

Grasping 961

Chapter 961: Corruption, Withdrawal, Seclusion

Mud figures, huh...

Ning Fan nodded, remembering Xiang Mingzi's instructions. His gaze swept over the foliage of Mu Island, feeling an indescribable ethereal sense in every plant and tree as if completely separate from the chaos of the outside world.

The faint sound of wind through the pines could be heard, mixed with the distant, indistinct tolling of a bell.

Each time the bell echoed in Ning Fan's divine sense, it clarified his mind a little, and his cultivation advanced slightly. Though the progress was small, it indicated the extraordinary nature of the bell.

The only thing that made Ning Fan frown was the intent within the bell's sound, urging people to retreat from the world. Due to Ning Fan's profound cultivation, he was not swayed. If an ordinary True Immortal were to come here, they might feel the urge to renounce worldly matters and choose to join the Buddhist disciples upon hearing this bell.

"What a powerful bell. In all my years of cultivation, I have never seen such a level of Buddhist supernatural power," Ning Fan praised.

"This bell contains the power of the Buddhist Supernatural Power 'Leaks End.' High-level Buddha cultivators mostly reside in the Western Heaven; Eastern Heaven is scarce in Buddhist disciples who have mastered 'Leaks End.' It's normal you haven't seen such power," Xiang Mingzi explained with a smile.

"Six Buddhist Supernatural Powers?" Ning Fan was slightly taken aback.

He didn't know much about Buddha cultivators; it was the first time he had heard this term.

"The six Buddhist supernatural powers are Heavenly Eye Technique, Heavenly Ear Technique, Telepathy, Fate Vision, Divine Footstep Technique, and Leaks End. The Heavenly Eye technique focuses on Dharma

Eye Divine Ability, Heavenly Ear focuses on Divine Perception, Telepathy allows one to gaze into a person's heart, Fate Vision lets one view changes throughout ancient reincarnations, Divine Footstep is the power of countless Dharma bodies, and Leaks End cuts off all worldly obsession and attachment. This bell from Wood Pine contains the power of Leaks End. If one's cultivation is insufficient, upon hearing this bell, they will surely seek refuge in the Buddhist disciples and forsake worldly matters." Xiang Mingzi explained while leading Ning Fan towards the center of Mu Island.

Flying wasn't impossible, but Daoist Wood Pine had a peculiar nature and disliked anyone flying within his territory. Xiang Mingzi had a request to make, so naturally, he didn't wish to offend him.

Mu Island was not large, merely a tiny island spanning about ten li, resembling a crouching tiger at the center of the ocean of stars.

The island was covered with Arhat Pines, towering ancient pines reaching dozens of zhang high, growing taller towards the island's center.

Among the pine forest, mud figures would occasionally drill out from the ground, launching an attack against Ning Fan and Xiang Mingzi without any words.

Initially, these mud figures possessed only Shedding Void Stage cultivation and naturally couldn't block the steps of Ning Fan and Xiang Mingzi, being easily destroyed by the two.

But later, even Broken Thought Mud Figures began to appear. Although their cultivation was not daunting, they mastered some secret technique that allowed them to predict Ning Fan's attacks in advance.

Several times, when Ning Fan swung the Memory Severing Dao Sword to slay them, those mud figures seemed to anticipate the angle of Ning Fan's sword and evaded the strike.

Of course, with the vast disparity in strength between the mud figures and Ning Fan, they were still easily destroyed by Ning Fan, yet he maintained a serious demeanor.

Such a divine skill that could predict someone else's attack, if mastered by a strong Immortal Venerable level practitioner, would certainly be challenging to deal with and not to be underestimated.

"This is the power of Telepathy, capable of foreseeing the opponent's thoughts, making judgments in a duel ahead of time, and used with endless ingenuity," Xiang Mingzi explained.

"So it's another Buddhist Supernatural Power. You mean these mud figures can peer into what I'm thinking through the power of Telepathy?" Ning Fan's eyes narrowed.

He didn't want a bunch of mud figures reading his thoughts.

"Hehe, Telepathy works only when there's a vast gap in cultivation power, revealing all inner thoughts. With your cultivation of the Eternity's First Tribulation Immortal Venerable level, even a Third Order Quasi-Saint Buddhist cultivator wouldn't be able to see through your mind. These mud figures can predict no more than your next attack; beyond that, they can achieve nothing," Xiang Mingzi reassured.

"I see."

Realizing he wouldn't be exposed by Telepathy, Ning Fan's expression relaxed. If anyone could see through his heart, Telepathy would indeed be terrifying.

Come to think of it, his Mind Reading Technique resembles the Buddhist Telepathy somewhat. It makes one wonder whether the Ancient Chaos Great Emperor referred to Buddhist supernatural powers when creating it.

After walking about three li along the pine forest, a Stele of Saintly Virtue suddenly appeared beside the path.

The tortoise beast carrying the stele was lifelike, hinting at being a true tortoise corpse from the Tortoise Race, dead for countless years, already petrified. The lingering smell of Evil Qi could still be sensed!

The Evil Qi was so strong that Ning Fan could immediately tell this deceased tortoise beast had cultivation comparable to a Sixth Calamity Immortal Emperor!

What a grand gesture from Daoist Wood Pine to use an immortal emperor demon corpse to carry the stele!

The stele atop the tortoise's back appeared rather ordinary, showing no peculiarities, merely inscribed with two simple words.

"Sealing the World"!

The two words were written in cursive script with Demon Bloodline on the stele, the lettering still crimson, as if it could bleed.

Between the lines, there flowed an imposing aura, sharp and unyielding, like a sword, impossible to ignore.

The reverse side of the stele bore a line of small script.

"Half my life spent as a domineering personality, the heavens unjust, I bring justice! The world holds grievance, I seek to remove it!"

The inscription reads Mu Nanzun, dated back to the Celestial Emperor Calendar, year 934,262,000.

Ning Fan didn't know who Mu Nanzun was; he had heard of the Celestial Emperor Calendar, a calendar dating ten billion years back to the initial establishment of the Heavenly Court by the Heavenly Emperor.

Cultivation spans no years; a thousand years pass in a blink of an eye, so the ancient court's calendar marked only eons, although the Heavenly Court had long fallen, some later Masters still use this calendar.

The inscription marks about sixty million years ago.

"Mu Nanzun is Daoist Wood Pine's mortal name before achieving emperor status. This stele was erected when he was a Quasi-Emperor," Xiang Mingzi explained.

Ning Fan's attention shifted slightly; so Daoist Wood Pine, even in the Quasi-Emperor stage, slew a Tortoise Race Immortal Emperor and erected a stele here—a truly formidable character.

Looking back at the "Sealing the World" characters, Ning Fan only felt their sharpness and domination, imagining the pre-emperor Daoist Wood Pine's commanding personality.

Reflecting upon the defiant words, "heavens unjust, I bring justice," Ning Fan seemed to envision a master walking through the world, embodying righteousness.

The so-called "Sealing the World" meant eliminating all worldly grievances...

After a long pause, Ning Fan accompanied Xiang Mingzi, venturing deeper into the pine forest, eventually reaching the second Stele of Saintly Virtue.

This stele was simply borne by a stone-carved tortoise beast, no longer truly a demon corpse.

The front of the stele was engraved with the words "Retreat from the World," lacking much of the killing aura, instead bearing more transcendental essence.

The reverse held another line of script.

"In my twilight years, confined by the Eight Tribulations bottleneck, unable to enter the Nine Tribulations Realm, I journeyed into the Western Heaven, listened to the mystical sound of Buddha, comprehended the true meaning of retreating from the world, washed away sharpness, ignored worldly affairs, thus attaining the peak of the Immortal Emperor Realm."

The inscription reads Emperor Wood Controller, the date marked on the Western Heavens Calendar 272,226,000.

No need to ask; Emperor Wood Controller is likely Daoist Wood Pine's title as an emperor.

As for the Western Heavens Calendar, it was another system, started by Buddha cultivators residing in the Western Heaven after the ancient Heavenly Court's fall, marking three billion years ago.

The date on this stele inscription is about thirty million years ago.

"This stele was erected at the Nine Tribulations Peak by Daoist Wood Pine," Xiang Mingzi explained.

Ning Fan frowned at the sight of this second stele.

The first stele portrayed a domineering aura yet dared to condemn injustice and eliminate worldly grievances, demonstrating Daoist Wood Pine's commitment to the world's rise and fall.

Ning Fan, though not such a person, always harbors respect for those with a worldly view.

Yet this second stele fully embraced a philosophy of retreating from the world. The word "Retreat" particularly displeased Ning Fan; throughout his life, he faced challenges head-on and never backed down.

His life knew not the word "Retreat." He refused to gaze upon this stele longer, fearing its retreating philosophy might taint his spirit sense.

The two continued deeper into the pine forest, arriving at the innermost sanctum where they encountered an ancient temple, outside which stood the third stele.

The third stele was not carried by a tortoise beast, but was fashioned directly from a towering ancient tree, its surface stripped away to form a wooden monument.

On the front of the wooden monument, two words were inscribed.

[Sealing the World]...

The back of the wooden monument bore an enigmatic line of ancient text.

'With the purple star on the left and the fighting star on the right, open eyes are dreams, closed eyes are emptiness.'

What does this mean? Ning Fan had no idea.

The inscription was signed by Daoist Wood Pine, the time noted as 'twelve million springs and autumns after the opening of the eyes'...

This time, Daoist Wood Pine did not use the Western Heavens Calendar, but rather a system Ning Fan could not comprehend.

What does this mean...

"'With the purple star on the left and the fighting star on the right, open eyes are dreams, closed eyes are emptiness.' This phrase is a chant engraved on the nine Tianhuang Stone Gates. It is said that this phrase holds a divine ability left by the Immortal Emperor. Many practitioners at the Immortal Emperor level know of this phrase and wish to comprehend its true meaning, yet cannot. Daoist Wood Pine once went to the Western Heavens, after which he practiced the meditation of avoidance and advanced to the peak of Nine Tribulations, but could progress no further. Later, it seemed he understood something from this phrase and switched to practicing the meditation of sealing. A subtle change in a single word carries an essential difference. Later, he successfully broke through to the Quasi-Saint Realm..."

Xiang Mingzi seemed to recall past events, with a hint of nostalgia, and continued,

"Old I and Wood Pine knew each other in youth; his talent was exceedingly high. No matter how hard I pursued, my strength always lagged behind his. When he sealed himself, I was inferior, but the difference was small; when he avoided the world, the gap grew wide; by sealing the world, I was no longer his match. Seven million years ago, we sparred once, and even though I used seventy percent of my strength and he only used thirty, the result was a draw..."

At this, Xiang Mingzi smiled bitterly. In seven million years without seeing each other, the gap between him and Wood Pine was probably even wider.

He sometimes suspected that seven million years ago, Wood Pine had already broken through to the Second-Grade Quasi-Saint Realm. Otherwise, how could he have drawn using just thirty percent strength...

Ning Fan was slightly taken aback. He hadn't expected that after practicing the meditation of sealing the world, Wood Pine's strength would be so terrifying.

Sealing the world, avoiding the world, closing the world...

If we consider these three terms as three stages in Wood Pine's cultivation, Ning Fan could understand the first two stages, but was utterly bewildered by the third, unable to grasp its essence.

What does it mean to seal the world?

Were those chants carved into the nine Tianhuang Stone Gates? Previously, he was busy with the Eye Orb Monster fighting Yin Mo and hadn't noticed the Tianhuang Stone Gates.

"And what does 'twelve million springs and autumns after opening your eyes' mean?" Ning Fan asked again.

"Heh heh, I do not know the meaning of this phrase myself. If I did, I wouldn't be so much weaker than Wood Pine." Xiang Mingzi chuckled wryly.

Just then, from within the ancient temple's meditation room, a voice of an old man, ancient and cold, as if dismissing someone from afar, suddenly echoed.

"Is that you, Xiang Mingzi? After seven million years, you come to see me again? Do you wish to be defeated by me once more? Aren't you ashamed!"

The tone was somewhat acerbic, yet as friends, Wood Pine and Xiang Mingzi would often mock each other without consequence.

Indeed, Xiang Mingzi was not angered by this remark. Instead, he laughed and retorted, "Seven million years apart, I've made quite some progress. Defeating me this time won't be so easy for you."

"Is that so? Then I shall have a good duel with you later. But first, let us dismiss the irrelevant people, shall we? Hmm!"

A sudden Buddhist roar erupted from the meditation yard, heading straight towards Ning Fan. Though it was merely a single 'hmm', it carried the might of a dragon's roar and a tiger's growl.

With Xiang Mingzi's cultivation, being affected by the Buddhist roar made his eardrums ache slightly, which was shocking.

Ning Fan stood at the focal point of that roar, feeling an unprecedented pressure!

Strong, immensely strong!

Though Daoist Wood Pine's cultivation wasn't as terrifying as Yin Mo's, the pressure brought upon Ning Fan was even heavier than in the battle with Yin Mo.

After all, in the fight with Yin Mo, the Eye Orb Monster was in charge, and Ning Fan wasn't shouldering the pressure alone; this time was different.

It was as if billions of monks were chanting a demon-subduing sound, echoing in Ning Fan's divine sense like a thunderclap, turning his face pale instantly, leading to black blood flowing from his ears.

This roar might not have matched the roar of the Ancient Great Demon, but compared to its weakened roar ten years later, it was nearly as powerful!

Under this roar, Ning Fan's body was wracked with unbearable pain, especially the Ancient Demon cultivation within, which seemed to start melting away like snow at the onset of spring!

What a domineering Buddhist roar, able to dissolve Ning Fan's Ancient Demon power with just a roar!

"Wait! This young friend Ning is a friend of mine, and I have a request for you today, so please stop!"

Xiang Mingzi's voice grew urgent as he waved his sleeve in a bid to sweep away the Buddhist roar from Ning Fan.

Wood Pine coldly snorted, his divine ability increasing the Buddhist roar's power, making Xiang Mingzi unable to disperse the roar surrounding Ning Fan.

"This child has crossed two of my taboos. My Mu Island does not welcome him! Since he is your friend, I will spare his life, but take him away; I will not assist in what you seek!"

He directly sent them away without considering his friendship with Xiang Mingzi, highlighting his reclusive nature.

Xiang Mingzi smiled bitterly, knowing the taboos of Wood Pine.

Wood Pine disliked outsiders entering the island. Bringing Ning Fan here violated his first taboo.

Wood Pine disliked Ancient Demons; it was a common attitude among Buddha cultivators to disdain Ancient Demons, yet Ning Fan bore an Ancient Demon aura, breaching his second taboo.

Alas, he thought Wood Pine might see favor in himself and allow Ning Fan onto the island. If he had known this, he wouldn't have brought Ning Fan.

Xiang Mingzi sighed more deeply. His intention was not just about the Heaven-Opening Stone but also to introduce Ning Fan to this senior, Wood Pine. How could he leave Ning Fan behind?

Even the Dark Clan feared Wood Pine slightly. If Ning Fan could gain Wood Pine's favor and protection, it would make any subsequent moves by the Dark Clan more cautious.

Xiang Mingzi meant well, hoping Wood Pine could become Ning Fan's future pillar. It seemed now it had backfired.

"Alright, I will take him away first. Quickly remove the Buddhist roar so it doesn't ruin his cultivation..."

Just as Xiang Mingzi spoke, Ning Fan pushed forward through the Buddhist roar's pressure, stepping in a particularly cunning and mysterious direction amidst the explosive sound waves.

With just one step, he left a shining golden footprint in the loose pine soil, followed by a second, a third, stepping one after the other.

"This is... the Secret Art of Prestige of the Ancestral Demon of the East!" Xiang Mingzi's gaze instantly sharpened.

From within the meditation courtyard, Wood Pine also let out a slight exclamation.

In just an instant, Ning Fan had taken nine steps. After those nine steps, it was as if all the pressure from the Buddhist roar had been firmly stepped beneath him.

With that final step, there was a tread upon the veins of the earth itself, immediately rippling waves of traces that spread out, causing a tremor that shook the ancient pines on the island violently. Then, with the sound of a crack, a gap tore open amidst the endless Buddhist roar.

Instantly, all sound ceased as heavens and earth quieted; Wood Pine's Buddhist roar dispersed like mist!

Incredibly, with his current cultivation, Ning Fan had shattered Daoist Wood Pine's Buddhist roar head-on!

"Impossible! It's rumored outside that the Rain Monarch is merely a newly ascended Immortal Venerable. How could he possibly withstand a roar from Master!"

Those who cried out were more than ten disciples of Daoist Wood Pine in the meditation courtyard, dressed either as monks or Daoists.

These disciples, their cultivation ranging from Shattered Thought Early Stage to even an Eternal Immortal Venerable!

Besides these monks and Daoists, there was an outsider, an elderly man in a black robe, his expression now utterly dark.

"Rain Immortal Monarch... Ning Fan! What is he doing here? And how did he withstand Senior Wood Pine's roar? Was that strange footwork just now, the legendary Secret Art of Prestige of the Ancestral Demon of the East?!"

Chapter 962: Wu Laoba

No wonder this black-robed elder's expression was so gloomy.

In fact, not long ago, this man received a message from a friend in Eastern Heaven, wanting to deal with this Rain Immortal Monarch.

He just didn't expect to run into Ning Fan here on Mu Island. If the location wasn't really inappropriate, the black-robed elder almost wanted to take Ning Fan down on the spot and send him to that friend.

No, I can't make a move against Ning Fan!

Although Ning Fan broke Mu Song's roar with a strange step, making the black-robed elder wary, what truly intimidated him was Xiang Mingzi beside Ning Fan.

Cluck, cluck, cluck, this one seems to be the same as Senior Mu Song, both are Quasi-Saints. Since he came with Ning Fan, there must be a significant relationship between the two, and it's impossible to make a move against Ning Fan in front of this person...

"How unfortunate, how unfortunate, I truly have bad luck. Finally encountering this little brat Ning Fan, and he has a Quasi-Saint with him, I can't make a move, I can't make a move..."

After several flickers in the black-robed elder's eyes, the gloomy look slightly diminished, yet he resolved not to act against Ning Fan on Mu Island.

On the other side, Ning Fan used the Secret Art of Prestige of the Ancestral Demon of the East to break Mu Song Daoist's roar, directly causing a stir of dread among the cultivators present.

In the ancient temple, the sound of gasping continued to resonate. Even Mu Song, who unleashed the Buddhist roar, had a moment of silence.

After a long while, a voice came again, yet it wasn't anger towards Ning Fan breaking his roar, but rather joy.

"Hmm, quite the audacious little fellow, daring to break my Buddhist sound in my territory. Xiang Old Monster, how long has it been since you last brought someone to see me? I can't remember. The last little guy seemed to be called Senluo, who dared to cut down my Four Emperors Luohan Pine right in front of me. This time the person you brought isn't bad either. Is he your new disciple?"

In the words, although there was still some sharpness, it didn't conceal his admiration for Ning Fan at all. There was no more disdain for Ning Fan's identity as an ancient demon. This Mu Song Daoist's temperament is indeed quite peculiar, unpredictable, making it hard to fathom.

"Senluo..." Hearing Mu Song mention Senluo, Xiang Mingzi's complexion darkened a bit, with a trace of bitterness, seemingly reminded by Mu Song's words of many past events, and further recalling the sorrow of Senluo's death in battle.

However, after a slight pause, he finally answered with a smile, "This child is named Ning Fan, not my disciple. To put it bluntly, he's an old friend of mine across generations."

"Oh? I've sealed myself off from the world for many years and know nothing of outside affairs. I haven't heard of your reclusive self making such a friend. Well, this child dares to break my Buddhist sound, even as an ancient demon, he qualifies to meet me. Come on in."

Hearing this, Xiang Mingzi didn't stand on ceremony and immediately led Ning Fan into the ancient temple.

Inside the ancient temple, more than ten monk and Taoist disciples stood in two columns, welcoming the arrival of Xiang Mingzi and Ning Fan.

Ning Fan's eyes lightly swept over these monks. Among the cultivators here, only three had the cultivation level of Eternal Immortal Venerable.

Among the three, only one reached the Eternal First Calamity realm, while the other two were just newly ascended Immortal Venerables.

Ning Fan's gaze fell on that Immortal Venerable of the Eternal First Calamity, who was the black-robed elder with the gloomy expression he noticed before. Short and stout, with a walrus mustache, his beady little eyes always seemed to be plotting something.

Before entering the ancient temple, Ning Fan had noticed that this black-robed elder harbored some hostility towards him.

He didn't care about this person's hostility. What concerned him was the slight oppressive feeling this black-robed elder gave him.

Though this black-robed elder was just at the level of the Eternal First Calamity realm, he wasn't to be underestimated. In terms of sheer cultivation, he's probably a notch stronger than my True Blood Three Stars, making him a relatively strong First Calamity Immortal Venerable.

Ning Fan also gained a clearer understanding of his strength. Although his Calamity Blood cultivation could be compared to a First Calamity Immortal Venerable, he wasn't considered strong within that realm, at best ordinary.

Rustle, rustle, rustle!

A sudden breeze blew through the ancient temple, causing a towering ancient pine at the center to sway, shedding countless emerald-like pine needles that fell to the ground, transforming into points of green light. From within these lights, a bald, eyes-closed elder in a green robe slowly emerged.

This elder's cultivation was entirely restrained, not revealing a shred, yet his every movement conformed with the Dao, and the completeness he exuded around him left little room for flaws.

As soon as he appeared, a resounding bell echoed in every person's ear, endlessly reverberating.

This man was the master of Mu Island, Emperor Cang's mentor, Daoist Mu Song!

"Welcome Master, emerging from seclusion!"

"Welcome, Senior Mu, emerging from seclusion!"

The disciples present instantly greeted Daoist Mu Song respectfully. Even the black-robed elder, being an outsider, bowed respectfully, not daring to be slow.

There were only two who didn't bow to Mu Song: one was Xiang Mingzi, who was of the same generation as Mu Song, and the other was Ning Fan.

Without a word, Mu Song Daoist made a move against Ning Fan. If not for Ning Fan's techniques defying heaven, his cultivation as an ancient demon would have already been drained by Mu Song.

In this case, even though Mu Song's cultivation was astonishing, Ning Fan had no respect whatsoever for him, so there was no need to bow.

"This kid..." Xiang Mingzi slightly smiled bitterly, thinking to himself, Ning Fan is indeed a stubborn little fellow, daring not to bow even in the face of a powerhouse like Mu Song.

This behavior truly resembled Senluo from back then. He had three disciples in his life: one was the current Shengkong Emperor, another was the current Xukong Emperor, and the last was Senluo. He had brought all three to meet Mu Song, but only Senluo dared to confront Mu Song on Mu Island, and only Senluo was the most appreciated by Mu Song.

This Mu Song had a strange temperament, disliking those who acted according to convention all his life, yet favoring those like Senluo who were arrogant and domineering.

Of course, arrogance requires a foundation, and that foundation is having the capital to be arrogant. If one doesn't have enough strength to support it, Mu Song wouldn't even glance at such a person.

Indeed, seeing Ning Fan not bow to him, Daoist Mu Song was not angry but rather delighted. He appreciated men who possess a bloody spirit, a sharp aura. Those who preserve the status quo may be smooth, but pioneers must be strong and determined. Ning Fan, a stubborn person like this, is exactly to his taste.

"So, you are Ning Fan. I didn't expect, during the years I sealed the world, someone like you would appear."

Daoist Mu Song had sealed himself away for many years, paying no attention to the external world, unaware that Senluo was dead and that the Rain Immortal Monarch had emerged in the Eastern Heaven.

Facing Ning Fan, he seemed to be scrutinizing him, yet never opened his eyes, which added a sense of strangeness.

Xiang Mingzi did not open his eyes because he was blind, but Mu Song chose not to open them for some reason.

Under the gaze of the closed-eyed Mu Song, Ning Fan felt a strange sensation.

Although Mu Song did not open his eyes, Ning Fan felt as if he had opened them. And though Ning Fan's eyes were open, he had the illusion that he hadn't opened them upon seeing Mu Song.

The strangest part was at the moment Mu Song focused on him, it seemed like everything in this world except Mu Song himself turned into an illusion. Even someone as notable as Xiang Mingzi, a First Order Quasi-Saint, became an illusion; within the heavens and the earth, only Mu Song was real...

Ning Fan could not understand why Mu Song had such an eerie gaze, but he was even more convinced of Mu Song's unfathomable cultivation.

"Old monster Xiang, you brought him here, what request do you have? Don't hesitate to say. If it's something within my capability and doesn't violate my principles, I will certainly assist you!"

This time, Mu Song's tone was no longer as distant as before, but had a touch of courtesy.

Xiang Mingzi shook his head helplessly, knowing that Mu Song found Ning Fan agreeable, which made him speak so congenially.

Thus, he did not waste words and directly mentioned the request for the Heaven-Opening Stone.

"You came here because you heard I have the Heaven-Opening Stone and want to obtain it?" Mu Song's face filled with an odd expression.

All of Mu Song's disciples looked toward the black-robed elder.

"Indeed, given your cultivation, keeping that low-grade Heaven-Opening Stone is of little use. It's better to make an exchange with me. I have several expensive pills here, enough to trade for your Heaven-Opening Stone."

After speaking, Xiang Mingzi made a slight gesture, and a crimson-gold pill bottle appeared in his hand. With a flick, the bottle flew toward Daoist Mu Song.

Mu Song took the bottle, scanned it with spirit sense, and was somewhat tempted, yet soon laughed heartily and returned the bottle to Xiang Mingzi.

"It's a shame, although the pill is good, I have no Heaven-Opening Stone to trade with you. The stone you want has already been given away by me."

"Given away?" Xiang Mingzi was slightly surprised, a bit caught off guard.

"When I was young, I owed a favor to a sect. Now, the descendants of that sect have come to my door with three requests, all of which I agreed to, including the Heaven-Opening Stone; I have already given it to this person."

"Brother Mu, could you tell me who the Heaven-Opening Stone was given to?" Xiang Mingzi asked.

"This person is far beyond the horizon, yet right before your eyes."

As soon as Mu Song finished speaking, the black-robed elder secretly cursed his bad luck, stepped out from the crowd, and respectfully cupped his fist towards Xiang Mingzi, "Junior Wu Laoba, the one who received the Heaven-Opening Stone, greet Senior Xiang..."

"Oh? You know me?" Xiang Mingzi asked, slightly surprised.

"I didn't know before, but my master mentioned you before his passing. There are few Quasi-Saints in Eastern Heaven, so you must be the Xiang Mingzi my master spoke of." Wu Laoba replied respectfully, though the eight characters on his mustache seemed a bit sleazy.

"Your master is..."

"Ancestor Heiyun."

"Uh, you are the disciple of Ancestor Heiyun and the current Sect Master of Heiyun Sect?" Xiang Mingzi's gaze towards Wu Laoba became somewhat peculiar.

After a brief silence, he asked another question, "How long have you had the Heaven-Opening Stone in your possession?"

"Over a month already... Hehe, does Senior still need this stone? If you do, I'm willing to present it to you."

Wu Laoba was extremely respectful, inwardly mocking, thinking that Senior Xiang Mingzi would surely not dare take his Heaven-Opening Stone.

Indeed, upon hearing the Heaven-Opening Stone had been in Wu Laoba's possession for over a month, Xiang Mingzi showed a helpless expression, sighed deeply, and said to Ning Fan,

"Alas, it seems you cannot obtain this Heaven-Opening Stone. If Mu Song gave it to someone else, I could still trade for it. But if it has fallen into this person's hands, even if he presents it willingly, I dare not accept it. This matter is very disadvantageous to you... Let's drop it."

Ning Fan was puzzled, not understanding what kind of mystery Xiang Mingzi was playing.

Since Daoist Mu Song had given the Heaven-Opening Stone to Wu Laoba, and Wu Laoba was willing to offer it, why did Xiang Mingzi not dare accept it?

"Since Senior does not want Junior's Heaven-Opening Stone, I'll keep it for my own use. Alas, alas, I am not skilled in Artifact Refining Technique and do not know if I can use this stone to refine a decent magical treasure."

Seemingly anticipating Xiang Mingzi's reaction, Wu Laoba pretended to lament, while inwardly smiling smugly. He dared not oppose Xiang Mingzi, as the latter was a Quasi-Saint. If Xiang Mingzi fancied his item, Wu Laoba was willing to offer it, but he assumed Xiang Mingzi wouldn't dare take it!

He is the current Sect Master of Heiyun Sect, the direct disciple of Ancestor Heiyun, and his Dark Luck Secret Technique had already reached its peak.

The things he touched, even a Quasi-Saint wouldn't dare touch lightly!

The paths he walked, even a Quasi-Saint wouldn't dare walk lightly!

All of this is related to his fortune, as the inheritor of the Heiyun (Dark Luck) Sect, he cultivates dark-colored luck. In this world, the better one's fortune, the better their luck. The worse one's fortune, the worse their luck. Those who cultivate the Dark Luck merit law to its peak are among the unluckiest

people in heaven and earth. Not only are they unlucky themselves, but they can also pass this misfortune on to others. The more you interact with such people, no matter how high your cultivation, you might still fall victim to unexpected accidents along your cultivation path.

Wu Laoba's master, Ancestor Heiyun, is said to possess a misfortune constitution encountered once every five million years. Even at his peak as a Sixth Calamity Immortal Emperor, Quasi-Saints had to show him respect.

Legend has it that a Seventh Calamity Immortal Emperor once tried to attack Ancestor Heiyun, chasing him across the starry skies. Mid-chase, they unexpectedly encountered a once-in-a-million-years meteor shower, nearly struck down by it in space.

Legend has it that an Eighth Calamity Immortal Emperor cursed Ancestor Heiyun, only to have his next Heavenly Tribulation inexplicably increase in power several-fold, nearly perishing beneath it.

Legend has it that twelve sects banded together to take on Ancestor Heiyun, scheduling a date to dispatch troops. On the eve of their attack, each sect experienced a once-in-a-ten-thousand-year calamity, ultimately unable to launch their assault against Ancestor Heiyun...

Legend has it that Ancestor Heiyun once urgently needed a certain Innate Spiritual Medicine for cultivation. Unable to find it, he went directly to a secret clan to demand it. The secret clan, fearing the misfortune he might bring, handed him the Spiritual Medicine just to send him away...

Legend has it that Ancestor Heiyun once generously donated trillions of Dao Crystals to a certain cultivation sect, and those who received them all perished from various natural and man-made disasters within the next ten years...

The legends of Ancestor Heiyun are numerous, yet due to his status as a harbinger of disaster, even mentioning his name might invite calamity; thus, in the Four Heavens, few discuss him, and his tales are rarely spread.

This was the first time Ning Fan had heard of such an odd figure as Ancestor Heiyun.

Unknown to many, Wu Laoba's misfortune constitution is even more pronounced than Ancestor Heiyun's. He failed Harmonious Spirit 37 times, Core Formation 122 times, Nascent Soul 369 times, and Divinity Transformation 971 times. The further he progressed, the more frequently his advancement failed, overcoming numerous obstacles along the way to the Eon Calamity Realm.

Yet the unluckier he was, the more afraid people became.

Even when someone like that knocks on your door, despite Daoist Wood Pine's high cultivation, he felt somewhat helpless. Remembering his acquaintance with Ancestor Heiyun, he agreed to Wu Laoba's three requests, even giving him treasures like the Heaven-Opening Stone.

Unfortunately, Wu Laoba became very interested in Mu Island's Dao Principle of Wood and wanted to stay and comprehend it.

Some disciples of Mu Island attempted to expel him, but they encountered various natural and man-made disasters, so no one dared confront him further.

Mu Song, with his profound cultivation, was not afraid of being implicated by Wu Laoba's dark luck. Helplessly, he allowed Wu Laoba to stay on Mu Island.

"Who would have thought Xiang Mingzi came for the Heaven-Opening Stone? It's a pity that with Xiang Mingzi's cultivation not yet entering the Second Rank, attempting to take anything from Wu Laoba is fraught with great risks. As for Ning Fan, his cultivation is even less sufficient; trying to touch Wu Laoba's Heaven-Opening Stone could trigger various disasters and misfortunes... They should not take it." Daoist Wood Pine shook his head slightly.

"Heh heh, you must be the Rain Immortal Monarch? Do you also wish for this poor Daoist's Heaven-Opening Stone? Since we met by fate, if Rain Monarch needs it, this Daoist is willing to offer it with both hands!"

Wu Laoba's eyes twirled, suddenly speaking to Ning Fan.

Despite being entrusted by others, he dared not act against Ning Fan in front of a Quasi-Saint.

However, he did have ways to scheme against Ning Fan. He could see that Ning Fan wasn't aware of his Heiyun Sect identity, which was no surprise, given the entire Four Heavens was deeply secretive about the Heiyun Sect. Mention it and feel misfortune; it wasn't odd that Ning Fan didn't know.

His Heiyun Sect's misfortunate dark luck was inherited from the great Ancestor Nieli. Who is the dirtiest in fortune among all heaven and earth? It's the Fu Li, the race long since extinct. Among the Fu Li race, who is the dirtiest in fortune? It's Nieli, the criminal of the Fu Li race!

Within the Nieli lineage, who is the dirtiest in fortune? It's Ancestor Nieli, bestowed the title of the strongest Nieli by the evil god!

The Heiyun Sect worships the corpse of Ancestor Nieli, and having absorbed fortune in front of it since his youth, his fortune is cursed to bring misfortune to whoever he encounters!

If exerting some divine skills to communicate with heaven and earth, encountering him means certain death is not mere hyperbole!

His gift of the Heaven-Opening Stone to Ning Fan was actually a malicious plot, intending for Ning Fan to suffer calamity after calamity, leading to an untimely death in the Eastern Heaven.

He delighted in an extravagant lifestyle and had once, on a cultivation star, been hosted generously by a low-ranking Master, becoming bosom friends.

That low-ranking Master, despite a Truth-Transcending Cultivation Level, was unworthy of his attention, but his Alchemy was brilliant in the Eastern Heaven.

The man used every means to compliment and please Wu Laoba, making him promise to accomplish something for him in this lifetime.

That low-ranking Master was the Sect Master of the Pill Sect!

Ning Fan had been back in the Eastern Heaven for several days, his fearsome reputation long ago spreading among those interested in the Eastern Heaven.

Who feared Ning Fan, known as the Eternal Immortal Venerable, the most? Yes, it was the Sect Master of the Pill Sect.

The Sect Master of the Pill Sect once issued a bounty order for hunting Ning Fan, though it was later canceled by the Slaughter Hall, the two bore a mortal enmity.

The Pill Sect's Sect Master possessed extraordinary Alchemy skills, widely famed in the Eastern Heaven Immortal World. A hundred years ago, he had no fear of Ning Fan's Rain Monarch's prestige; after all, Ning Fan was just beginning to make a name in the Eastern Heaven then.

But then rumors spread of Ning Fan being the inheritor of the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor, and upon hearing that the Ancient Chaos Great Emperor was still alive, the Sect Master of the Pill Sect felt doomed, fearing catastrophe, treading through a hundred years in anxiety, only to hear that Ancient Chaos neared its end, meaning the Dark Clan would not spare Ning Fan!

Upon hearing this news, the Sect Master of the Pill Sect rejoiced; if true, Ning Fan would become the target of Eastern Heaven, and countless ancients would wish to appease the Dark Clan by acting against Ning Fan.

His fear of Ning Fan gradually diminished, yet rumors surfaced of Ning Fan reappearing in Eastern Heaven, slaughtering everywhere with shocking events.

Ning Fan has returned, reappearing in the Eastern Sky in a stunning manner!

Before the destruction of the Ancient Chaos, the Dark Clan was apprehensive and wouldn't act proactively. Only a few ignorant forces dared to attack Ning Fan.

Now that Ning Fan has attained the Eternal Immortal Venerable cultivation level, he is not at all afraid of provocations from these forces. Many from the Shedding Void and Enlightenment stages have perished by Ning Fan's hands, even the newly ascended Immortal Venerable, Deyun Ancestor, met a tragic end in his hands!

This caused the Sect Master of the Pill Sect to panic. With Ning Fan's current cultivation, if he were to settle old scores, he could easily destroy the Pill Sect with a wave of his hand before Ancient Chaos is annihilated!

No, he doesn't want to die!

So he decided to strike first, using his connections made through his alchemy skills, widely sending heroic invitations, and inviting countless powerful figures to form an alliance to kill Ning Fan.

The true old monsters, either respecting their own status or apprehensive of the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor, would not respond to the Pill Sect's call.

Yet, countless old monsters still coveted the opportunity to express goodwill to the Dark Clan. If one sect or clan couldn't stand against Ning Fan, what about ten sects and clans? What about a hundred sects and clans?

Moreover, the Sect Master of the Pill Sect promised he was about to refine an Emperor Pill, and if anyone helped him kill Ning Fan, he would present the Emperor Pill as a gift!

This matter again caused quite a stir in the Eastern Heaven on a small scale.

Could it be that the Eastern Heaven Immortal World is about to give birth to an Emperor Pill Alchemist? If the Sect Master of the Pill Sect truly became an Emperor Pill Alchemist, even a gigantic entity like the Dark Clan would not dismiss his existence!

More and more old monsters were stirred and responded to the Sect Master's call.

Even a very few Eternal Immortal Venerables decided to wade into this muddy water, heeding the Sect Master's summons with a resolute heart.

While Ning Fan remained unaware, a sizable Anti-Ning Alliance was beginning to take shape.

Wu Laoba also received the news from the Pill Sect. He originally planned to join the Anti-Ning Alliance for fun, but coincidentally, before he left Mu Island, he encountered Ning Fan.

If he could directly plot against Ning Fan and fulfill the Sect Master's request, why wouldn't he?

By himself, he could eliminate Ning Fan, a figure deeply feared by the entire Anti-Ning Alliance, wouldn't that be a great achievement?

As for the Heaven-Opening Stone given to Ning Fan, if Ning Fan dies, wouldn't it be retrievable? Hehe, once Ning Fan dies, who would dare take the Heaven-Opening Stone? Whoever takes it will have bad luck, and it will return to Wu Laoba's hands again.

And if it's the dark luck on the Heaven-Opening Stone that causes Ning Fan's death, then Xiang Mingzi would have nothing to say. It's his own bad luck to encounter such a disaster, who could blame Wu Laoba?

"Hehe, Younger Brother Ning, we seem to have hit it off at first sight. If you truly need this Heaven-Opening Stone, take it. If not, it would be disrespectful to me!"

Firm in his intention, Wu Laoba immediately flipped his hand to produce the Heaven-Opening Stone which emitted black smoke, and handed it to Ning Fan.

He laughed coldly in his heart tens of millions of times, thinking that if Ning Fan dared to take this stone, he would definitely meet a fate of being reduced to ashes by the ensuing disasters!

Upon hearing this, Xiang Mingzi and Daoist Mu Song both frowned, seeing through Wu Laoba's malicious plan. They thought to themselves that Wu Laoba was indeed the disciple of the Ancestor Heiyun, his heart was just as malicious as his teacher's.

Xiang Mingzi would certainly not stand by and watch Ning Fan take the Heaven-Opening Stone, inviting disaster upon himself. Just as he was about to speak to warn him, he saw Ning Fan's gaze turn cold; evidently, he had seen through Wu Laoba's malicious plan, so he said no more and let Ning Fan handle it himself.

"Do you really want to give me this stone?"

Ning Fan looked icily at Wu Laoba. Although he didn't know the origin of the Heiyun Sect, how could he not see the myriad of poisonous curses within the Heaven-Opening Stone?

Others might see the Heaven-Opening Stone shrouded in smoke, but as the Ancestral Demon of the Fu Li race, Ning Fan could directly behold the essence from within the myriad of black smoke, exposing its true nature!

This wasn't mere black smoke at all, but a series of ancient, incomprehensible threads of causality intertwined, forming divine abilities that could tarnish the fortunes of the strong and lead others into calamities!

Wu Laoba's evil intentions were clear; the gifting of the stone was false, while the intention to harm was true!

Moreover, for some reason, the divine abilities within the black smoke, capable of tainting one's fortune, strangely resonated with Ning Fan's Fu Li ancestor blood...

"Alas, my intentions are pure, doesn't Younger Brother Ning dare to take this stone? If not, let's forget about it." Wu Laoba chuckled sinisterly, with a hint of provocation. He had mostly realized that Ning Fan had likely spotted some clues and wouldn't fall for his devious trick.

He withdrew his hand, planning to reclaim the Heaven-Opening Stone, cursing inwardly at the lost opportunity to directly kill Ning Fan.

At this moment, a distinctly-boned hand suddenly reached out, placing itself over the Heaven-Opening Stone.

"Did I say I didn't want this stone? If you dare give it, why would I not dare take it? Just hope you don't regret giving it later!"

This seemingly unremarkable voice carried a majestic authority that caused Wu Laoba's mind to ache, involuntarily drawing him back half a step, as he looked at Ning Fan in shock.

Ning Fan's hand, resting on the Heaven-Opening Stone, seemed to weigh thousands of pounds; in Wu Laoba's cultivation, he unexpectedly found himself unable to shake it off!

Strange, what divine skill is this brat Ning Fan using that actually gives me such a feeling of suppression!

Wu Laoba felt a fear for the first time in his life, a fear seemingly rooted deep in his bloodline, inexplicable but causing him to shiver involuntarily.

The terrifying feeling was akin to an old bully, running into a natural predator...

Chapter 963: One Sword!

Wu Laoba's heart trembled. He realized he had underestimated this Rain Immortal Monarch. What startled him the most was Ning Fan's audacity to directly touch the Heaven-Opening Stone, a deed beyond his expectations.

It's known that this Heaven-Opening Stone has been refined by his Dark Luck Secret Technique for a full month. Even an Immortal King, if they touched this stone recklessly, would have their fortune slightly tainted, causing backlash and damage.

Yet, Ning Fan remained calm, seemingly untouched by the dark fortune of the Heaven-Opening Stone, which couldn't help but move Wu Laoba.

"Bitter indeed, bitter indeed, this Rain Monarch is worthy as the inheritor of Ancient Chaos. His cultivation might not exceed mine, but he likely possesses divine skills to resist my dark fortune erosion. Even if this Heaven-Opening Stone is given to him, it probably won't harm him... Let's end this matter here!"

The Heaven-Opening Stone was held back by Ning Fan, and couldn't be retrieved. Wu Laoba mustered all his energy, secretly activating his divine skills. His body emitted a faint black light, suddenly seeming to have infinite strength, almost forcibly snatching the Heaven-Opening Stone from Ning Fan's grasp.

Ning Fan narrowed his eyes slightly, also activating his divine skills. A faint red glow emerged around him, vaguely matching Wu Laoba's strength, deadlocked in a balanced struggle.

Wu Laoba inwardly cursed, thinking that Ning Fan was undeterred by the dark fortune erosion and that he was adamant about seizing the Heaven-Opening Stone. On the surface, however, he maintained a gentle expression, smiling at Ning Fan, "I just suddenly remembered that this Heaven-Opening Stone still has its use, and it might not be appropriate to give it to you, Daoist. Please release it and return the stone to me."

"Daoist, your words differ from your actions. Our words are law, and once spoken, they cannot be taken back. The stone now belongs to Ning. It's you who should let go!"

The Ancient Demon power within Ning Fan erupted, shaking Wu Laoba directly, causing him to loosen his grip. Wu Laoba stumbled back several steps before stabilizing himself, his expression drastically changed.

"The power of Ancient Demons..." Xiang Mingzi nodded slightly, while Daoist Wood Pine seemed thoughtful, lightly pinching his fingers as if calculating something, later expressing enlightenment, muttering to himself, "So this child is the inheritor of Ancient Chaos, no wonder..."

The fact that the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor possessed the bloodlines of gods, demons, and fiends might be unknown to many low-level cultivators, but at the Eternal Level, almost everyone knows.

Once Ning Fan's status as the inheritor of Ancient Chaos was revealed, he no longer needed to conceal the aura of the Ancient Fiendgod, Ancient Demon, or Ancient Chaos. Although possessing Ancient Demon and Ancient Chaos bloodlines is shocking in this era of lost hearts, souls, and blood, it becomes understandable when it's related to the inheritor of Ancient Chaos.

"Thank you, Daoist, for gifting the stone."

Ning Fan flipped his hand and put away the seized Heaven-Opening Stone, looking expressionlessly at Wu Laoba.

He was able to push back Wu Laoba not due to profound cultivation but rather the supreme fiendish might of the Ancestral Fuli within him.

Upon his first glance at the Heaven-Opening Stone, he felt a peculiarity in the black smoke which surprisingly resonated with his demon blood.

Being part of the dirtiest luck-ridden Fuli race, having once self-tainted his fortune as a Black Fate cultivator, he naturally wasn't afraid of dark fortune contamination, which is why he dared to place his hand directly on the Heaven-Opening Stone.

What he didn't anticipate was, upon close contact with the Heaven-Opening Stone, Ning Fan actually sensed a trace of fear.

The Heaven-Opening Stone seemed to fear him!

No, to be precise, it's not the Heaven-Opening Stone but the dark-colored luck on it that showed fear. Upon seeing Ning Fan, that black smoke adopted a submissive posture, not daring to harm Ning Fan at all.

The feeling this black smoke gave Ning Fan was very similar, almost identical, to the aura on Zili.

With a mere thought, Ning Fan comprehended the situation. The black smoke entwined with the Heaven-Opening Stone actually contained Nieli's power!

This Wu Laoba, surprisingly, has Nieli's power!

Wu Laoba is neither of the demon race nor of Fuli or Nieli bloodline. This, Ning Fan could confirm upon close contact.

Yet Wu Laoba could possess Nieli power; there might be a hidden truth here.

No matter what the true hidden story is, Wu Laoba's attempt to suppress Ning Fan with Nieli's power is simply being overconfident.

How could Ning Fan, a dignified Demon Ancestor of the Fu Li race, possibly fear Nieli's power?

Wu Laoba's heart pounded rapidly. He wasn't truly Nieli, and Ning Fan hadn't consciously displayed the Fuli aura. Thus, he couldn't recognize Ning Fan's identity as Fuli.

That's why he couldn't fathom how Ning Fan managed to shake him off.

Watching Ning Fan take his Heaven-Opening Stone, Wu Laoba no longer smiled, his face turned cold, and he said coldly,

"Daoist, snatching my Heaven-Opening Stone here on Mu Island, you are disregarding the master of this place!"

Meaning to use Daoist Wood Pine's reputation to pressure him.

"Daoist, your statement is inaccurate. This stone was given to me by you, certainly not a seizure," Ning Fan said expressionlessly.

Wu Laoba was furious, his face turning ashen gray. He had leveraged his master's connections to obtain three treasures from Daoist Mu Song. Unexpectedly, upon meeting Ning Fan, one was snatched away. How could he not be angry?

If it weren't highly inappropriate to make a move here, and if Ning Fan wasn't accompanied by Xiang Mingzi, a Quasi-Saint monster, Wu Laoba would have already used force to take back the Heaven-Opening Stone and teach Ning Fan a lesson!

No, he couldn't make a move against Ning Fan in front of two Quasi-Saints...

This thought had just settled in Wu Laoba's heart, and Daoist Mu Song suddenly spoke to Xiang Mingzi.

With Mu Song's intervention, despite Wu Laoba's intense reluctance, he dared not explode on the spot and entertained the thought of arguing with Ning Fan further. However, for now, he could only suppress his anger and find an opportunity later to retrieve the Heaven-Opening Stone.

"Old Monster Xiang, it seems you brought this young man here for more than just the Heaven-Opening Stone, otherwise you could have come alone." Mu Song ignored Wu Laoba's frustration. He had already fulfilled three requests for Wu Laoba, settling the karma of Ancestor Heiyun. As for the Heaven-Opening Stone, Wu Laoba brought this upon himself, and Mu Song wouldn't interfere.

"Brother Mu has just used the Fate Vision to deduce some matters, guessing my intentions. This boy is being targeted by the Dark Clan, and the name of my Godly Void Pavilion is insufficient to deter them. Only with Brother Mu intervening can they be restrained." Xiang Mingzi said with a wry smile.

"According to my recent deduction, your disciple Senluo has already died, hasn't he..." Daoist Mu Song suddenly shifted the topic.

"Yes, the child has already died." Xiang Mingzi said bitterly.

"Since my seclusion, after sealing the world, I have ignored earthly matters. I vowed that before enlightening my Holy Heart, I would not open my eyes more than three times! Even if Emperor Cang, my disciple, faced difficulties, I would turn a blind eye, letting him fend for himself. The Dark Clan once bullied your disciple Senluo; I protected him once before. This time, are you asking me to make an exception again?"

"Indeed, this matter is putting Brother Mu in a difficult position. However, if Brother Mu wants to understand the mysteries of the Golden Sky Black Earth Painting, you might need this young man's help. Opening your eyes for him might be worth it." Xiang Mingzi's words rendered Daoist Mu Song silent in contemplation.

Ning Fan's expression changed slightly; he was intrigued by the mention of the Golden Sky Black Earth Painting.

The four ancient paintings, each possessed extraordinary elements. The first painting, The Immemorial Fisherman's Raincoat Painting, was once found by Ning Fan and the little demoness. It could help one

comprehend the Life and Death Grand Dao, aiding ascension to immortality, and was now in the hands of the Godly Void Pavilion.

The second painting, the Golden Sky Black Earth Painting, reportedly contained the Yin Yang Grand Dao, which could help a Master breach the Immortal Emperor bottleneck.

A major ancient force called the Gold Talisman Palace in the southern heavenly gate was destroyed because of this second painting. Luo You had tried to find this painting but failed to locate any trace of it.

Unexpectedly, this Golden Sky Black Earth Painting was in the hands of Daoist Mu Song!

Logically speaking, the second painting should only aid one in achieving the status of Immortal Emperor, and it shouldn't be significant enough for someone as strong as Daoist Mu Song to value. However, judging from the tone of Xiang Mingzi, this painting seemed to have other mysteries that warranted Mu Song's repeated study...

After a long pause, Daoist Mu Song made a decision but did not directly respond to Xiang Mingzi; instead, he pointed at Heavenly One, causing numerous pine needles from the forest to rise into the sky, forming a cyan circle in the air.

That cyan circle seemed to possess some Great Divine Power, isolating everything inside the circle. Even if a battle erupted inside, as long as it did not exceed the circle's limit, the fluctuations wouldn't leak to the outside world.

"Whether this young man is worth me opening my eyes, I need to test him. Songxi Tong'er, enter the ring and have a duel with Young Friend Ning!"

Upon hearing this, one of Mu Song's many disciples, a green-faced Dao Child, immediately stepped forward from the line. After saluting the crowd, he flew up into the circle and hovered in the air.

This green-faced child was unremarkable in appearance, yet standing with arms folded to the sky, he exuded an imposing aura that could tread over eons, demanding respect from anyone.

This person was one of the three Immortal Venerables in the temple, a newly ascended Immortal Venerable, yet he seemed like he had also slain the Eternal Immortal Venerable, with very heavy Evil Qi.

"Young Friend Ning, ascend the platform and duel with Mu Song's disciple. Let him witness your skills. If you can gain his favor, he will surely help you against the Dark Clan." Xiang Mingzi advised Ning Fan.

Ning Fan wasn't a fool; by now, he knew Xiang Mingzi brought him to Mu Island with ulterior motives.

Xiang Mingzi hoped to find him a new patron, one strong enough to intimidate the Dark Clan. If the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor were to perish, Mu Song would protect Ning Fan. This was Xiang Mingzi's original intention.

Ning Fan felt emotional. Xiang Mingzi and he were not kin, yet he went to great lengths to do this for him. Of course, he would not act ungrateful nor refuse Xiang Mingzi's kindness.

With a flicker, Ning Fan appeared on the cyan platform, once again receiving Xiang Mingzi's sound transmission.

"Give it your all; let Mu Song see your true talents."

"Hmm."

Ning Fan nodded, standing a hundred yards apart from the green-faced Dao Child, his momentum spreading wider than the Dao Child's aura.

Seeing the impending battle, all disciples inside the ancient temple focused their gaze towards the sky, even the infuriated Wu Laoba looked on with the same demeanor.

Wu Laoba wanted to take a closer look at what means Ning Fan possessed. After understanding Ning Fan's capabilities, it would increase his chances significantly when seeking trouble with Ning Fan in the future.

Of course, if he had the opportunity, he would prefer to replace that Green-faced Dao Child, personally take action, teach Ning Fan a lesson, and reclaim the Heaven-Opening Stone!

The Green-faced Dao Child looked at Ning Fan with an arrogant expression. He lived with his master on Mu Island, sealed from the world, and hadn't heard of the ferocious reputation of the Rain Immortal Monarch, so he naturally did not know of Ning Fan's astonishing achievement of killing the Deyun Ancestor.

Even if he knew, he would not fear Ning Fan. He had also killed newly ascended Immortal Venerables, having the confidence that even if he sensed Ning Fan's aura at the level of the Eternity's First Tribulation, he was not afraid at all.

"Daoist, although you are not a disciple of Senior Xiang, you can be considered to represent Senior Xiang in this battle. If you lose to me again in this battle, it means Senior Xiang's disciples would have lost four times in a row on Mu Island. For Daoist's sake, not to lose too miserably, I shall hold back by thirty percent." The Green-faced Dao Child across suddenly spoke, his tone quite arrogant.

Xiang Mingzi had accepted three disciples in his life, all of whom had been brought to Mu Island. When they were young, Shenkong and Xuankong, both Great Emperors, had visited Mu Island and sparred with the young Emperor Cang but were defeated by him.

Later, Senluo was also brought to Mu Island, but at that time, Senluo was still very young and was defeated by other disciples of Mu Song without Emperor Cang even having to take action.

Ning Fan was the fourth person brought by Xiang Mingzi. If he also lost on Mu Island, this defeat would naturally count against Xiang Mingzi's disciples.

"..."

Ning Fan did not like to speak much during duels, and what made him even more speechless was where this Green-faced Dao Child got his confidence to actually dare to hold back by thirty percent when facing him.

The Green-faced Dao Child not only spoke arrogantly but also acted with arrogance, standing with his hands behind his back, not intending to make the first move, adopting an attitude as if letting Ning Fan have three moves.

Are all of Daoist Mu Song's disciples so conceited?

Ning Fan shook his head slightly. Considering Daoist Mu Song's eccentric personality, it was quite possible for him to teach disciples with all kinds of different personalities.

"This person's Divine Intent is Pine, and his Dao is also Pine, but what he cultivates seems to be the solitary arrogance of the Pine, which is why he acts arrogantly..."

The hint of azure in Ning Fan's eyes flickered momentarily, effortlessly seeing through the Green-faced Dao Child.

During that flicker, no one in the scene noticed it except for Xiang Mingzi and Daoist Mu Song.

Xiang Mingzi had already known Ning Fan was a Heavenly Immortal Practitioner and could not discern Ning Fan's level in the Second Realm of Tianren, so he was not surprised. Daoist Mu Song, however, showed a slight shift in expression.

"This boy is actually of Tianren's cultivation. No wonder he can be valued so highly by Old Monster Mu..."

Since the Green-faced Dao Child was not willing to make the first move, Ning Fan did not bother being polite. He cautioned the Green-faced Dao Child to be careful, raised a finger, and a streak of purple light shot towards the Dao Child.

"A Dao Weapon, is it? This Dao Weapon seems to have been nurtured by the Heavenly Dao Purple Qi, but in the eyes of us Immortal Venerables, it is nothing remarkable."

The Green-faced Dao Child showed slight disdain, spitting out a palm-sized dark azure leaf, which he offered up into the sky.

Once the leaf rose into the air, it immediately expanded against the wind, growing a hundred feet in size, directly enveloping the Memory Severing Dao Sword underneath, wrapping it in the center.

No matter how much the Memory Severing Dao Sword struggled, it could not break free from the binding of the leaf.

"Do you have any other magical treasures, Daoist? Please feel free to use them all!" The Green-faced Dao Child said arrogantly, with an expression suggesting he had already gained the upper hand.

Ning Fan was slightly speechless. Even if this person cultivated the solitary arrogance path, he was excessively arrogant, lacking the essence of solitude.

The solitary arrogance of the Azure Pine differed from mere arrogance; the word 'solitude' was a constraint. The arrogance of the Pine was only displayed in solitude, not high-handed, hence it was solitary arrogance. The route of this Green-faced Dao Child was wrong.

The leaf was a manifestation of the Green-faced Dao Child's Divine Skills, interwoven with the Dao Principle of Wood, unable to be hidden from Ning Fan's Heavenly Vision.

The Divine Skills of the Eternal Immortal Venerable were powerful because they utilized the power of Dao Laws. Whereas the power of a Control Position Immortal Emperor was having Control Position Path much stronger than ordinary Dao Laws. With the power of the Dao Principle of Wood, the leaf could easily bind the Memory Severing Dao Sword, but if this layer of Dao Law power was broken, the leaf would be insignificant.

Ning Fan did not waste words on the Green-faced Dao Child but instead bent his finger to point, and instantly, an infinite Rain Intent surged through the heavens and earth. In the blink of an eye, a slight drizzle fell upon the entire Mu Island.

The Green-faced Dao Child's facial expression changed slightly before he could react. Suddenly, the Memory Severing Dao Sword, originally bound by the leaf, emitted a slicing sound. A sword light shot forth, shattering the Dao Principles on the leaf into pieces. In the next instant, the leaf shattered into countless azure glows, dissipating.

The Green-faced Dao Child's gaze darkened. At this moment, the Dao Laws entwining the Memory Severing Dao Sword were far superior in quantity and quality compared to the wood's Dao Principles on the leaf.

No wonder it could break his Pine Breath Leaf; it turns out Ning Fan's understanding of the power of Dao Laws surpasses his own!

Slash!

Another sound of the air being pierced rang out, with the Memory Severing Dao Sword entwined with the Rain Dao Principle, transforming into thousands, slashing towards him from all directions.

This time, the Green-faced Dao Child did not dare to be complacent. Instead, he retreated half a step, operating his Divine Skills, and his entire right arm instantly transformed into a dark blue hue, directly reaching out to grasp the sword shadows filling the sky.

No matter how the Dao Sword diverged, no matter how varied the trajectory of the sword rain was, the Green-faced Dao Child seemed able to accurately predict the arrival point of each sword light. His dark blue right palm was not afraid of the sharpness of the Dao Sword in the slightest, lifting his hand to shatter each illusory sword light. The sound of metal colliding continuously emanated from his right palm, demonstrating the hardness of the palm at this moment.

In an instant, all the thousands of sword rains were crushed by the Green-faced Dao Child, clearly indicating that relying only on the Dao Weapon could not defeat this newly ascended Immortal Venerable.

Ning Fan sighed slightly, retracting the Dao Sword. Without a strong offensive magical treasure in hand, achieving a quick victory would not be easy.

The Green-faced Dao Child, having gained the upper hand, became even more arrogant, his form flickering as he transformed into an all-over dark blue giant.

Ning Fan had already witnessed that dark blue defense, capable of withstanding the sharpness of the Memory Severing Dao Sword. Upon changing into the giant, its defense increased several folds further, possessing extreme might.

A Dao Sword entwined with a kind of Dao Principle cannot sever this dark blue defense.

In this situation, only the simultaneous use of a second Dao Principle is viable!

An obscure light flickered in Ning Fan's eyes, instantly plunging the whole universe into complete darkness.

"A Great Divine Power to change heaven and earth? No, it's Illusory Art!"

The Green-faced Dao Child was initially startled but then laughed heartily.

If it were a Great Divine Power to change heaven and earth, he would fear Ning Fan a lot more, but if it's merely Illusory Art, he is not afraid at all.

He was close to mastering the Heavenly Eye of the Buddhist disciples, enough to pierce through most illusions. This technique is not a threat.

"Break!"

The giant formed by the Green-faced Dao Child shot a myriad of golden lights from its eyes, attempting to sweep away the darkness in the universe. However, the golden lights, upon falling into the darkness, were immediately swallowed by it, unable to pierce through.

This surprised the Green-faced Dao Child, realizing that the illusion used by Ning Fan was far too advanced, even his Heavenly Vision could not break it.

Many people underestimate illusions because illusions generally do not cause substantial harm; they usually only have a confusing effect, almost useless once broken through.

But if they cannot be broken, the terrifying nature of illusions is revealed. In a duel, a momentary distraction can decide victory or defeat. Trapped in Ning Fan's illusion and unable to dispel the darkness, Ning Fan has countless opportunities to kill him!

"Although I have fallen into his illusion, I specialize in defense techniques. This defense cannot be broken by a First Calamity Immortal Sovereign! This battle can at least end in a draw. This young one cannot defeat me so easily..."

This thought had just emerged in the Green-faced Dao Child's mind when the next moment, his huge giant body flew backward violently, and a blood arrow shot out from his chest.

The darkness in the universe finally began to disperse, but it was not broken; rather, Ning Fan voluntarily lifted the illusion.

From the start to the end, appearing slow, it actually only took ten breaths.

In the ancient temple, everyone's vision finally recovered, and the first thing they saw was the image of the giant form of the Green-faced Dao Child spitting blood, falling from the sky, carrying a look of disbelief.

On the chest of that giant is a ferocious sword wound, deep enough to reveal bone, completely breaking through his physical defense, with blood splattering across the sky!

With one sword, Ning Fan stood against the sky, entwined with two kinds of Dao Principle lights on his Dao Sword, extremely striking, giving an unbeatable sharp sensation.

"Gasp! Senior Songxi's Azure Pine Body could not possibly be breached in one strike even by a Second Calamity Immortal Lord! Yet this Rain Immortal Monarch broke Senior Songxi's strongest defense with just one sword!"

"Ten breaths! Senior Songxi could only last ten breaths in the hands of the Rain Monarch!"

Each of the Mu Song disciples began to gasp, while Wu Laoba was even more shocked.

He is also a First Calamity Immortal Sovereign, and being powerful within the first calamity, he has fought against the Green-faced Dao Child, admitting he couldn't break this person's defense in one move.

Yet Ning Fan can achieve this; could it be Ning Fan's strength surpasses his?!

He is a veteran Immortal Venerable who has practiced for thirty-four million years, whereas Ning Fan has only been famous for a mere hundred years; could Ning Fan truly be stronger?!

Chapter 964: Eternal True Body

Could it be that my thirty-four million years of cultivation cannot rival the hundred-year rise of a youngster?

Wu Laoba's small green bean eyes were fixed on Ning Fan's sword marks. Although reluctant, he had to admit the terror of Ning Fan's sword.

The green-faced Dao Child's physical defense could definitely be considered formidable, yet Ning Fan could break through it with one sword due to the fusion of two Dao Laws on the sword.

In the Immortal Venerable realm, there are not many who can use the power of two Dao Laws, and the power produced absolutely isn't as simple as one plus one equals two. Ning Fan's possession of two Dao Laws makes him exceptionally strong in offense among his peers.

However, Ning Fan's rapid victory can be attributed mainly to the most significant contributor, the Dark Illusion Technique that could cover the sky and earth.

This Illusionary Art was very formidable, and Wu Laoba self-confessed that if trapped within the illusion without using hidden means, he wouldn't be able to break free quickly.

It was precisely due to the power of this illusion that the green-faced Dao Child fell into the illusion and couldn't evade, taking Ning Fan's sword directly, breaking through defense seamlessly, and cutting down from the sky.

Wu Laoba initially wanted to teach Ning Fan a lesson but now harbored a deep fear and hesitation.

He was even second-guessing whether to accept the Sect Master of the Pill Sect's request to join the Anti-Ning Alliance to jointly eliminate Ning Fan.

The green-faced Dao Child was bleeding while exiting the giant's form, plummeting to the ground. Though Mu Song Daoist had his eyes closed, he was fully aware of the outside situation, and with a casual sleeve flick, a breeze swept through and gently carried the Dao Child, settling him steadily in the ancient temple.

"Disciple has lost the contest, I await Master's punishment."

The green-faced Dao Child didn't care about the wound continuously bleeding on his chest, directly knelt before Mu Song, full of guilt.

He disgraced Mu Island, lost to Xiang Mingzi's disciple, and failed his mentor.

"Silly child, it's merely a loss in a contest, why take it to heart? Just, do you know why you lost so thoroughly?" Mu Song sighed slightly and patted the Dao Child's shoulder.

"Disciple doesn't know, I seek Master's guidance."

"You are on the wrong path. Although you have yet to realize this, surely Ning Young Friend has. Even placed in Eastern Heaven, you are a person of talent, yet ultimately can't match this person. To you, losing to him is beneficial; the pride of the pine, without the grind of wind and snow, cannot stand out."

Mu Song spoke words the Dao Child didn't understand, then with another sleeve flick, a breeze lifted the Dao Child up.

The Dao Child's head buzzed; he felt the final words from his Master were a profound enlightenment.

His path is wrong... could it truly be wrong?

The green-faced Dao Child was momentarily dazed but soon regained composure, losing a lot of his arrogance compared to before. He casually took an expensive pill, stopping the bleeding after consumption, then sighed deeply, cupped his fists towards Ning Fan in the sky with remorse,

"Thank you, Daoist, for your mercy."

The injuries he suffered were not severe; the sword only struck his chest, if it were to strike his Dantian, it would truly be fundamental damage, indeed Ning Fan showed mercy.

"Hmm."

Ning Fan watched the interaction between Mu Song and his disciple deeply. Before, Mu Song seemed indifferent to his disciple the Emperor Cang's hardship, making Ning Fan see him as a cold-hearted mentor. Now, he realized Mu Song silently cared for his disciple too.

Mu Song letting the green-faced Dao Child challenge him certainly had the intention to test him but also to train and guide the disciple.

However, he wondered how Mu Song Daoist's opinion of him was after this exchange, whether he met his expectations.

Just as he prepared to descend from the green ring, he heard Mu Song Daoist speak to a nearby Big Ear Sha Mi.

"Pine Country Child, you also go and challenge this Rain Immortal Monarch."

The Big Ear Sha Mi called was slightly stunned, then shook his head and said, "Disciple is not a match for Rain Monarch."

"No worries, this is your chance to confirm the Desolate Wood Great Dao. Even if defeated, surely it will be rewarding."

Upon hearing this, Big Ear Sha Mi no longer declined, instead his figure faintly transformed, instantly appearing in the sky above within the green ring, forming a clasped palms and wry smile towards Ning Fan.

"Master ordered, this disciple dares not defy, but asks the Rain Monarch for some guidance."

Once spoken, dark yellow brilliance flowed around his body, hidden yet exuding aura, similarly the Eon Zero Calamity Domain, mature more than the green-faced Dao Child, probably nearing the First Calamity Realm.

And in this dark yellow brilliance, vaguely possessed a potent Break Illusion Divine Skill; if Ning Fan wished to reuse Dark Illusion Technique, it might not work.

The Big Ear Sha Mi then muttered incantations, suddenly transforming the world within the green ring.

Ning Fan's eyes slightly narrowed, and the previously standing sky abruptly altered, appearing suddenly in a world of ancient pines.

All around him were towering ancient pines, accompanied by the endless echoes of Buddhist chants resonating within the pine breeze.

"The Change Heaven and Earth Divine Skill."

Ning Fan's eyes flickered with azure light, his spirit sense transformed into rain, instantly spreading over the entire ancient pine world, and in a flash, he saw through the entire ancient pine world.

After Big Ear Sha Mi dragged Ning Fan into this world, he immediately activated his divine skills. Suddenly, ancient pines rose from the ground, transforming into wood dragons. Billions of dragons simultaneously charged at Ning Fan, leaving almost no retreat in the heavens and earth, sealing off all escape routes.

"Impressive divine skills. If it were a Zero Tribulation Celestial Venerate, it might not withstand this strike."

Ning Fan praised the opponent's impressive divine skills aloud, but his body flickered and disappeared, leaving only a faint red glow in place.

All dragons paused, unable to detect Ning Fan's whereabouts, growing bewildered.

In the next moment, Ning Fan appeared directly in front of one of the countless dragons, his eyes flickering with azure light locked onto the dragon, raising his hand for a strike.

It was another slash under the dual Dao laws' augmentation. This strike had no dazzling sword light, yet directly cleaved the dragon in half, revealing Big Ear Sha Mi hidden within the dragon's body.

Big Ear Sha Mi was greatly shocked, obviously not expecting Ning Fan to so easily locate him amidst billions of dragons, unable to react as he saw Ning Fan slash at his chest.

"Desolate Dragon Mirror, protect me!"

Seeing the sword light about to arrive instantly, Big Ear Sha Mi hesitated not, and shouted. All the dragons disappeared, and in front of him appeared an ancient mirror with pine markings.

The sword light slashed onto the ancient mirror, unexpectedly being bizarrely absorbed by the mirror, then a burst of sword light shot from the mirror, facing Ning Fan directly, rebounding his divine skills.

"An ancient mirror capable of rebounding divine skills..."

Ning Fan's gaze slightly concentrated, raising his hand to block the sword light, and once again slashing at that ancient mirror.

Previously, the sword light entwining two Dao laws could not shatter the mirror but was rebounded by it. But if it were three Dao laws, could the mirror achieve the same!

This time, Ning Fan utilized the War Yin and Yang power, the overwhelming battle intent flowing into the sword, increasing the sword's Dao laws light to three.

"Three kinds of Dao laws! Impossible!"

Big Ear Sha Mi's face changed drastically, unable to react further before hearing the ancient mirror crack and being forcefully shattered by Ning Fan. The sword light continued unabated, directly cutting into Big Ear Sha Mi's chest, causing the entire ancient pine world to collapse, while Big Ear Sha Mi's chest erupted with blood arrows, retreating dozens of steps in the air before stabilizing.

The chest injury wasn't severe, but he was indeed defeated by Ning Fan, completely not his match...

"Thank you, Daoist friend, for your mercy."

Big Ear Sha Mi slightly bitterly smiled, landed back in the ancient temple, knowing beforehand he wasn't Ning Fan's match, yet didn't expect such a swift defeat.

Junior Brother Pine Creek lasted at least ten breaths under Ning Fan's hands, but he barely lasted three breaths before defeat...

"Hiss! Senior Brother Songguo even used the Change Heaven and Earth technique yet only lasted three breaths under Rain Monarch's hand!"

The disciples in the temple gasped endlessly, while Wu Laoba's face grew uglier.

Ning Fan's sword wielded a third kind of Dao laws power! In terms of attack force, probably not many within the realms of Eternity's First Tribulation could match up to Ning Fan!

Of course, an Immortal Venerable level opponent wouldn't simply stand there and take attack after attack. If unable to withstand Ning Fan's sword light, one could replace defense with offense.

Yet Wu Laoba's formidable offensive methods mostly related to Black Fortune, particularly countered by Ning Fan. In terms of defense methods, he didn't believe he had any divine skills capable of blocking Ning Fan's triple Dao laws sword.

Thus, in facing Ning Fan, it was a situation of losing more often than winning. Bearing this in mind, Wu Laoba's wariness towards Ning Fan heightened unprecedentedly, solidifying his resolve not to meddle in the Pill Sect's muddy waters! Anyway, he and the Sect Master of the Pill Sect were merely drinking buddies, with no need to provoke someone as formidable as Ning Fan for them.

"Haha, after two battles, I wonder if Brother Mu is satisfied with Young Friend Ning's performance?" Xiang Mingzi inquired, though already almost certain, confident that Daoist Wood Pine was highly satisfied with Ning Fan.

Daoist Wood Pine only smiled silently.

Ning Fan claimed victory in both battles, the wins crisp and admirable, Wood Pine was highly satisfied.

Ning Fan possessed three kinds of Dao laws and was also a Heavenly Immortal Practitioner, Wood Pine was likewise greatly satisfied.

Yet, if it were just this, Ning Fan did not yet possess the qualification to compel Wood Pine to pay a hefty price, open his eyes, and confront the Dark Clan once more.

What moved Wood Pine most about Ning Fan was his status as the inheritor of the Ancient Chaotic Grand Emperor. This child's strength was substantial, but if he could not accomplish a particular task, he would be inadequate to assist with the research of the Golden Sky Black Earth Painting, thus lacking the qualification to compel him to open his eyes.

Letting two Immortal Venerable disciples and Ning Fan cross swords was more about wanting the disciples to gain adversity, using the opportunity to hone them.

What truly tests Ning Fan lies in the third challenge.

Wu Laoba resolved that in the future, upon seeing Ning Fan, he must certainly avoid him. As for retrieving the Heaven-Opening Stone, he dared not consider it anymore, for Ning Fan was indeed too formidable.

Unfortunately, Wu Laoba didn't know that while he wished to avoid confrontation with Ning Fan, Daoist Wood Pine would not grant him such a chance, having already factored him in.

"Little Friend Wu, why don't you also spar a bit with Young Friend Ning?" Daoist Wood Pine slightly smiled, uttering words that prompted Wu Laoba to feel an urge to curse.

What a joke! Your disciple can't defeat Ning Fan, so you're letting an outsider like me take the stage. Do you want Ning Fan to slash me with a sword too? That's a strike with three kinds of Dao laws—I can't block it!

Despite grumbling inwardly, Wu Laoba dared not utter a single complaint outwardly. He forced a smile and politely declined, "Senior Mu, you're joking. The Rain Immortal Monarch is highly skilled, possessing three kinds of Dao laws. I'm most likely not his match either, so let's forgo the third battle..."

Mu Song, truly a peculiar person, was smiling one second and changed his face the next. With a somber expression, he said, "Humph, I've asked you to fight, so you go fight. To refuse is to harbor discontent against this old man!"

That accusation was serious. Wu Laoba immediately broke out in a cold sweat and hurriedly explained, "The senior presented three treasures to the junior—how could I possibly harbor discontent?"

Bitter, truly bitter—this time, no matter how much I want to avoid Ning Fan, I can only grit my teeth and step forward for the battle.

Looking at Mu Song's intentions, it's clear he wants to test Ning Fan, yet he's also drawn me into his schemes. Damn it, with lower cultivation, I must bow low and meekly play along—it's truly frustrating!

Fine, fine, if you want a fight, then I shall fight. I still have the other two treasures you gave me; I'm not necessarily afraid of Ning Fan's three Dao laws!

Thinking of those two treasures, Wu Laoba's confidence surged, and with a flash, he ascended the azure ring in the sky and respectfully cupped his hands towards Ning Fan.

"This poor Daoist is Wu Laoba. I've had many misunderstandings with the Rain Monarch before, but now I have no choice but to fight. I ask the Rain Monarch for mercy."

His tone was unprecedentedly courteous!

Ning Fan was slightly taken aback. Wu Laoba's courtesy wasn't an act but genuine fear of Ning Fan, which was evident due to his sharp perception akin to someone in the Second Realm of Tianren.

Unexpectedly, even after I took the Heaven-Opening Stone from him, he can remain courteous—such an accepting attitude is rare indeed.

Unfortunately, I don't have much fondness for Wu Laoba, and naturally, I won't show mercy. If we meet in battle, I'll defeat him swiftly to demonstrate my abilities in front of Mu Song.

He's brought here by Xiang Mingzi, representing Xiang Mingzi's face, so it's crucial to earn some glory for that senior!

"Be careful, Rain Monarch, I'm going to use a magical treasure!"

Wu Laoba laughed on the surface and reminded Ning Fan, but inwardly, he hoped that Ning Fan would be defeated by his magical treasure in a single blow.

But as he lifted his hand, a small pine sapling about a foot long appeared, emitting a flowing jewel light, clearly an extraordinary item.

Wu Laoba then blew a breath toward the pine sapling, and upon sacrificing it mid-air, the sapling grew into an immense pine tree up to the sky!

The number of pine needles on this giant pine tree was unknown, each as sharp as a flying sword, gleaming coldly.

With a change in his hand seals, suddenly thirty million pine needles turned into flying swords, descending like a violent storm towards Ning Fan.

Ning Fan's expression immediately changed, filled with unprecedented seriousness.

This little pine sapling wasn't a magical treasure, yet the pine needles it grew could naturally be used as flying swords!

Thirty million pine needles meant thirty million flying swords!

The lowest grade of these flying swords was Shattered Void Treasures among Immortal Swords. Even more, there was countless pine needle swords of Heavenly Grade, and reaching Acquired Twelve Nirvana levels!

Among them, several pine needle swords even reached the Acquired Twelve Nirvana level!

With thirty million flying swords cutting towards Ning Fan, and countless high-grade Immortal Swords among them, how could Ning Fan underestimate this?

At this moment, even with a Dao Sword intertwining three Dao laws, it would not be possible to repel thirty million flying swords with a single strike; most other Divine Skills are inadequate for this situation.

If he used Vertical Golden Light to evade, he could easily dodge Wu Laoba's attack, but this would leave an impression of weakness to Daoist Mu Song.

In this battle, he must win and win decisively, only then will he uphold the honor of Senior Xiang.

In a flash of thought, Ning Fan swallowed the Dao Sword into his belly, his entire body suddenly bursting with ten thousand red glows, driving the Calamity Blood Power to its utmost.

He possessed the Body of Robbery Blood, his strongest Divine Skill without a doubt was the signature skill of the Seventh Generation Barbarian God Tagu—the Obliteration Technique!

It was a Great Divine Power that could change the heaven and earth, perfect for this moment!

As thirty million flying swords arrived, Ning Fan, without a change in expression, raised his right palm.

Though the action seemed as swift as lightning, to the onlookers, every frame appeared to be in slow motion, as if played out frame by frame.

As his fingertip grazed the sky, a crack easily formed between heaven and earth, and then the entire world began to change its visage.

In the two years since stepping out of the Barbaric Wilderness Passage, Ning Fan had studied this art meticulously, using the Obliteration Technique with seamless proficiency.

Now, using this technique, there were no lingering steps in forming mountains and seas but directly presenting an endless flowing Obliteration River in heaven and earth!

The thirty million flying swords initially cutting towards Ning Fan were all engulfed by that river, unable to escape.

Wu Laoba's expression changed dramatically, he had no time to react further before being sealed beneath the great river by Ning Fan, unable to escape!

"What kind of divine power is this!" In the ancient temple, almost no one was not shocked, even Xiang Mingzi and Daoist Mu Song showed a solemn expression.

Anyone with some insight could see that Ning Fan used a technique that could change heaven and earth, but the level of this technique was unexpectedly high to all present.

This technique is definitely of the divine power level of an ancient great cultivator, unquestionably!

It's known that even a weaker Immortal King facing thirty million flying swords head-on couldn't possibly handle them all, yet Ning Fan could do so with the power of a single calamity, which surely speaks to the mightiness of his divine power!

This might has already surpassed the understanding of the low-level disciples here, such a high-level divine power, even Xiang Mingzi and Daoist Mu Song wouldn't know many. The rest could hardly possibly be competent!

The green-faced Dao Child and Big Ear Sha Mi stared dumbfounded at the black river in the sky. If they were a bit defiant in losing to Ning Fan earlier, now they had no resentment left.

Didn't you see Wu Laoba with his eon-old tribulation cultivation trapped at the riverbed like a turtle, unable to escape?

Wu Laoba's cultivation was undoubtedly higher than theirs, even facing a Second Calamity Immortal Lord he could be defeated, but not suppressed and confined like this.

If it were them, it would be even more impossible to escape from Ning Fan's obliteration river.

"Rain Monarch is not an ordinary person, not someone to contend with!" The two exchanged a glance and both sighed.

On the other side, as one of the involved parties, Wu Laoba had long been scared out of his wits by Ning Fan's one move divine power.

Only by being within this river could one feel the terrifying nature of the water. Wu Laoba was shocked to death, this river water devoured all, destroyed all, his memories and methods alike were unable to resist the erosion of the river water!

And this was Ning Fan showing mercy, if Ning Fan was ruthless, Wu Laoba would definitely have perished within this long river!

"It's bitter, it's bitter, who would've thought Rain Monarch would know divine powers of an ancient great cultivator level, able to take away my thirty million flying swords in one move and imprison me within this great river. Fortunately, I still have the third treasure bestowed by Senior Mu Song, with this item, it might not be impossible to escape from this long river!"

Wu Laoba took a deep breath, patted his storage pouch, and retrieved a square seal with a golden top and black base, with sun and moon patterns on the four corners.

At first glance, this seal seemed ordinary, but if you looked closely, you could detect the unlaunched innate aura from within.

This treasure turned out to be an innate treasure!

The name of this treasure is "Two Instruments Four Directions Seal", which was the signature artifact used by Daoist Mu Song before he became a Quasi-Saint. Even among innate treasures, it isn't ordinary!

This item is the third treasure Wu Laoba sought from Mu Song!

"The only downside of this treasure is that every use requires enormous mana, even with my eon-old tribulation mana, it's slightly insufficient to sustain the operation of this treasure, I must reveal my 'Eternal True Form' to have enough mana to activate the treasure!"

"Ning Fan brat, your divine power may be strong, but can it be stronger than the signature artifact of Senior Mu Song?"

Wu Laoba sneered internally, almost having foreseen the scene where Ning Fan would miserably lose under the Two Instruments Four Directions Seal.

In the next moment, Wu Laoba's entire body swelled rapidly, enveloped in ten thousand zhang of black light, the dazzling black light made it impossible for others to see his appearance clearly at this moment.

His body almost transformed into a giant millions of zhang high, yet the river seemed strange, its surface seemed to rise along with Wu Laoba, no matter how high he grew, he couldn't stick his head out from the river surface.

"Is this... the Eternal True Form! Isn't this a divine power that only Immortal King cultivators can attain? To think this person could achieve it during the first calamity, how impressive!"

The green-faced Dao Child and Big Ear Sha Mi exclaimed in unison, clearly astonished by Wu Laoba's Eternal True Form.

But as the black light dissipated from Wu Laoba's body, the two were left speechless.

It turns out Wu Laoba's Eternal True Form was an incredibly ugly black turtle. Human cultivators achieving a true form of demon types is rare indeed, and rarer still is the ugliness of Wu Laoba's black turtle true form.

How to say? Fierce beasts in the cultivation world, beauty can indeed bring aesthetic pleasure, yet ugliness and ferocity can similarly bring a sense of power and endearment.

Wu Laoba's black turtle true form, however, carries not the slightest impression of ferocity, only the feeling of being ugly-cute. The facial structure descended from Wu Laoba himself, thus its appearance indeed turned out a bit ugly. Yet here's the rub, this turtle true form seems to tread the line of cuteness. Originally small green bean eyes, upon transforming into a giant tortoise, turned into shamefully adorable round big black eyes, along with double eyelids and long lashes.

In this manner, this turtle cannot convey the sense of ferocity, it can only be said to be ugly-cute. Lacking the impression of mightiness, those who favor fierce beasts might hardly be fond of it.

"It's bitter, it's bitter, I knew that once revealing my Eternal True Form, I would surely be ridiculed by others. It's solely my fault that my Taoist skills are wanting, intending to absorb the power of Ancestor

Nieli to achieve the true form of the Nine-Winged Xuanwu, yet faltering due to ill fortune, and mistakenly cultivating into such an ugly appearance."

The sole consolation for Wu Laoba was that this ugly turtle form was actually quite formidable, once transformed into the true form, mana could almost soar by several multiples.

His original cultivation was slightly above one calamity, after transforming into the true form, his cultivation was just a fraction away from stepping into the second calamity realm! With his current mana, it's sufficient to activate the Two Instruments Four Directions Seal!

"Break for me!"

The giant tortoise roared, the Two Instruments Four Directions Seal instantly shook, emitting majestic power, tearing the obliteration river apart.

It was actually through the might of the magical treasure, directly breaking open the divine power of an ancient great cultivator level!

Chapter 965: Cause and Effect Revealed in the River

With one successful strike, Wu Laoba suddenly gained a lot of confidence in his heart. His huge body that covered the sky rushed out of the Obliteration River, and he looked at Ning Fan with disdain in his eyes.

Ning Fan, Ning Fan, you possess three Dao traces and ancient great cultivation divine skills, but I hold the Liangyi Square Seal. Ultimately, you are not my match.

Let me show you the true power of this seal!

"Yin Seal Phoenix Freeze Heaven!"

Wu Laoba shouted again, and four phoenix shadows, filled with resentful energy, flickered above the Liangyi Square Seal, followed by four earth-shattering phoenix cries echoing across the skies.

After the first cry, the temperature of heaven and earth suddenly dropped; it was like early spring a moment ago, but instantly transformed into the chill of deep winter.

After the second cry, snow began to fall profusely in the starry sky.

After the third cry, the entire Obliteration River froze instantaneously, and even Ning Fan's body showed a trend of being frozen.

Then, with the fourth phoenix cry, Ning Fan's entire body was completely encased in ice, as lifeless as if he were dead, and without a trace of vitality.

After the four phoenix cries, the Liangyi Square Seal transformed into a black light, directly crashing down towards Ning Fan's Tian Ling.

If this seal hits true, in his frozen state, Ning Fan's Tian Ling would likely be directly shattered by this seal, his brain poured out!

"No good! If this seal strikes, the Rain Monarch will be destroyed even if he doesn't die! Wu Laoba is too ruthless!"

"This seal is the magical treasure refined by Master over the years; it is said that Master slew four dragons and four phoenixes, all with Immortal Emperor cultivation, to forge it. The seal has three forms, and this Yin Seal Phoenix Freeze Heaven is the first change; the four phoenix cries exacerbate it. The force of this strike is utterly unstoppable; the Rain Monarch is in danger!"

In an ancient temple, there was a clamoring noise. Xiang Mingzi's expression was extremely solemn, fearing Ning Fan might slip up. He nearly wanted to take action to help Ning Fan block this seal, but Daoist Wood Pine stopped him halfway.

"There's no need to intervene; this child may not necessarily lose..."

Daoist Wood Pine's eyes, which were initially tightly shut, now slightly opened a crevice. Although not completely open, faint purple light flickered between his eyelids.

Only he could see through the frozen state and perceive Ning Fan's real condition at the moment.

Cold, very cold!

Ning Fan's body felt as if it had plunged into an ice cave, the cold infused with the grievous yin chill formed by the resentment of four Immortal Emperor-level phoenix demon spirits.

This chill easily froze his physical form, froze his Obliteration River, and even his Spirit was nearly in a false death state under the invasion of that severe cold.

"This seal possesses such strong chilling power! If I were not the inheritor of the Yin Yang Evil Vein, possessing the Grand Five Elements Body, this coldness would have frozen my Spirit directly!"

This cold was not simple frost, as it contained a particle of power that pointed directly at the source of the Grand Dao, capable of turning all yin attributes in the universe into a murderous chill!

Divinity Transformation cultivates the principle, Fate Immortal cultivates the force, Spirit Severing cultivates the thought, Immortal Venerable cultivates the Dao trace.

More formidable than the Dao trace are the Control Position Great Emperor's laws.

The power contained in this seal, directly pointing towards the source, is even more terrifying than the Control Position Path. It is Dao Source Power, something only accessible at the Quasi-Saint level!

Ning Fan's cultivation level is far from the Quasi-Saint level, this being his first contact with the power of the Dao Source.

He doesn't know how to define this power, but can recognize its formidable aspect, any carelessness could lead to death under its force!

I underestimated Wu Laoba, unexpectedly with such a terrifying magical treasure in his possession...

"Crumble!"

Under the extreme cold, Ning Fan's Spirit suddenly condensed his eyes, and the Yin Yang Locket hanging around his Spirit's neck immediately emitted a strange glow.

This power from the Yin Dao Source is indeed formidable, but don't forget, Ning Fan is also the inheritor of Ancient Chaos, cultivating the Yin Yang Grand Dao, possessing a restraining force against this Yin Dao Source.

With a push of the Yin Yang Locket, the power of the Yin Dao Source sealed within Ning Fan's body was immediately dispelled in substantial amounts.

A cracking sound was heard; it was the layer of ice on Ning Fan's surface turning into ice flakes, and around his body, vitality resumed again.

As soon as the ice seal was undone, the Liangyi Square Seal was about to fall head-on, mere inches away from Ning Fan's Tian Ling. Time left for Ning Fan was insufficient for evasion, only to harden against the seal's crashing force.

Ning Fan's entire body erupted in red light, all the power of Blood Lightning gathering in his right fist, to directly punch towards the crashing seal.

This punch was so powerful that the world was lit red by the force of Calamity Thought; the impact of the strike completely matched the full force of an ordinary First Calamity Immortal Sovereign.

In the clash between fist light and the seal, its momentum was instantly stopped, blocked by Ning Fan's punch, though Ning Fan also spat blood while retreating continuously in the air, the blood containing ice debris, evidently injured seriously by this seal's hit.

The seal's prowess was beyond his expectations; if not fighting with all his might, he wouldn't be able to withstand this seal!

"Heh, Rain Monarch, oh Rain Monarch, weren't you quite formidable a moment ago? Didn't you suppress me easily to the riverbed? Suppress me again, suppress me again!"

Wu Laoba's arrogant and sordid laughter almost filled the world, with the Liangyi Square Seal constantly smashed towards Ning Fan at his repeated urges.

Bang!

At the second clash, Ning Fan summoned the sword marks, raising a sword towards the seal. This sword seemed to employ some special sword technique, and immediately, a godly light-shining sword ray with a moonlight resemblance, flickering and unstable, reflected onto the seal.

The sword ray was exceedingly strange, seemingly containing infinite power, or none at all. Yet, against the seal, it was no match, directly shattered into scattered light by the seal.

As for Ning Fan, he was once again knocked back by the seal, coughing blood consecutively, though his gaze slightly brightened, as if confirming some matter.

"Heh, heh, what kind of broken sword technique is this? Its power is so weak; trying to rely on it to block the Liangyi Square Seal's attack is simply wishful thinking!"

Wu Laoba grew increasingly smug, paying little attention to Ning Fan's sword technique. Bang, bang, bang sounded three times, retreating Ning Fan for the third, fourth, and fifth time.

In subsequent attacks, Ning Fan continued utilizing the strange sword technique, slicing out the bizarre sword rays towards the seal, but yet again pushed back each time by that seal.

Everyone presumed Wu Laoba had the upper hand in this series of attacks; only Xiang Mingzi, and Daoist Wood Pine understood the extraordinariness of Ning Fan's sword technique.

"It is rumored that the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor possesses five types of heaven-defying sword techniques; could this child be utilizing one!"

Ning Fan's first strike with the fist was exploratory; the following four attacks using the strange sword technique against the seal were for another purpose.

"You won't have a sixth time to knock Ning Fan back!"

Having been slammed by the seal five times, Ning Fan steadied his form once more, no longer retreating; the timing was ripe for a counterattack!

"Yo, not bad, Rain Monarch, being knocked away by me five times, yet you're still so confident! Heh, heh, my favorite thing is acting against those who claim to be outstanding! You say you won't be knocked back the sixth time; then I'll knock you back a hundred times, a thousand times! Yin Seal Phoenix Freeze Heaven, hit him hard!"

Wu Laoba grew more arrogant and was about to exhort the seal to smash towards Ning Fan again, only to find the seal malfunctioning, refusing to move towards Ning Fan.

"Hmm? What's going on? Yin Seal Phoenix Freeze Heaven, smash at me!"

Still no response, unable to activate.

"Yin Seal Phoenix Freeze Heaven, Yin Seal Phoenix Freeze Heaven, Yin Seal Phoenix Freeze Heaven... damn, why isn't the invocation working!"

A sense of unease arose in Wu Laoba's heart, and he stared closely at the Liangyi Square Seal. Noticed it wasn't tight, but upon seeing, he was startled!

Only now did he realize, the four phantom figures of Yin Phoenixes on the seal actually bore ferocious sword wounds. These wounds were remarkably severe, capable of severing the Yin Dao Source within the Yin Phoenix, preventing it from operating freely. Consequently, the seal's first form was unusable due to the lack of Dao Source Power!

"What, what, what, what, what's this? The Dao Source Yin Phoenix is injured?! How can this be!"

"Could it be! The technique this child just used to break the sword has actually injured the four Dao Source Yin Phoenixes within the treasure seal! What a joke!"

Wu Laoba gasped.

One must know, these four Yin Phoenixes were manifested from Dao Source Power, formless and intangible. Even a Control Position Great Emperor might not necessarily be able to harm the Yin Phoenixes, yet Ning Fan, with his peculiar sword technique, managed to do so. How could Wu Laoba not be shocked!

He did not realize that the sword technique Ning Fan used was not some peculiar technique but one of the Chaotic Ancient Ultimate Study's Yin-Yang Five Swords—[Severing Dao Divine Sword]!

The Yin-Yang Five Swords, Heaven Sword Annihilates Fate, Earth Sword Severing Momentum, Human Sword Annihilates Life, Divine Sword Annihilates Dao, Ghost Sword Annihilates Thoughts. When all five swords are unleashed, nothing can stand in their way, making this the renowned ultimate skill of the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor!

Among them, the one Ning Fan is most familiar with should be the Life-Slaying Sword, which he comprehended greatly within the Ninefold Celestial Towers, slaying countless Immortal Venerable ancient corpses and achieving brilliant victories.

The second most familiar is the Heavenly Sword Annihilates Fate, which he had at least used a few times.

However, this was the first time using the Severing Dao Divine Sword. Ning Fan hadn't comprehended much of it, so its power was insufficient, leading Wu Laoba to briefly assume it was a weak sword technique.

Little did he know, the Severing Dao Divine Sword, though seemingly weak, actually possesses the power to sever all great Daos between heaven and earth!

It can sever Dao traces, sever Control Position Dao traces, and even Dao Source can be slashed!

This Liangyi Square Seal has three transformations. Wu Laoba's mana was insufficient, only enough to use the first transformation, unable to execute the second and third transformations.

Now that the first transformation is broken, the seal is almost unusable, and Wu Laoba has lost his greatest advantage against Ning Fan!

"Next, it's Ning Fan's turn to strike back!"

With a thought, Ning Fan's shoulder suddenly flashed with black light, revealing a lazy black cat, yawning leisurely.

But as Ning Fan raised his right palm and grasped forward, the black cat on his shoulder instantly sharpened its gaze, transformed into a black light with a flicker, caught by Ning Fan in his grasp, and then swallowed in one gulp.

In an instant, Ning Fan's aura soared continuously, reaching the peak of Eternity's First Tribulation and then breaking through the bottleneck to reach the level of the Second Calamity!

"What's going on! Why has Rain Monarch's aura suddenly surged!"

The disciples in the ancient temple couldn't see through the black cat's true nature, unaware that Ning Fan had temporarily boosted his cultivation using the mysteries of the Soul Extraction Technique.

Xiang Mingzi and Daoist Wood Pine, upon closer inspection, barely discerned some clues, yet were still greatly astonished. Obviously, they hadn't expected that by Ning Fan's side, there was a Heavenly Dao Kitten...

"That black cat... is actually Heaven's Dao Soul! This child can actually extract Heaven's Dao Soul and take it as a demon pet, this..."

Even as Quasi-Saint powerhouses, they are not qualified to be the masters of Heavenly Dao. They might be able to extract the Heavenly Dao Soul, but they could never make the Heavenly Dao submit!

Yet Ning Fan could make the Heavenly Dao submit, which is simply inconceivable.

To be honest, upon seeing Ning Fan perform the Severing Dao Divine Sword, Daoist Wood Pine was already very satisfied with this trial. But it was only satisfaction, treating Ning Fan as a junior all the same.

However, having witnessed the bizarre event of Ning Fan making the Heavenly Dao submit, Daoist Wood Pine's view of Ning Fan elevated to unprecedented heights.

What he couldn't do, Ning Fan could. This child's ability is overwhelmingly extraordinary, enough to regard him as an equal!

"Wu Laoba, didn't you tell me to press you down at the river bottom? As you wish!"

At this moment, with Ning Fan's energy greatly amplified, a mere sweep of his sleeve spread a vast force, shattering the ice sealing the Obliteration River and restoring the water's flow.

He then raised his palm and pressed down once more. Wu Laoba immediately felt as if the sky and earth were spinning, seeing a fleeting vision as his gigantic form of a hundred thousand zhang in length once again found itself trapped beneath the river, unable to break free.

"Not good!"

Wu Laoba desperately urged the power of his Eternal True Body, trying to escape the river, but it was all in vain.

This time, lacking the protection of the Liangyi Square Seal, with Ning Fan using the power of the Heavenly Dao Black Cat, his cultivation soaring, under these changing circumstances, how could Wu Laoba manage to escape from the river!

"You like being pressed at the river bottom, now stay put there!"

Ning Fan's right hand suddenly clenched, and the undercurrents of the river bottom surged violently. The tearing force formed by the raging undercurrents tore countless cracks into Wu Laoba's turtle shell.

Poor Wu Laoba, at this moment, hid reluctantly within his turtle shell, not daring to emerge.

During the time of Eternity's First Tribulation, Ning Fan's use of this art was already terribly powerful. Now possessing the Second Calamity cultivation level, the river bottom's undercurrents posed a mortal threat to Wu Laoba.

Death was imminent!

This was a divine skill of the Ancient Great Cultivator level. Unleashed by Ning Fan's Second Calamity cultivation, with Wu Laoba's treasure seal shattered, he couldn't withstand this strike!

Furthermore, what terrified Wu Laoba most was the faint, elusive sense of killing intent he felt from Ning Fan!

Ning Fan wanted to kill him, Ning Fan actually wanted to kill him! What a joke!

He hadn't done anything excessively wrong to Ning Fan. How could Ning Fan justify wanting to kill him, how dared he attempt to kill him in front of Daoist Wood Pine, the host of this place!

He merely intended to present Ning Fan with the Heaven-Opening Stone out of goodwill, and even if there was a sliver of malice, it was negligible. Damn it, just for this, Ning Fan wanted to kill him? What a joke!

He had, after all, been a bit ruthless in the subsequent duel, trying to destroy Ning Fan's physical defense, even underhandedly striking Ning Fan several times. These were but small mistakes, not unforgivable ones. And yet, for this, Ning Fan wanted to kill him, what a joke!

Alright, Wu Laoba admitted, he had indeed gone a bit far with Ning Fan. This time, he might really be in big trouble.

"Such suffering, such suffering, Ning Fan is determined to kill me. This time, I've truly hit a dead end..."

Wu Laoba was now utterly despondent, realizing he was likely doomed this time.

His master, Ancestor Heiyun, claimed to have ties with Daoist Wood Pine, but that was merely a nodding acquaintance.

Daoist Wood Pine once owed Ancestor Heiyun some karmic debt, which was why he came to seek three treasures from Wood Pine this time. Wood Pine merely wished to settle this karmic debt, striving for a closer approach to the Perfect Realm.

Wood Pine didn't care about his life and death. If Wood Pine helped him, he would get entangled in Ning Fan's karmic situation, which, given Wood Pine's nature, he would absolutely avoid. After being trapped at the river bottom, with no intent from Wood Pine to rescue him, it clearly spoke volumes.

Crack, crack, crack.

This was the sound of the turtle shell continuously fracturing. Wu Laoba could feel that his shell was nearing its breaking point. If it shattered, he would surely be torn to pieces by the river's undercurrents.

Ah, to think that I, Wu Laoba, famed for a lifetime, would drown here today.

Suddenly, Wu Laoba found this scene oddly familiar. Yes, many years ago, he seemed to have almost drowned once before.

How long ago was that? Uh, he couldn't quite recall.

That time, he had terrible luck, venturing to a secret ground of ancient cultivators in search of treasure, only to find the space of the secret ground collapsing.

Even then, as a powerful Immortal Venerable, he was severely injured by the spatial collapse. On the escape, he haplessly triggered several hundred deadly formations set by that ancient cultivator.

He narrowly escaped the secret ground, gravely injured, only to be afflicted by the secret ground's deadly poison, his mana sealed, falling from the sky like a mortal, plummeting into a river of a Cultivation Star.

Hmm, at that time, it seemed a small cultivator casually saved him, or else he would have drowned. Later... he casually bestowed some fortune upon that small cultivator, guiding him, aiding him in cultivating Black Fortune, avoiding a great disaster...

Wu Laoba smiled bitterly and couldn't help but reminisce about those long-sealed memories.

Unknowingly, those memories merged in the river water, obtained by Ning Fan, who, upon seeing those glimpses of memory, suddenly widened his eyes, withdrawing his intent to kill Wu Laoba, instead feeling a complex array of emotions.

"So this Wu Laoba... has once had karmic ties with my Master!"

Chapter 966: Slave of the Third Immortal Venerable

At the bottom of the Obliteration River, past memories flow like water, quietly traversing the riverbed...

The starry sky was that of the Northern Heaven Immortal World, and the location was the main sect star of the Black Demon Sect - the Yin Yang Star.

One day, above the Yin Yang Star, a spatial rift suddenly tore open, and a bloodied, ragged black-robed elder fell from the sky, crashing right into the Demon River beneath the Black Demon Mountain of the Yin Yang Star.

The disheveled elder who fell from the sky was none other than Wu Laoba, who had been treasure hunting in secret places. However, due to various mishaps, he was severely injured, and his mana was sealed. After falling into the Demon River, he couldn't even hold his breath, nearly drowning.

At that moment, a fierce-looking youth in black was meditating on the riverbank. Just as Wu Laoba was about to drown, it was this black-clad youth who fished him out of the river.

Thus, Wu Laoba decided to properly thank the black-clad youth.

He had many good things on him, but they had all been refined with his Black Fortune. Giving them to the youth might end up harming him.

After pondering it over, Wu Laoba finally discovered traces of the machinations of a powerful Immortal Emperor on this black-clad youth and immediately thought of a way to repay him.

Ordinary people couldn't see the calculations on the youth, but Wu Laoba, being a descendant of Black Fortune, had deep knowledge of fortune and was able to see through it.

"In the Southern Heaven Immortal World, there is an Immortal Emperor known as Fate Wielding. This emperor has a great reputation in the South and is always seen as a kind old man. However, we old monsters who are Immortal Venerables understand his true nature. This emperor is incredibly cunning and has calculated low-level cultivators throughout the four heavens and nine worlds. Since my cultivation, I've encountered many cultivators he's schemed against, but because I didn't want to get involved in their karma, I never helped anyone."

"Today, this young man saved me, so I'll repay him. If his fortune continues down this path, it will surely be taken by the Fate Wielding Emperor unless he, like me, practices Black Fortune magic to have a slim chance of survival. Haha, this boy meeting me is his luck, but it's also the beginning of his life's misfortune!"

Ah, I forgot to ask for the name of this little benefactor.

"Little benefactor, may I ask your name?"

"I am Han Yuanji, a man destined to become the next Ancestral Emperor of the Northern Heaven. Remember this name; in a thousand years, it will resonate throughout the Northern Heaven!" His tone was exceedingly arrogant.

"Well, well, you little jerk have quite the audacity, dreaming of becoming the next Ancestral Emperor of the Northern Heaven... Haha, if you become the Ancestral Emperor, I will become an Immortal Emperor; hey, what are you doing..."

Plop!

The black-clad youth turned and kicked Wu Laoba back into the river.

"Glug glug... you little brat, you're asking for death! Glug glug... how dare you kick me! Glug glug... do you even know who I am! Glug glug... fine, fine, I admit defeat. Please, pull me out of the river. I've already drunk a bellyful of river water; I'm really going to drown, I beg you, my young master!"

"Hm! You dared to mock Han's dreams, so you deserve to drink a few more mouthfuls!"

Though the rebellious black-clad youth said so, he still pulled Wu Laoba out of the water. Subsequently, Wu Laoba aided the black-clad youth.

A bond of karma was thus formed...

However, Wu Laoba only ever met the black-clad youth once and didn't have a deep connection. They never crossed paths again. If he hadn't nearly drowned in the river once more, Wu Laoba wouldn't have recalled this somewhat similar incident.

Ning Fan was slightly speechless; he never expected that Wu Laoba had once had a karmic connection with the old monster.

It couldn't be mistaken, that fierce-looking, spiky youth shouting about becoming the next Ancestral Emperor of the Northern Heaven was his master—Han Yuanji?

To speak of it, that black-clad youth was indeed very handsome, vaguely bearing many features of the older Han Yuanji, with the only difference being the lack of that inherent sleazy aura.

Time truly is a ruthless butcher's knife, capable of turning a beautiful young man into a sleazy chrysanthemum face.

And what Ning Fan never expected was that the old monster had also been calculated by the Fate Wielding Immortal Emperor, yet thanks to Wu Laoba's help, he ultimately cultivated Black Fortune and escaped the Fate Wielding Immortal Emperor's schemes.

This Wu Laoba actually did a favor to his master.

Ning Fan sighed deeply; because Wu Laoba had done a favor for his master, Ning Fan couldn't even think of killing Wu Laoba.

However, he couldn't easily let this person go either. This person had plotted poisonously against him, and if he were directly released, he would surely become a future threat!

The Obliteration River could strip memory, and Ning Fan saw fragments of Wu Laoba's interaction with the Sect Master of the Pill Sect in that river.

"Who would have thought the Sect Master of the Pill Sect founded an 'Anti-Ning Alliance' to deal with me. Though I am willing to spare Wu Laoba for the sake of my master's relationship, I cannot guarantee that Wu Laoba won't hold grudges and turn against me."

The human heart is treacherous, and from a glance, Wu Laoba is not a good person. If he is given a second chance, how should he be dealt with if he develops a desire for revenge?

"Wu Laoba, do you remember Han Yuanji?" Ning Fan suddenly asked toward the Obliteration River.

"Han Yuanji? Which Han Yuanji... let's not talk about that anymore. Rain Monarch, oh Rain Monarch, have mercy and spare me. If I survive this calamity, I am willing to serve you as a bull or horse!" Wu Laoba, who was already resigned to his fate, suddenly heard Ning Fan's question, and a spark of survival ignited, causing him to plead.

Wu Laoba vaguely remembered almost drowning back then, but he couldn't recall the name of the black-robed youth who saved him.

That wasn't surprising; Wu Laoba was unlucky all his life and encountered many disasters. Countless people had saved him, including juniors and even mortals; how could he remember them all?

Wu Laoba couldn't care less about Han Yuanji or whoever he was; his only thought at the moment was survival!

The Rain Monarch was terrifying! Wu Laoba had roamed freely for years, and no one dared to kill him because he had reached the Eighth Level Black Luck, which even a Quasi-Saint would find troublesome due to its influence.

Thus, he had lived for so many years without anyone daring to kill him. Wu Laoba was facing someone who didn't fear his Black Luck for the first time.

Only Ning Fan dared to touch his Heaven-Opening Stone casually, to kill him forcefully, without fearing the revenge of Eighth Level Black Luck!

How to beg the Rain Monarch to spare his life?

"Rain Monarch, please, if you are willing to spare me, I am willing to give you the Heaven-Opening Stone, Four Emperors Arhat Pine and Yin Yang Square Seal!"

Compared to his life, these three treasures were nothing. As the current Sect Master of the Heiyun Sect, his Eighth Level Black Luck was something even a Quasi-Saint had to fear a little. If he lacked any heavenly material treasures, he could easily demand them from major powers, and as long as it wasn't too outrageous, most major powers would agree to his requests!

"..." Ning Fan ignored Wu Laoba, still thinking about how to deal with him.

He definitely couldn't kill him. With the old monster's nostalgic nature, killing the benefactor would chill his heart, even if this so-called benefactor couldn't remember who the old monster was...

But if he was released, how could he ensure Wu Laoba wouldn't seek revenge?

Seeing Ning Fan's delayed reply, Wu Laoba assumed his offer wasn't high enough to move Ning Fan.

Cursing Ning Fan for his greed, Wu Laoba gritted his teeth and continued,

"Hehe, does the Rain Monarch find these three treasures insufficient? How about this, if the Rain Monarch is willing to spare this humble Taoist, I am willing to hand over the accumulated wealth of the Heiyun Sect from the Northern Heaven spanning tens of millions of years! Along with the previous three treasures, it should be enough to make up for my prior offenses, right?"

"..."

Ning Fan remained silent. Compared to the sect's accumulation of the Black Fortune Sect, he was more interested in finding a foolproof plan to eliminate the potential major threat of Wu Laoba's future retaliation.

In this world, even master and disciple can turn against each other, and father and son can become enemies. Faced with someone as ruthless and unpredictable as Wu Laoba, if there was nothing to hold him in check, Ning Fan simply could not trust this person.

Seeing Ning Fan still silent, Wu Laoba became anxious, thinking that this Rain Monarch was too greedy. He had already offered up all the sect's accumulated wealth of the Black Fortune Sect, something even an Immortal Emperor would covet, yet Ning Fan was still unsatisfied and unwilling to set him free.

He really wanted to see what kind of greedy master could produce such an insatiable disciple! He hadn't heard that the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor was so greedy...

Must he give up his soul and pledge it as a master before he would spare his life? Damn it, the soul is such an important thing, how could it be...

Wu Laoba was cursing inwardly when suddenly he froze, uh, yeah, isn't there still that solution!

Although the soul is important, if it could save one's life, what couldn't be handed over!

"If I give up my soul and make him my master, he surely wouldn't be willing to kill me! My strength isn't weak, and I possess the eighth level of Black Luck, which even the secret clans must fear me by three points! Isn't Ning Fan troubled by the Dark Clan's affairs? If he could accept me as a servant, it would be greatly beneficial to him. Such a proposal, he surely wouldn't refuse!"

Wu Laoba's thoughts raced, increasingly convinced that this was the right solution. All his life, he had been yielding. He didn't have much resistance to being someone's servant. Once he made up his mind, he immediately said to Ning Fan,

"Enough, enough, I admit defeat! I am willing to offer my soul and serve you as my master. In this way, can you spare me a way to live?"

Ning Fan's eyes flickered.

He had indeed overcomplicated the issue; to deal with a cold-blooded devil like Wu Laoba, his consistent method was indeed to use life as leverage, wasn't it?

If he took Wu Laoba's soul, Wu Laoba naturally dared not harbor malicious intent again, and all problems would resolve themselves.

Of course, Wu Laoba was kind to the old monster, so Ning Fan naturally wouldn't truly treat him as a servant. He would still show due respect. What Ning Fan needed was merely a check to restrain Wu Laoba from misbehaving.

"Good! If you give up your soul, I can spare your life!"

Seeing hope for survival, Wu Laoba immediately showed joy, fearing that Ning Fan would go back on his word, he hurriedly opened his mouth and spat out his turtle-shaped soul.

That soul was then taken away by Ning Fan. From this moment on, Wu Laoba's life and death were at Ning Fan's mercy. Wu Laoba's whole life could be considered as having officially fallen into Ning Fan's hands.

After dispelling the Obliteration River and clearing the battlefield, dismissing the Black Cat Dao Soul, Ning Fan collected the Four Emperors Luohan Pine and the Liangyi Square Seal, then descended back into the ancient temple with Wu Laoba, who had returned to his original form. The two stood one behind the other, establishing a master-servant relationship.

Wu Laoba was thick-skinned, feeling no shame in acknowledging a master to save his life. In the cultivation world, the weak submitting to the strong is normal. Ning Fan was the only nemesis he had encountered in his life; serving him was no disgrace!

"Moreover, I've heard some things about this Ning Fan. It is said that his character is incomparably strong and unyielding. If he found himself in my situation, he would never submit to an enemy as a servant, but would fight to the death for the sake of pointless pride. Hehe, my ability to endure humiliation and preserve my life is something this Ning Fan boy can't match. In this aspect, he is not as good as me!"

"Though Ning Fan's strength surpasses mine, he lacks the ability to intimidate the secret clans. It's only by relying on the prestige of his master, the Ancient Chaos that the secret clans slightly fear him. But I can make the secret clans cautious of me with my abilities, in this regard, Ning Fan is no match for me."

"I was able to cultivate an Eternal True Body during a tribulation, which Ning Fan couldn't do, another way he falls short of me!"

"I am feared in the cultivation world, while he is hunted by everyone in the cultivation world, hehe, he is still not as good as me!"

"I have a mustache, while the Ning Fan boy doesn't even have a beard, hehe, he still falls short of me!"

"Looking at it this way, there's hardly anything this Ning Fan surpasses me in, hehe, he really is quite pitiable..."

The more Wu Laoba thought about it, the more pleased he became, looking at Ning Fan with a sympathetic gaze. Just on spiritual triumph, there were indeed not many in the cultivation world who could match Wu Laoba.

"I wonder if Senior Mu Song is satisfied with this junior's strength?" Ning Fan respectfully saluted towards Mu Song, asking neither humbly nor arrogantly.

He had been brought by Xiang Mingzi and had consecutively won three rounds. He felt that he hadn't embarrassed Xiang Mingzi, and even a formidable force like Mu Song would not dare underrate him.

"Hehe, my young friend has consecutively won three matches and blocked the first change of the Liangyi Square Seal with a cultivation of Eternity's First Tribulation, and moreover has a Heaven's Dao Soul following. What qualifications do I have to be dissatisfied with my young friend?"

Mu Song chuckled, but then changed his tone and asked, "I just deduced something, it seems that my young friend has been closely pressed by the Dark Clan recently. Do you need my assistance?"

"What's the condition?" Ning Fan asked in return.

He had gleaned something of Daoist Wood Pine's character. This individual secluded himself from the world, unwilling to involve himself in others' karmic links, and absolutely wouldn't help him against the Dark Clan for nothing.

"Plainspoken, I like it. Naturally, I wouldn't help you unconditionally. Let's say, this is an exchange. Have you heard of Senluo?"

"I've heard of it."

"Senluo, for some reason, had offended the Dark Clan. Even though Xiang Mingzi abandoned his eyesight, he couldn't secure it. Later, I intervened. It was my first exception to open my eyes, agreeing on a battle with three Quasi-Saint elders of the Dark Clan at the starry sky's edge, and the result was that I gained the upper hand, thereby making the Dark Clan refrain, agreeing to spare Senluo's life..."

During these recollections, Mu Song spoke without any sense of boasting, as if it were nothing more than a trivial anecdote.

Ning Fan was moved. Daoist Wood Pine was indeed remarkable, capable of single-handedly matching three Quasi-Saint elders of the Dark Clan, and even obtaining the upper hand. In the Era of Decline, he was indeed a top-tier powerhouse!

"Do not underestimate the Dark Clan simply because of my achievements. The Dark Clan consists of more than just those three Quasi-Saint elders..." Daoist Wood Pine's expression suddenly grew heavy, as though he recalled some past events he didn't share with Ning Fan.

After a momentary silence, he continued, "Do you know why I helped Senluo?"

"Could it be because Senluo helped Senior accomplish something?" Ning Fan speculated based on Mu Song's personality.

"Precisely, Senluo was able to have me intervene because I owed them a karmic debt, and it wasn't on account of Xiang Mingzi's face. Similarly, unless you can make me owe you karma, I won't assist you. Ten days later, I shall show you something. If by then you can lend me assistance, I could make an exception to open my eyes for you at a time of need, for a second time! For these ten days, I must carefully prepare for this, so you can temporarily stay on my Mu Island. Although Mu Island is small, it contains seven grand forbidden areas, of which the first, second, and third you cannot enter due to your insufficient cultivation, but you may freely enter and exit the others without hindrance."

Ning Fan nodded, seeing he could only reside on Mu Island for ten days.

Not everyone would, like Xiang Mingzi, assist him selflessly. Once one's cultivation reached the realm of an elder like Mu Song, they often avoided involvement in karma. This led many Quasi-Saints to choose seclusion, not to be famed across the Four Heavens. Without an enticement of benefits, these aged monsters simply wouldn't partake in any cultivation world conflicts.

Gaining the assistance of Daoist Wood Pine could only depend on his performance ten days later!

Chapter 967: Jianmu's Essence

Xiang Mingzi was called away by Mu Song, seemingly busy preparing for the trial in ten days.

That night, Ning Fan stayed in the guest room of the ancient temple's meditation courtyard, waiting for the trial ten days later.

He wasn't waiting idly. As soon as Ning Fan had some free time, he entered the Xuan Yin Treasure to deal with the three treasures he obtained from Wu Laoba.

The Heaven-Opening Stone, Four Emperors Luohan Pine, and the Liangyi Square Seal.

In the Western Xuanyin Realm, above the cave mansion Ning Fan established, a vast void had been newly opened, within which a sprawling grove of bronze towers floated.

If examined closely, it would be discovered that these bronze towers were the batch of Time Sealing Towers from the Immortal Void of the Eye Orb Monsters.

Ning Fan originally planned to take these Time Towers after defeating Yin Mo, but before departure, the Eye Orb Monster changed its mind and handed these towers to Ning Fan in advance.

Millennium Towers. 9 Ten-thousand-year Towers.

With these Time Towers, whenever Ning Fan needed to undertake something time-consuming, he could directly use the sealed time within the towers to save a great deal of time.

Using the Barbaric God's Punishment Force, Ning Fan bypassed the tower's seal and directly entered one of the Millennium Time Towers.

Upon entering the tower, the first thing he did was use the Heaven-Opening Stone to repair the God-Extinguishing Shield.

This Heaven-Opening Stone was refined by Wu Laoba using the Dark Luck Secret Technique. Others would need to handle this stone with extreme caution, but Ning Fan wasn't afraid of the dark luck within the stone. He used the Fuli Force to wipe away the dark luck with a single sweep of his hand.

Then he opened his mouth and released the God-Extinguishing Shield from his body, looking at the ferocious cracks on the shield, the battle with Yin Mo still vividly remembered.

With Ning Fan's current cultivation, using this shield was enough to defend against the attacks of an Eight Tribulations Celestial Emperor. If he could repair the God-Extinguishing Shield, Ning Fan would undoubtedly have a significant trump card when traversing the Eastern Heaven.

The repair method for the Heaven-Opening Artifact is quite simple; it can self-repair as long as it is nourished by the power of the Heaven-Opening Stone.

The only troublesome part is the slow self-repair speed of the Heaven-Opening Artifact. Fortunately, Ning Fan had an abundance of Time Sealing Towers, so there was no fear of wasting time.

In the space of the bronze tower, Ning Fan found a place rich in Spiritual Energy and placed the God-Extinguishing Shield and the Heaven-Opening Stone together to let them self-repair there.

Afterward, he planned to stay in the tower for a thousand years, waiting for the shield to repair. During this time, he decided to handle the other two treasures.

The first treasure Ning Fan dealt with was the Four Emperors Luohan Pine. It's an extremely rare pine tree, and its needles can all be used as flying swords!

Currently, this pine sapling had grown thirty million pine needle swords, among which nine pine needle swords had reached the level of Acquired Twelve Nirvana!

Any of these Nine Twelve Nirvana Pine Needle Swords could be used as a superb magical treasure for duels at the Immortal Venerable level.

If Ning Fan, like Wu Laoba, could wield the entire Four Emperors Luohan Pine to slay enemies with all thirty million flying swords, even an Immortal King would find it hard to withstand such an attack!

These thirty million pine needle swords could be released en masse or used individually as a magical treasure. This pine's acquisition undoubtedly resolved Ning Fan's urgent lack of magical treasures.

Moreover, the Four Emperors Luohan Pine has another formidable feature: it is a living entity and can continue to grow.

Like the Seven Treasures Marvelous Tree, this pine tree requires Daoquan irrigation to keep growing. The more it grows, the higher the grade of the pine needle swords on its crown.

Theoretically, as long as Ning Fan has enough Daoquan for irrigation, it could elevate all thirty million flying swords to the innate level!

At that time, if Ning Fan unleashed the Four Emperors Luohan Pine, wielding three million innate flying swords to slay foes, even the Initial Saint would retreat upon witnessing such a scene...

Of course, such an idea is quite unrealistic. The growth of the Four Emperors Luohan Pine requires countless Daoquan. To grow even one innate flying sword, vast amounts of Daoquan would be required. The entire Phantom Dreamland's Daoquan wouldn't suffice for thirty million innate flying swords.

"Speaking of which, if I have the leisure, I should actually acquire some Daoquan to nourish the Seven Treasures Marvelous Tree. As it grows, it bears fruit that aids in my cultivation. Compared to that, the growth of the Four Emperors Luohan Pine is not as important."

Cultivation is, of course, more critical than a magical treasure.

If there is Daoquan, Ning Fan would choose to water the Seven Treasures Marvelous Tree first and only then water the Four Emperors Luohan Pine.

Ning Fan refined all thirty million pine needle swords. So in future duels, he could use the pine needle swords for attack any time.

After refining the pine needle swords, Ning Fan took out the Liangyi Square Seal and examined it carefully.

This was the third treasure offered to him by Wu Laoba, and it had three transformations, each more powerful than the last.

Among them, Wu Laoba only used the first transformation of this seal to send Ning Fan flying five times, forcing him into a bitter struggle.

If not for Ning Fan understanding the reverse-heaven divine skill of the Severing Dao Divine Sword, severing the seal's Dao Source operation, he would most likely have been defeated by Wu Laoba.

The destructive power of this seal is stronger than the Obliteration Technique and thirty million flying swords. After a ritual sacrifice, it could become Ning Fan's first offensive innate magical treasure!

"Previously, I struck this seal with four swords, injuring the Yin Phoenix within the seal. To use this treasure, I must first repair it."

The Liangyi Square Seal is not a Heaven-Opening Artifact and cannot repair itself. Repairing it also does not require using such reverse-heaven items like Heaven-Opening Stone.

In the Bronze Tower Space, within a millennium, Ning Fan spent ten years repeatedly forging this seal using the Eleven-Flavors True Fire in his body, supplemented by countless immortal ores, until he repaired the seal.

For the subsequent nine hundred and ninety years, Ning Fan only did one thing: refining this seal and comprehending the three transformations contained within it.

The first transformation of this seal is named [Yin Seal Phoenix Freeze Heaven]. Even with Wu Laoba's cultivation level, he would need to summon the Eternal True Body to perform this transformation. Ning Fan's Calamity Blood cultivation is insufficient to perform the first transformation; only after merging with the Black Cat Dao Soul could he barely achieve it.

The second transformation of this seal is called [Yang Seal Dragon Striking Fire]. Even after merging with the Black Cat Dao Soul, Ning Fan's cultivation level couldn't use the second transformation.

Ning Fan couldn't comprehend the third transformation of this seal, seemingly due to insufficient cultivation.

A millennium passed in the blink of an eye, and the God-Extinguishing Shield absorbed all the power of the Heaven-Opening Stone, thoroughly repairing.

Ning Fan retrieved the God-Extinguishing Shield back into his body. From this moment, even being chased by the Eight Tribulations Celestial Emperor, he now had the power to protect himself!

After the collapse of the Bronze Tower Space, Ning Fan returned to the Western Xuanyin Realm, temporarily planting the Four Emperors Luohan Pine beside the Seven Treasures Marvelous Tree to use when needed.

Then he returned to his guest room and rested for the night.

Early the next morning, Wu Laoba came to wait outside Ning Fan's chamber, seemingly to report some matter, but fearing to disturb Ning Fan's rest, dared not push the door open and enter.

"Come in, you need not be so restrained in front of me," Ning Fan said courteously.

Upon hearing Ning Fan's call, Wu Laoba finally opened the door and entered with eagerness.

"I have an important issue to report to the master, regarding the [Anti-Ning Alliance]!", Wu Laoba said with a face full of self-satisfaction, repeatedly calling him master in a very smooth manner.

"Tell me in detail, what is this Anti-Ning Alliance all about?"

Ning Fan had seen some fragments in Wu Laoba's memory, but still wanted Wu Laoba to explain the whole story fully.

Wu Laoba had just acknowledged Ning Fan as his master and was eager to make some contributions, quickly telling everything he knew to Ning Fan.

The leader of this Anti-Ning Alliance is the Sect Master of the Pill Sect. The alliance has not yet been truly established and is still in the preparation stage. After all, Ning Fan had just returned to the Eastern Heaven for a few days, and the Pill Sect had only recently decided to establish an Anti-Ning Alliance specifically to deal with Ning Fan.

"Master mustn't underestimate this Dan Old Monster due to his not-so-high cultivation. His alchemy skills are extraordinary, having advanced to the Ninth Revolution Golden Pill's refinement level decades ago. Even more astonishingly, not long after reaching the Golden Core refinement level, he somehow reached the bottleneck of Emperor Elixir Grade refinement!"

"Currently, Golden Core level Alchemists in the Four Heavens are few, and it's uncertain if there are any Emperor Elixir Grade Alchemists. His alchemy skills could form a huge rallying force, and because the Dark Clan is coveting the master, quite a few old monsters responded to Dan Old Monster's call, deciding to join the Anti-Ning Alliance to trouble the master. Among them are strong Immortal Venerables, and this small man knows three Immortal Venerables by name, all famous for many years in the Eastern Heaven Immortal World..."

Upon hearing this, Ning Fan's brows furrowed slightly; it seems that the Sect Master of the Pill Sect should not be underestimated.

"Are there any Immortal Kings among the alliance?"

"There are none. After all, Dan Old Monster has not truly stepped into the Emperor Elixir Grade dan refinement realm, and the master's teacher, the Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor, has not truly perished. Immortal King old monsters are cautious and won't easily get involved in such turmoil," Wu Laoba recalled and answered earnestly.

"So no Immortal Kings, huh..." Ning Fan's gaze flickered, pondering with some undefined thoughts.

"Master need not worry; the alliance is still in the preparation stage. After three months, a [Anti-Ning Conference] will be held at the Pill Sect to discuss the formation of the alliance."

"Three months later, huh..."

Ning Fan's eyes flashed with coldness. His enmity with the Sect Master of the Pill Sect had been long-standing; it's time for a resolution!

Three months later, all who wish to oppose him will gather at the Pill Sect for a grand Anti-Ning Conference.

If Ning Fan arrives at the Pill Sect three months later, could he entrap all those malicious cultivators in Eastern Heaven?

Facing Ning Fan's sharp and cold gaze, Wu Laoba felt an inexplicable chill in his heart, thinking to himself that this star of misfortune might unleash a massacre at the Pill Sect three months later!

It seemed that a mere one night not seeing Ning Fan gave Wu Laoba an illusion. Overnight, Ning Fan's cultivation hadn't increased, but the sense of oppression transmitted seemed to have grown stronger.

The reason, naturally, is because Ning Fan had repaired the God-Extinguishing Shield, which invisibly placed a heavier pressure on Wu Laoba.

But Wu Laoba didn't realize this; he only thought that Ning Fan, who had previously defeated him, still had spare strength unused, and so his apprehension towards this convenient master increased significantly.

"What a hardship, what a hardship. Old Monster Han, Old Monster Han, you've provoked such a star of misfortune, it's better to fend for yourself this time. This time, this poor Daoist cannot stand by you. Perhaps, this poor Daoist may have to help his master to destroy your Pill Sect. After all, there's no karma between us, killing you won't have any negative impact on me," Wu Laoba shamelessly cast the Pill Sect Master, whom he had a sort of drinking buddy relationship with, directly to the opposing side.

"By the way, I have another question to ask you. Where did your Heiyun Sect's Nieli Ancestral Corpse come from?" Ning Fan suddenly asked.

"In reply to my master, it was found by chance by my master Ancestor Heiyun during his travels in the Heavenly Demon." Wu Laoba's heart was shaken, secretly wondering how Ning Fan knew about this matter, but he still truthfully answered the question.

Ning Fan pondered slightly.

From Wu Laoba's memory, Ning Fan saw many things, and even saw the existence of the Nieli Ancestral Corpse deep within Wu Laoba's memory.

The Heiyun Sect is located in the Northern Heaven Immortal World, hidden deep in the stars, where a Nieli Ancestor's corpse is sealed!

Both Wu Laoba and his master, Ancestor Heiyun, required absorbing the dark fortune of the Nieli Ancestor's corpse while cultivating to gradually cultivate the powerful black fortune that shook the Four Heavens.

In Wu Laoba's memory, there is also a hierarchy for the black fortune; Ancestor Heiyun divided the dark fortune into nine levels, corresponding to the levels of the Nine Colors of Immortal Fate.

Ancestor Heiyun himself has the cultivation of an Immortal Emperor, yet only possesses a level seven black fortune, while Wu Laoba seems to have already reached level eight.

Level eight black fortune corresponds to the eighth color of Immortal Fate; anyone with fortune levels lower than Wu Laoba would be influenced by his black fortune!

But it's just an influence; for masters like Xiang Mingzi, although they haven't cultivated the eighth color of Immortal Fate, they wouldn't fear Wu Laoba, only hold some reservation at most.

In Xiang Mingzi's cultivation, if he were to seize Wu Laoba's belongings or kill him, it might cause some trouble, but there would be no mortal danger.

"The level eight black fortune of Wu Laoba could be used to create some trouble for the Dark Clan, but relying on this method to deal with them is insufficient. Ultimately, improving my own cultivation is fundamental. Only by becoming strong myself can I prevent the Dark Clan from daring to offend me and others from daring to insult me!"

Ning Fan's Fiendgod and ancient demon cultivation is stuck at the Shedding Void Stage, but his ancient demon cultivation still has room for improvement.

Currently, he has four main methods to improve his cultivation.

Firstly, consuming expensive pills, Dao Fruits, and other heavenly treasures, secondly, cultivating twenty-seven types of Yin and Yang, each of which significantly enhances cultivations.

Thirdly, watering the Seven Treasures Marvelous Tree and consuming the fruits it yields; fourthly, enhancing the cultivation of female cultivators with the Zi Relic, which in turn elevates his own cultivation with the Mother Relic.

"On this Wood Island, the Dao Principle of Wood is indeed abundant. Anyway, I need to stay on Wood Island for ten more days, so I might as well go out and comprehend it a great deal."

Just as Ning Fan had this thought, a visitor arrived—it was the Big Ear Sramanera whom Ning Fan had defeated earlier.

After some pleasantries, Ning Fan learned that this person was the second disciple of Daoist Wood Pine, with the Dharma name Songguo. He came under the order of his master Daoist Wood Pine to guide Ning Fan around Wood Island.

"My master has ordered that since Daoist Ning is the inheritor of Ancient Chaos, he would likely be interested in the Dao Principle of Wood on Wood Island. So, he ordered me to guide Daoist Ning to visit the seven forbidden areas on Wood Island. If luck is gained from them, it is considered Daoist's skill!"

Songguo Chan Master's tone was very courteous; though he lost to Ning Fan once, there wasn't a bit of resentment in him, reflecting his well-cultivated mind.

"The seven forbidden regions, is it..."

Ning Fan's gaze slightly condensed. According to his perception, there are seven places on this Wood Island where the power of the Dao Principle of Wood is the strongest—these must be the seven forbidden regions mentioned by Songguo.

He intended to comprehend the Dao Principle of Wood on Wood Island, so naturally, he wouldn't refuse Songguo Chan Master's suggestion.

Consequently, Songguo Chan Master led Ning Fan and Wu Laoba out of the ancient temple and toward a towering ancient pine deep in the island's forest.

It was an ancient pine with slightly purple bark, faintly exuding a terrifying pressure that created a vacuum within a hundred steps, allowing no one to approach it!

The soil beneath the pine tree was damp, and the earth's surface occasionally rolled slightly, as if something alive was moving beneath the ground.

Upon sensing Ning Fan's arrival, twelve mudmen immediately emerged from the ground, their killer intent squarely locked onto Ning Fan and Wu Laoba.

Each mudman possessed the cultivation level of a Newly Ascended Immortal Venerable, specifically guarding this place and protecting this pine!

But after Songguo Chan Master's shout of 'retreat,' the twelve Immortal Venerable mudmen each burrowed back into the ground.

"Within this pine, there echoes a bell sound, personally planted by my master. If you step within a hundred steps away, you can hear the bell, but its sound is intermittent and grows stronger the closer you get to the pine. Without the Eternal Immortal Venerable cultivation, it is impossible to cross these hundred steps. This is the first of Wood Island's seven forbidden regions and the weakest among them."

With that said, Songguo Chan Master took the lead, being the first to step within a hundred steps of the ancient pine, his figure swaying as he advanced directly to ninety steps away from the pine.

As he stepped within a hundred steps, a bell sound suddenly echoed between heaven and earth, seemingly both distant and close.

The bell sound seemed to emerge from within the old pine tree, yet also appeared to originate from the endless void of a faraway place. Ning Fan, standing nearby, could not determine where the bell sound actually came from!

It was as if the sound could originate from anywhere in this world, or perhaps, the sound never existed, and it was all just an illusion, leaving no trace to be found.

At the sound of the bell, Monk Songguo, having crossed into the hundred steps distance, turned pale, groaned, as if injured, and without hesitation, summoned his mana to resist the bell sound. Despite the severe consumption of mana, he was forced to retreat five steps, barely able to stabilize his stance.

He took a deep breath and, shimmering once more, advanced ten steps toward the old pine, yet another bell sound struck him back five steps.

He continued this dance of retreat and advance, taking a total of one hundred forty-nine breaths to reach beneath the old pine.

Upon arriving under the old pine tree, he found his mana almost entirely exhausted, consumed in the struggle against the bell sound!

Then, a miraculous scene unfolded.

Monk Songguo, without using any mana recovery technique, was enveloped in a layer of green light from the old pine, rapidly restoring his mana.

"This is... the power of the Dao Principle of Wood!" Ning Fan's eyes glistened.

The cultivation of Dao Principles endows practitioners with many abilities.

For instance, the cultivation of the Rain Dao Principle enhances Ning Fan's perception; the War Dao Principle strengthens Ning Fan's willpower; the Darkness Dao Principle increases Ning Fan's illusory art strength.

The Dao Principle of Wood grants practitioners a certain ability, that ability being the endless regeneration of mana.

Immortal Venerables who cultivated the Dao Principle of Wood restore mana at twice the speed of those cultivating other Dao Principles.

Of course, in terms of offensive power, the Dao Principle of Wood is not as strong as many other Dao Principles. Where there are advantages, there are also drawbacks, as it is not an aggressive principle.

"Hehe, Daoist Ning, Daoist Wu, why don't you two try as well? See how many breaths it takes to reach under this pine," Monk Songguo suggested, sitting cross-legged in the shade of the pine, addressing Ning Fan and Wu Laoba.

Hearing this, Wu Laoba showed eagerness.

He had lingered on Mu Island for over a month, yearning to enter the seven forbidden grounds of Mu Island to perceive the Dao Principle of Wood. Unfortunately, Daoist Wood Pine, despite gifting him three treasures, did not permit him to enter any forbidden ground on Mu Island.

This time, thanks to Ning Fan's influence, the people of Mu Island allowed him to approach the old pine and perceive the Dao Principle of Wood. Such a rare opportunity couldn't be missed.

Heh, serving Ning Fan does have its perks, after all.

"It's said that when Daoist Wood Pine was young, he obtained three drops of Jianmu's Essence. He used one himself, achieving the title of Emperor Wood Controller. The second, gifted to his student Emperor Cang, which allowed Cang to grasp some understanding of the Dao Principle of Wood, though he never fully comprehended the true power of Control Positions. The third drop, Wood Pine divided into seven portions, sealed within the seven ancient pines on Mu Island, endowing each pine with divine skills, turning them into the seven forbidden grounds of Mu Island..."

Wu Laoba was elated, as he now had the chance to perceive Jianmu's Essence within the old pine. Should he be fortunate in obtaining some understanding of the Dao Principle of Wood, his power would surely increase significantly!

His cultivation was one tribulation higher than Monk Songguo's. With a single leap, he moved to a position eighty steps from the old pine. Despite being struck by the bell sound, he retreated only four steps. In this manner, he reached the old pine with only five retreats, taking merely twenty-six breaths, much more effortlessly than Monk Songguo.

"As expected of a senior Immortal Venerable of Eternity's First Tribulation, traversing the hundred steps in only twenty-six breaths."

Monk Songguo was very impressed with Wu Laoba, and his expectations for Ning Fan's performance heightened even more.

Ning Fan's strength surpassed Wu Laoba's, so he should take even less time.

Upon reaching the shade of the pine, Wu Laoba immediately sat cross-legged and relished the green Buddha Light descending from the old pine. This Buddha Light carried the scent of Jianmu's Essence, embodying the supreme Dao of Wood. To grasp even a wisp of it would be an unparalleled opportunity. He breathed in the light wood aroma greedily, afraid to miss even a trace.

Seeing Wu Laoba's actions, Ning Fan shook his head speechlessly. Taking a deep breath, he also shimmered and stepped within a hundred steps.

Despite his formidable combat power, Ning Fan's actual cultivation was somewhat inferior to Wu Laoba's. With a single leap, he reached a position eighty-two steps from the old pine.

Then came the bell sound again. While Wu Laoba, with his cultivation, had to step back four steps to withstand it, Ning Fan merely swayed gently, with gold light flashing around him, without retreating even half a step.

"Hiss! To stand unfazed in the face of the first forbidden ground, only a Second Calamity Immortal Lord can do so. Yet this Rain Monarch did not even use that peculiar black cat, which did not elevate his cultivation to the Second Calamity level. How did he manage this?"

Monk Songguo's eyes were filled with disbelief, realizing the Rain Immortal Monarch was far more profound than he had anticipated, defying ordinary logic.

Wu Laoba was now even more convinced that the pressure he felt from Ning Fan earlier was no mere illusion.

After just one night, Ning Fan seemed to have undergone a seismic transformation, giving Wu Laoba the sense that this current Ning Fan could not be defeated no matter what...

Chapter 968: Ancient Buddha Tree Spirit

"That fleeting golden light, what divine power is it? The master's ability to stand firm seems closely related to that golden light..."

Wu Laoba's pea-sized eyes darted around, yet he couldn't see through the origins of that protective golden light.

He wouldn't know that the golden light was the radiance emitted by the God-Extinguishing Shield to protect its master.

In fact, after the first sound of the bell resonated through his body, Ning Fan had already sensed something amiss. The sound of the ancient pine bell here contained extremely pure Buddha power, which was inherently incompatible with the ancient demon bloodline within him, as if they were natural enemies.

Others who would hear the bell might at most be repelled; however, Ning Fan was different.

He was an ancient demon, and throughout history, Buddhists and demons have never coexisted peacefully! The barely perceptible bell sound, to him, bore an invisible destructive power, enough to neutralize the cultivation of the ancient demon within him!

If not for the God-Extinguishing Shield autonomously protecting its master with the golden light, Ning Fan wouldn't have simply been repelled by the bell sound; he might have suffered damage to his ancient demon cultivation!

"Hmm? You little ancient demon, interesting, you can remain unmoved under Grandpa Qi's Fumo Bell."

Inside the ancient pine, a surprised voice suddenly sounded.

Wu Laoba didn't know who was speaking, feeling extremely perplexed. Monk Songguo, on the other hand, had knowledge of this ancient pine; upon hearing it speak, he dared not neglect it, hurriedly stood up, clasped his hands into a prayer, and greeted,

"Disciple Songguo, greetings to Uncle Master Qi!"

"This Songguo calls the person within the pine Uncle Master; could it be that this person is a senior brother of Daoist Wood Pine? How come I didn't know Daoist Wood Pine had a senior brother!" Wu Laoba was shocked internally, standing up in haste, and showed respect to the ancient pine without any trace of negligence. Ning Fan, however, frowned, his eyes flashing with azure light, seeing through the origins of the person within the pine.

The speaker was actually a spirit born from the ancient pine's years of cultivation!

While speaking, a human face suddenly emerged from the ancient pine, glanced at Monk Songguo and then at Wu Laoba, and frowned, saying,

"Oh? It's Junior Nephew Songguo. Didn't your master promise us seven brothers that no outsiders are allowed into the forbidden land of Mu Island? And yet today, two outsiders came, disturbing my dreams, and even made me see an ancient demon, whom I loathe."

Upon saying the words ancient demon, the human face glared fiercely at Ning Fan with a look of disgust.

"These two are not outsiders, but..." Monk Songguo was about to explain when the human face impatiently interrupted,

"Enough, enough! You needn't have irrelevant talk with me; I know it already. How wouldn't I know? These two must have some connection with your Mu Island, otherwise how would they be allowed into the forbidden land. Well, this pea-sized-eyed fellow desires to enter the forbidden land to gain insight, which I can tolerate, but that one, being an ancient demon, wishes to comprehend under my tree, that's a thousand times impossible, a ten thousand times!"

"Ancient demon kid, you have three breaths to quickly retreat a hundred steps away from my ancient pine, or don't blame me for enhancing the bell's power to make you embarrassed!"

The human face was extremely rude, wanting to drive away Ning Fan, the ancient demon master.

Monk Songguo immediately showed a troubled expression; he never expected Uncle Master Qi to be so domineering, not allowing Ning Fan to comprehend Dao here in the forbidden land.

It's no wonder, after all, these ancient pines of Mu Island's seven forbidden lands were all personally planted by Daoist Wood Pine, nurtured daily with Buddha power, eventually giving rise to tree spirits.

Seven ancient pines in the forbidden areas, seven tree spirits, their cultivation levels might not be much higher than that of Monk Songguo, but their seniority is extremely high, having witnessed the entire process of Wood Pine Dao's formation, and even providing insightful assistance, thus being gratefully regarded by Daoist Wood Pine as senior brothers, counting as Uncle Masters to Songguo and other disciples of Mu Island.

What should be done now? The master instructed me to bring Rain Monarch to comprehend in the forbidden land, yet Uncle Master Qi disagrees with Rain Monarch coming here to comprehend...

Just because Rain Monarch is an ancient demon?

In the past, weren't there pseudo-ancient demons who came to Mu Island for insight, and to those pseudo-ancient demons, weren't you quite tolerant? Why so harsh on Rain Monarch?

Just because he is a true ancient demon and you're a Buddha cultivator?

"Uncle Master Qi, can this matter have some room for compromise..."

"One breath!"

"Uncle Master Qi, this is the master's intention, the master wants..."

"Two breaths!"

"Uncle Master Qi..."

"Three breaths! Alright, alright! Good for you, ancient demon kid, aren't you leaving? If you have the capability, then keep walking forward, let's see if you can continue to withstand Grandpa Qi's Fumo Bell!"

The human face seemed to lose all patience, snorted coldly, and returned to the inside of the ancient pine.

Seeing this, Monk Songguo gave a bitter smile, feeling quite helpless, he apologized to Ning Fan positioned eighty-two steps away,

"I'm sorry, I didn't expect Uncle Master Qi would be so biased against the identity of a Dao friend as an ancient demon; as a result, it seems the Dao friend won't be able to approach this pine for insight."

The implication was, Rain Monarch, regardless, don't continue forward, just retreat to a hundred steps distance.

Mind you, if these tree spirit Uncle Masters insist that someone shouldn't enter the forbidden land, even an Immortal King might not forcibly approach the ancient pine.

"Why should Daoist Songguo apologize? Didn't your Uncle Master Qi say, allow me to continue forward if I have the capability. I dare say, Ning Fan has some capability, the distance of eighty-two steps isn't Ning Fan's limit, how could I retreat."

Ning Fan stood expressionless, gazing at the ancient pine.

While Monk Songguo revered the pine, Ning Fan had no reverence for it whatsoever.

The words of this pine spirit showed disdain towards ancient demons, targeting him maliciously; he could overlook it for the sake of Daoist Wood Pine.

Yet, his insight here had been permitted by Daoist Wood Pine, and a mere tree spirit wanting to expel him was out of the question!

With this thought, Ning Fan's figure flickered, appearing at the sixty-four-step mark near the ancient pine.

Dong——

Once again, a bell sound rang from nowhere between heaven and earth; this time, the bell sound increased by thirty percent in power compared to the first.

This time, Ning Fan still blocked the bell sound with a flash of golden light and remained unmoved.

On seeing this, the human face emerged once more from the ancient pine, snorted coldly, and said,

"Impressive, ancient demon youth, even the amplified bell sound can't faze you; if so, I won't hold back anymore, and if I can't force you a hundred steps away, hmph, I'll start writing my name backward! Buddha talisman manifests, Buddha's Radiance Shines Universally!"

With a scolding from the human face, pine wind suddenly stirred around the ancient pine, amidst which azure light circulated, coalescing into peculiar-looking symbols, swirling continually around the pine.

Ning Fan's eyes narrowed slightly, sensing that the Buddha talismans swirling around the ancient pine seemed somewhat similar to the Symbol of Devil Raising of the ancient demons.

Unfortunately, these Buddha talismans were blurry and illusory; he couldn't discern their clear appearance.

The Buddha talismans emitted countless rays of Buddha light, enveloping Ning Fan, causing his mana to feel sluggish, his shoulders burdened as if laden with mountains, resulting in a sense of being unable to move.

His figure flickered forward again, but this time, due to the overwhelming pressure upon him, he only advanced less than ten steps.

Dong——

A bell sound, several folds stronger than before, arrived as expected, echoing through the sky. The sound was so intense it buzzed in Songguo's and Wu Laoba's ears, yet Ning Fan still didn't retreat a step, unafraid of the bell sound.

"Great, you little ancient demon, still not retreating, alright then, I'll have to show my true skills!"

Dong——

The surrounding pressure intensified continuously, Ning Fan moved forward again, advancing five more steps; the bell sound rang, yet with the protection of the God-Extinguishing Shield, he stayed firm without retreat.

The human face looked even more displeased, "Interesting, truly interesting, let me show you Grandpa Qi's unrivaled skills!"

Dong——

This time, Ning Fan advanced merely two steps, yet still remained unharmed under the bell sound.

"Your Grandpa Qi doesn't believe even once he can't make you retreat!"

Dong—

Ning Fan still proceeded relentlessly.

"Your Grandpa Qi has to bring out his ultimate skills from the bottom of the chest!"

Dong—

Gradually, Ning Fan not only did not retreat, but after adapting to the suppression of the Buddha's Light, he started advancing more steps.

"Such sin, such sin, this move, with Grandpa Qi's compassionate heart, I originally didn't intend to use, but you forced my hand!"

Dong—

Unable to halt Ning Fan's advance!

With endless chimes resonating, the tree spirit named Mu Qi found in his lamentation that his chimes were utterly incapable of stopping Ning Fan's progress!

"... The previous twelve chimes were given to you by Grandpa Qi, but this thirteenth chime is not allowing it anymore..."

"... The previous thirteen chimes were merely probes, but the fourteenth chime contains the essence of Grandpa Qi's lifetime of divine skills..."

"... Don't force me! The fifteenth chime, Grandpa Qi truly means business!"

"The sixteenth..."

"The seventeenth..."

"The eighteenth..."

"Blast it! My Fumo Bell's chime is strong enough to repel a Triple Calamity Immortal King, yet it cannot repel this little ancient demon! What is this kid's origin!"

Seeing Ning Fan remain unshakeable, Mu Qi the tree spirit finally couldn't contain himself, bursting into curses, breaching the precepts of anger.

The bell chimed endlessly across the sky above Mu Island, disturbing all the disciples on the island, who left the Zen courtyard for the first forbidden land to witness Ning Fan's grand march through the land of hundred steps.

With ten thousand Buddha's Lights bearing down, Ning Fan's pace was slow. Each advance triggered bell chimes strong enough to repulse a Triple Calamity Immortal King, yet he never retreated a half-step under the reverberation.

This scene gave everyone on Mu Island a newfound understanding of Ning Fan's strength.

"This Rain Monarch is quite formidable! Clearly only possessing the cultivation of a First Calamity Immortal Sovereign, yet capable of resisting bell chimes that could repel a three-tiered Immortal King!"

"What divine skill is that golden light? Not ordinary, definitely not ordinary!"

"Perhaps this Rain Monarch has strength comparable to an Immortal King!"

"Seven Master Uncle has exerted all his efforts yet cannot hinder the Rain Monarch's progress. The reputation of the Rain Immortal Monarch is truly well-deserved!"

Amidst the chorus of praises, Ning Fan finally reached the shade of the old pine, sitting cross-legged. He discovered that the Buddha Light and chimes were not without benefits.

Within the Buddha Light and Buddha Talisman, there seemed to be deeply profound traces of The Great Dao of Wood; each chime, though blocked by the God-Extinguishing Shield, offered some refinement to the Ancient Demon Bloodline within.

His ancient demon cultivation had surged in the Barbarian Wilderness Ancient Domain; because of that, it became somewhat insubstantial, but now, under the endless chiming, it was refined and consolidated continuously. Thus, he not only didn't blame Mu Qi for ringing the chimes, but should even thank him for tirelessly ringing them, assisting the refinement of his ancient demon cultivation, saving him at least a thousand years of arduous practice.

"Well now, you arrogant little ancient demon, dare to meditate under my tree? You want a good enlightenment, but I won't allow you to fully grasp it!"

Seeing Ning Fan sitting nonchalantly under the tree in meditation, Mu Qi was so enraged that green smoke puffed from his nostrils, with the chimes now like bursts from a rapid-fire cannon, striking one after another, becoming dense and tight.

Mu Qi just couldn't believe it, that with such chime reverberation, Ning Fan could still calmly sit cross-legged and meditate!

Within a hundred steps of the old pine, the chimes echoed relentlessly; forget about meditating in this place; even standing within a hundred steps doing nothing was extremely difficult.

Monk Songguo and Wu Laoba had long been shaken beyond a hundred steps by the violent chimes, unable to enter the forbidden region within the hundred steps of the ancient pine.

Even standing beyond a hundred steps, many lower-level disciples couldn't withstand the chimes and retreated to a two hundred step distance.

Within one hundred steps of the ancient pine, only Ning Fan remained!

He just sat quietly, as if the overwhelming chimes and Buddha Light were nothing, focused solely on his own matters!

Sweat beaded more on Mu Qi's face; releasing the Buddha Light and ringing the chimes was no easy task for him, yet they couldn't affect Ning Fan in the slightest.

The truth was in front of Mu Qi; he was reluctant to acknowledge it but had no choice—he had no way to deal with this ancient demon Ning Fan...

"Conceded! Little ancient demon, I yield to you! What conditions do you want to leave within my hundred step range? My lifetime cultivation in Buddhist disciples has not come easily, now crucial in my cultivation bottleneck, cannot be disrupted by ancient demons. If you agree to withdraw a hundred steps, I'll gift you something—how about it!"

Mu Qi's tone already bordered on pleading, pitifully. It turned out this was the fundamental reason for his eagerness to drive Ning Fan away.

Ning Fan's gaze flickered, smiling, "Oh? What gift?"

"Take it!"

Mu Qi, straightforwardly enough, spat from his mouth, swiftly emitting a blue light orb that landed in Ning Fan's palm.

"This is..."

Ning Fan's gaze instantly became serious.

Contained within the blue light orb were incredibly pure traces of the Dao Principle of Wood; solely judging purity level, it almost equaled the highest Heavenly Grade Fierce Origin Crystal!

This was excellent material for cultivating Wood Yin-Yang!

Though one point left Ning Fan a bit disappointed—the wood traces quantity within the light orb was too little; if only this, it would have limited use.

"Just this much..." Ning Fan smiled innocently, extorting more from Mu Qi.

While Mu Qi rang bells to suppress him, though the results were good in aiding the refinement of his ancient demon cultivation, the motivation was somewhat malevolent.

Ning Fan was not one to suffer losses; this spirit dared to suppress him with chimes, a penalty needed—he wouldn't be Ning Fan without extracting a hefty price, nor the disciple of the old monster, nor the legacy bearer of the Black Evil Sect!

"Just this little bit! Really just this little bit! Fine, little ancient demon, after accepting the thing, don't you move swiftly?" Mu Qi spoke, feeling guilty.

"If it's only this little bit... I won't leave..."

Speaking, Ning Fan flipped the blue light orb into his hand, then continued to endure the Buddha Light and chimes, closing his eyes, perceiving the wood traces within.

Given his experience, from Mu Qi's expression alone, it could be judged there must be many of these; if he could take more, it would greatly benefit cultivating Wood Yin-Yang.

"Oh, so no wonder you're an ancient demon, greedy to such an extent! Do you want more of Jianmu's Essence? Fine, as you wish! Grandpa Qi will see if you have the capability to take these!"

Mu Qi, amused by Ning Fan's greed, laughed, opened his mouth, and spewed dozens of blue light orbs. Once afloat, they emitted an enormous blue light, painting the entire sky blue.

Above the blue sky, a massive Buddha Talisman was etched stroke by stroke.

A colossal pressure descended from the sky, causing not just Monk Songguo and Wu Laoba but fellow practitioners to change their expressions, struggling to bear that level of pressure.

This time's Buddha Talisman was incredibly clear, so clear that everyone could witness the complete process of its creation!

Monk Songguo and others had at least seen Seven Master Uncle release the complete Buddha Talisman, shocked only briefly, yet Wu Laoba was deeply moved.

"Anciently, Buddha cultivators defied the ancient demon path, practicing the Ancient Buddha's Dao. Ancient demons cultivate the Symbol of Devil Raising, Buddha cultivators practice Buddha Talisman. The more strokes in the seal script, the stronger the talisman! Over a hundred strokes make an ancestral talisman; this spirit's Buddha Talisman seems to belong to the Wood Buddha Lineage, and has seventy-two strokes, though not ancestral level, rare in this era!"

"And if I am not mistaken, all these blue light orbs are diluted Jianmu's Essence! This tree spirit's attack unexpectedly utilized the Jianmu's Essence power, this pressure nearly reaching the Triple Calamity Peak Immortal King's strike! Master, Master, can you withstand this strike!"

Wu Laoba began to worry about Ning Fan's safety.

How could he not worry? His soul is under Ning Fan's control; if Ning Fan met misfortune, his soul couldn't be guaranteed undamaged...

"Little ancient demon, if you can withstand this chimes' reverberation, these essences will be yours—why not! Unfortunately, you can't withstand it! This time, I'm truly playing seriously—not deceiving!"

Dong—Dong—Dong—

This time, three chimes resonated together, bell sounds like waves, one higher than the last; within a hundred steps, the space quivered, suddenly emitting cracking sounds. The twelve Immortal Sovereign clay figures lurking underground were similarly shaken, emerging from the earth, fleeing beyond a hundred steps, fear etched on their faces.

The originally cross-legged, eye-closed Ning Fan was rattled by the chimes; his body's golden light showed signs of scattering!

Seeing this, Mu Qi's confidence surged, assuring himself that this strike could drive the pestering ancient demon away from the forbidden region.

The gratified smile on his face grew even wider...

Chapter 969: Ancestral Talisman Transformation

It's a pity, Mu Qi was destined to be disappointed. Just as the golden light on Ning Fan's body showed signs of dispersing, an even stronger golden light emanated from within him, easily defending against the three overlapping chimes.

Like a mighty tree unafraid of ants shaking it, or a hill unmoved by the gentle breeze, he remained steadfast!

With his attack ineffective, Mu Qi's expression changed, quickly retracting the azure light spheres from the sky, as if fearing that Ning Fan would snatch them away. In his mind, he was filled with bitterness. He had used his strongest attack, but to no avail against Ning Fan. What should he do now?

"Is this all the Jianmu's Essence that the Ming Luo Tree has?"

Seeing Mu Qi hastily retract all the essence, Ning Fan felt quite regretful.

Mu Qi retracted the Jianmu's Essence so quickly; he had no time to seize it before it was taken back...

Forget it, after all, this is the territory of Daoist Wood Pine, and this tree spirit is nominally Wood Pine's senior brother. Forcing him too much would not be appropriate in the end.

Ning Fan shook his head slightly, no longer paying attention to Mu Qi. Compared to the Jianmu's Essence in Mu Qi's hand, Ning Fan was more interested in comprehending the Dao Principle of Wood here.

He meditated like an old monk, completely ignoring the chimes ringing in his ears. Even though the chimes were as loud as thunder, to him, the world grew increasingly silent.

Mu Qi's startled noise became inaudible to him; the chimes heard from the heavens also gradually quieted. The whole world was peaceful, no sound could reach his ears!

This was the Second Realm of Tianren, already in harmony with the world. If he wished to meditate, no one could disturb his heart spirit even slightly! Unless he was forcibly attacked and pulled out from this meditative state, but unfortunately, the God-Extinguishing Shield would not allow others to attack its master!

"He... the Rain Monarch can forcibly enter meditation under the true essence strike of the Seventh Elder and the three overlapping chimes!"

"To my knowledge, even the Great Emperor Cang, despite being able to easily block the chimes, cannot meditate to such an extent when the chimes ring chaotically in the ears!"

"My master once said that being able to achieve 'All sounds of the world are silent, only the bell and chime sounds remain' under the Fumo Bell signifies a peerless hero, qualified to vie for the Immortal Emperor Realm! But somehow, I feel the Rain Monarch's meditation is even more profound than that state..."

"No doubt, seeing the expression of the Rain Monarch with closed eyes and silence, I fear even the chimes are absent from his ears... Could this be the highest Buddhist realm of the [Six Senses Purification]!"

"The Five Aggregates Emptiness, Six Senses Purification... these are legendary Buddhist realms! Unexpectedly, today, we are fortunate enough to witness it firsthand!"

All the members of the Mu Dao Gate watched Ning Fan's meditation intently, hoping to discern some method or gain insight into the profound method of the Six Senses Purification.

Unfortunately, they didn't know that Ning Fan was not a Buddhist cultivator and had never learned the Six Senses Purification.

This was not the Six Senses Purification, but a rarer Second Realm of Tianren. In the vast world, those who could enter this realm were few!

"That azure light sphere, is it called Jianmu's Essence... This essence is indeed commendable, but compared to it, the Buddha Talisman intrigues me even more..."

Though Ning Fan did not open his eyes, in his mind, the scene of Mu Qi drawing the seventy-two strokes of the Buddha Talisman played over and over.

Mu Qi was an ancient Buddha cultivator, and he had inscribed all his insights of the Dao Principle of Wood into the seventy-two strokes of the Buddha Talisman.

The Buddha Talisman and the Symbol of Devil Raising seemed extremely similar...

I possess Mo Luo's Ancestral Talisman, yet I've never inscribed any Dao Principle into it...

Ning Fan suddenly had a moment of spiritual insight. Could he inscribe the Dao Principle into his Ancestral Talisman like Mu Qi?

Is this perhaps the way, the method for ancient demon cultivators to comprehend the divine skills of the Dao Principle...

"Come to think of it, how many strokes does my Mo Luo's Ancestral Talisman contain... It seems I've never paid attention to this matter."

In the meditative state, Ning Fan suddenly lifted his right index finger, sketching a stroke in the air.

He had never seriously contemplated his Ancestral Talisman, this was the first time he had the urge to thoroughly study it.

The previous path of cultivation was too rushed, too hasty, sprinting all the way, dashing all the way, thus missing many necessary stages and insights.

One stroke, two strokes, three strokes... seven strokes!

Mo Luo's Ancestral Talisman comprised of four designs: Giant Devil, Six Wings, Mist Horn, Ghost Eye.

The initial design of the Ancestral Talisman was a Giant Devil, but with only seven strokes, Ning Fan found that he could not sketch the outline of the Giant Devil. It seemed an unimaginable barrier existed between him and the Ancestral Talisman, making it impossible to draw the eighth stroke.

In the end, when he forcibly drew the eighth stroke, the magic talisman with eight strokes cracked with a 'ka-cha' sound and dispersed into countless fragments of light.

He couldn't draw his own magic talisman!

"Is the Rain Monarch sketching his ancient demon magic talisman? I wonder how many strokes the Rain Monarch's ancient demon magic talisman has..."

"The Rain Monarch seems to find it difficult to draw the eighth stroke. It's said that after stepping into the Heavenly Demon Realm, ancient demon cultivators must remake their magic talisman; otherwise, a barrier exists between the person and the talisman that can't be broken. Has the Rain Monarch not experienced this magic talisman remaking yet? Otherwise, it shouldn't be so difficult to draw this magic talisman."

Among the members of Mu Dao Gate, there were many experienced old monsters whose understanding of the ancient demon ways was deeper than many cultivators outside. Thus, even witnessing Ning Fan's failure in drawing the talisman, none underestimated him; instead, they understood the reason behind it.

Mu Qi was different. Seeing Ning Fan fail to draw the magic talisman, he immediately laughed heartily without reserve, and his wanton ridicule considerably lessened the frustration of failing to shake Ning Fan with the chimes.

"This little ancient demon can't even draw his own magic talisman? What a disgrace to the ancient demons! Haha, it's killing me with laughter!"

"This child, although he hasn't finished drawing the magic symbol, I can see some clues from the few strokes already made. It seems to be an outline of a Giant Devil Totem. Judging from the stroke's trajectory, this child's magic symbol is either a twenty-two stroke Giant Armor Clan symbol or a twenty-four stroke Cangti Clan symbol. Hmm, it might also be a minor clan's symbol with fewer than twenty strokes, but it's definitely not a profound symbol..."

Mu Qi sneered incessantly. The magic symbols starting with a Giant Devil stroke are mostly low-grade symbols, not on the same level at all compared to his seventy-two stroke Wooden Buddha Talisman.

As soon as he finished speaking, he saw Ning Fan raise his hand again, seemingly wanting to try once more to draw the magic symbol.

"Seven strokes are my current limit for drawing magic symbols... However, this limit is not unbreakable!"

"After entering the Heavenly Demon Realm, my magic symbol seems to have changed. The reason I couldn't complete it might lie here. Unfortunately, I've been too busy increasing my cultivation, neglecting the attention my internal ancient devil magic symbol needs, missing this point... Since I've discovered this flaw today, no matter what, I must redraw this magic symbol!"

One stroke, two strokes, three strokes... eight strokes!

This time, Ning Fan still failed at the eighth stroke, but compared to the first time, the sense of estrangement was much less.

"Haha, this child failed again! It seems no matter what, he can't draw the eighth stroke! It's no wonder, the process of reconsolidating a magic symbol is just like reconsolidating a Buddha symbol, requiring a lot of time. Back then, I spent three hundred years reconsolidating my Buddha symbol, and this child wants to complete it between dawn and dusk, it's nothing but a delusion!"

Before Mu Qi finished speaking, Ning Fan raised his hand for the third time to draw the magic symbol.

Mu Qi was convinced that Ning Fan would again fail at the eighth stroke, but an unexpected event occurred.

In this third drawing, Ning Fan made it to eleven strokes before failing, a significant improvement from the previous eight strokes!

"This child could grasp the knack of reconsolidating the magic symbol in just a few breaths!"

Mu Qi was quite astonished, and many Mu Island sect members were also expressing their amazement.

The time needed for reconsolidating magic symbols or Buddha symbols depends entirely on the cultivator's enlightenment.

It's like the same Buddhist principle, where some Buddha cultivators suddenly attain enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, while others spend their entire life gradually understanding it. Mu Qi took three hundred years to reconsolidate his Buddha symbol, yet Ning Fan gained insight in mere breaths, which only means Ning Fan's enlightenment far surpasses Mu Qi.

"Eleven strokes are still not enough... This Mo Luo's Ancestral Talisman is an ancestral symbol with over a hundred strokes. Eleven strokes cannot even complete the first form of the Mo Luo's four concepts, the Giant Demon form..."

The scenes of running rampant through the Endless Sea of the Rain World replayed in Ning Fan's mind.

He seemed to recall the moments he cultivated in his youth, the various scenes of slaughter and bloody mist throughout his life. The more he recalled, the thinner the barrier between him and the magic symbol became.

Is redrawing the magic symbol about channeling one's lifetime understanding of the Demon Dao into the symbol?

Ning Fan remembered the snow of the Giant Devil Clan of the Endless Sea, remembered a little snowman called Feng Xueyan, remembered many, many things...

Looking back on past events, he didn't think of the hardships of the Demon Blood Path but rather felt a gentle warmth, even a slight smile appeared at the corners of his mouth.

As this smile appeared, the devil intent of his magic symbol underwent some changes.

The devil intent of the previous magic symbol was somewhat similar to Mo Luo the Great Emperor's, but now it was gradually aligning with Ning Fan's Dao and intent.

For the fourth time, he raised his right hand and, before the magic symbol dissipated, drew a total of fourteen strokes.

In his fifth attempt, he drew seventeen strokes.

In his sixth attempt, he drew twenty-two strokes!

In his seventh attempt, he drew twenty-nine strokes, presenting a somewhat complete Giant Devil pattern to everyone!

This Giant Devil appearance was different from Mo Luo's four forms back then, still giving off a sense of overwhelming Demonic Qi. Yet, if examined closely, one would find a gentle smile on the Giant Devil's face.

Such a smile could never appear on Mo Luo the Great Emperor's face, only Ning Fan could smile so brightly and relievedly!

"It's neither a Giant Armor Clan magic symbol nor a Cangti Clan magic symbol! This child's magic symbol seems unfamiliar... I've already combed through the library of Junior Mu Song, I recognize almost all magic symbols of the Demon Clan in the Ancient Demon Abyss aside from the nine ancient devil ancestors' symbols! However, this child's magic symbol is not among those I know... Could this be some magic symbol I overlooked?"

"However, it only has twenty-nine strokes, qualifying merely as a middle-ranked magic symbol, not a high-grade one... Compared to my Buddha symbol, it's not just a minor gap."

Mu Qi's face was filled with pride, having a seventy-two stroke Buddha symbol gave him ample reason to be proud.

Then, Ning Fan raised his hand for the eighth, ninth, and tenth times, each time increasing the complexity of the magic symbol on the Giant Demon pattern, causing Mu Qi's gaze to become more and more solemn.

"Thirty-four strokes, no, it's thirty-five strokes! This child is actually adding a Magic Wing Totem to the magic symbol..."

"Forty-two strokes! A magic symbol that simultaneously possesses a Giant Demon and Magic Wing Totem only belongs to the Dark Wanderer Clan's thirty-six stroke magic symbol and the Tread Sky Clan's thirty-eight stroke magic symbol... Clearly, this magic symbol is neither of them..."

"Forty-six strokes! The strokes can actually increase!"

Ning Fan was unaware of the outside world, unaware that his action of drawing magic symbols was continually shaking Mu Qi's perception.

At this moment, he only wanted to do one thing, and that was to focus on drawing the Six-Winged Totem.

He recalled the scene of competing for the Devil Statue Slate with King Lan Ling in the Six-Winged Clan, thinking how he was so weak back then, once even considering King Lan Ling who hadn't reached the Void Fragmentation stage as a life-long enemy...

He remembered the Devil Concubine he captured in the Six-Winged Clan, whose name seemed to be Fen Chi...

With the number of strokes in the magic symbol he was drawing continuing to increase, by the sixteenth attempt, he had drawn a total of sixty-two strokes, completing the Six-Winged Totem.

"Sixty-two strokes! This child's Xiang is not much weaker than my own Fu... if it weren't for my own opportunities, my Fu wouldn't have exceeded sixty strokes..."

Mu Qi's expression was grave, and he no longer dared to underestimate Ning Fan's Xiang one bit.

A Xiang with sixty-two strokes could not possibly remain unknown in the cultivation world. Why had he never heard of Ning Fan's Xiang?

He initially thought sixty-two strokes was the limit for Ning Fan's Xiang, but unexpectedly, Ning Fan raised his hand for the seventeenth time, continuing to draw the Stormhorn Totem on the foundation of the Six-Winged Totem.

Recollecting the past, he remembered how he had taken a Devil Concubine named Su Yan from the Mist Horn Clan... that place also held his memories...

Those memories blended into his fingertips, drawn into the Xiang, gradually etching the intricate double horns on the mighty demon in the pattern.

When the Stormhorn Totem was finally drawn, the strokes of the Xiang increased to an astounding ninety-nine!

"A Xiang with ninety-nine strokes! In the current Ancient Demon Abyss, only the Xiangs of the nine great devil ancestors have stroke counts exceeding a hundred. This child's Xiang surely ranks first below the nine ancient ancestors!"

Mu Qi struggled to calm himself, for compared to Ning Fan's ninety-nine stroke Xiang, his Fu was nothing but trash!

"I never expected, never expected to witness this child's moment of re-conceiving the Xiang! And it's a profound Xiang with ninety-nine strokes; this might even affirm my path of ancient Buddhism... Isn't this receiving the grace of the Little Ancient Demon? In this way, would I not owe the Little Ancient Demon a karmic debt?"

Mu Qi quietly calculated in his mind, unsure if the Jianmu's Essence he gave to Ning Fan could repay this cause and effect...

"There's still the Ghost Eye Totem to be drawn..."

Ning Fan concluded his recollection, drawing a third ghostly eye in the forehead of the totem.

One hundred and nine strokes...

One hundred and seventeen strokes...

One hundred and twenty-nine strokes...

One hundred and forty-one strokes...

When Ning Fan finally withdrew his finger, his Xiang had gathered all of Mo Luo's Four Aspects, reaching a terrifying one hundred fifty-two strokes!

He slowly opened his eyes, gazing softly at the Xiang before him.

No one knew that he wasn't looking at the Xiang, but at the past of himself cultivating the Ancient Demon Bloodline, as if a youth looking at his younger self.

The venue was filled with dead silence! Mu Qi had long ceased ringing the bell or releasing the Buddha Light, for fear of disturbing Ning Fan's enlightenment!

Before this, no one had anticipated Ning Fan's Xiang would reach the terrifying count of 152 strokes!

A stroke count like this could only be achieved by ancestral-grade Xiangs; there was no doubt that Ning Fan's Xiang was of ancestral talisman-level!

In the Dreamland Realm, those who possess an ancestral-grade Xiang, besides the Ancient Great Demons who vanished with the Demon-Sealing Peak, are only the nine great devil ancestors who are suppressed!

Is Ning Fan's ancestral talisman the ancestral talisman of the nine great devil ancestors, or the ancient devil talisman of the Demon Peak? Or, is it an ancestral talisman passed down from the Immortal Domain?

"Trouble. This karma I owe is considerable indeed... Among the disciples of Daoist Wood Pine, there are no ancient Buddhists, so it's impossible to gain any insight. I do not owe this child's karma, yet it is different for me. My cultivation has been stuck at the Second Calamity Immortal Lord Realm for nine million years; witnessing this child's Xiang gathering gave me a hint of breakthrough... If I break through, I will become an Immortal King! How do I repay karma that aids in my ascent to an Immortal King..."

Mu Qi's mind raced, recalling how Ning Fan showed a keen interest in Jianmu's Essence.

Years ago, Daoist Wood Pine planted the Seven Pines tree, and after enlightening them with spiritual awareness, divided the last drop of Jianmu's Essence into three parts, granting insight to the Seven Pines.

As the tree spirit of the Seventh Pine, Mu Qi has the authority to allocate these Jianmu Essences at will. What needed to be comprehended has been understood, rendering these Jianmu Essences relatively useless; gifting them to Ning Fan wouldn't be a loss!

"Little Ancient Demon, no, no, Little Ancient Demon Friend. Little Ancient Demon Friend, since you desire this old man's Jianmu's Essence, this old man shall gift it all to you..."

Throughout his life, Mu Qi detested the ancient demons, yet now he forced a smile at Ning Fan.

Unfortunately, even though Ning Fan opened his eyes, they were only filled with the Xiang, still engrossed in his enlightenment, completely ignoring Mu Qi.

This enlightenment was not yet complete!

Re-conceiving the Xiang was merely something he had left unfinished after reaching the Heavenly Demon Realm.

He still had further tasks: to inscribe his realized Dao Principle of Wood into the Xiang!

This task was far more challenging than re-conceiving the Xiang, but if successful, it would further increase the strokes of the Xiang, boosting its power!

"What is wood? In the eyes of a thousand people, there are a thousand principles of wood. The tree spirit Mu Qi's true form is a pine, thus his comprehension of the Dao Principle of Wood is also rooted in the pine. His Fu has seventy-two strokes, depicting an ancient sturdy pine..."

"Mu Qi paints the pine as a Fu, seemingly taking its meaning of being aloof and unapproachable... The pine needles, like thorns, are painful to touch; their barbs convey a ruthless authority. Because of this ruthlessness, Mu Qi dismissed me as an ancient demon without acceptance, his attitude harsh..."

"Mu Qi sees the pine needles as cold and distant, but I perceive their defiance as daring to pierce through everything. They dare to stand upright, reaching the sky without fear; they dare to stand alone against the cold, breaking the wind and snow without yielding. These barbs won't harm others, but serve as a warning: 'If wronged, vengeance will be inevitable; if bullied, there will be consequences, even unto mutual destruction! The pine surely has its own fervor..."

At this moment, although Ning Fan realized the principle of the pine, his mind flashed back over his rebellious past experiences.

Upon first stepping onto the cultivation road, he dared oppose the Moksha Emperor; even when he was still a butterfly, he had dared to destroy the Eye of Affection Control.

Not that I cannot tolerate, but I simply cannot compromise. There are too many things in this world, not a single step can be retreated...

I raise my hand towards the firmament, not necessarily to pluck the stars, but simply to maintain an upward, never-yielding stance...

"From this perspective, indeed I am only fit to cultivate the Yin Yang Transformation, not Buddhism. Buddhist disciples emphasize accepting what comes, while demoness refuse to suffer even the smallest loss. Buddhists speak of Five Aggregates Emptiness, requiring one to abandon all external distractions, not to dwell on them in the heart, yet I stubbornly insist on preserving all my convictions. Buddhists advocate doing good deeds, but I, like an Evil Sect, slaughter in all directions, infamous across the realms. Few in the world respect me, but many fear me, yet I have never sought worldly admiration..."

"The pine drawn by Mu Qi consists of seventy-two strokes; among them, sixty-four strokes form the foundation, only the last six strokes incorporate the power of the Dao Principle of Wood..."

Those last six strokes replay ceaselessly in Ning Fan's mind. These six strokes contain Mu Qi's countless years of wood insights and also his lifetime of Buddhist realizations.

"The wood insight in these six strokes, I can absorb, and integrate into my Symbol of Devil Raising, but the Buddhist insight, I must oppose. I am an Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor, not an ancient Buddha. Buddha cultivates by opposing ancient chaos, and demoness arises by opposing the Buddha's path, these six strokes, I must take the principle honestly, but reverse the intent!"

Ning Fan raised his hand, adding the 153rd stroke after Mo Luo's four slaves!

This stroke, if one's cultivation is insufficient, cannot perceive the mystery within.

Here, only Songguo, Songxi, Wu Laoba, and Mu Qi can discern the mystery within, especially Mu Qi, who almost widened his eyes.

With just one glance, Mu Qi recognized that Ning Fan's stroke was clearly realized from his seventy-two stroke Buddha talisman!

Not only that, the stroke completely reversed the Buddhist intent within Mu Qi's Buddha talisman and was assimilated into Ning Fan's own thoughts.

This is creating a Symbol of Devil Raising! Ning Fan actually created his own Symbol of Devil Raising on the foundation of the ancestral-level Symbol of Devil Raising!

As the stroke landed, the Dao Principle of Wood throughout Mu Island was activated by Ning Fan's Symbol of Devil Raising, this Symbol of Devil Raising vaguely possesses the power of the Dao Principle of Wood!

This stroke is the inverted sound of differing paths of chaos and Buddha.

As this stroke was drawn, Ning Fan's Symbol of Devil Raising underwent a qualitative change. To insist it was Mo Luo's Ancestral Talisman would be inaccurate, as Mo Luo's Ancestral Talisman did not incorporate wood transformations.

This is a different kind of Symbol of Devil Raising from Mo Luo's Ancestral Talisman! With this symbol, Ning Fan's Ancestral Blood Ancient Demon truly severed the connection with Mo Luo, achieving his own uniqueness!

"Only Ancestral Blood Ancient Demon can create a Symbol of Devil Raising! If the bloodline level is inadequate or lacks the identity of an Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor, there is no qualification to create a personal talisman or bloodline! This Little Ancient Demon can create a Symbol of Devil Raising, which only has one explanation...he is not only an Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor but has cultivated the Ancestral Blood of an Ancient Chaos Grand Emperor!"

"Unexpectedly in this Era of Decline...there actually exists an Ancient Demon Demon Ancestor!"

Although the path of Buddha is different from a demon, they also share common aspects.

To personally witness an Ancient Demon Demon Ancestor create a Symbol of Devil Raising is undoubtedly an immense gain for Mu Qi!

The karma just grows larger and larger...

He detested Ancient Chaos Grand Emperors the most in his lifetime, yet this time, he owes Ning Fan such massive karma.

Under Mu Qi's complex gaze, Ning Fan added the second stroke, third stroke, fourth stroke to the Symbol of Devil Raising.

For the fifth stroke, Ning Fan took an entire two hours to complete.

For the sixth stroke, Ning Fan took a full four hours to complete.

At this point, Ning Fan's ancestral talisman stroke count officially increased to 158 strokes, with an ancient pine standing tall beside the four slaves.

Though only six strokes were added to the Symbol of Devil Raising, its level is now significantly higher than the original Symbol of Devil Raising! It can utilize a portion of the power of the Dao Principle of Wood!

"Little Ancient Demon, I am convinced, truly convinced, you've shown me such an excellent performance, I shall hand over all Jianmu's Essence in my possession to you. In doing so, I'll clear my karmic debt to you. Oh, and I'll give you a word of advice. My understanding of the wood Dao Principle is only six strokes; my six elder brothers have far deeper Dao Enlightenment. If you go to other forbidden sites, directly tell them you wish to see their Buddha talisman, to use it to comprehend your ancestral talisman, I believe they'll be glad to display their Buddha talisman for you to see... They've been stuck at the bottleneck for many years now, they won't miss this chance..."

Mu Qi sighed deeply, spat out dozens of green light clusters, sending them to Ning Fan.

Though he harbored ill-intent, it sparked Ning Fan's insight, leading to self-creation of the Symbol of Devil Raising. Evil intent couldn't offset the karma Ning Fan provided. To settle karma, only Jianmu's Essence could repay Ning Fan.

After all, Ning Fan brought considerable benefit, loosening the nine-million-year-old Immortal King bottleneck that Mu Qi faced, which was a great favor, making it appropriate to pay some price...

"You're giving them all to me?"

Ning Fan was momentarily surprised.

Without even needing to seize Jianmu's Essence, it delivered itself right to him, such fortune?

With a turn of thought, Ning Fan understood the reason behind it. Mu Qi, due to his own creation of talisman, gained insight and wished to repay the karma owed.

Throughout a Buddhist's life, pursuit is of karmic completion. Planting good causes, reaping good fruits, owing karma, must repay it.

Considering thusly, he accepted Jianmu's Essence with the confidence of righteousness.

Another matter that caught Ning Fan's attention was Mu Qi's advice.

Mu Qi's six brothers with even deeper wood Dao Enlightenment?

Wonder if those insights can add a few more strokes to his Symbol of Devil Raising...

Chapter 970: The Heartless Nature of Plants and Trees

Mu Island is home to seven ancient pine trees that are forbidden areas, and the body of Mu Qi is the Seventh Pine.

Within the Seventh Pine lies Mu Qi's wood enlightenment from tens of millions of years, integrated into 72 strokes of Buddha talismans. The last six strokes, which are the essence of it, were comprehended by Ning Fan and integrated into his own Symbol of Devil Raising. Thus, there wasn't much point for Ning Fan to continue staying in the Seventh Pine forbidden area.

After giving some advice, Mu Qi receded back into the tree. Ning Fan stored away Jianmu's Essence and, along with others, left the Seventh Pine forbidden area and headed to the Sixth Pine forbidden area.

The Sixth Pine was also an ancient purple-skinned pine tree, exuding a heavier aura than the Seventh Pine. Within a hundred steps, the air seemed to be solidified, with not a hint of wind sound, an eerie silence.

That silence was like a decade of wordless barren Zen, like the world's silence if I remained silent.

Ning Fan gazed at the Sixth Pine, lost in thought, while the Mu Island Sect members stayed a hundred steps away, paying respects to the Sixth Pine. Monk Songguo lowered his voice, not daring to speak loudly, and informed the Sixth Pine of Ning Fan's intent to comprehend the enlightenment here. He even mentioned Ning Fan's creation of an ancestral talisman at the Seventh Pine to the Sixth Pine Tree Spirit.

After a long while, finally, a human face emerged on the Sixth Pine's trunk. It was the tree spirit of the Sixth Pine, Mu Liu.

Mu Liu remained silent, but his gaze towards Ning Fan was somewhat touching and attentive.

Then, he opened his mouth and spit out dozens of green light clusters, sending them in front of Ning Fan.

"It's Jianmu's Essence again!" Wu Laoba's eyes were ablaze, puzzled by why this silent tree spirit would give his master so much Jianmu's Essence as soon as they met. If this was a greeting gift, wasn't it too generous?

Monk Songguo, seeing Ning Fan also appeared puzzled, explained to Ning Fan, "The Sixth Master Uncle never speaks. His intention is to watch the scene of Daoist creating a Symbol of Devil Raising, like the

Seventh Master Uncle, in order to gain enlightenment and break through bottlenecks. These Jianmu's Essence pieces are the Sixth Master Uncle's payment, ensuring Daoist doesn't exert effort in vain."

"I see..."

Ning Fan nodded and took all the green light clusters in front of him, saying to Mu Liu, "Please display the Buddha talisman."

This time, he didn't step within a hundred paces of the Sixth Pine. To comprehend the Dao Principle of this pine, he didn't have to go under the tree; directly understanding from the tree spirit's Buddha talisman would undoubtedly be faster.

Mu Liu remained silent but, upon Ning Fan's request, opened his mouth and emitted a green light that soared into the sky, gradually presenting a Buddha talisman depicting an ancient pine pattern in the air, stroke by stroke.

Mu Liu's Buddha talisman consisted of 74 strokes, far more profound than Mu Qi's talisman. Strangely, the moment this talisman appeared, the entire world fell into a dead silence, as if all sound vanished in an instant.

"The wood Dao Principle that the Sixth Tree Spirit comprehended is also based on pine; he comprehended the meaning of silence of pine..."

Ning Fan stood a hundred steps away from the Sixth Pine, slowly closing his eyes, repeatedly going over each stroke of Mu Liu's Buddha talisman in his mind.

His mind gradually merged with the Daoist thought of the Sixth Pine forbidden area, the complex 74-stroke Buddha talisman becoming clear and discernible.

"This Buddha talisman has 74 strokes, identical to Mu Liu's talisman, based on 66 strokes, with 8 strokes containing the enlightenment of wood..."

Ning Fan raised his right index finger, demonic glint emanating as he sketched the Symbol of Devil Raising in the air before him.

The 158-stroke ancestral talisman gradually appeared before everyone, especially the final six strokes giving Wu Laoba, Monk Songguo, and other Masters an incredibly mysterious feeling, as if these six strokes encompassed countless great Dao of wood, yet were too profound and esoteric. So much so that they wanted to mimic, to trace the Dao paths with their own strength, only to find it impossible...

Nonetheless, just by watching these few strokes, everyone gained their insights into the wood Dao, bringing them joy despite the insights being minimal.

Especially Wu Laoba, who held an almost obsessive attachment to the wood Dao Principle, out of countless Dao paths, for an unknown reason, he only favored this one.

To gain his enlightenment on wood from watching Ning Fan's rune creation was an immense joy for Wu Laoba, who was already submissive to Ning Fan. At this moment, he felt that serving Ning Fan was an incredibly wise choice!

"Though peach and plum are silent, they naturally form paths; pine and cypress do not speak, yet live evergreen for eons. A sage is quiet for three years, and beyond the seas, all is silent; yet one word can astonish the world. It appears this Sixth Tree Spirit practices the Buddhist silent meditation. This person has comprehended the subtle art of silent meditation from the sound of countless green pines, cultivating the silence of pine, capable of silencing all things. Thus, he hasn't spoken a word since our meeting, and within a hundred steps of this place, not even a breath of wind is heard..."

"In terms of cultivation, this person surpasses me significantly, already at the Immortal King realm. Yet, from my perspective, his silent meditative path with pine hasn't reached its peak, and seems to have gone on the wrong path..."

"If I were to cultivate silent meditation, I would divide it into four realms: one is silence out of fear, indicating cowardice; one is silence out of pain, indicating reluctance; one is silence out of laughter, indicative of an unnecessary; the final one is emotions of neither sorrow nor joy, no heart or thought, desiring expression but losing words, indicating non-attachment..."

"This person remains silent, yet his inner voice cannot cease. Upon seeing me, although clearly excited inside, he dared not speak, forcing silence. Even within silent meditation, this is considered inferior. His Dao contains fear, and thus, his eight strokes of wood enlightenment inevitably carry a hint of fear. True silence silences not the mouth but the heart. I can take his enlightenment, but this fear cannot be accepted—modification is necessary to integrate it into my Symbol of Devil Raising..."

Strokes 159, 160, 161... each stroke was added extremely slowly. As time drifted by, one day quietly passed.

The number of strokes in Ning Fan's Symbol of Devil Raising finally increased to 166, encompassing Mu Liu's countless years of enlightenment within it!

The Symbol of Devil Raising's power in the wood Dao Principle saw significant advancement!

These simple eight strokes contain unimaginable wood Dao enlightenment, allowing Wu Laoba and the Mu Island Sect members to gain insights, some pondering deeply, others frowning, each with different expressions.

Mu Liu, on the other hand, wore an expression of sudden realization, as if given a wake-up call, attaining clarity.

So that's how it is, that's how it is!

The reason he was stuck at the bottleneck, unable to progress in cultivation, was due to following the wrong path...

The eight strokes incorporated into Ning Fan's Symbol of Devil Raising appeared similar to his Buddha talisman but differed fundamentally.

Those eight strokes not only reversed his Buddha intent, integrating demonic thoughts, but crucially, Ning Fan's Symbol of Devil Raising's eight strokes lacked any hint of fear...

Cultivation inherently rebels against heaven; Buddha cultivators may endure suffering, but in their hearts, there should be no fear...

"Wood is not wood, silence is not silence, closing the mouth is opening it, sounding yet silent... Over these years, my stubborn silence, clinging to appearance... Young friend, thank you!"

Mu Liu repeatedly sighed in admiration and, after thanking Ning Fan, retreated back into the ancient pine. All the Mu Island Sect members were hugely surprised, as Sixth Master Uncle, who hadn't spoken for millions of years, had actually spoken today!

"Let's see the Fifth Pine."

Having completed this enlightenment, Ning Fan and the group proceeded to the Fifth Pine forbidden area.

The Fifth Pine was filled with an intense battle spirit; Monk Songguo and others stated their intentions to the Fifth Pine, and a human face soon emerged with furrowed brows and cold eyes, fixing on Ning Fan among the crowd.

"I am Mu Wu, what's your name!" Mu Wu's voice was loud, like a roar, echoing like thunder.

"I am Ning Fan." Even Wu Laoba, Monk Songguo, and others were left with ear pain by Mu Wu's voice, but Ning Fan remained unfazed.

"I heard from Monk Songguo that my sixth and seventh brothers received considerable benefit from you. I am very interested in your creation of the ancestral talisman, but my Buddha talisman carries intense momentum; can you withstand it?"

"Please display the Buddha talisman, Senior!"

"As you wish!"

Mu Wu let out a fierce shout, an unimaginable, overwhelming battle spirit shaking the heavens and earth, turning the skies green.

Amid the green light, an ancient pine Buddha talisman took shape, stroke by stroke, the pressure increasing with each stroke.

When the talisman reached the twenty-fourth stroke, the Thought-Shattering Cultivators present could hardly stand firm.

When it grew to forty-eight strokes, Wu Laoba, Monk Songguo, and the others also turned pale, unable to withstand the battle spirit within the talisman.

As the talisman progressed to seventy-six strokes, the entire Mu Island was submerged under Mu Wu's intense battle spirit.

Even Wu Laoba, facing Mu Wu, felt an instinctual trembling, as if he was already intimidated before the battle.

Mu Wu did not glance at the crowd at all, unlike the others who were swayed by his intimidating presence, Ning Fan stood like a straight green pine, proudly, unaffected by the surrounding battle intent.

This made Mu Wu regard Ning Fan even more highly, and he laughed heartily.

"Exciting, exciting! Even the ordinary Triple Calamity Immortal King would feel some fear before me, yet you do not flinch under the suppression of my will. Since this is so, I won't hold back either! Let's have a hearty battle!"

In his excitement, Mu Wu forgot his original intention was to display the Buddha Talisman to Ning Fan to observe the moment Ning Fan created his Symbol of Devil Raising.

At this moment, he only wanted to fight ardently with Ning Fan, but as he roared thunderously, the roar formed into tangible divine skills, like a substantial blue will, crushing down on Ning Fan's head like a mountain collapsing, shaking the heavens and earth.

"So this Fifth Ming Luo Tree is a battle maniac..."

Ning Fan was slightly speechless; he had come for insight, yet Mu Wu directly took action against him...

He could naturally see that Mu Wu didn't mean any harm nor was he heavy-handed; it was just out of a joyful desire to spar with him.

The blue will pressed down on the cultivators here, suffocating them, yet Ning Fan remained utterly unmoved.

He slowly lifted his hand, pressing his five fingers, instantly tearing apart the descending blue will, which then collapsed with crackling sounds.

Ning Fan had mastered War Yin and Yang; in a clash of wills, he feared nothing!

"Good lad, you actually tore apart my will suppression directly, come, come, let's fight again!"

Mu Wu was thrilled and wanted to battle once more with Ning Fan, but Ning Fan gently shook his head, saying nothing but pointing a finger towards the void above the Fifth Pine.

It was merely an ordinary gesture, incomprehensible to others, but as soon as the finger descended, Mu Wu's battle-hungry expression turned into shock.

This hovering gesture easily sealed the flow of will within him, calming his originally turbulent battle intent instantly, as though cold water had been poured on it!

He couldn't break free! He couldn't escape this seal! This... was suppression at the Control Position level!

"This lad possesses the Palm Position Path in the realm of will!"

Mu Wu's expression dramatically changed.

Throughout Eastern Heaven, there are only four Great Emperors who can cultivate the palatial void of Control Position. Few Immortal Emperors can even slightly comprehend the Palm Position Path.

This lad only has the Immortal Venerable Cultivation Level, yet he can understand and apply the Palm Position Path, using Control Position Power to seal the flow of will within him...

"In cultivation, it's about moderation. You seem to be overly fond of battle..."

Ning Fan's casual words were like a sudden realization for Mu Wu, making his expression further shaken, and left him in brief confusion.

Moderation, moderation...

He was cultivating the unyielding will of the pine, but he didn't realize when that unyielding will transformed into a frenzied battle intent...

This path, it truly went wrong... If someone else said Mu Wu walked the wrong path, he might retort, but hearing this from Ning Fan gave it a different significance.

Ning Fan could cultivate the Palm Position Path in the realm of will; his understanding of the path of will was naturally profound, his words couldn't be dismissed!

"May I ask you, Daoist friend, if I were to choose again, how should I proceed?"

Mu Wu changed his previous battle craving expression, asking politely.

The Mu Dao Gate members were all shocked, their jaws dropping; the Fifth Master Uncle had never been polite to anyone, even often assuming airs of the Heavenly Healer before their master, Daoist Wood Pine. Who could have thought the Fifth Master Uncle would be courteous to someone...

Ning Fan didn't directly answer Mu Wu's question, instead closing his eyes, outlining in his mind the 76 strokes of Mu Wu's Buddha Talisman.

Among these 76 strokes, only 10 contained insights belonging to wood. Mu Wu comprehended the unyielding will of the pine...

Ning Fan stood there for an entire day, never answering Mu Wu's question.

After a day, Ning Fan finally opened his eyes, lifted his hand, and began drawing his Symbol of Devil Raising stroke by stroke.

His Symbol of Devil Raising had grown to 166 strokes, and upon integrating Mu Wu's wood insights, he drew the 167th stroke.

Following that was the 168th stroke, the 169th stroke, the 170th stroke...

Mu Wu's wood insights only had ten strokes, but this time, relying on his understanding of will, Ning Fan extended those ten strokes into twelve strokes.

His Symbol of Devil Raising ultimately expanded to 178 strokes. With more strokes, the ancient pine image he drew became progressively more restrained, stable, and composed.

"Have you understood..." Ning Fan finally spoke, having already answered Mu Wu's question through his actions.

Mu Wu showed a pensive expression, vaguely feeling he grasped something crucial, yet he remained puzzled. After a long time, he bitterly smiled at Ning Fan, shaking his head.

Ning Fan said nothing, moving next to an ordinary pine tree, using his finger as a blade to cut it down, pointing at the tree rings, and asked, "Do you understand now..."

Looking at the tree rings on the pine's section, Mu Wu felt a thunderous revelation in his mind, understanding what had once bewildered him.

Mu Wu let out a long sigh and sincerely thanked Ning Fan, "Thank you, Daoist friend, for your guidance!"

Ning Fan pointed the way: it was to be restrained...

Mu Wu saw will as the patterns on the pine bark, while Ning Fan saw will as the innermost tree rings...

The cultivation of will shouldn't be aggressively exposed but should be akin to the tree rings of the pine, hidden within, growing layer by layer from the inside out.

Verbal gratitude was insufficient to express Mu Wu's thanks; thus, he naturally gifted all his Jianmu's Essence to Ning Fan.

Ning Fan accepted the essence, bade farewell to Mu Wu, and together with others went to the forbidden grounds of the Fourth Pine.

After explaining their presence, the spirit of the Fourth Pine, Mu Weiliang, manifested, displaying his Buddha Talisman to Ning Fan.

Unlike the Buddha Talismans of the previous three tree spirits, Mu Weiliang's Buddha Talisman similarly depicted a pine tree, but beneath the pine was a naive little girl...

"My Buddha Talisman isn't the strongest on Mu Island, but it's different from the others..." Mu Weiliang's gaze was cold and unfeeling. As his Buddha Talisman appeared, the Dao Principle of Wood on Mu Island slightly shifted.

Ning Fan's expression immediately tightened; Mu Weiliang's Buddha Talisman surprisingly contained a trace of Wooden Control Position Power!

"My thousands of years of wood insight can be summarized in one phrase: grass and trees have no emotion..."