fan flirt with girls numerous times, and didn't mind. They were only surprised that Ning Fan didn't even spare married women, which seemed to be the first time.

Ning Fan, unaware of being misunderstood, continued his conversation with Emperor Butcher.

His expression was somewhat solemn because Emperor Butcher told him some news.

"Kid, you need to be careful during this illusion trial. It's not just Tuo's disciple who wants to kill you. According to the information from my spies in Sanyan, members of Sanyan will appear during this illusion trial to kill you, reportedly led by Meng Zhen's elders."

"Meng Zhen's elders?" Ning Fan's eyes slightly narrowed.

Meng Zhen was already a powerful Eternal Immortal Venerable, so his elders would at least be Immortal Kings, and possibly Immortal Emperors...

He was mentally prepared for Sanyan's revenge, after all, he had killed the Stone Flame Demon Child, and if there was no revenge, Ning Fan would find it unbelievable.

He just didn't expect this revenge to occur right at this moment, during the illusion trial...

"But you can rest assured, as long as you can meet my requirements during this illusion trial, in return, I will protect you somewhat. The Meng clan within the Stone Flame is not the strongest. Let alone if just some members of the Meng clan come, even if the Stone Flame Master himself arrives, if I choose to protect you, he won't be able to harm you!" Emperor Butcher said very arrogantly, with a somewhat domineering demeanor.

"I haven't yet thanked the lady for the Illusory Night Pearl. If you say the lady gave me this item without asking for anything in return, Ning Fan absolutely won't believe it. The lady has appeared before Ning Fan multiple times, I don't know what you want? Are we enemies or friends? It would be good to judge clearly."

"I have a request from you, naturally without malice. This matter is not urgent, I will tell you later, but I can assure you, this matter also offers you great benefits. Oh, and there's another matter where I need your help. After entering the Fire Soul Tower, I must mobilize all my cultivation to accomplish something, during which this physical body won't be able to exert any cultivation and will be extremely weak. At that time, you must protect me well and don't let my body die tragically inside the Fire Soul Tower. If this happens, then the entire trip to the Fire Soul Tower would be wasted."

"This... rest assured, during the lady's cultivation limitations, I will certainly protect you somewhat."

For the time being, Emperor Butcher did not seem to be hostile, so Ning Fan treated her courteously while remaining cautious internally, curious what exactly Emperor Butcher wanted from him, perhaps related to the existence of the Fire Soul Tower?

Soon, a stick of incense burned out, and then Heaven Capital Emperor opened a light gate at the center of the square. One by one, tribes who completed their team formation proceeded under the guidance of Bright Temple Monks, entering the light gate in threes.

The stone terrain of Middle State was extraordinarily tough, and reaching the deep underground two-world seal was challenging using earth evasion abilities. This light gate provided direct access to the two-world seal's Fire Soul Tower.

Ning Fan's group quickly entered the light gate, along with Emperor Butcher, Wuxx Yan, and others, they were randomly transported to a location on the first level of the Fire Soul Tower.

What immediately greeted them was Fire Soul power, twice as intense as that of the outside world! This Fire Soul Tower is indeed a paradise for practitioners of fire! If not for the purpose of illusion trials, Ning Fan would have been happy to practice here and condense some Fire Path Ferocious Origin Crystal, certainly beneficial for higher-level Feng Yin-Yang cultivation.

Forget it, the major issue takes precedence, cultivation must be temporarily set aside.

Ning Fan looked at the dim map; as they stepped into this place, a dark region on the map randomly illuminated with white light.

The illuminated area was labeled as [Illusion Bamboo Forest? East].

Ning Fan looked around, surrounded by collapsed and abandoned temples, and looking west, he could see vast expanses of rugged purple bamboo, towering ten-thousand feet high. Rather, the bamboo forest was enveloped with Yin energy, echoing with ghostly cries, and occasionally with beast roars that soared into the sky, carrying immobilizing Immortal King power!

"Hiss? Our team's luck is really bad to be randomly transported to the third of the four dangerous places on the first level of the Fire Soul Tower, Illusion Bamboo Forest! Based on the map, this bamboo forest is guarded by Illusory Beasts of Immortal King level, attacking anyone attempting to enter the bamboo forest! The Illusion Bamboo Forest spans a hundred miles, if the map can be activated here, a huge score can be earned, and it's recorded that deep in the Illusion Bamboo Forest, there are many ancient expensive pills... Too bad this place is too dangerous, it's clearly not somewhere we can venture."

Wuxx Yan looked at the map, then at the Western Purple Bamboo Forest, somewhat regretfully, shaking her head.

The Fire Soul Tower is very peculiar, every time before the second round of tomb raiding begins, the heavens within the Fire Soul Tower would collapse entirely, and then be reborn. Essentially, every time the second round of tomb raiding starts, it marks the beginning of creation and destruction within the Fire Soul Tower.

The freshly generated heavens are extremely unfamiliar environments for any entrant. Though Wuxx Yan had entered the Fire Soul Tower a dozen times outside of tomb raiding periods, looking at this place now still felt unfamiliar and foreign.

If not for the map's introduction, she wouldn't even know where she was standing.

That Immortal King beast's roar imposed a massive sense of danger on Wuxx Yan, making her unwilling to enter the depths of the Illusion Bamboo Forest. Lighting up the map can entirely be done elsewhere, there's no need to risk life and death just for a hundred miles of scoring here!

Not only Wuxx Yan, but also the powerful ones from the Sea Witch Sect and Huanhai Clan, upon hearing the roars of the Immortal King beasts here, they all felt fear, wishing to leave immediately, and making a noise with no semblance of the calmness expected of immortal cultivators.

Ning Fan, however, had no intention to leave in a hurry.

The map might describe this place as dangerous, but as he activated the illusion-breaking ability of the Fu Li demon eyes on his left eye, the bamboo forest appeared like a mirage to him, disappearing bit by bit!

Gradually, in his eyes, where was there any existence of an Illusory Bamboo Forest here? It was instead another form altogether!

The so-called Illusory Bamboo Forest was a lie! The dangers recorded on the map did not exist at all! With the illusionary art skill of Wu Yan and others, they couldn't see through it, but they couldn't fool the eyes of Ning Fan!

"This place..."

Ning Fan was pondering when a fragrant breeze suddenly blew onto him. First, the person's black hair brushed across his face, and then his embrace softened.

It was the feet of the Emperor Butcher who suddenly went weak, as if unable to stand, and she directly collapsed limply into Ning Fan's arms!

The Emperor Butcher's ears immediately turned red, and her heart was secretly startled. She thought to herself that the force of creation and destruction of the Fire Soul Tower seemed to suppress her more strongly than before. Caught off guard, she found her entire body limp, and even the strength to stand was drained!

A pair of rounded breasts were pressed against Ning Fan's chest. Even though the Emperor Butcher acted decisively in killing, she was still a woman, and the physical contact somewhat embarrassed her.

She wanted to get out of Ning Fan's embrace and stand up, yet couldn't muster the strength to stand steady enough, causing her to feel a bit of a headache.

"... You said before that you couldn't mobilize your cultivation, but you didn't say you couldn't even stand steady..." Ning Fan felt speechless and communicated telepathically. He found the beauty in his arms to be like a hot potato, unsure whether to throw or hold. That body was soft and fragrant, yet in essence, she was an absolute disaster star...

"Hmm, I miscalculated. The tower's force is stronger than before... Never mind, I have no strength in my body now at all, so you may as well carry me forward," the Emperor Butcher said straightforwardly. It seemed like being carried was just a small matter, no harm, no foul.

"..." a speechless Ning Fan.

"What? Not willing? Hehe, you're not even daring to hold a woman delivered to your doorstep? When you used that bewitching technique on me earlier, I didn't see you acting so timidly."

"... Why don't you find your Dao partner? Wouldn't having him hold you be better?"

"Hehe, hehe... Don't mention the word 'Dao partner' to me. I'm nearly at my breaking point already, only fearing that if I can't hold back, I might slaughter the entire Huanhai Clan. If that truly happens, it would violate my and Supreme Ox Demon's promise."

"I see, it's only because of a promise that you're suppressing your intent to kill... Supreme Ox Demon..." Ning Fan's eyes slightly narrowed.

"Alright then... I can't even stand, let alone walk. Why don't you, young man, put in some effort and carry me for a while? In return, if you encounter an illusory formation here that you can't break, I'll provide you with some guidance in illusory arts. How about that?"

Guidance in illusory arts?

Receiving guidance from a Grand Emperor Master of Illusions was something Ning Fan naturally wouldn't refuse. Suddenly, he no longer thought of the soft body in his arms as a hot potato. Furthermore, with the Emperor Butcher in his embrace, he didn't fear her capriciousness. With such close physical contact, employing a bewitching technique against the Emperor Butcher became an easy feat. Even though the opponent's strength was formidable, with a bewitching technique in hand, he was not entirely without the power to fight back, thus was equipped to handle the worst case scenario. On deeper thought, perhaps the Emperor Butcher allowing herself to be carried was her way of reassuring him she harbored no ill will. With this realization, his eyes steadied as he lifted the Emperor Butcher amidst the varied expressions of onlookers.

The Emperor Butcher then looked at Ning Fan with great implications, her lotus arms wrapped around his neck, and then rested her small face against his chest. To outsiders, she seemed incredibly shy and coquettish, though in truth, no such embarrassment was there; she quickly adapted to it all.

The Sea Witch Sect fell silent: this Ning-named foreign cultivator was so audacious, openly embracing a teammate's wife. Was he not afraid of teammates turning on him? Such shameless behavior paid no regard to the feelings of the Huanhai Clan at all.

The Huanhai Clan similarly fell silent as everyone's gazes landed on the scarred man, filled with sympathy, anger, mockery, and schadenfreude, varying with their relationship with him.

The scarred man felt as if his head was already covered with lush green lettuce, yet he seemed mentally prepared, laughing spontaneously and not minding in the slightest.

"It seems I've unfairly gained the infamy of seizing another's wife..."

Ning Fan felt somewhat speechless. He knew the Emperor Butcher was not actually the Dao partner of the scarred man, so holding her was not some great sin. However, this was something he couldn't explain to others.

Deciding explanations were unnecessary, he moved forward with an unchanged expression, carrying the beauty in his arms. Meanwhile, the Emperor Butcher simply leaned against him, discreetly extending her spirit sense to delve deeply into the Fire Soul Tower's mysteries...

As the cuckolded man remained silent, Wu Yan naturally wouldn't accuse Ning Fan of anything, still with a smiling demeanor, she said to him.

"I reckon, this place is exceedingly perilous. Perhaps we should leave soon and head to another location; what do you think, Brother Ning?"

"Perilous, eh... How about this, let's part ways and light the map. I wish to study the illusory formations of the Illusory Bamboo Forest a bit more here. You all go ahead, what do you say?"

"Very well. In that case, we'll part ways with you here, Brother Ning. We still hope you won't linger here too long and will set off soon to illuminate more maps, as that's the priority."

Seeing Ning Fan genuinely intent on lingering a bit here, Wu Yan didn't push further. Acting separately was fine too. If the Sha Bailou came killing, she could be far away and avoid entanglement. It sufficed to share Ning Fan's exam results.

"In this case, my Huanhai Clan will accompany Lord Wu Yan in departing." The scarred man decided to lead the Huanhai Clan along with Wu Yan. As for his little wife... well, she would just be left to Ning Fan. Ah well, time to find another.

With paths diverging, only Ning Fan and the Emperor Butcher remained here.

Ning Fan took a long look at the Illusory Bamboo Forest before suddenly carrying the Emperor Butcher deeper into the bamboo, feeling a certain aura within drawing his Fu Li blood forward...

Chapter 1038: Cloud Blood Fruit

The bamboo forest before him stretched for hundreds of miles, resembling a vast sea of bamboo.

Ning Fan had been to the Tree World's bamboo sea, where he left behind some past memories. Now, triggered by the scene, he couldn't help but reminisce.

Hollow Bamboo, with a soul dwelling; the soul takes root, in the heart of the bamboo; the root of the soul, the heart of the bamboo, inseparable...

He wondered how Old Tree Spirit Mu Luo was doing after reuniting with his old lover... How were his friends and family in the Rain Immortal World... Had Mother awakened... Had the Dao Fruit planted by his master matured...

Shaking his head, Ning Fan put aside his distracting thoughts, slowly advancing through the bamboo forest, carefully observing the changes around the bamboo sea.

With his Fuli Illusion-Breaking Talent, he could easily decipher the illusionary pattern here. There were no Immortal King illusionary beasts in this place, in fact, even the bamboo sea before him was false, non-existent.

Outside the bamboo forest, he thought he could rely on his Fuli talent to easily decipher the bamboo sea's illusions.

However, once he stepped into the bamboo forest, it was a different feeling, the illusory bamboo sea suddenly felt extremely real. Inside Mount Luxxx, Ning Fan found it difficult to see through this bamboo sea.

Gradually, a serious expression appeared on Ning Fan's face.

Even though he had been walking through the bamboo forest for a long time, for some reason, he always felt like he was walking in place, as if with every step he took, the entire bamboo sea moved a step as well.

Although he felt as if he saw through the bamboo sea's illusions, after deciphering them, he frustratingly found himself still trapped in another layer of illusions.

No, it's not just an illusion! It's really just staying in the same place!

Ning Fan checked the scroll map and found that only a very small area of the map was illuminated, indicating that although he seemed to have traveled far within the bamboo forest, he was actually just going in circles...

One incense stick passed, then another... Ning Fan circled around and somehow ended up coming out of the bamboo forest and back to where he started.

Finally, he acknowledged the complexity of this bamboo forest illusion.

"This bamboo forest illusion is not as simple as I imagined," Ning Fan thought to himself.

Emperor Butcher was a bit speechless, and said to Ning Fan, "Alright, kid, put me down. You've been circling around here for half an hour, and even though the trial of illusions will last for a month, you can't waste time like this. Alright, I've gradually adapted to the suppressing force here, and I can move freely now."

With that, Emperor Butcher twisted her slender waist, jumped down from Ning Fan's embrace, landed on the ground, and shook off the numbness from her body, then stared at Ning Fan with a strange gaze.

Stare.

Stare.

Stare.

Ning Fan felt a bit uncomfortable being stared at and asked, "Why is the young lady looking at me like that?"

"I'm looking at a weirdo, the most amazing weirdo in the world," Emperor Butcher replied earnestly.

"Weirdo? Is the young lady talking about me... What do you mean by that?"

"Imagine if there was a person in the world who could ignore grand illusions like the 'Five Finger Illusion,' but was stumped by an entry-level 'Inferior Taixuan Illusion,' would you call that person a weirdo?"

"What is the Five Finger Illusion... and what is the Taixuan Illusion?" Ning Fan perked up and asked.

"That's not the point. The point is, your talent for illusions is very high, but you seem to have not systematically learned illusions. Is that so?"

"Uh, indeed I haven't systematically studied illusions... the young lady has good insight." Ning Fan nodded.

"Good insight? Seeing through this doesn't require much insight. I bet any illusion master among the Immortal Emperor-level could see your illusion foundation is quite shallow. From what I've seen of your method of breaking illusions, it seems you only know how to forcibly break them, without understanding the basics of 'attacking the illusion and hiding the reality' and 'guarding the reality and placing the illusion,' let alone advanced concepts like 'creating illusions,' 'destroying illusions,' or the 'Taixuan Eight Thousand Illusions.' You can't just wander through the bamboo forest aimlessly. That won't work."

"Indeed, your talent for illusions is very high. With your talent, forcibly breaking ordinary illusions is not difficult. But know this, the illusions inside the Fire Soul Tower, many of them are renowned Taixuan illusions from ancient times. If you don't understand the deep principles of illusions, unless your cultivation far surpasses the one who set the array, it would be impossible to forcibly break these ancient illusions..."

"Do you think no one in the Sea Witch Sect or the Huanhai Clan can see through the true situation of the Illusory Bamboo Forest? Do you think they all quickly left out of fear of the false Immortal King beast roars here? I don't know about others, but I'm sure there are people in the Huanhai Clan who can see through the illusion's reality here. After all, the Huanhai Clan has a lone copy of the 'Taixuan Eight Thousand Illusions Lower Volume,' someone must be able to see through the Taixuan Illusions here, which is why they decisively abandoned this place and chose to illuminate other sections of the map."

Attacking the illusion and hiding the reality, guarding the reality and placing the illusion, creating illusions, destroying illusions... Ning Fan had only read about these terms in ancient texts, and didn't understand what they meant.

The Four Heavens had very few illusion masters, and even fewer illusion traditions had been passed down. These terms seemed to be extremely advanced illusion knowledge, it was no wonder Ning Fan didn't understand them. Although the demon race was very skilled in illusions and had passed down many ancient illusion traditions, unfortunately, Ning Fan had never been to the Higher Realms' Immortal Demon World; if he had, he might have learned these illusionary arts...

As for the strange term 'Taixuan Eight Thousand Illusions,' Ning Fan swore this was the first time he had ever heard of it.

Ning Fan knew that Emperor Butcher was probably dropping hints to help him, so he certainly wouldn't pass up the opportunity to learn. After all, here was a Great Emperor guiding him in illusions; many ancient experts would be willing to give up everything for the chance to hear the teachings of a Master of Illusions.

"Senior, are you saying the illusion of this bamboo forest is not a normal Immortal illusion, but one of the 'Taixuan Illusions' you mentioned?" Ning Fan's eyes narrowed as he asked.

"Indeed, the illusion here is one of the Taixuan Illusions. In ancient times, the Black Buddha Sect had an illusion prodigy known as the Taixuan Elder. Although his cultivation wasn't the pinnacle, his understanding of illusions was unmatched. He collected over eight thousand of the strongest illusions from across the heavens, compiling them into a work titled 'Taixuan Eight Thousand Illusions,' divided into upper, middle, and lower volumes. The upper volume recorded the strongest illusions, the middle volume the next strongest, and the lower volume contained the weakest. However, even the weakest Taixuan Illusions were potent enough for a mumbling True Immortal to use as a secret technique."

"Because of the existence of the Taixuan Elder, later generations even regard the term Taixuan Illusion Technique as a general term for powerful illusions. Taixuan Illusion Techniques are divided into three grades: upper, middle, and lower. The bamboo forest illusion here is merely a lower-grade Taixuan Illusion Technique. If the practitioner has slightly weaker cultivations, your skill would be enough to forcibly break the technique and reach the depths of the bamboo forest. But unfortunately, the practitioner is the Fire Soul Tower itself... In this case, you can only hope to break this technique by understanding the true and false of this illusion."

"I know you sensed the treasure in the deep bamboo, so you want to enter this bamboo forest, right? Well then, follow me; I'll take you into this bamboo forest. Hmm... it still won't work. Although I can walk, some places that require brisk walking cannot be traversed quickly enough, and cannot span the gap between illusion reality... Fine, carry me for a while, follow my lead, and naturally, you can enter the depths of the bamboo forest!"

Emperor Butcher walked directly to Ning Fan and calmly said, "Carry me!"

"...Oh." Ning Fan answered, once again carrying Emperor Butcher horizontally. Having experienced it before, this time neither was too embarrassed, remaining very calm. Emperor Butcher's body fragrance filled Ning Fan's nostrils, a hint of honey-like sweetness that he hadn't noticed when his mind was unsettled.

"What are you smelling!" Emperor Butcher frowned. Although she didn't mind physical contact between men and women, she was not willing to be openly teased by Ning Fan like this.

"Sorry." Realizing he had been caught sniffing her scent, even Ning Fan, with his thick skin, felt somewhat embarrassed.

"No need to mind it too much; if you want to smell it, it's not impossible. Oh, and don't keep calling me 'young lady'; just call me Qingling." Seeing Ning Fan wasn't purposely teasing, Emperor Butcher didn't mind, even jokingly replying to Ning Fan.

"Uh, isn't Qingling your alias? Could it be your real name?"

"Of course it's my real name. I only disguise this identity; the name is real."

"Haha, I thought your real name was Emperor Butcher?"

"...What woman would name herself that... Emperor Butcher is just my code name for participating in the Blood Martial Arena, like your code name 'Slaughter Fox'; it doesn't mean much. From now on, just call me Qingling; calling 'young lady' all the time is annoying to hear. Hmm, I won't call you 'boy,' either; I'll address you by your name, since I seek your help, I need to respect you a little. Enough idle talk; the

illusion here has changed. Move to the direction I indicate. South twenty steps, west eleven steps, change direction, and enter the bamboo forest from this position!"

Emperor Butcher directed from within Ning Fan's arms.

Oh, perhaps he shouldn't call this delicate woman Emperor Butcher anymore; even though she kills without mercy, she desires not such a name.

So, it's Qingling...

Ning Fan moved according to Emperor Butcher's directions, entering the bamboo forest. Then, under her guidance, he gradually approached the depths of the forest.

"West nine steps, retreat one step, south two steps, speed three breaths per step, slow pace."

"East three steps, west three steps, east two steps, west two steps... speed four breaths per step, slow pace again."

"West seventy-nine steps, quick pace, one breath ten steps!"

"East two hundred and twenty-seven steps, quick pace, one breath thirty steps!"

"Faster!"

"Slow down!"

"Chop the left thirteenth Purple Bamboo with your palm!"

"Move this stone!"

Regarding Emperor Butcher's directions, Ning Fan felt confused, as if a barrier prevented him from comprehending the real brilliance within.

He held the beauty, moving swiftly like a leopard at times, slowly like a turtle at others, sometimes going east, sometimes west, occasionally destroying some bamboo. He didn't know how long he had walked when the dense bamboo suddenly opened up, revealing a vast clearing ahead.

Emperor Butcher said 'arrived', leaped from Ning Fan's arms, and gazed around with great interest.

Feeling light in his arms, Ning Fan freed his hands and took out the map to check, noticing that in this short time, the area of Illusory Bamboo Forest on the map had been completely lit up. Clearly, through Emperor Butcher's seemingly indecipherable guidance, Ning Fan had traversed hundreds of miles of this bamboo forest and finally reached its depths!

Here, the scent attracting his Fu Li Demon Bloodline grew even stronger.

Ning Fan put away the map, looked around, then raised his head, his expression suddenly stiffening.

Above the clearing, amidst fluttering bamboo leaves, hundreds of vividly ethereal purple-black birds were dancing. All were in a spectral form, emitting a glowing light, chirping crisply in mid-air, ethereal and illusory!

Under the glimmering light of their wings, the place felt dreamlike and illusionary, with a unique fragrance filling the air, refreshing and sobering. The surroundings of eerie Purple Bamboo gave the bamboo forest an ethereal and secluded beauty, seemingly isolated from the world.

"What a beautiful place; it's because of the Cloud Blood Fruit growing here." Emperor Butcher stretched lazily and turned to Ning Fan, saying, "Kid... no, Ning Fan, do you know why so many spectral birds are dancing here?"

"Didn't the young lady say it's because the Cloud Blood Fruit grows here?"

"Do you know what Cloud Blood Fruit is?"

"I don't."

"Cloud Blood Fruit is a kind of Innate Spiritual Medicine, unique to the Dabei Clan. Consuming this fruit raw can enhance a Master's blood flow, strengthening parts of the physical defense. It grows from the blood of Immortal Emperor-level Powerhouses at the site of their demise, using the blood as nourishment and slowly forming. It absorbs the essence of heaven and earth, growing gradually; when mature, the Spirit Fruit body becomes void, transforming into endless illusions. The different blood from the powerhouses used as nourishment makes the medis highly unique. Look at the bird phantoms here... no, not ordinary birds, these bird shadows must be of that specific demon class... the evil presence of the Feather Fiend Lineage, the Fu Li! So, the effect of this Cloud Blood Fruit should be increasing blood flow in the eyes, significantly enhancing a Master's vision to improve Illusion Deciphering."

Ning Fan thought indeed, these dazzling, dancing fluorescent birds are illusions of Fu Li. Presumably, the Cloud Blood Fruit growing here once absorbed nutrients from the blood of Fu Li Demonic Mounts, thus manifesting these phantoms.

"All the shadows of birds here are transformed from Cloud Blood Fruits, false among the many with only one real. If you wish to capture this fruit, you must catch the one true bird shadow. Ning Fan, with your ability, you should be able to discern which bird is real, right?"

"I'll give it a try."

Ning Fan's proficiency in illusions might truly be as high as the Emperor Butcher claimed, with great natural talent yet shaky fundamentals. Nevertheless, his skill in seeing through illusions was exceptional, with the Fuli Breaking Illusion Talent combined with the formidable Tianren Eye Technique. Effortlessly, he identified the true entity among hundreds of bird shadows. Ning Fan's figure merely flickered slightly before he stood still again, as if he had never left his place, never leaped, yet he had already captured a bird shadow from midair.

The bird shadow captured by Ning Fan fluttered its wings, unable to escape from Ning Fan's grasp, then reluctantly transformed into a luminous, fair and reddish fruit, resembling an infant's tender and delicate skin.

The Cloud Blood Fruit was now in hand!

In the instant of acquiring the Cloud Blood Fruit, all other false bird shadows vanished without a trace.

Touching the slightly cool Cloud Blood Fruit in his hand, Ning Fan could feel his Fuli bloodline radiating with excitement. Clearly, this fruit had formed using Fuli blood as nourishment, and consuming it would enhance illusion deciphering for others, but for Ning Fan, it would also improve his Fuli bloodline.

No doubt, the Emperor Butcher hadn't deceived him; just by touching the fruit, he could already sense the numerous benefits through his bloodline...

Thoughts of consuming the fruit alone couldn't help but arise, but...

Ning Fan noticed the Emperor Butcher's intense interest in this fruit, and he cooled down, suppressing the fervent craving in his bloodline.

Indeed, he entered this place aiming for the Cloud Blood Fruit, and obtaining it would be ideal. However, he also understood that without the Emperor Butcher's help, given his own skill in illusions, he wouldn't be capable of entering the depths of this bamboo forest to claim the Cloud Blood Fruit.

The fruit rightfully belonged to the Emperor Butcher.

"With my illusion skills, I wouldn't have been able to reach deep inside this bamboo forest without your guidance. It seems like you need this fruit, so take it." Ning Fan smiled lightly and handed the Cloud Blood Fruit to the Emperor Butcher.

The Emperor Butcher's gaze towards Ning Fan became somewhat peculiar, as if it was the first time she had seen someone so generous.

After a brief hesitation, a smile appeared at the corner of her lips.

"If it were an ordinary Cloud Blood Fruit, I wouldn't care, but this one's effects are rather special, and it has significant benefits for me.... However. It seems you also need this fruit, so how about we each eat half of it?"

"Each eat half?" Ning Fan was slightly astonished.

"This fruit can only be consumed raw, and it has a drawback that once it's harvested, it must be eaten within the time of an incense stick's burn, or it will wilt swiftly and lose its effectiveness. In my Dabei Clan, this fruit is known as the 'Flower of the Fruit,' due to its sudden life and death nature. Don't waste time, it's decided, half for each of us. You first eat half, and then pass the rest to me!" The Emperor Butcher cheerfully shoved the Cloud Blood Fruit back into Ning Fan's hand.

Had he not examined the fruit and found it flawless, Ning Fan might almost have suspected that the Emperor Butcher was setting some kind of trap for him by inviting him to partake.

After a cautious investigation, Ning Fan felt guilty for his tinge of mistrust; indeed there was nothing wrong with the fruit.

So, could he now safely consume half and then give the other half to the Emperor Butcher?

For some reason, Ning Fan found himself imagining a scene where the Emperor Butcher's lips slightly parted, savoring the leftover fruit with gusto, unfazed by his saliva on it...

"It's better if you eat first," thinking of this, Ning Fan decided it was best to let the Emperor Butcher eat first.

The Emperor Butcher regarded Ning Fan with a deep glance, then chuckled indifferently, "Ah, what a cautious young lad..."

Worried that I might tamper with the fruit and therefore want me to eat first? Hehe, such caution isn't misplaced in the cultivation world. Well, I meant to let you eat first so you could have more, but since you suspect me, then I'll simply help myself...

With this thought, the Emperor Butcher no longer hesitated with Ning Fan and quickly ate most of the fruit.

After eating roughly two-thirds, she left one-third for Ning Fan...

"The rest is for you, hurry up and eat it; bear in mind that once time's up, the fruit's potency will dissipate."

Ning Fan looked at the remaining third of the Cloud Blood Fruit in his hand, feeling a little disheartened.

What happened to the promise of half for each?

The prominent Emperor Butcher, a powerful figure almost at the Quasi-Saint level, the formidable master of the Illusionary Control Position as a Great Emperor, is really going back on her word?

Oh well, thanks to the Emperor Butcher's guidance, he managed to obtain the fruit free of charge; it's pretty good to eat a third for nothing.

Ning Fan brought the fruit to his mouth, ready to bite down, then suddenly noticed the edge of the fruit bearing faint lipstick marks...

So he raised his glance, peculiarly looking at the lips of the Emperor Butcher. Eating it now would seem like eating her lipstick as well...

"Hurry up, eat. We still have important matters to attend to; although this Illusion Trial will last for a month, just traveling to the sixth floor's base will take a considerable amount of time." Seeing Ning Fan hesitant to bite, the Emperor Butcher urged impatiently.

She clearly mistook Ning Fan for being timid and overly cautious, afraid to recklessly eat the fruit she had eaten from, thinking thusly, she wished she could snatch away the remaining third of the fruit and finish it herself! It's rare for her to show goodwill in sharing the treasure equally with this youngster, and yet he still harbors suspicion towards her. Hehe, hehe... She really felt like venting her anger.

"This woman seems to misunderstand something..."

Ning Fan shook his head, ignoring the rouge on the fruit, and wolfed down the remaining fruit in just a few bites, leaving only the core.

The first sensation was the fruit's sweetness, a kind of sweetness with a hint of blood, apparently due to the fruit being nourished by blood.

The second sensation was that the rouge was also quite sweet, tasting like honey. One wonders what kind of rouge Emperor Butcher used. It seems that no matter how fierce a woman is, in the end, she's still a woman who adorns herself.

The third sensation... was the overwhelming medicinal power contained in this fruit! This was indeed an Innate Spiritual Medicine. Even though it was only one-third, eating it raw like this was extraordinary!

Seeing Ning Fan's flushed and blood-filled face, looking as if he had overindulged, Emperor Butcher frowned belatedly.

She had forgotten about this. To her Half-Step Quasi-Saint body, swallowing innate spiritual medicine wasn't a big deal, but for Ning Fan, it seemed to be a bit too much.

"Sit cross-legged, meditate, circulate your energy, and refine the medicinal power! Forget it, this item originally had another purpose, but I might as well lend it to you now! I cannot exert my cultivation at this moment to help you quickly refine the medicinal power within you, but the Will of the Saint contained within this item is enough to press you into accelerating the refinement of the medicinal power!"

Emperor Butcher was unaware of Ning Fan's background, which is why she was worried if Ning Fan's overindulgence would endanger his life.

Ning Fan knew his own body very well and was well-prepared to refine the massive medicinal power of the Innate Spiritual Medicine. If he wasn't confident, he wouldn't dare to eat the Innate Spiritual Medicine raw.

He initially intended to handle the immense medicinal power himself, but when he saw what Emperor Butcher took out, he changed his mind.

With the assistance of the Will of the Saint provided by Emperor Butcher, he could expedite the refinement of the medicinal power. With such benefits, he wouldn't refuse. He also didn't want to waste too much time refining the medicinal power within the Illusory Bamboo Forest.

Emperor Butcher slightly parted her red lips, spitting out a beam of blood-light. Within that blood-light, the object was indiscernible, wrapped and sealed layer upon layer. Ning Fan's spirit sense couldn't penetrate those seals to see clearly.

Even though he couldn't see what it was, Ning Fan could distinctly sense the overwhelming will exuding from it!

The Will of the Saint!

Once, at the Zhenhuan River, Ning Fan used the Immortal Emperor's will provided by the River Demon to quickly refine some Dark Star Fruit, greatly enhancing his cultivations.

Under the auxiliary pressure of a strong will, blood and mana can accelerate in flow, thus speeding up the refinement of consumed spiritual fruits and expensive pills.

The Will of the Saint, in terms of quality, is naturally far inferior to the Immortal Emperor's will, but in terms of quantity, it differs. The Immortal Emperor's will the River Demon collected from the Zhenhuan River was extremely diluted and mixed, whereas the Will of the Saint exuding from the item taken out by Emperor Butcher at this moment was unimaginably immense, giving Ning Fan the illusion of truly facing a Saint!

As a result, the sense of oppression brought about by the Will of the Saint in front of him, in some sense, surpassed the Immortal Emperor's will he felt before!

"Thank you!" Ning Fan sat cross-legged, refining the medicinal power within him while expressing his gratitude.

"It's a small matter, no need to keep it in mind. You can completely consider my help as our trade-off. Alright, quickly refine the medicinal power within you!" Emperor Butcher feigned lightheartedness,

though her delicate body trembled slightly. At this moment, unable to exert any of her cultivation, the sudden use of this item made it difficult to resist the overwhelming Will of the Saint.

However, to save time and let Ning Fan quickly refine the excess medicinal power within him, she didn't dwell on it.

With the aid of this immense Will of the Saint, it didn't take long for the medicinal power of the Cloud Blood Fruit within Ning Fan to be entirely refined. After refining, Ning Fan distinctly felt that his eyesight was more potent, discerning the illusionary changes around him more clearly than before.

Clearly, these were the benefits brought by the Cloud Blood Fruit!

Additionally, his Fu Li Demon Bloodline also advanced to some degree due to consuming this fruit. Even a drop of ancestral blood once burned in anger in the Barbarian Wilderness Ancient Domain had partly been restored!

Amazingly, it had been directly refined back to one-tenth!

"By the way, the reward you obtained at the Blood Martial Arena last time seems to have yet to be consumed. Given that the item is unsealed once, let's use this will's pressure to refine all the expensive pills you have. Gaining more strength is very beneficial for my trip's purpose as well!"

Emperor Butcher's face turned slightly pale under the pressure of the Will of the Saint, yet she continued to speak nonchalantly.

Clearly, she was determined to let Ning Fan gain as much strength as possible in one go.

With Emperor Butcher's good intentions, Ning Fan naturally didn't refuse. He flipped his hand to take out Blood Martial Arena's rewards, including the Nirvana Mother Stone Marrow and Thunder Tempering Fruit, consuming and refining them one by one!

The aura around him surged continuously under the nourishment of various medicines!

The rapidly rising cultivation aura transformed into a raging storm, sweeping through the bamboo forest and engulfing the place!

...

Outside the bamboo forest, a beam of blood-light, ignoring the forbidden force of the space, skimmed across the ground, crashing down violently outside the bamboo forest.

As the blood-light landed, a sharp-featured, merciless man stepped out, staring at the bamboo forest with a murderous intent surging.

It was Sha Bailou!

"Such a delicious scent, hehe, hiding in this bamboo forest, huh? Well then, I'll enter this bamboo forest and thoroughly enjoy this delicacy of yours!"

Sha Bailou licked his lips, his figure flickered, transforming into blood-light, forcefully charging into the Illusory Bamboo Forest!

Chapter 1039: A Million Streams Converge into an Ocean

In the clearing deep within the bamboo sea, Ning Fan sat cross-legged, using the Will of the Saint to refine the immense medicinal power within him.

Suspended in mid-air was an object, unclear due to layers of seals. The blood light it emitted was blinding and searing, akin to a small sun, making it hard to keep one's eyes open.

A vast Will of the Saint emanated from this object, enveloping the clearing.

Under such profound Will of the Saint, Ning Fan seemed burdened with countless high mountains, heavily oppressed, causing the blood in his body to flow nearly tenfold, hundredfold... even more than usual!

Just as sweat appeared on his body, it was immediately evaporated by the terrifying high temperature on his surface, producing a sizzling sound.

His meridians transmitted a throbbing pain, sometimes even rupturing, leading to injuries, obviously resulting from the excessive flow of Mana within his body.

Fortunately, Ning Fan's physical self-healing ability was extremely formidable, even when injuries occasionally appeared, he could quickly self-recover.

Time was slow, and the surroundings were quiet.

Like a sponge, Ning Fan frantically absorbed the tyrannical medicinal power of the Nirvana Mother Stone Marrow and Thunder Tempering Fruit within his body. His eyes were tightly shut, a slight expression of pain on his face, the pain naturally caused by forcibly absorbing the vast medicinal power of these heavenly treasures.

What is Nirvana Mother Stone Marrow? It can only be extracted from mineral veins of Nirvana Mother Stone above five stars. The extraction process is exceptionally brutal, requiring the destruction of an entire mineral vein to refine a very scarce few drops of essence.

The twelve drops of Nirvana Mother Stone Marrow in Ning Fan's hand required destroying at least three or four mineral veins to extract them. The contained medicinal power, if converted into equivalent grade Nirvana Mother Stone, could pile up into seven or eight miniature mountains of Nirvana Mother Stone!

If converted into cultivation, consuming these twelve drops of Nirvana Mother Stone Marrow equates to hundreds of thousands of years of arduous cultivation for an ordinary Mortal Cultivator.

As for those Thunder Tempering Fruits, although their value is far inferior to the Nirvana Mother Stone Marrow, their advantage lies in quantity, with a hundred fruits in total, enough to offset an ordinary Mortal Cultivator's twenty thousand years of arduous cultivation.

The vast medicinal power was being refined within, and Ning Fan's Ancient Chaos aura was also soaring due to the nourishment of these body refining spiritual medicines.

After burying Shen Ershisan, Ning Fan's Ancient Demon Blood cultivation had already advanced significantly, having progressed halfway towards the Demonic Tenth Nirvana, now soaring again, not only reaching the peak of Demonic Ninth Nirvana but continuously impacting the bottleneck of Demonic Tenth Nirvana!

One impact, failed.

Second impact, still failed.

Third, fourth... countless attempts, Ning Fan could never truly step into Demonic Tenth Nirvana, always missing by just a fraction.

Gradually, the medicinal power within was fully refined, Ning Fan slowly opened his eyes, halting this rapid surge in cultivation.

He knew what he lacked to truly step into the realm of Demonic Tenth Nirvana.

It was battle!

On that day, while absorbing the power of the Nirvana Mother Stone, the breakthrough to Demonic Ninth Nirvana was seamless, because Ning Fan's cultivation had stopped at Demonic Eighth Nirvana, accumulating enough blood battles.

He broke through to Demonic Ninth Nirvana after entering the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain, but the time spent at Demonic Ninth Nirvana was too short, the baptism of blood battles too few. Ancient Chaos are born for battle, natural warriors, the last step to breakthrough Demonic Tenth Nirvana requires accumulating enough blood battles to succeed!

"It seems you have completed the refinement, not bad, your aura seems to have grown stronger..."

Emperor Butcher pointed a finger heavenward, and the small blood-red sun swirling in mid-air immediately fell into her palm, and with one swallow, she consumed it back into her body.

Ning Fan noticed Emperor Butcher's pale complexion and also the sweaty, clinging green gauze on her body.

Clearly, Emperor Butcher, unable to exert her cultivation at this moment, was under great pressure from the Will of the Saint, suffering intensely. Yet, to aid Ning Fan in refining the medicinal power, she still released the Saint Will magical treasure.

Indeed, he owed Emperor Butcher a favor...

This time, Ning Fan did not express thanks again, feeling that Emperor Butcher was right, verbal gratitude achieved nothing; as long as he could assist Emperor Butcher in the upcoming Fire Soul Tower expedition, he would repay this favor.

Ning Fan stood up, brushing the soil off his body, recalling Emperor Butcher's pale face, suggested: "Would you like to rest here for a while, miss?"

"We don't have much time to rest; when we continue later, just like before, carry me, and I'll rest in your arms to save time." Emperor Butcher's tone was indifferent, and she said,

"Let's first leave this Illusory Bamboo Forest; haha, once out, a formidable foe awaits you outside."

"A formidable foe? Could it be..."

Being deep in the bamboo forest, amidst illusion, Ning Fan's Ice Rain Technique couldn't surpass the illusion to sense outside the bamboo forest, naturally unaware that Sha Bailou had reached here.

"As you guessed, it's him. Let's go meet Emperor Lou Tuo's disciple!"

Emperor Butcher nestled into Ning Fan's embrace, then was effortlessly carried up by Ning Fan without a change in expression, as both had embraced many times before.

Under Emperor Butcher's guidance, Ning Fan found a path through the bamboo, turning left and right, soon disappearing from sight.

...

Outside the Illusory Bamboo Forest, Sha Bailou's face was twisted with rage. Despite his mastery of Illusory Arts, he couldn't enter the bamboo forest. After several attempts, he found himself repeatedly walking out from where he had entered!

He could clearly sense that Ning Fan was inside the bamboo forest, yet he just couldn't get in!

What a bother, truly troublesome. Illusory arts, while not particularly lethal, are often incredibly annoying, especially the one cast upon this bamboo forest. Judging by its level, it had clearly reached the grade of an Inferior Taixuan Illusion Technique. Moreover, being inside a Fire Soul Tower, entering this bamboo forest was as difficult as ascending to the heavens...

Shao Bailou often retreated into a Fire Soul Tower in years past to undergo closed-door training, so he naturally understood the difficulty of the Taixuan Illusion Techniques within the Fire Soul Tower. Having tried in vain, he temporarily gave up on entering the bamboo forest.

"Interesting, interesting indeed, a bamboo forest that even I cannot enter, yet Ning Fan can! This person's capabilities seem to surpass mine, a person indeed worth killing!"

With this thought, Sha Bailou's anticipation of killing Ning Fan grew even greater!

Only such a Ning Fan would be worthy of being killed by him!

Unable to enter the bamboo forest, he used his Great Divine Power to seal off hundreds of miles of land around the bamboo forest. No matter from which direction Ning Fan emerged from the bamboo forest, Sha Bailou could rush over at the first moment to kill Ning Fan outside the bamboo forest!

He did not believe that Ning Fan would remain in the bamboo forest forever, without coming out!

"Come out! Come out and meet your death, let me kill you and drink your blood!"

Shao Bailou's expression was exaggeratedly distorted with excitement, looking extremely deranged.

During this period, other competing tribes who passed by were slaughtered effortlessly by Sha Bailou, releasing his pent-up killing intent.

When Ning Fan walked out of the bamboo forest, he was greeted by the sight of scattered corpses everywhere, and Sha Bailou sitting on a female corpse, playing with a bloodstained human head in his hand!

Ning Fan did not walk out from another path; under the deliberate guidance of the Emperor Butcher, he appeared directly in front of Sha Bailou as he exited the bamboo forest.

Upon seeing Ning Fan, the long-waiting Sha Bailou crushed the human head in his hand and abruptly stood up. Blood and brain matter splattered on him, yet he was indifferent, his eyes brimming with almost manic excitement!

"You finally decided to come out!"

The repressed killing intent finally burst forth without reservation at this moment. The surging Evil Qi turned into a blood fire that rained down like meteors on the ground. Shortly, the surroundings had become a sea of flames.

Ning Fan furrowed his brows, setting down the Emperor Butcher, whose face was filled with a watching-theatre-kind of expression, aside. And the Emperor Butcher whispered 'finish it quickly' to Ning Fan and then knowingly moved to a distance, giving space to Ning Fan's duel with Sha Bailou.

Inevitable things will eventually come. It was no surprise to Ning Fan that Sha Bailou would come to kill him. However, Ning Fan didn't expect Sha Bailou to come so fast. Judging by his speed in finding his tracks, Sha Bailou must have started looking for him as soon as he was teleported to the Fire Soul Tower.

"This person seems to completely disregard the results of the illusion trials, nor does he care how much of the map gets illuminated, he just wants to kill me..."

From Sha Bailou's eyes, Ning Fan read desire, read greed. He wanted to kill him not just on orders from Emperor Lou Tuo but also as an act of following his own inherent bloodlust!

"You have challenged me again and again, beyond my tolerance. If you are intent on seeking death, I would not mind having one more corpse beneath my feet." The acute killing intent surrounding them did not affect Ning Fan's heart, accustomed to bloody mists over the years, as he coldly spoke.

"Haha! Hahaha!"

Sha Bailou suddenly burst into uncontrollable laughter, as if he had heard the funniest joke!

To him, a mere Mortal Cultivator with the cultivation level of an Immortal Venerable could not possibly be his match! No one, not even his master, had truly gauged his strength's limit, dealing with Ning Fan was easy!

The laughable thing was, did this Mortal Cultivator think that possessing an Immortal Venerable level made him comparable to Sha Bailou!

So what if his trial achievement was a bit higher? Did he think it excused ignoring Sha Bailou!

Ludicrous, just ludicrous!

Even if this Mortal Cultivator's current level is sealed, indeed even at his peak state, he is just a First Calamity Immortal Sovereign, wanting to kill him, a First Calamity Immortal Sovereign is not enough! Even a Second Calamity Immortal Lord still isn't enough!

"Do you know why I want to kill you?"

After finishing his laugh, Sha Bailou suddenly spoke, his tone exceedingly contemptuous.

"Because you and I are the same kind of people!"

"You seem to have killed many as well, but unfortunately, compared to me, you are still lacking! Have you ever heard of the Path of Familial Slaughter!"

"Kill father, kill mother, kill wife, kill child... I have slaughtered too many close ones, yet this Path of Familial Slaughter still has its flaws. I have not yet killed my master, nor myself! Killing the master would be fine, as long as my cultivations reach that far, killing the master is not hard, but the hardest thing is to kill oneself!"

"The Path of Familial Slaughter means slaughtering all dear ones, and amongst all people in this world, the closest to me is not my parents, wife, or children, but myself! I am willing to harm everyone, but unwilling to harm myself; everyone else in the world could be my enemy, but only I will never betray myself!"

"But of course, I can't kill myself, so I can only settle for the next best thing, seeking out the mighty ones similar to me to slay! You are an excellent choice!"

"Standing on the pinnacle of slaughter yet not losing one's true nature, there are often only two kinds: one, is the beast guarding its den, capable of slaughtering any would-be attackers to protect what's behind them; the other is... the hunter! I am the hunter, and so are you! We are both driven by the inner desires for slaughter, we... are the same kind! But although we are of the same kind, there is a fundamental difference between you and me, that is... I am stronger than you! This is something you seem not to have realized yet!"

Ning Fan's frowned even deeper.

So it was the Path of Familial Slaughter, no wonder the aura of Sha Bailou was so ferocious. If there was any path Ning Fan detested the most, the righteous Path of Familial Slaughter surely topped the list. But Sha Bailou was mistaken, though Ning Fan had killed many in his lifetime, he was, in essence, not the same type of person as Sha Bailou at all.

If we have to say, he was more like a fierce beast guarding its den from Sha Bailou's words.

"Now, let me show you the disparity in power between us! Buddha's Vast Escape!"

Suddenly, a blast of blood light erupted around Sha Bailou, and he disappeared from the spot without leaving a trace, not even an afterimage, as if by some bizarre magic!

In the Central State Forbidden Sky, where the forbidden force was many times stronger than outside, it was said only someone with the cultivation of an Immortal Emperor could use escape light here. Ning Fan, at least, admitted he couldn't perform escape light here, and could at most rely on agility to run swiftly, yet Sha Bailou could use escape techniques, truly a peculiar matter.

Furthermore, the speed of escape was not the slightest bit inferior to the Vertical Golden Light that Ning Fan had comprehended, perhaps even a notch above Ning Fan's current level of Vertical Golden Light. Ning Fan hadn't even clearly seen Sha Bailou's figure before instinctively forming a defense; the Nightmare Dragon Claw instantly materialized, striking a distance of one zhang forward, almost at the moment of attack, a human-sized blood shadow appeared before Ning Fan.

It was Sha Bailou!

Boom!

The five black slashing waves of the Nightmare Dragon Claw accurately hit Sha Bailou who had suddenly attacked, but the clash force transmitted back, causing acute pain and numbness in Ning Fan's left arm, forcing him back several steps, clearly at a disadvantage!

Sha Bailou not only had extreme moving speed but also immense physical power, far surpassing the current sealed Ning Fan!

What made Ning Fan's glance deepen was that after one strike, Sha Bailou's silhouette, too swift for the eye to capture, suddenly turned and rushed toward the not-far-away Emperor Butcher.

The Emperor Butcher had merely been watching the spectacle, curious how Ning Fan would handle Sha Bailou's provocation, but didn't expect that the brat Sha Bailou dared to attack herself, immediately making her eyes sparkle with cold light.

Behind the cold shimmer was more of solemnity. At the moment her cultivation couldn't exert a bit; even though her cultivation was high, she followed the Illusory Art Path, and her physical body wasn't the strongest among Immortal Emperors. If hacked directly by Sha Bailou, even if not destroyed, she would still suffer severe injury.

If she had even a sliver of cultivation power, she wouldn't be in such a predicament, yet now, there was a faint crisis looming over her, albeit she did have countermeasures, but each came at a hefty price...

Hmph, what's the use of the price, she couldn't allow a youngling to bully her!

Just as Emperor Butcher was about to take action, she suddenly felt emptiness under her feet...

Then, her body got engulfed by Sha Bailou's blood light attack!

"First kill one irritating obstacle, then kill you!"

As the blood light dispersed, the place had turned to ruins, underneath which faint remnants of limbs and body parts were visible. It was unclear whether those belonged to the corpses previously lying around or to the Emperor Butcher. Then Sha Bailou appeared holding a blood-colored bone sword, as per usual, after killing, bringing the sword to his mouth as if to lick the warm blood off it, yet upon licking, realized it slicked nothing but air, which darkened his eyes instantly.

No blood on the sword! This attack actually didn't hit the target! How could a mere girl from the Huanhai Clan dodge his attack!

Gazing sharply toward Ning Fan, he saw Ning Fan holding the fair lady in his arms, quickly realizing that Ning Fan had, somehow, in a fraction of a moment, pulled Emperor Butcher to his side, narrowly escaping Sha Bailou's strike.

Now, Emperor Butcher was held in Ning Fan's embrace. Beneath her feet was a Swirling Void Technique vortex filled with spatial power, slowly dissipating.

To Ning Fan, the Swirling Void Technique's power was insufficient for a duel, but it's quite useful for rescue. Using the space teleportation from the Swirling Void Technique, he had instantly brought Emperor Butcher close to him, thus avoiding Sha Bailou's attack.

Feeling slightly uncomfortable, Emperor Butcher, who had lived for such extensive times, had never been rescued by a junior with less cultivation than her. Her eyes faltered briefly, soon regaining clarity, only feeling that this time Ning Fan held her so tightly, why did she have accelerated breathing? She was quite used to such physical contact, having been held countless times by Ning Fan before, apart from a slightly embarrassing difference during the initial times.

And yet, this time, she felt as though Ning Fan's embrace was like a pincushion, like a trap she could not stay long within and must leave immediately.

Twisting her waist, she wriggled out of Ning Fan's embrace, frowning she chided Ning Fan.

"Even without your intervention, I wouldn't have been harmed by him. Didn't I tell you to wrap this up quickly? Why are you still wasting time with him, three breaths, chop him up!"

Underlying her words, seemingly, she blamed Ning Fan for overdoing it by rescuing her, and further for dawdling without swiftly concluding the battle.

Ning Fan frowned, saying nothing more. Indeed, he had erred, knowing Sha Bailou was no simple foe, he shouldn't have held back but gone all out immediately.

The reason why he hadn't used the Luminous Pearl gifted by Emperor Butcher to restore his full power when first facing Sha Bailou, was purely to see how his drastically elevated Ancient Demon Blood Wine cultivation fared.

Testing had been done, showing the greatly increased Ancient Demon Blood Wine cultivation to be much more formidable, yet against someone like Sha Bailou, who held the strength of an Eternal Immortal Venerable, that level wasn't nearly enough. Simply a disparity in levels.

The trial completed, now focus should be on swiftly ending the encounter!

Ning Fan flipped his hand, drawing out the Illusory Night Pearl bestowed by Emperor Butcher, channeling Mana into it, and with a slight urge, a gentle illusory power flowed from the pearl, infusing into his body.

"Heh, your Path of Killing hasn't reached a heartless, detached state yet; for a mere woman, you wouldn't let go and even saved her. How utterly laughable!"

Not aware of the changes happening within Ning Fan, Sha Bailou was about to launch another attack when his pupils suddenly widened.

What followed was monumental excitement!

Ning Fan actually broke free from the Punishing Ring's seal, temporarily regaining his cultivation!

No mistake! Ning Fan's aura was soaring, this dish was finally showcasing its most delicious aspect!

Except... it seemed Ning Fan hadn't destroyed the Punishing Ring to regain his cultivation but employed some special method instead.

Sha Bailou's eyes slightly narrowed; there was a legend of something called Reprieve Cold Dew, which could temporarily lift the Punishing Ring's seal without breaking it... Could it be that Ning Fan used this to restore his cultivation without damaging the ring?

Forget it, no matter how he restored his cultivation! As long as he can restore his cultivation, it's the best thing! Sha Bailou indeed wants to kill Ning Fan, but he doesn't want to kill him when Ning Fan is at his weakest. Only by killing him at his strongest can he best prove the Path of Familial Slaughter!

"Good, very good! Since you've already restored your cultivation, I'll let you know that even if you recover, you're still not my match..."

Before Sha Bailou finished speaking, he suddenly saw a flash of red light before his eyes. Ning Fan had already closed in, and without even seeing Ning Fan's move, he was spurting blood wildly, being blasted away.

The violent wind roared, an unknown sinister red light swept across the land, and beneath the red glow was Ning Fan's silhouette in white, his robes billowing!

His long hair danced wildly like a demon, and his eyes were as cold as millennia-old Xuan Ice!

It was a different coldness from Sha Bailou!

Sha Bailou's cold was ruthless and indifferent, while Ning Fan's cold felt like the callousness of the Heavenly Dao, a kind of aloofness that looked down on all living beings!

It was a gaze unique to the Taicang Calamity Spirit! A realm that Sha Bailou's current Path of Familial Slaughter could not reach!

Surely, in proving the Dao through familial slaughter, the Taicang Calamity Spirit is the true ancestor! Did you not know that when the Zi Dou Immortal Domain collapsed, even saints as strong as they were, were controlled by the Taicang Calamity Spirit, disowning their kin and betraying their world!

Sha Bailou trembled all over, as if in fear, as if in excitement, Ning Fan's powerful strength shook him. This level of power is not something an ordinary First Calamity Immortal Sovereign would possess!

This is already very close to the power of the Second Calamity of the Eternals! No, in terms of attack power alone, even among Second Calamity Immortal Lords, few can reach this level! Is Ning Fan really just a First Calamity Immortal Sovereign?

"Sha Bailou, you're strong, but you shouldn't have provoked me! This was the first strike, the second strike comes next!"

Another flash of red light!

Sha Bailou's pupils widened, bloodshot, as he faced the approaching red light, he fiercely stabbed out with his blood-colored White Bone sword.

This strike even entwined a bit of the Power of Dao Laws he'd comprehended through his cultivation of the Path of Killing, but such level of Dao Laws, under the press of Ning Fan's five fingers, were shattered together with the blood bone sword itself!

Sha Bailou himself spat blood wildly, being blasted dozens of miles away by Ning Fan's strike, his body deeply embedded in the middle of a mountain, his aura significantly weakened.

In this strike, he used a Dao Law power he had just barely comprehended, thinking he might slightly suppress Ning Fan, but little did he expect Ning Fan to use more than one Dao Law, all of which he understood to a rather profound degree!

"Two kinds, three kinds, four kinds... I can't see through, I can't see through how many kinds there are! How can an Immortal Venerable cultivator comprehend such diverse Dao Laws, this... how is this possible!"

"I don't believe it!"

Bang!

With a loud bang, the mountainside collapsed, and Sha Bailou bloodily escaped from within, crossing the dozens of miles in nothing but an instant, flying back and charging at Ning Fan nearly maniacally.

He doesn't believe it! He doesn't believe the gap between him and Ning Fan is so vast, he has killed a Second Calamity Immortal Sovereign before, how could he lose to Ning Fan by so much, how is it possible!

"Your power is strong, but if I'm not mistaken, this power actually doesn't belong to you. Your true strength hasn't even reached the Immortal Sovereign level. To have power beyond an Immortal Sovereign, it's only because you absorbed the souls of your closest kin, integrating them into your body. This cultivation, this power, you still can't wield it freely, because your Path of Killing went astray. When you slaughtered your kin, did you really feel no guilt deep inside..."

Ning Fan's figure flickered, his entire being shrouded in blood light, charging toward Sha Bailou.

Then came the third fierce collision after unsealing his cultivation, echoing endlessly in the heavens and earth!

The result was Sha Bailou being blasted away once again like a dead dog, his body continuously breaking apart during the retreat, clearly having accumulated too severe injuries! He could match evenly against a Second Calamity Immortal Sovereign, but against Ning Fan who wielded multiple Dao Law powers, who even battled Pinnacle Immortal Kings before, defeating a mere Sha Bailou, Ning Fan easily gained the upper hand with his domineering attack power!

After three clashes, Ning Fan wasn't unaware that after unsealing his cultivation this time, his strength was visibly stronger than before entering the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain.

With a bit of thought, he understood the reason.

The integration of the divine, demon, and monster bloodlines in the Divine Demon Calamity wasn't a simple additive calculation of cultivation, but a mutual aid, mutual enhancement.

And the Dao Laws he comprehended weren't just for boosting attacks either, they could be integrated into his strength as well.

Previously, his divine, demon, and monster bloodline powers, and Calamity Blood cultivation strength were unbalanced, leading to him only being able to exert seventy or eighty percent of his total strength, with the remaining ten or twenty percent used to stabilize the balance within.

Now his Ancient Demon cultivation has improved quite a bit, making this imbalance slightly more even, so if previously he could only exert seventy or eighty percent of his full power, now he can exert nearly ninety percent! Further enhanced by the significant advancement in Ancient Demon's cultivation, leading to a qualitative change.

It was as if many kinds of powers collided and surged within him, like streams converging into a river, rivers into a body of water, bringing about a qualitative change.

If it were solely the power of Calamity Blood, Ning Fan wouldn't be able to suppress Sha Bailou in direct combat empty-handed, he would at least need to employ some magical treasures and divine skills to achieve this.

But at this moment, Ning Fan could clearly feel that his entire strength had merged together, forming an ocean. A million streams can't drown a person, but the ocean is different, even if the volume is the same, the power is vastly different. The force it can unleash is far beyond the level of Calamity Blood cultivation, but... infinitely close to the power of the Second Calamity of the Eternals!

"I only used to think that the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor cultivated both divine, monster, and demon for the sheer amount of cultivation power, but now it seems such thinking was wrong. The unity of divine, monster, and demon creates a new power, transforming quantity into a qualitative change in strength. If it also involved the Taicang Calamity Blood, something even the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor couldn't achieve, then this qualitative change would be even greater, more complex... The power I now wield surpasses Calamity Blood cultivation, serving as proof of this qualitative change..."

It was as if Ning Fan, at this moment, was rediscovering the grand work of 'Yin Yang Transformation', a monumental cultivation technique of mixed bloodlines.

In the eyes of others, the seemingly trivial cultivation technique of Dual Cultivation concealed profundities that ordinary masters could never reach in the Grand Dao...

Chapter 1040: The Power of the Abandoned

Sha Bailou crawled on the ground, struggling to get up, but unfortunately, Ning Fan did not give him the chance. With a wave of his sleeve, the Calamity Thought Red Glow instantly engulfed Sha Bailou's entire broken body, sizzling like thunder, and with a roar, Sha Bailou's physical body exploded into a mist of blood. His Spirit was then eroded by the Calamity Thought Red Glow, constantly letting out miserable screams. On the surface, he seemed to be not far from death, unable to even complete his sentences!

Sha Bailou was very strong. As a Master at the Shattered Thought Peak, he was able to fight across levels against the Eternal Immortal Venerable, which was enough to demonstrate his extraordinariness.

However, in this world, Sha Bailou was not the only one possessing the ability to fight across levels. At least, Ning Fan's level-crossing combat ability was stronger than Sha Bailou's. At this moment, Ning Fan had unleashed all his cultivation, fighting against Sha Bailou whose cultivation was at the Shattered

Thought Peak level, and shockingly, it took only three strikes for Ning Fan to destroy Sha Bailou's physical body, leaving only his Spirit!

Under normal circumstances, when a Master is left with only their Spirit, they generally don't have much power left to continue fighting and often can only choose to flee. The lucky ones manage to escape, and the unlucky ones end up being destroyed by their opponent.

Yet, Sha Bailou's situation was extremely bizarre. Though only his Spirit remained, and his aura was waning and weak, the sense of danger he posed to Ning Fan was instead even stronger than before.

Ning Fan's eyes showed a merciless expression as he prepared to deliver the final blow to Sha Bailou's Spirit. Suddenly, his eyes flickered with surprise, and without saying a word, he swiftly retreated.

It was at the moment of his retreat that Sha Bailou's Spirit suddenly stopped screaming, revealing a sinister smile on its small face, and uttered a strange incantation. In an instant, large areas of gray gas emerged from his Spirit. Wherever the gray gas covered, the blood fire on the ground extinguished, and the flesh of the corpses on the ground withered away. The moist soil, engulfed by the gray gas, dried up and cracked. The gray gas continued to spread, mountains, rivers, grass, and trees... everything, whether living or dead, encompassed by the gray gas, within a few breaths, lost all vitality and returned to silence.

"This is..."

Upon seeing these gray gases, even with the experience of the Emperor Butcher, there was a slight surprise.

Soon, he felt a lightness in his body, as he was embraced by Ning Fan, retreating swiftly over the ground swept by the roaring blood fire and gray gas.

At this moment, Ning Fan temporarily unsealed his cultivation, making his retreat very fast. Over the ground, only a red glow could be seen streaking across it, quickly moving away from the gray gas's enveloping range, revealing his figure.

Ning Fan placed the Emperor Butcher down from his embrace, looking solemnly at the gray gas in front of him. The gray gas emitted by Sha Bailou's Spirit covered over dozens of miles of terrain.

The gray gas was extremely potent. At this moment, Ning Fan's entire right forearm was shriveled, resembling mummified flesh devoid of blood. Despite his rapid retreat, he was still caught in Sha Bailou's scheme...

Fortunately, Ning Fan's recovery ability was incredibly strong, and that mummified flesh quickly healed under the burning of the Nirvana flames.

Gradually, the gray gas sprawling over dozens of miles dispersed. In the wind, Sha Bailou's excited laughter still echoed.

"Indeed, what a delicious prey! You wait, wait for seven days, I will return! Haha! Hahaha!"

As the originator of the gray gas, Sha Bailou's Spirit had actually perished within the center of the gray gas. On the small face of the Spirit's corpse, an insidious and vicious smile remained. On the surface, those words seemed to be just his unwilling cries before death.

A dozen breaths later, unexpectedly, the appearance of this Spirit began to change, transforming from Sha Bailou's appearance to that of a child with an adorable sleeping smile, tied up with a bun.

Then, the child-like Spirit turned into ashes and disappeared into smoke.

Strange, upon Sha Bailou's death, why did the Spirit's appearance change... Ning Fan's temporarily unsealed cultivation gradually dwindled, and his aura quickly lowered to the previous level. He checked the Illusory Night Pearl, and the power within seemed to have been used less than one-sixth, as the battle ended swiftly, conserving the pearl for many more uses.

"If I am not mistaken, Sha Bailou should not be dead. Lou Tuo's capabilities are lacking, but his disciple really possesses extraordinary abilities." Emperor Butcher carefully examined the place where Sha Bailou's Spirit turned to ashes, pinched a trace of the Spirit's ashes, sniffed them, and then made a conclusion that caused Ning Fan's gaze to suddenly become serious.

"Did he actually escape?" Ning Fan did not expect that even under his full suppression, Sha Bailou would still have the chance to escape.

"Indeed, this child's escape technique is quite remarkable. This technique I have only seen one other person cultivate before, yet unexpectedly, another person managed to cultivate this sinister Divine Skill. If this child really used this technique, even at the height of my cultivation, I couldn't stop him. Because this Divine Skill does not actually escape from the real battlefield, but rather after death, reborn from another place... attaining a second life, reincarnating and resurrecting!"

"Reincarnating and resurrecting?"

"Have you heard of the Death Emperor of Sanyan Continent?"

"I've heard a bit... Sanyan Continent is divided into Stone Flame, Wood Flame, and Vacant Flame three major branches. Among the three branches, the Vacant Flame faction is the weakest, but strangely, within the weakest Vacant Flame faction sits the strongest among the Sanyan, the Death Emperor, known to be on par with the Bright Buddha, the foremost figure of the Holy Mountain." Ning Fan pondered and answered.

"Have you ever heard what the Death Emperor's strongest ultimate technique is?" Emperor Butcher asked again.

"No."

"This matter, not only for you, even for figures of the level of the Central Continent's Five Emperors, they are not qualified to know about it. The Death Emperor's strongest skill was comprehended from the last of the Five Supremes, this isn't a power that should exist in the Dreamland Realm, but comes from the legendary True Realm. This power is called [Desolate]. It's said that in the True Realm, due to the power of [Desolate], countless strong clans were born, among which the most famous is the Primeval Immortal Realm. Perhaps the master of the Primeval Immortal Realm is currently the person in the True Realm with the highest understanding of the power of Desolate..."

The Emperor Butcher paused slightly, frowned, and continued to explain to Ning Fan.

Ning Fan's eyes narrowed. Primeval Immortal Realm... True Realm... These pieces of information are undoubtedly the ultimate secrets of heaven and earth! It's not surprising that beings like the Five Emperors of the Middle State don't know these things, but the problem is, how does the Emperor Butcher know!

Could it be that the Emperor Butcher is actually an old monster like the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor, Burying Moon Immortal Concubine, who has lived since ancient times?

But, even the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor, Burying Moon Immortal Concubine, are all very secretive about secrets like the True Realm, unwilling to tell Ning Fan more. There are some things that one isn't qualified to discuss without sufficient cultivation, and can't even mention...

Yet the Emperor Butcher dares to casually mention such great secrets of heaven and earth, isn't it a bit too bold...

"...I am not a strong figure from the True Realm, but a native Great Humble One born in the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain. At the time I was born, the path between the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain and the True Realm had been severed for years, and the entire Supreme Pill Sacred Domain had long been completely 'swallowed' into the Dreamland Realm created by that adult of the Zidou Fairy Realm. The information related to the True Realm was not told to me by anyone, nor was it something I saw in any book, but rather... I dreamt of it. Do you find it incredible that just by dreaming, I can dream of such profound and inscrutable secrets!" As if seeing Ning Fan's inner concerns, the Emperor Butcher explained.

At this moment, the Emperor Butcher seemed to have let go of the aura of being above as a Control Position Great Emperor, her gaze was very ethereal, very distant, accompanying the recollections, drifting back to a long, long time ago.

"When I first dreamt of these things, I was just a naive and ignorant little girl. In my dreams time and again, I saw scene after scene of strange and chaotic landscapes, where there were countless Immortal Emperors who dominated the winds and clouds, Saints who founded sects and preached the scriptures, and even beings more powerful than Saints... It was a world completely different from the Supreme Pill Sacred Domain I was in. Later, as my experience grew, I realized what kind of world the world I dreamed of was..."

"True Realm..."

"What was even more unbelievable was that the scenes I dreamt of were not illusory dreams, many fragments of my dreams... were actually real events that had happened in the True Realm! Beyond that, the reason my illusionary art attainment could reach its current level is greatly related to the numerous True Realm illusions I had seen in my dreams."

"This is exactly my purpose for entering the Fire Soul Tower this time. There is a layer of confusion in my heart, wanting to know where these dreams originate from. Gradually, this confusion became a heart demon, a bottleneck in my heart. I'm only a half step away from entering the Quasi-Saint realm. It's not that I haven't tried to truly break through to that realm, but every time I'm close to success, this heart demon appears, becoming the greatest barrier to my breakthrough. I've come to this place precisely to resolve some of the confusion in my heart, and this process requires your help."

"Will reaching the sixth level of the Fire Soul Tower resolve your inner confusion?" Ning Fan asked, and at this point, he finally understood the Emperor Butcher's purpose, inevitably relaxing in his heart. With a lingering question in mind, it naturally heightens one's guard, just as the Emperor Butcher feels with an unresolved confusion in her heart, right?

"I don't know, I don't know if this time I can completely resolve the confusion in my heart, but the bottom of the Fire Soul Tower should have part of the answers..."

Upon speaking of this, the Emperor Butcher seemed to have no intention of delving further, so Ning Fan tactfully redirected the topic back to Sha Bailou.

According to the Emperor Butcher, within this Dabei Clan, there exist the Five Supremes whom ordinary people can't remember; the eminence of the Five Supremes even surpasses formidable beings like the Bright Buddha and the Death Emperor, representing the true pinnacle of the Dabei Clan's power.

The Emperor Butcher didn't go into detail about who the Five Supremes are specifically, only mentioning a Supreme Ox Demon. Based on Ning Fan's speculation, this Supreme Ox Demon is likely the old man surnamed Niu who gave Wu Laoba a hard time.

As for the last of the Five Supremes, although the Emperor Butcher didn't mention their name, she described the powers of this supreme, saying that the strongest power of this supreme is [Desolate]. The reason the Death Emperor could become the strongest in the Sanyan is because he comprehended a trace from the power of [Desolate], creating a unique skill from it, which brought him to reign supreme in the Sanyan.

The divine skill created by the Death Emperor is called the [Blood God Reincarnation Technique]; once this technique is successfully cultivated, each time the Death Emperor dies, he can reincarnate in another location using a medium. For any opponent, a foe who cannot be killed no matter how you try is undoubtedly troubling and terrifying.

It's just that the Blood God Reincarnation Technique can't be used endlessly. This technique requires a medium, and the medium must be the soul of a direct blood relative refined through a special secret method! Each resurrection consumes a blood relative's soul.

It's highly likely that Sha Bailou used the Blood God Reincarnation Technique to reincarnate somewhere else. Rumors say Sha Bailou killed his own child, and the reason why his Spirit changed appearance, transforming into the visage of a child at the moment of dispersing, is likely because this time, Sha Bailou's resurrection used up the soul of his child...

"The resurrection of the Blood God Reincarnation Technique takes seven days to complete. During the process of reincarnation, the aura of the caster completely disappears, not existing in the world, until seven days later when he is truly resurrected. The range of reincarnation usually isn't far from the place of death, but due to the advantage of aura disappearing, even if Sha Bailou's place of resurrection is not far from here, at the moment, he is formless, invisible, and without breath or thought, it would be as difficult as climbing the sky for you and me to find him. Only when he is truly resurrected and his aura returns after seven days can his location be sensed..."

Ning Fan couldn't help but sink into thought.

No wonder Sha Bailou said before his 'death' that he would return to kill again after seven days, turns out there's a seven-day resurrection time limit...

So in seven days, Sha Bailou will complete his resurrection and come once more to hunt him down?
What a persistent fly!

"No matter, even if Sha Bailou can resurrect, what can he do! Coming to kill again is just delivering his head to us. With your strength, would you even fear a Sha Bailou? Quickly proceed to the sixth level of the Fire Soul Tower; achieving the purpose of this trip is the real business." The Emperor Butcher said impatiently, as it seemed she had wasted a lot of time because of Sha Bailou.

"I'm not afraid, I'm just a bit annoyed being pestered."

Ning Fan searched through the ruins here and found many storage pouches, aside from Sha Bailou's own, the rest belonged to pedestrians killed by Sha Bailou.

Sha Bailou's storage pouch left Ning Fan speechless! It contained hardly any valuable pills or magical treasures. Instead, it was filled with human heads! There were men and women, young and old, intact and decayed, and even some were just skulls...

It seems Sha Bailou had a peculiar hobby for collecting these? Hehe, truly a grotesque interest.

Naturally, those grotesque human heads were all discarded by Ning Fan.

Besides, the only somewhat useful item in Sha Bailou's storage pouch was his Illusion Test Map.

Upon entering the Fire Soul Tower's first level, groups of three tribes would be randomly transported. Sha Bailou's starting point was far from Ning Fan's Illusory Bamboo Forest, more than a thousand miles apart, yet Sha Bailou persistently found his way through. Though he pretended not to care about his Illusion Test score, unintentionally, he had illuminated over a thousand miles on the map.

Now, this map was confiscated by Ning Fan. Ning Fan unleashed a burst of Black Dragon evil fire to burn Sha Bailou's map, instantly acquiring the areas Sha Bailou illuminated. His map now showed not only the region within a hundred miles surrounding the Illusory Bamboo Forest but included all the regions Sha Bailou had traversed.

The other contestants' storage pouches also contained three maps, but due to their short time in the tower, collectively they explored only one or two hundred miles, with many overlapping sections.

These three maps were destroyed by Ning Fan as well, thereby seizing their Illusion Test scores.

Thus, although Ning Fan had lingered long in the Illusory Bamboo Forest, the map had already illuminated over twelve hundred miles, translating to a score of over 2400 points!

"If you truly care about the Illusion Test score, you should join me at the sixth level of the tower base. There, illuminating a mile of land can earn you 64 points, a thousand two hundred miles can yield over seventy thousand points. It's much faster than scoring in the Fire Soul Tower's first level, effortlessly claiming first place in the Illusion Test," Emperor Butcher said impatiently. Time, oh time, Ning Fan spent too much time picking up these storage pouches!

"I know you're eager to move forward, but I'm afraid I'll need to take a bit more of your time..."

Ning Fan smiled helplessly, sat cross-legged on the ground, and began refining the power of the Medicine Soul Stone.

The territory of the Dabei Clan is extremely rich in medicine power. If one's Medicine Soul is not sufficiently strong, frequent absorption of Medicine Soul Stone power is needed to survive here. Hence, he must replenish some Medicine Soul Stone...

"Troublesome, really troublesome! It seems necessary to enhance your Medicine Soul realm, otherwise, with your stop-and-go approach, more time will be needed to reach the sixth level..."

Emperor Butcher took Ning Fan's map, carefully studying it, seemingly searching for places along the way where Ning Fan could upgrade his Medicine Soul...

Soon, Ning Fan completed the refinement and stood up, informing Emperor Butcher that he had absorbed enough Medicine Soul Stone power and could continue on his way.

Emperor Butcher's expression became somewhat unnatural, seemingly reluctant for Ning Fan to carry her, requesting Ning Fan to give her a piggyback ride.

Fine, a piggyback ride then. After all, Ning Fan could still receive Emperor Butcher's illusion guidance en route, making it a worthwhile exchange.

Yet Emperor Butcher, though intent on heading directly to the entrance of the second level, suppressed her impatience, detoured several times, and took many wrong paths. The purpose was to visit all three dangerous areas on the first level of the Fire Soul Tower.

Dangerous areas in the Fire Soul Tower often contain valuable items. If they could be used to enhance Ning Fan's strength, it would contribute to the success of the task in the sixth level.

Besides the Illusory Bamboo Forest, the first level has three dangerous areas: Rusheng Building, Thousand-Foot Cliff, and White Horse Glacier.

Within Rusheng Building's illusion depths, hundreds of Ten Nirvana and Eleven Nirvana treasures are sealed; atop the Thousand-Foot Cliff lies a deceased Innate Spiritual Wood.

These things were of little use, causing Emperor Butcher to repeatedly lament, regretting the wasted steps.

Fortunately, the final location at the White Horse Glacier's bottom yielded considerable gains, acquiring an eight-million-year-old White Dragon Coral.

This small segment of White Dragon Coral could greatly enhance the Medicine Soul power of the Nine-Turn Alchemist! Ning Fan's first thought was to save this White Dragon Coral for Ouyang Nuan to consume. Unfortunately, Emperor Butcher insisted that Ning Fan immediately consume it to quickly boost his Medicine Soul power. After all, boosting Ning Fan's Medicine Soul power would expedite her travel. Moreover, during the important task on the sixth level, there would be no opportunity for Ning Fan to consume Medicine Soul Stones continuously for days. Therefore, Emperor Butcher's plan was to elevate Ning Fan's Medicine Soul level to the rank of Nine-Turn before entering the sixth level!

As long as Ning Fan's Medicine Soul level reaches this height, even as an outsider, he won't need to rely on Medicine Soul Stones daily anymore but can adapt to the overwhelming medicine atmosphere within the Dabei Clan through the sheer strength of his Medicine Soul.

For ordinary people, attempting to advance from the Seventh-Turn Medicine Soul to the Ninth-Turn Medicine Soul in a short time is simply a daydream.

But fortunately, Emperor Butcher is extremely familiar with the Fire Soul Tower, knowing that there are numerous forbidden treasures here, enough to make such hopes a reality. Naturally, those forbidden treasures are not easy to obtain, but given her major goal this time, these minor difficulties are not a problem—she will guide Ning Fan one by one to overcome them.

A piece of White Dragon Coral did not directly raise Ning Fan's Medicine Soul level to the Seventh Revolution peak; it still fell slightly short of the Seventh Revolution peak.

This made Ning Fan feel quite regretful. With his Medicine Soul perception, he could sense some of the characteristics of the White Dragon Coral. This item requires a slow refinement to fully absorb its power, and cannot be rushed. If handled aggressively, most of the power will be lost.

If given several months to slowly refine this White Dragon Coral, he was confident he could absorb its complete power and make a breakthrough to the Seventh Revolution peak in Medicine Soul level!

Obviously, Emperor Butcher can't afford to give Ning Fan so much time to dawdle. To her, a bit of power wasted is fine, as there are plenty of good items ahead, nothing is more precious than her time.

After the refinement, Ning Fan once again carried Emperor Butcher and hastily sped through the first level, heading straight for the second level entrance indicated on the map.

The following day, Ning Fan and Emperor Butcher reached the second level.

On the sixth day, Ning Fan and Emperor Butcher entered the third level.

The dangerous area in the second level was similarly explored by the duo, acquiring several kinds of spiritual items, completely allowing Ning Fan's medicine soul power to break through to the Seventh Revolution peak, just a line away from breaking into the Eighth Revolution!

Of course, the benefits he gained were not limited to medicine soul growth; the study of illusion techniques was the biggest advantage.

Everywhere in the Fire Soul Tower were perilous illusions, and each time they encountered one, Emperor Butcher would give Ning Fan a brief explanation. Starting with the basic knowledge of illusions, carefully explaining the various changes in reality and illusion.

Ning Fan has an extremely high talent for illusions, lacking only the basics. He absorbed the knowledge Emperor Butcher imparted like a sponge, and many previously incomprehensible concepts gradually became clearer in his mind, forming outlines.

The way of illusions lies in the transformation between reality and illusion. True and false exist in one thought, but how to utilize that thought is crucial.

Attack the false, conceal the real; defend the real, deploy the false; extinguish the real, preserve the false; no false, no real... Ning Fan previously did not know that a simple illusion contained so many intricacies, as if opening a brand new magical door before his eyes.

Illusion techniques not only require skillful use of reality and illusion but also distinguish between living illusions and dead illusions... Having learned all this, Ning Fan recalled the Inferior Taixuan Illusion Technique from the Illusory Bamboo Forest and felt he had captured the path in his mind. If he were to enter the Illusory Bamboo Forest again, he was confident he could walk through it!

With a significant increase in illusion basics, Ning Fan also gained new insights into the use of Dark Yin Yang. Regarding the previously created dark illusion technique perfected through the Demonized Dark Night Dao Elephant, he planned to refine it further.

The Demonized Dark Night Dao Elephant, from which he comprehended the dark illusion technique, was supposed to be a trump card. However, after understanding this technique, Ning Fan found it difficult to perfect, always feeling it lacked something, useful occasionally but hard to make a big impact.

Now looking at this dark illusion technique again, Ning Fan feels more confident that given enough time, he could utilize the illusion knowledge imparted by Emperor Butcher to perfect this technique into a truly terrifying divine skill!

Of course, the current focus is not on perfecting the dark illusion technique; Emperor Butcher would not grant him the time to do such things.

The seventh day finally arrived!

Ning Fan knew at this time, Sha Bailou had most likely completed his resurrection, but naturally, he wouldn't stop his steps because of Sha Bailou. Though Sha Bailou's divine skills are bizarrely eerie, they're not enough to make him fearful!

On the eleventh day, Ning Fan, carrying Emperor Butcher, reached the entrance to the fourth level, preparing to enter when he suddenly halted.

Behind him, the sky was suddenly enveloped by a blood-colored killing intent, accompanied by a whistling blood-red glow carrying the aura of Zero Tribulation Celestial Venerate!

It was Sha Bailou!

But unlike before, the present Sha Bailou was no longer at the Shattered Thought peak cultivation, but a newly ascended Immortal Venerable!

Compared to the former Sha Bailou, after breaking through to Immortal Venerable, his aura was more than twice as strong!

"Ning Fan! To kill you, I have abandoned my plan for a perfect ascension to Immortal Venerable, completely breaking through the cultivation bottleneck suppressed for many years! Now I am not the weakling you overcame before—I will kill you this time!"