

Longevity 351

Chapter 351: Otherworldly Cat Girl, True Word Secret Decree

In the quiet room of Zhang Mansion in the Demon City,

Tao Qian suddenly returned to Yunrong's embrace and immediately sat down to meditate, closing his eyes and entering a state of cultivation.

Every cultivation tribulation must have its benefits.

This was a valuable experience Tao Qian had obtained after practicing the Spirit Treasure Method, and it had proven true time and again.

His extraordinary talents, like the Innate Dao Seed and the Taishang Treasure No-leak Body, all came this way.

This time should be no exception.

"O Heavenly Venerate above, the true inheritor of the Evil Sect, Lian Yulou, was an Evil Demon Giant of the Ultimate Happiness Realm in a previous life and almost transcended the nine desires tribulations this life," murdered such a formidable opponent and even seized his True Soul, the first tribulation was so perilous, it would only be reasonable to expect some substantial benefits as a reward, right?"

Tao Qian's last thoughts settled before entering meditation, and then his entire being was pulled into a massive vortex storm in the unknown.

Within his long-closed No-leak Body, unprecedented activity had begun.

It was as if a small world had formed within, refining earth, water, fire, and wind just like in the beginning, everything seemed chaotic.

Throughout this process, Tao Qian could clearly feel his "mana" skyrocketing; despite being sealed within the No-leak Body, pure Spirit Treasure Immortal Spiritual Power surged out of nowhere and was rapidly absorbed by his body, far surpassing the previous 999 paths by a huge margin.

And yet, there was no sign of cessation.

Although Tao Qian had not carefully compared the mana of other Transcend Mortality Cultivators of the Spirit Treasure Sect, just in this moment, Tao Qian was certain he had surpassed the ordinary Spirit Treasure disciples and was catching up to the likes of Ma Yuan and Huang Zhen, the Spirit Treasure true inheritors.

Mana growth was within Tao Qian's expectations.

The Third Method was so dangerous and complex, it was supposed to have commensurate great benefits.

Tao Qian estimated that if he completely transcended all cultivation tribulations with the Third Method and ascended to the Transcend Mortality Realm, his mana would be more profound than even senior brothers like Yang Jie and Xu Xun.

Apart from the explosive growth of mana, Tao Qian suddenly started to feel some discomfort.

Ears, eyes, nose, mouth, palms... all over his body, a strange itching emerged.

This turn of events shook Tao Qian's Primordial Spirit and thoughts of joy arose:

"Back on Spiritual Tablet Island, I saw Uncle Qin Jiao's life story."

"He also entered the world with the Third Method for cultivation tribulations, and during that process, he acquired two extremely rare and terrifying innate divine abilities."

"One is the Formless True Eyes."

"The other is the Destiny Reversing Dao Body."

"Combined, these two could control the mortal world's Heavenly Luck and the Fate Law, truly supreme secrets of the Heavenly Dao."

"Well used, not to mention killing up a level, it's possible to kill hundreds or even thousands of enemies across several ranks."

"Remember, the Founding Emperor supported by Qin Jiao was a beggar, implying from bowl to throne... this clearly demonstrates the terror of Fate-related divine abilities."

"Now it's my turn, but who knows what kind of divine ability could I mix up?"

Almost instantly, as Tao Qian's thoughts subsided,

the incessant itching concentrated on his mouth.

In the blink of an eye, Tao Qian knew what kind of benefit he had received, as a swirl of information in a unique format began emerging in his mind:

"Spirit Treasure supreme, Sublime Dharma mysterious."

"There's a divine skill called [Taishang Lingbao True Word Secret Decree], already included within one of the Nine Scripture of the Spirit Treasure Great Volume," the Scripture of Salvation," different from ordinary Imperial Decree of God secret techniques, this divine skill is one of the most top-notch and difficult to cultivate within the Great Book of Imperial Decree."

"To master this technique, even the most talented of individuals would need sixty years."

"And for the final hurdle, one must light Daoist Incense and wear the Treasure Records in Biyou Palace of the Spirit Treasure Sect, and obtain approval from the Lingbao Tianzun before the skill can be used."

"Due to the Third Method's special nature... the payment can be waived, and the Taishang Lingbao True Word Secret Decree has been obtained!"

When Tao Qian had read through all this information, the itching in his mouth also disappeared.

Then a familiar chill passed through him, and Tao Qian woke up.

Joy, uncontrollable no matter what, was evident on his face and in his eyes.

Although his own Taishang Treasure No-leak Body was still sealed, and he was some distance away from "Transcend Mortality Realm", the mana within his body became so profound so quickly, that he had already caught up with true disciples like Huang Zhen and Ma Yuan.

It's hard to imagine?

If Tao Qian formally advanced to Transcend Mortality, the profoundness of his mana would have completely crushed his peers.

Of course, at this thought, Tao Qian subconsciously ignored the spectacular debt he owed to Lingbao Tianzun.

Out of sight, out of mind, and no problem.

But aside from the increase in mana, the real big gain was:

"True Word Secret Decree!"

The four words surfaced in Tao Qian's mind.

He hadn't forgotten to bow through empty space to his own Lingbao Tianzun, sincerely thanking him:

"O Heavenly Venerate above, your disciple knows that you are very caring for such a potential junior like me; rest assured, in life I am a person of the Spirit Treasure, and in death, I will be a ghost of Penglai, turning to the Secret Demon or such is just a joke."

Tao Qian was obviously acting cute because he was very clear he had received a great benefit.

He no longer needed to envy Senior Brother Xu Xun's Universe in the Sleeve, Sister Golden Crow's Golden Crow Dao Body, or Senior Brother Yang Jie's Innate Divine Eye.

True Word Secret Decree!

Although the technique does not sound as domineering as Universe in the Sleeve,

Tao Qian knew its potential was immense.

Compared to Uncle Qin Jiao's "Formless True Eyes," and "Destiny Reversing Dao Body," it was just as imposing.

"Belonging to the Fate-related divine skills, my True Word Secret Decree is actually the low-budget version of Saying and Following."

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"I just need to open my mouth, and at the cost of expending mana and the like, I can make the spoken words become reality."

"Of course, this ability is also subject to strict restrictions."

"For example, if I were to say 'I want to become a Tribulation Immortal,' I would either die on the spot or be eaten by a creature of Tribulation Immortal level."

"Or if I want a stone to turn into flesh and blood, I could just as well die instantly, because that goes against the natural laws of Heaven and Earth."

"Heaven and Earth operate on their own rules and reasons; this Secret Decree is actually like borrowing some authority from the Heavenly Venerate, allowing me to cheat a little, take some shortcuts, but as soon as I overstep even a bit, the backlash will be severe enough to take my life."

"Even so, this ability is still incredibly formidable."

As these thoughts settled, Tao Qian's gaze suddenly fell on Yunrong, who had been resting on a meditation cushion on one side of the quiet room and who, upon seeing Tao Qian awaken, had pounced straight at him.

Upon this glance, Tao Qian's wicked and playful thoughts could not be restrained.

Taking advantage of Yunrong, still in midair, two tempting words that he dredged up from memories of his previous life suddenly spilled forth.

In an instant, Tao Qian felt an enormous amount of mana being drawn away.

Then, in the midst of white fog, a warm and soft body with the characteristic cat ears and tail of the Kitten landed directly in Tao Qian's arms.

Yunrong, in the throes of budding desire, instinctively cuddled closer, extending her small tongue and licking Tao Qian's face, which had regained its comely appearance.

One lick was not enough; she subconsciously gave several more.

The soft and warm body twisted in Tao Qian's arms, and those paws couldn't keep still, wandering everywhere.

"Good gracious, this is the end of me."

"I'm really asking for trouble!"

Almost getting carried away, Tao Qian remembered that he still had critical tasks unfinished, so he had to muster great willpower to sternly place the Cat Girl beside him.

In the process, under Yunrong's confused gaze, Tao Qian hastily pleaded for mercy:

"Good sister, this place isn't the right territory, nor is it the right time. With a great tribulation ahead, we cannot be careless."

"Let's talk about the Kitten matter another time."

Tao Qian, who accidentally trapped himself with his newly acquired Divine Skill, quickly turned his attention back to unfinished matters.

The first tribulation to overcome!

Beyond the huge gains in mana and Divine Skills, there were also spoils of war.

The disembodied Desire Sin Tribulation Body from the Ultimate Happiness Realm of Lian Yulou was foremost among them.

Next were the contents of Lian Yulou's Storage Treasure Bag. Given his noble identity from his previous life and this life, it surely contained a great many treasures.

However, Tao Qian had not yet taken the time to inspect them; while he liked Cultivation Techniques and external items,

There is a priority in handling affairs, and overcoming the tribulation was the utmost concern.

Because of the opponent and the imminent calamity brewing, it was sure to be far more fearsome than Southern Yue.

Tao Qian was now urgently keen to uncover the inside information, to know oneself and the enemy, to make the right decisions.

The quiet room had long been set with Forbidden Techniques, and with a flick of his sleeve, Tao Qian directly summoned Lian Yulou's True Soul.

After a hit from the Refining God Seal, it was stored within the Holy Embryo Bag.

When Lian Yulou's True Soul appeared, it took a good while to emerge from its daze.

Seeing Tao Qian, it immediately understood its plight.

While regretting the prior misjudgments, it stared at Tao Qian coldly and said:

"I never expected that I, Lian Yulou, after lifetimes of cultivation, almost achieving Perfect status after eight tribulations, would fall into the hands of a tender novice who barely has years of cultivation. It must be destiny."

"But it's not altogether shameful; Buddha Bird Relics, Nine Toad Bead, Human Dao Fortune, Secret Demon Child... huh, quite the Spirit Treasure True Inheritor, worthy of being a Disciple that Duobao True Monarch was willing to accept exceptionally."

"Do you release me only to drain any value I have left, then to kill me?"

"If that's what you think, keep dreaming. My treasure bag is an Exotic Treasure, and my True Spirit will self-destruct the moment I perish."

"As for my body, you may use it as you wish. When a person dies, it's like a lamp extinguished; it's no longer my concern."

Hearing this, Tao Qian laughed.

If Lian Yulou truly did not fear death, he should have stayed silent.

So much babbling confirmed his fear of death.

But that was also very normal. According to the gossip Tao Qian heard from Yuan Gong, the emotional involvement Lian Yulou had was, in fact, with his past-life Disciple and current-life Master, now the Evil Sect Elder Zhuge Qingyi.

In other words, including Xiao Chenzhou, the nine destiny-tangled individuals linked with Lian Yulou were just transient passers-by, mere playactors.

My, what a world!

It's truly a mess.

Tao Qian commented inwardly, then looking at Lian Yulou with a smile, he said:

"Mr. Lian Daoist, don't try to deceive me. With un severed emotional ties and unresolved sinful entanglements, how could you bear to die just like that?"

"Furthermore, if I were to ruthlessly kill you, I'm afraid Elder Zhuge Qingyi would immediately come after me with another ten thousand Red Dust Sin Swords... Ah, I almost forgot, my Master Duobao True Monarch, hearing that you wanted to kill me, went to trouble your Master first with the Heavenly Punishment Demon-Slaying Sword."

"My Master is of the Ultimate Happiness Realm, and so is Elder Zhuge Qingyi. It's only fair."

Upon hearing these words, Lian Yulou's expression changed drastically.

He even wanted to jump up and roar at Tao Qian, "Fair my ass! Nevermind how shameless and filthy Duobao True Monarch is, just the fact that he's the designated next Spirit Treasure Sect Master tells you that in this vast Cultivation World, there are almost no cultivators of the Ultimate Happiness Realm who can stand against him causing trouble."

In this life as a human, Lian Yulou had often relied on Zhuge Qingyi's formidable reputation to act wantonly outside, never minding other cultivators.

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Even as a disciple of a Great Sect, one wouldn't dare to provoke him lightly.

But now, the tables had turned, and he was being oppressed by the fame and combat prowess of his own master.

Moreover, this time, his actions had implicated his master as well.

The thought of his beloved master being hunted down by that damn Duobao True Monarch with the Heavenly Punishment Sword caused Lian Yulou immense pain.

He didn't hesitate to lower his pride and bowed deeply to Tao Qian, pleading:

"I provoked Daoist without cause, it was Yulou's fault."

"I will take all the blame, let Daoist do as you please, only asking that you ask your master to retract his magic sword."

"Is that the truth?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I'm not particularly interested in Lian Daoist's treasure bag or body for now, but I've heard that Lian Daoist has some secret dealings with the Ninth Prince Zhu Qi. Presumably, you are aware of the grand scheme that Prince Zhao is brewing? I'm rather curious, could you honestly explain it, and dispel my doubts?"

"That's no issue, that crafty youth Zhu Qi is planning to..."

He stopped mid-sentence as if he had touched upon a big secret, suddenly snapping out of the atmosphere that Tao Qian had painstakingly created.

He abruptly raised his head, staring fixedly at Tao Qian.

His expression revealed a sudden understanding.

He then gritted his teeth and laughed coldly:

"Daoist, you're quite the schemer!"

"Knowing that I have not transcended my cultivation tribulation, and that a heart demon is growing, you bait me with the scandalous matters between me and my master to coerce me into revealing secrets."

"It seems you're also aware that my True Spirit Origin hails from the Ultimate Happiness Realm and that most soul-searching secret techniques are ineffective on me, hence you resort to such despicable tactics."

"Yulou remembers, although my master is no match for Duobao True Monarch, saving his own life shouldn't be a problem. At worst, he might escape back to the Mountain Gate with serious injuries. True Monarch's combat record might be impressive, but would he dare cause trouble at the entrance of Evil Sect?"

"Additionally, Yulou recalls something else, you possess the inheritance of both Secret Demon and Spiritual Treasure Sects and obtained the Buddha Bird Relics, a treasure capable of creating a new lineage. Only to have disguised yourself as a pitiful Mixed Dragon Demon, mingling in a large merchant's residence under Zhu Qi's control, plus you acquired some Human Dao Destiny in Southern Yue."

"If Yulou isn't wrong, you're currently coveting something in that young Zhu Qi's possession, right?"

"This is getting interesting, it's truly becoming a spectacle."

"Although it's normal, that treasure's provenance is beyond imagination. Were it not in conflict with the tenets of Evil Sect, Yulou would also want to compete for it."

Having regained his composure, Lian Yulou became more animated as he spoke.

He watched Tao Qian with a burning gaze, feeling as if he had uncovered his blind spot.

As he spoke, he also gained more confidence.

After a moment's thought, he boldly set forth his conditions:

"Yulou indeed knows of the young Zhu Qi's plans and the origins of that treasure."

"If Daoist is willing to make a Daoist oath to return my tribulation-affected self and let me leave, Yulou will invariably reveal all the secrets without reservation."

"There's no need for Daoist to worry about Yulou seeking revenge later. We will make a pact to avoid crossing paths."

"If Daoist finds the offer lacking, Yulou can also swear to retreat three thousand miles wherever Daoist appears."

"How about it?"

Having guessed Tao Qian's true intentions, Lian Yulou felt the conditions he laid out were quite reasonable.

Any rational person should have accepted and been content.

Unfortunately, if it had been the previous Tao Qian, he might have accepted.

Because he had consulted Yuan Gong, and True Monarchs of the Ultimate Happiness Realm indeed were immune to soul-searching and soul-capturing techniques—at least, most magic skills known to Tao Qian were ineffective on True Spirits from the Ultimate Happiness Realm.

However, Yuan Gong had also said there were exceptions.

Sects like Taishang Dao, Spirit Treasure Sect, Great Freedom Temple, Demon Buddha Temple, Secret Demon Sect, and so forth, possessed Great Divine Powers and Great Means, capable of extracting secrets from the True Spirit of an Ultimate Happiness Realm cultivator.

It was just that such methods were extremely difficult to come by.

For instance, the Secret Demon Sect possessed a Magical Treasure known as "Great All Heavens Secret Demon Banner", consisting of nineteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine Demon Banners. This could assemble the Great All Heavens Ten Directions Sky Demon Soul Refining Technique, which in an instant could refine a True Soul of an Ultimate Happiness Realm cultivator into the most pure and original thoughts.

Any secret hidden within that cultivator's True Spirit would then become evident.

Of course, even for the Secret Demon Sect, this was a true treasure.

During the great battle, the treasure was mostly destroyed, and the Demon Banners scattered far and wide. It was said that Duobao True Monarch had snatched many, enough to form a small array, but was no longer able to refine Ultimate Happiness Realm True Spirits.

But that was not very important, for other techniques exemplified by Yuan Gong.

Coincidentally, Tao Da True Master had obtained one of them.

True Word Secret Decree!

While this method couldn't soul-search and capture, it wasn't difficult to pry out the secrets one desired to know from an Ultimate Happiness Realm True Spirit, it was simply a matter of cost.

Tao Qian believed he could afford it.

So at this moment, after hearing Lian Yulou's offer,

Tao Qian only gave him a pitiful gaze, then uttered a sentence that made Lian Yulou feel ominous:

"How could I possibly release such an evil demon back into the wild after falling into my hands?"

"Since you disdain the kind wine and must drink the punitive one, it's hard for me to be polite."

"It's quite ironic that I have a Sublime Dharma that can resolve this situation."

"The technique is taken from you, and it will be appropriately used on you."

"It's destiny!"

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Lian Yulou had not yet truly transcended the Nine Calamities of Desire; his past life's mana and memories remained unretrieved.

Outwardly, he appeared to be a contemporary of Tao Qian, but his true soul was at the level of Ultimate Happiness.

Hearing these few words from Tao Qian, Lian Yulou felt a sense of foreboding but still clung to hope, stubbornly retorting,

"Yulou is eager to see how you plan to be inhospitable."

"Threats and brags won't pry open my mouth."

As soon as Lian Yulou finished speaking, Tao Qian made his move.

He did not immediately employ the "True Word Secret Decree," but instead, he formed the Refining God Seal with his hand and stepped forward to deliver another blow to Lian Yulou.

Tao Qian's approach was simple and crude; extracting secrets from Lian Yulou's true spirit would come at a price.

Between a lucid state and one of being dazed by the blows, the latter would likely require less of a price to be demanded.

"Save where you can!"

With this thought, Tao Qian abruptly spoke out.

The True Word Secret Decree required no wind-up; each word possessed power.

"Tell me the origins of the Exotic Treasure that Ninth Prince Zhu Qi is currently nurturing and refining."

Tao Qian did not ask questions like what the Ninth Prince's biggest secret was,

Fearing what might not be that treasure but some palace scandal instead, Tao Qian was not about to waste his mana on others' private gossip.

As expected, once the Divine Skills were employed,

Tao Qian immediately felt his mana being drawn away in waves, a massive amount, almost one-third more than what he had expended battling with Lian Yulou. This meant he owed another large debt to his own Heavenly Venerate, and he was suddenly overcome with a sense of emptiness.

The only consolation was that the method worked.

Lian Yulou began to speak.

He now resembled someone under hypnosis, revealing secrets buried deep in his memory in great detail.

And with just the first sentence, the statue of Yuan Gong that had been lying in Tao Qian's arms all this time also reacted.

Tao Qian had anticipated this response somewhat, and upon hearing it, he simply raised his eyebrows, confirming his suspicions.

"That object is called the 'Mountain and River Map,' which came into being from a Fragment of the Ancestor God Forbidden Technique Longevity Barrier upon its shattering."

This statement resounded through the quiet room.

Yunrong, still in the form of Cat Girl, could not help but lift her head, a look of surprise appearing in her eyes.

From within the statue in Tao Qian's embrace, red smoke emerged, coalescing into a phantom of Yuan Gong, which drifted out and stood beside Tao Qian.

Clearly, the reputation of the Ancestor God Forbidden Technique was no small matter.

After all, Yuan Gong was an Old Demon of the Secret Demon Sect who had fallen many years ago. With such status, even he showed excitement and curiosity upon hearing this keyword.

Lian Yulou, affected by the "True Word Secret Decree," did not stop revealing more.

"After the Ancestor God Forbidden Technique shattered, some Fragments went to the Outer Realm, and others fell back to this world, scattering in various places."

"Each fragment gave rise to different treasures, most of which concealed themselves, making it difficult for others to find them."

"To obtain such treasures, one must be guided by Karma."

"As with the 'Mountain and River Map,' it was presented to Zhu Qi by a scholar who lamented his unrecognized talents and sought a Bright Lord to assist in rising to prominence amidst the chaos. This scholar, seemingly named Yang Xiu, was ironically naive; after offering up the treasure map, he directly asked for the position of military advisor, failing to realize Zhu Qi's madness. Zhu Qi immediately ordered the scholar to be captured, cleansed, and steamed in a pot."

"As he faced death, the scholar cursed Zhu Qi, saying he would not die well. I know not where his confidence stemmed from - how could a mere mortal's curse affect a Taishang Demon Son and the current Prince?"

"Despite the bizarre acquisition process, the Mountain and River Map is indeed the first of the divine treasures borne from the Ancestor God's Fragment."

"The second is said to have fallen into the hands of the warlord Zhang Jiudeng who occupies Ancient Qin Province, its name currently unknown."

"Though just a Fragment, the Mountain and River Map possesses part of the Ancestor God Forbidden Technique's power. If someone can refine it and then deploy it to envelop an area, they could create an 'Absolute Spirit Forbidden Zone,' controlling the life and death of all Transcendent beings within that territory."

"This effect might be somewhat exaggerated, but indeed, it's a Divine Treasure that indiscriminately targets the Cultivation World—Daoists, Buddhas, Devils, Demons, adherents of heresy and heterodoxy, Alien Strange Objects... and so on."

"If Zhu Qi actually succeeds in refining the Mountain and River Map, other places won't be affected, but within the bounds of Demon City, even if beings of Ultimate Happiness were to arrive, it's likely they would be no match for him."

"As for those low-level nobodies, he could wipe them all out with a mere thought."

As Lian Yulou finished speaking, the few people in the quiet room all frowned in silence.

Tao Qian's expression was calm, without a trace of surprise.

When he had spied on the conversation between Zhang Baisui and his son, he had already guessed a bit, though he had not known so many details.

"Ancestor God Forbidden Technique Fragment... Mountain and River Map... Doesn't this mean that in the near future, the vast Longevity Heavenly Dynasty, and even countries abroad or the Outer Realm, will frequently encounter similar magical treasures?"

"Just any one of them could form an Absolute Spirit Domain, eradicating all Transcendent beings within it?"

Tao Qian pondered, momentarily unclear whether this was good or bad.

Upon reflection, could it really be worse than the current chaos plagued by Demons?

Although asking a single question incurred a huge debt, Tao Qian was not inclined to stop.

As if Mouth Containing Heavenly Constitution, Tao Qian again addressed Lian Yulou:

"How does Zhu Qi plan to refine the Mountain and River Map?"

"How many forces support him?"

This time, Tao Qian asked two questions in a row and immediately had an amount of mana drawn away equivalent to two-thirds of what he had expended in the entire battle.

Quickly, however, Lian Yulou's answer arrived.

"Because the Mountain and River Map originated from a Fragment of the Ancestor God Forbidden Technique, refining such a Divine Treasure requires exceedingly complex prerequisites."

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"Amongst the requirements, one is indispensable, yet allows for a choice between two options, either to obtain Hidden Dragon Blood and Flesh, or to secure Human Dao Fortune,"

"The latter is extremely difficult to acquire, which is why Zhu Qi set his sights on his own brother, the reigning Yue King, Fourth Prince Zhu Xuan, and has managed to capture him."

"Zhu Xuan thought that Zhu Qi, his younger brother, would not kill him, ha, the fool was utterly unaware that his body contained Hidden Dragon Blood and Flesh—half of which Zhu Qi intended to refine the Mountain and River Map, and the other half he sold to the Governor of Ancient Qin Province, Zhang Jiudeng, for a hefty price, under the condition that the latter support his claim to the throne."

"Aside from Hidden Dragon Blood and Flesh, refining the Mountain and River Map requires several other conditions, but since I don't plan to be involved, I don't know the specifics. It's nothing more than a blood sacrifice of a large number of Demon Cultivators, Deceitful Objects and Strange Charms, nothing novel."

Even though Lian Yulou was pounded into stupor by Tao Qian and was under the spell of his Secret Technique, his manner of speaking still had its own flair.

Having answered Tao Qian's first question with only a moment's pause, he went on to the second.

Likewise, his response was remarkably detailed.

"Zhu Qi, that young chap, has quite an impressive skin, and a sweet mouth, charming a high-ranking Elder of the Taishang Demon Sect to take him as a Direct Disciple. Not only did he impart all of the Great Lifebook Scripture, but he also handed over almost all his subordinates to Zhu Qi's control. Heh, I suspect Zhu Qi is that Old Demon's illegitimate son; the Emperor who recently perished might just have been crushed to death by that cuckold's hat."

"Aside from the full support of the Taishang Demon Sect, this young scamp has also secured investment from another major force."

"Alchemists!"

"Tsk, a whole bunch of old monsters there. Fortunately, they dare not wreak havoc in the world and only hunker down on their own turf, either messing with Mortals around the world or scattering bait for amusement in fishing."

"However, as it happens to be at the end of a dynasty again, the Alchemists have dispatched a group of so-called 'Saint Heirs' into the world, and the one who chose Zhu Qi is a fellow named Huang Chong."

"This guy is a complete and utter villain; most of those treacherous and shameless deeds are conceived and executed by him."

"Then comes Zhang Jiudeng, the Cao Gang, Rashamon Country—forces united by interest, ready to disperse at any moment."

"Speaking of Rashamon Country, that Rashamon Girl named An Ya, tsk tsk, is quite infatuated. Zhu Qi has left her a widow-in-life, and yet the girl is still wholeheartedly looking out for him."

"Such a pity, meeting a man devoid of loyalty; widowhood aside, he discarded her as an insignificant pawn... Originally, I intended to return her to the Rashamon King, but the girl pleaded fervently to return to Prince Zhao Mansion, so I agreed, and she's now securely in my treasure bag."

After Lian Yulou finished, Tao Qian's brows were deeply furrowed.

Gains?

Some, but not to Tao Qian's satisfaction.

Suppressing his pain, Tao Qian did not cease but continued to ask questions.

Phrase by phrase, the True Words were uttered!

Mana inside Tao Qian's body churned like rolling rivers, crazily drawn away.

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The next morning, within a quiet room in Zhang Mansion.

Tao Qian sat with a face void of expression, across from the True Spirit of Lian Yulou who had just woken from the effects of the Refining God Seal.

Although he was aware of what happened while "True Word Secret Decree" forcibly pried open his mouth during his dazed state,

So upon waking at this moment, the former Evil Demon Giant of the Evil Sect had an utterly defeated look on his face.

The one condition that could have been used to bargain for his freedom was gone.

Lian Yulou knew this well and without a second thought, he struggled to say, "I am willing to submit to Daoist's command..."

Before he could finish, Tao Qian, who had regained his icy demeanor, waved his sleeve and once more stored him in the Holy Embryo Bag.

At that moment, his mind was already surging with thoughts. How could he spare the time to listen to such drivel?

But it was also at this time, as usual, upon sensing the completion of his task, that Lian Jing'er brought in a new Cloud Token Letter.

Tao Qian felt a premonition and, combining it with the many secrets he had learned from Lian Yulou,

Even before he opened the letter, he already had a vague guess about its contents.

Indeed, as soon as he opened it, the news brief that confirmed the suspicions in his mind leaped out:

"Last night, Ninth Prince Zhu Qi, to retaliate for Xiao Chunjiao's previous assassination attempt and the grudge over the Dragon-locking Root, killed Xiao Chunjiao through a cruel method of steaming and divided her flesh among his Heavenly Demon Army, while hanging her remaining skeleton at the city gate for public display and flogging, an act that stirred discontent among the kings of the Taiping Army. Their leader, the Taiping Heavenly King, issued an Imperial Edict, condemning Zhu Qi's brutality and naming him 'Nine Nether Devil Dragon,' declaring that the Taiping Army would sooner or later invade Demon City and put him to death."

"Due to Zhu Qi's capture of Fourth Prince Zhu Xuan, the government of Ancient Yue Province has requested Prince Zhao treat Yue King well, offering many conditions and willing to pay a great price to exchange for the Yue King's return, while also declaring that if Prince Zhao refuses, they will send a large army to wage war... Although the Fourth Prince was captured, in terms of military and financial strength, the Yue King's side is stronger than Prince Zhao's, and Zhu Xuan's several adult sons are all valiant and battle-hardened. If a war truly breaks out, the outcome is uncertain."

"The Emperor, who has returned to the throne, has once again sent an Imperial Edict, not only summoning him to the capital again and promising to appoint him as Crown Prince, but also demanding that he treat the Yue King well and not kill him."

"All requests have been ignored by Prince Zhao, Zhu Qi, who only announced that in three days a Treasured Artifact Conference will be held, inviting cultivators from all sides to participate, the more the merrier, without any restrictions."

"Moreover, to celebrate his imminent recovery from illness, Zhu Qi also declared the opening of granaries around Demon City to provide relief to disaster victims... regardless of which province the disaster victims fled from, Demon City will take them in, also welcoming all comers."

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Tao Qian automatically ignored the rest of the trivial matters, his gaze directly locked onto the last two pieces of news.

In his mind, thoughts exploded like fireworks.

"In three days, Zhu Qi intends not only to borrow spiritual materials like those of Lady Mei to refine the 'Six Desires Demon Pill' to heal his body and dramatically increase his cultivation, but he also plans to seize the opportunity of the Treasure Refining Convention to capture all the Demon Cultivators, Alien Ghosts, and other beings in the Cultivation World within Demon City, to use them all for a Blood Sacrifice in the Refining Treasure process?"

"If he merely plagued the Cultivation World, it would be one thing, but this perverse lunatic is openly distributing food to relieve the disaster victims, surely within three days, he will attract at least a million refugees... Could it be that these people, along with the several million disaster victims already in Demon City, are all to be used for a Blood Sacrifice?"

Thinking of this, Tao Qian's brows immediately furrowed even tighter.

From what he had learned from Lian Yulou, he had discerned Zhu Qi's grand scheme.

But he only knew the outline, not the details.

What were his Heavenly Demon Army going to do?

What was Zhang Jiudeng tasked with?

And what was Alchemist Saint Child Huang Chong responsible for?

And what about the Cao Gang, Rashamon Country, and other forces?

Despite not knowing this, Tao Qian could be certain.

The process of Zhu Qi refining the Mountain and River Map would surely lead to a bloodbath within Demon City, with countless lives lost and corpses strewn everywhere.

This so-called Prince Zhao was far from a "Bright Lord," he wasn't even a normal person.

Tao Qian's mind immediately recalled the opinion of Lian Yulou, an already twisted Evil Sect Practitioner, on Ninth Prince Zhu Qi:

"Zhu Qi is a sly and tyrannical child, cruel and unfeeling."

"He seems uninterested in affairs between men and women, only delighting in torturing and manipulating others, flaying alive, steaming, dismembering, lingering deaths... all kinds of punishments are his favorites."

The more he thought about these things, the greater the activity became within Tao Qian.

The Human Dao Destiny he had attained in Southern Yue was surging constantly.

"Such a person, both a prince and a Taishang Demon Son."

"If he succeeds in refining the treasure, the Mortal Human Race of Demon City will have no hope, and for a very long time, they will be ruled by a perverse maniac."

"What's even more terrifying is, despite the uncertainty of whether the Ancestor God Forbidden Technique can be reassembled, there remains a sliver of possibility, and if Zhu Qi refines the 'Mountain and River Map', he won't be satisfied, and will likely covet the remaining Fragments, perhaps thinking of reactivating the Forbidden Technique to completely dominate the entire Longevity Heavenly Dynasty."

With his thoughts firmly set, Tao Qian pondered deeply on how to break the situation?

He alone was but a drop in the bucket, but what if he could pull the other great powers into the fray?

As he was pondering, suddenly, between heaven and earth, a terrifying thunderclap resounded fiercely over Demon City.

Even Tao Qian, who was in the quiet room, heard it distinctly.

This was no ordinary thunder!

Tao Qian immediately waved his hand, causing the door to swing open.

The next moment, he, as well as all the civilians in Demon City, involuntarily looked up towards the sky.

It was supposed to be early morning, but after that thunderclap, the sky above Demon City was completely enveloped by a crimson blood cloud.

The sound of "pitter-patter" was heard as rain started to fall on Demon City.

Blood rain!

Rain that resembled thick blood plasma poured down in torrents.

Even within the rainwater, some pieces of flesh, exuding a strong odor and mixed with yellow fat, were thudding down.

Even Tao Qian's expression froze at this moment.

Just then, a drop of blood rain was fluttered by the wind into the room, and Tao Qian caught it with his hand.

In his mind, the Record erupted:

[Record: Blood rain, a portent from the heavens, signifies that a great disaster will befall Demon City, possibly culminating in millions of corpses.]

As this brief message surfaced.

The familiar sensation once again appeared on Tao Qian.

A multitude of abnormalities, one after another, began to manifest on his body.

And in an extremely short time, it settled on the first one.

The place of convergence was, unexpectedly, his belly.

Tao Qian's abdomen visibly swelled, and in the blink of an eye, he had developed the round belly of a woman in her tenth month of pregnancy, round and full as if there truly was something inside?

"My sweet rain..."

Even though Tao Qian considered himself to have a stalwart will, he couldn't help but curse out loud.

Chapter 357 Tao Qian Shakes People, Secret Affairs of the Heavenly Demon

The vast Demon City was overwhelmed by a rain of blood. Though it lasted only for a few dozen breaths, and the government quickly responded, dispatching the Heavenly Demon Army with various methods to clean up the blood rain and the chunks of fat and flesh thoroughly. With the support of organizations such as the Changchun Society, White Lotus Sect, and Cao Gang, public opinion was tightly controlled.

Nonetheless, the event caused no small disturbance.

It was fortunate that this was an age of unprecedented upheaval and transformation, and such strange phenomena were not rare.

After all, in the vast Longevity Heavenly Dynasty with its sixty-seven provinces, omens and celestial phenomena were beyond counting, occurring every single day.

Aside from Ninth Prince and his cohort who incited the trouble, Tao Qian had become the only one within Demon City who knew the truth.

But at this moment, Tao Qian had no time to attend to other matters.

Because on his body, the manifestation of a "Big Belly" was still not enough, unusual conditions continued to multiply.

The second abnormality soon took shape—this time, it was the eyes; a pair of new pupils forcibly emerged.

Tao Qian's occasionally effective High Spirit Vision, due to this change, became permanently available.

"Double pupils, hmm, this is acceptable," he sighed in relief upon recognizing the new abnormality.

This change was actually rather favorable, even powerful and domineering.

Infant Sect Master Li Shantong, who effortlessly crushed the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva and another Cavernous Mystery Demon with a simple gesture, also possessed double pupils. Although Tao Da, True Master, had stolen the show that day, he knew his place: it was the childlike Li Shantong who was the true force to be reckoned with.

Having gained double pupils and thus securing High Spirit Vision made Tao Qian feel as if he had stumbled upon a fortune.

However, he quickly realized that the third anomaly was approaching.

This time, it was the face.

It was a transformation similar to "plastic surgery." The moment he sensed the tribulation energy moving toward his face, Tao Qian immediately felt something was amiss.

Raising his hand, he conjured a Mystic Light Mirror and saw an oddly shaped face reflected within.

At first, the face seemed peculiar, but upon closer observation, Tao Qian himself could perceive something special about it.

He even had a strange illusion: with this face, whatever he set out to do, he could succeed.

"A countenance blessed by fortune... is this the Dragon Face?" Tao Qian furrowed his brows and hesitated.

From the memories of his scholarly predecessors, he knew that each time the ruling Imperial Family of the Longevity Heavenly Dynasty changed, each founding Emperor, or the ruler who restored the dynasty, would have certain special features. The most common was the peculiar face that Tao Qian now bore, which could also be referred to as Dragon Face.

"They really think quite highly of me, do they? Are they intending to thrust me into a rebellion?"

"Big Belly, double pupils, Dragon Face... If someone proficient in physiognomy or divination saw me now, they would probably kowtow immediately, eagerly following me to gain the merit of supporting a dragon."

Tao Qian's latest self couldn't suppress the urge to mutter critiques under his breath.

Fortunately, he had already experienced the shock of his previous Long-eared Parallel Teeth transformation and quickly grew accustomed to it.

With a thought, he reverted to his original appearance using the Secret Demon Transformation Technique.

These anomalies were merely signs, telling Tao Qian that his tribulation was on its way.

His attention immediately returned to more serious matters.

"Blood rain falling on Demon City signifies that this territory could be destined for millions of corpses; it's almost certain that Zhu Qi, that twisted Ninth Prince, requires a Blood Sacrifice for the refining process of the 'Mountain and River Map.'"

"Since he can't conduct a Blood Sacrifice with the proper citizens of Demon City, knowing fully well that, no matter how twisted, he can't afford to lose his subjects, did he deliberately lure refugees from other provinces?"

"In this world, what's never in short supply, is refugees."

"But what about the cost?"

"Even if they are refugees, a mass Blood Sacrifice of millions at once—that backlash and cost, even someone at the Daoist Transformation Realm might struggle to bear it, right?"

Pondering this far, Tao Qian fell into doubt.

Then, Yuan Gong, who materialized from a wisp of red smoke at his side, spoke eerily, "As long as he doesn't kill them himself, it's possible to shift the karma. Taishang Demon Sect is most adept at these sorts of tricks, a group of underground little demons."

Yuan Gong's words, like an epiphany, immediately reminded Tao Qian of another piece of news from the Cloud Token Letter: the Ancient Yue Province government asked Ninth Prince to treat the Yue King well while putting forth various conditions for ransom.

Tao Qian's expression changed as he suddenly said, "I understand now, damn Zhu Qi."

"That psychopath captured his own fourth brother and is eyeing not just his Hidden Dragon Blood and Flesh but also his Fungus Demon Army. With their leader captive, the leaderless forces will stop at nothing to attempt a rescue."

"Is this guy planning to form a human defensive line outside Demon City using the refugees, deliberately guiding the Fourth Prince's forces to slaughter them, and then conduct a Blood Sacrifice with the Mountain and River Map?"

In a few words, Tao Qian felt he had guessed a significant part of Zhu Qi's plan.

And it was the most crucial part.

Yuan Gong nodded in agreement, then revealed a vital ancient secret, "The Ancestor God Forbidden Technique was established by the ancient Emperor who swept through the eight desolations. It was also a time of demons and chaos, gods and ghosts cohabiting, where suffering beings were commonplace—phenomena like blood rain occurred every few days... To speak of it, that Emperor did indeed establish extraordinary achievements. Without the Ancestor God Forbidden Technique, the numbers of the Mortal Human Race within this territory would never be what they are today."

"Since the Mountain and River Map is a Fragment turned by the Ancestor God Forbidden Technique, the conditions for its refinement must be shared."

"That devil calling himself Zhu Qi must be planning to recreate those times... to accelerate the refinement of that treasure. Otherwise, normally speaking, an Exotic Treasure of such a high order would take several years for someone in the Ultimate Happiness Realm to refine, and that little demon would need at least decades."

Chapter 358 Tao Qian Shakes People, Heavenly Demon's Secret_2

"Rumble"

The reminder came just in time.

Some unknown details, as well as things Lian Yulou didn't know, seemed to burst through the haze.

In Tao Qian's mind, a torrent of thoughts surged; he dared not claim he had fully grasped all of Ninth Prince Zhu Qi's plans, but he had a grasp of about eighty to ninety percent of them.

It was precisely because of this that Tao Qian's face showed difficulty.

It was too hard!

Too perilous!

"Zhu Qi used the Fourth Prince as bait, drawing his numerous military forces to slaughter millions of refugees."

"Then with the so-called Treasure Convention as a front, he lured all manner of Daoist, Buddhist, Demon, and Devil cultivators, as well as heresy and heterodoxy and deceitful alien species, to replicate the form of the Mortal World in ancient times, also turning them into another part of the material for a blood sacrifice."

"These things sound simple, but they are a hugely complex and immense project."

"To accomplish this, just the forces under the elder of the Taishang Demon Sect plus the disfavored Ninth Prince would definitely not be enough."

"So Zhu Qi must have colluded with Alchemist Saint Child Huang Chong, the military warlord Zhang Jiudeng, as well as the Cao Gang and the White Lotus Sect—several hidden side doors."

"The Cultivation Tribulation Technique and Human Dao Destiny really think highly of me; as soon as they started to move, they thrust me into this tribulation, just me alone, plus one cat, and three youngsters. How am I to fight?"

Tao Qian worried, and involuntarily, his gaze shifted back to Yuan Gong.

Despite possessing a pair of majestic and uncanny double pupils, he could still put on such a look of sincere inquiry.

But this time, Yuan Gong couldn't be bothered with this fellow; the blood-red brows lifted, and he scoffed:

"Don't put on such a pretense; you're a revered Spirit Treasure True Inheritor. How could you deign to ask me, an Old Demon of the Secret Demon Sect, for advice?"

"When you defect to the Secret Demon, I, Old Ape, may well devise strategies for you, and I would stake my old life to fight if necessary."

"For now, you should go find Duobao that fellow."

"Bring out your identity as the only disciple of the Spirit Treasure True Inheritor. Bring the entire Spirit Treasure Sect to join the fight. Not to mention one Taishang Demon Son or an Alchemist Saint Child, even if you add a bunch of chickens and dogs, or the entire Taishang Demon Sect comes at you, they are not a match for the Ten Thousand Immortals of the Penglai Sea."

After dropping these resentful words, Yuan Gong transformed back into a wisp of red smoke and retreated into the statue.

Tao Qian was stunned for a moment, then concluded a lesson: "Seems like next time I talk to the Heavenly Venerate, I should avoid Yuan Gong. The old man really is petty, despite his age."

Although Yuan Gong gave no more guidance, Tao Qian still heard the implied meaning.

Recruit people!

But, not from the Spirit Treasure Sect.

As for the reason?

Ever since he had learned the Cultivation Tribulation Technique, Tao Qian knew that the fortunes of the Mortal World were the most profound and mysterious, where a slight pull could lead to an unimaginable scale of disaster after accumulating over time.

"The disaster brewing by this Ninth Prince is terrifying indeed, but as Yuan Gong said, its essence is merely that of a Taishang Demon Son, plus a rather hefty Alchemist Saint Child. Although the atmosphere created seems a bit more terrifying than during the time in Southern Yue, it still doesn't qualify as a real massive calamity."

"If I therefore turn back to Spirit Treasure Mountain Gate to ask for help, uttering 'Daoist, please stop,' 'Brother, assist me,' wouldn't that possibly brew an apocalyptic-level catastrophe?"

"The one who breaks tribulation must seek within the tribulation itself."

"For example... the National Salvation Congress!"

Tao Qian seemed to hit upon a key point, his eyes suddenly lighting up.

At this moment, Tao Qian finally understood where the opportunity lay in this disaster of the Demon City.

He was indeed isolated and weak, but he could bring in other significant forces.

To overcome the tribulation, it was not necessary to slay and overthrow Zhu Qi and his gang; merely disrupting his blood sacrifice refining treasure conspiracy would suffice.

Tao Qian grasped the concept completely and directly took out the Great Wilderness Token and sent a message through it.

...

Before long, it was still the Xianheng Hotel.

Tao Qian saw Yu Yanshi, Li Wenyan, and Shi Yingqiong again.

Including Tao Qian, the six people sat down, all with serious and silent expressions, watching the soldiers of the Heavenly Demon Army cleaning blood and flesh on the street corner and sprinkling some unknown powder to dissolve it.

Evidently, they had already learned about Zhu Qi's overall plan from Tao Qian's message.

Thump!

Li Wenyan, whose temper was the most explosive, slammed the table fiercely, his angry words transmitting quietly into the ears of the other five.

"I've said it before, Zhu Qi is nothing but a shameless, beastly brute."

"Recruiting refugees, performing blood sacrifices with millions of people, others might not dare, but Zhu Qi could definitely commit such atrocities."

"If we can't foil that bastard's plans this time, we, the entire National Salvation Congress, will all be sinners. I, Li Wenyan, will be the first to commit suicide as an apology."

The anger of Li Wenyan was partly due to the previous collaboration between the National Salvation Congress and the Demon City Government in disaster relief.

At first, it was undoubtedly a good deed, but now, after hearing Tao Qian's leaked information.

Everyone was filled with immense regret; providing disaster relief at this moment was tantamount to indirectly helping Zhu Qi attract victims for his perverse plan.

Fortunately, none of these individuals were the self-pitying type who achieved nothing.

Yu Yanshi was quick to suppress his emotions and immediately began to ponder.

However, he quickly frowned and transmitted his thoughts:

"The Mountain and River Map is already in Zhu Qi's hands, and it's very difficult for us to snatch it away."

"And the key point of Zhu Qi's conspiracy is the blood sacrifice of provisions. Regardless of whether it's opening the grain depots for relief or drawing the Fungus Demon Army to attack, both are overt schemes. Even if we take the risk to expose them, very few people will believe us. Desperate for

something to eat, the disaster victims would do anything, while the Fourth Prince Zhu Xuan's subordinates would go to any length to rescue their master."

"If we also reveal the existence of the 'Mountain and River Map,' we would instead confirm the rumors of a treasure in Zhu Qi's possession, yet unrefined by him."

"Some lower-level cultivators might be scared off by us, but conversely, it would attract high-level cultivators who fancy their chances of snatching the treasure, further supplying him with victims."

After Yu Yanshi finished speaking, Shi Yingqiong on the side also spoke up.

"We shouldn't publicize the existence of the Mountain and River Map for now."

"This is a major secret concerning the entire Longevity Heavenly Dynasty, the fate of billions of people hangs in balance. Once it's leaked by us, the consequences will be unimaginable."

As she spoke, Tao Qian also nodded in agreement.

"If this won't work and that won't work, and with Zhu Qi's beastly plan approaching its final phase with only three days left, the Fungus Demon Army under the command of the foolish Fourth Prince Zhu Xuan might have already set off. Our National Salvation Congress is nothing more than a few cats, big and small; how could we possibly confront both the Heavenly Demon Army and the Fungus Demon Army head-on?"

Li Wenyan's statement was indeed a harsh reality.

Tao Qian pondered and also felt nearly out of options.

Even though the National Salvation Congress included the powerful transcendent beings like the Three Immortals of the Great Wilderness, how could such beings slaughter an entire alien army in a short time?

Moreover, whether it's the Taishang Demon Sect behind Zhu Qi or the Fungus Sect behind Zhu Xuan, both harbored Ultimate Happiness Realm powerhouses.

"The ruler of Demon City intentionally drawing an external army to slaughter his own people... Even if we know about it, who can stop it?"

The most steady and composed Wen Ruyue also spoke these words with a face full of fury.

Harsh!

But it was the harsh truth.

To stop an extraordinary, alien army naturally requires another army.

Within the territory of Demon City, there's no second option but Zhu Qi's Heavenly Demon Army.

Yet all six understood that Zhu Qi must have given orders not to resist.

When the time comes, he would let the Fungus Demon Army slaughter the multitudes of disaster victims on the outskirts of Demon City.

Once again, the six fell into silence, until the always silent Yang Li hesitantly said:

"The true controller of the Heavenly Demon Army is actually the general Yin Qiye. If he were to turn against Zhu Qi, his schemes might not succeed."

"Who doesn't know that? But Yin Qiye is a disciple of the Taishang Demon Sect, a lackey for that brute Zhu Qi; how could he turn against his own master?"

Li Wenyan replied, and Yang Li shook his head, suddenly revealing a secret that even made Tao Qian's eyes widen.

It was obviously a private matter of others, and Yang Li hesitated for a moment before revealing:

"Due to an accident, I witnessed the Heavenly Demon Army general Yin Qiye in a secret rendezvous with Zhu Qi's Consort, who is also the Rashamon Girl from abroad."

"The nature of their relationship is clearly unspeakable. Perhaps leveraging this, we could win him over?"

Chapter 359: Turning Yin Qiye, Chiyu Three Disks Scripture

Yang Li had just revealed the secret, and everyone's faces showed a hint of "There's actually such a thing?"

However, except for Tao Qian, Yu Yanshi and a few others didn't show much joy.

One after another, they spoke, denying the possibility of using this matter to coerce Yin Qiye.

"This may not be useful, although we all know that Zhu Qi was once assassinated by Xiao Chunjiao, and his dragon root was locked, causing the Rashamon Girl to become a widow right after her marriage... But as far as I know, Zhu Qi naturally has no interest in matters of men and women; his interest lies in tormenting others."

"Though Zhu Qi is a beast, he is also an ambitious figure. In his eyes, a mere woman means nothing. If he finds out about this, he might just gift the Rashamon Girl to Yin Qiye."

"Don't forget the incident at Jin Mansion; the Rashamon Girl was captured by the Evil Sect's true disciple, Lian Yulou. She might already be dead, which explains why Yin Qiye hated Xiao Chenzhou of the Western Capital Army so much; he was willing to use himself as bait, eventually annihilating the Western Capital Army—could it be that he didn't realize his own lord was using the Rashamon Girl as nothing more than a discarded pawn?"

"It's likely that Zhu Qi personally cast a demon curse on her, a typical move by the Demon Sect, always sinister."

While Yu Yanshi and others were talking, Tao Qian suddenly spoke up.

"The affair of making Yin Qiye turn against his allies might indeed be feasible."

"Because the Rashamon Girl is now in my hands."

"However, what exactly is the relationship between this girl and Yin Qiye? We might need to interrogate her first to avoid startling the snake without catching the fish."

As Tao Qian spoke, everyone immediately turned their heads to stare at him.

Those in the National Salvation Congress were all witnesses to the change at Jin Mansion, watching Lian Yulou abduct the Rashamon Girl.

They also guessed that Lian Yulou, officially Xiao Chenzhou's male concubine, was actually a man of the Ninth Prince, Zhu Qi.

Now that Tao Qian mentioned having the Rashamon Girl in his possession, did it mean... Tao Qian had killed an Evil Sect true disciple?

Although they were vaguely aware of Tao Qian's supposed dragon demon identity through the subtle hints of the Tianjiang Immortal, one of the Three Immortals of the Great Wilderness, this was false.

But to kill an Evil Sect True Disciple!

It was well-known that to kill a true disciple of a major sect, another disciple of a major sect had to act.

Especially the Evil Sect, which is a top major sect in the Demon Path.

Everyone, having backgrounds related to Daoist and Buddhist sects like Shi Yingqiong from the powerful Shaoqing Sect, admitted to themselves they were no match for Lian Yulou.

Taishang Dao True Inheritor?

Spirit Treasure Sect True Inheritor?

With thoughts flashing through their minds, Yu Yanshi reacted the quickest, guessing Tao Qian's origins.

However, he didn't expose him but instead abruptly stood up.

He nodded to the manager of Xianheng Hotel, who immediately came forward and led them to a secluded guest room.

Well now, as soon as Tao Qian stepped in, he immediately sensed it was shrouded in multiple forbidden techniques.

"This guest room is connected to the Secret Realm of All People; Daoist can act freely."

With that, Yu Yanshi finished speaking and Tao Qian started.

Previously, in the quiet room of Zhang Mansion, he had used the "True Word Secret Decree" to pry the truth from Lian Yulou's mouth.

Naturally, he wouldn't overlook his storage treasure bag.

Like plucking feathers from a passing goose, Tao Qian, who hadn't engaged in looting for a long time, excitedly transferred all the good items from the Evil Sect true inheritor's treasure bag into his Holy Embryo Bag.

This included the Rashamon Girl, An Ya.

As Tao Qian waved his sleeve, a flash of light twinkled.

The Rashamon Princess, An Ya, who on her wedding day had caused the streets of Demon City to empty with her beauty stunning thousands, appeared before them all.

While she was still dazed, Tao Qian explained,

"Lian Yulou, this person was actually a reincarnated old demon of the Evil Sect, entangled by karmic retribution, who attempted to scheme against me instead of transcending; fortunately, with the aid of Sister Yunrong, I ultimately killed him."

"The grand scheme of Zhu Qi was what I learned from the True Soul of Lian Yulou."

"This girl was originally to be returned to the Rashamon King by Lian Yulou, but she pleaded with Lian Yulou, claiming she was hopelessly in love with the Ninth Prince, preferring death over not returning to Prince Zhao's mansion... It seems there are hidden truths; perhaps the one this girl loves is Yin Qiye?"

As Tao Qian spoke, Rashamon Princess An Ya slowly regained consciousness.

Before she could see clearly where she was, a somewhat familiar face suddenly came close, and then she heard him ask, "What is your relationship with Yin Qiye?"

This question, once heard, caused An Ya's beautiful, exotic face to dramatically change.

Subconsciously, she assumed it involved an illicit relationship that the two could not publicly acknowledge, and now it was discovered by the Ninth Prince, Zhu Qi.

Now, was she to be tortured for information?

As Zhu Qi's official consort and the nominal mistress of the Prince Zhao Mansion.

Although she could not yet grasp their grand plan, she already knew some secrets, like what kind of person was Zhu Qi?

"A demon!"

"A devil!"

In An Ya's mind, the most terrifying adjectives popped up one after another.

She couldn't even imagine what terrible tortures she and Qi Ye would suffer if their relationship were exposed.

It would be worse than death!

With this thought, she immediately prepared to trigger the spell within her body to commit suicide.

But it was only necessary if it could prevent any trouble for her lover, Qi Ye, after her death.

Her thinking was not without merit, but unfortunately, she had no control over her own body.

Even someone as powerful as Lian Yulou couldn't withstand the Divine Power that Tao Qian had recently acquired, let alone a mere Rashamon Girl.

The next moment, extreme terror appeared in An Ya's eyes, and she involuntarily blurted out,

"I and Qi Ye are the true husband and wife. Initially, my father rallied the navies of other Western countries to form a coalition to invade your country, thinking it was an ancient and backward country closed off for a thousand years, with a hastily formed navy that surely lacked combat power; as the saying goes in your Longevity Heavenly Dynasty, 'mere chickens and dogs.'"

"Who would have thought that the hastily assembled navy would severely damage us in the first battle? I was disguised as a man on one of the ships that got sunk, thinking death was certain; but in the last moment, my god arrived, my lover, my most heroic and beautiful lover..."

As An Ya narrated, the expressions of the others turned strange.

Initially, when they heard that the Rashamon Girl and Qi Ye had an illicit relationship, they thought it happened after An Ya's marriage into Prince Zhao Mansion, due to living in forced celibacy, which led to their affair.

But now, it wasn't like that at all.

Rather, there was a fully-fledged love story with classic elements.

Their love had developed before the peace marriage, born amid the war.

Regrettably, they were ultimately torn apart.

"After that, as you know, the Ninth Prince of your country defeated the coalition led by my father. As a peace offering, I was sent here to marry."

"Despite my numerous resistances, it was all in vain. My father said that as the Rashamon Princess, even if I was married off by force, I had to marry someone of equal status—none other than the Ninth Prince of your country, the current Grand Admiral."

"After I became Princess Zhao, I even felt saddened when my husband was attempted upon, but soon I realized that it was a great fortune, because my husband was, in fact, a demon, a monster that should be fed to the grim reaper, the most disgusting and terrifying creature."

"Qi Ye knew about my plight. He once said he wanted to elope with me, but he needed time to prepare. Unfortunately, I was in trouble before he could get ready..."

At this point, An Ya had fully regained consciousness.

Seeing Tao Qian, Yu Yanshi, and the others clearly, she realized she was not in Zhu Qizhi's hands.

Instantly, hope sprouted within her.

But the next conversation between several individuals made her emotions fluctuate again.

"So, it seems that Qi Ye has long harbored thoughts of rebellion, which is quite expected since he is also a Taishang Demon Son, but Zhu Qi's status is much higher than his, which led him to reluctantly serve under him as a general in the Heavenly Demon Army."

"If we push forward now, considering the romantic entanglement and the grudge over a stolen wife, there's a high chance we could win him over."

"Not necessarily! He initially only wanted to elope with the Rashamon Girl to escape from Zhu Qi, not to rebel against him. Also being a Taishang Demon Son, Zhu Qi's status within the Taishang Demon Sect is extraordinary, he might sense Qi Ye's betrayal in an instant and resort to some Demon Sect Skill to kill him through the void."

"It's possible indeed. Daoist and Buddhist Sects might not sabotage their disciples' Cultivation Techniques, but the Demon Sect might very well do so."

"Qi Ye would also consider this point; his so-called preparation is probably looking to remove any traps inside his own Cultivation Technique. If he's not ready now, he definitely won't agree with us."

Yu Yanshi and the others saw a glimmer of success and did not give up, exchanging ideas and making calculations.

Meanwhile, Tao Qian planned to secretly communicate with Yuan Gong inside the jeweled statue to seek advice again.

However, unexpectedly, Yuan Gong initiated contact first.

"Sly boy, this 'Qi Ye,' the Taishang Demon Son acting as the general for Zhu Qi's Heavenly Demon Army, must have cultivated one of the major scriptures of the Taishang Demon Sect, the 'Chiyou Three Disks Scripture,' known for its expertise in conquest and slaughter, surely countered by anyone who has cultivated the 'Six Desires Heavenly Demon Scripture.'"

"That lad called Zhu Qi has a lower cultivation level, which isn't much of a concern, but his Master, ha, if Qi Ye betrays, he could be killed by the Heavenly Demon Curse from thousands of miles away."

"But resolving this matter is simple. Listen to my advice, young one, retrieve a chapter of the 'All Heavens Secret Demon Scripture Formless Chapter' from the Outer Realm using the Refining Magic, and give it to Qi Ye to cultivate. At the critical moment, it would allow him to shift from being a Taishang Demon Son to a Secret Demon Child, thus fearing no Heavenly Demon Curse."

With every word from Yuan Gong, Tao Qian's eyes shone brighter.

Indeed, the arrangement made by his affordable master could never be useless.

Carrying the Yuan Gong statue was not only for practicing the 'Secret Demon Sacrifice Body Sword Technique' but more importantly, it was due to Yuan Gong's exceptional status and extraordinary experience.

Having an experienced elder was like possessing a treasure!

Tao Qian muttered to himself and replied in secret,

"Master Yuan, this time shouldn't you thank your disciple a bit? Qi Ye is extraordinary, a true disciple of the Taishang Demon Sect commanding hundreds of thousands in the Heavenly Demon Army, effortlessly annihilated that troublesome Western Capital Army, and even defeated the coalition of Western Countries... A truly talented disciple indeed."

"Such a figure, through my intervention, could be swayed to join our Secret Demon Sect, adding a possibility for the revival of the Secret Demon Sect in the future. Master, you certainly must not forget this credit of your disciple."

Having said that, the statue of Yuan Gong in Tao Qian's arms trembled uncontrollably.

Clearly, the old demon of the Secret Demon Sect was also astounded by Tao Qian's audacity.

Fortunately, Tao Qian knew when to stop, aware that Yuan Gong had not yet revealed the method to retrieve the Formless Chapter.

Without the No Skill Sect, Qi Ye could not be persuaded, so how would Tao Qian overcome the calamity in Demon City?

Tao Qian quickly held his tongue but couldn't help asking another question before discussing the plan with Yu Yanshi and the others,

"Master Yuan, you said the Chiyao Three Disks Scripture has a backdoor, does the All Heavens Secret Demon Formless Chapter also have one?"

Chapter 360: Supreme Elder, Primordial Demon Manifestation Saint

"You must really want to ask if there are any traps or tricks in the Secret Demon Sacrifice Body Sword Technique," Yuan Gong said, not even bothering with a questioning tone.

Clearly, after having spent a long time together, this senior had gradually become accustomed to Tao Qian's treacherous nature, and even began to pick up a bit himself.

After saying this, Yuan Gong had no intention of responding further to Tao Qian.

He trembled slightly and then fell silent.

He had thought that Tao Qian would fall into anxiety, constantly speculating and guessing.

Yet upon hearing these words, Tao Qian simply curled his lips and thought to himself, "The old man must be mistaken. Why would I bother cultivating the sword technique if it had a backdoor? The only trick it might have is that once you cultivate this technique, you can't cultivate any other sword techniques. It's like the epitome of trapping a scumbag."

After making his snarky comment, Tao Qian spoke to Yu Yanshi and the others, relaying what Yuan Gong had said.

The group, who had been looking worried, suddenly froze, then expressions of both joy and shock appeared on their faces.

"This is feasible!"

"If we can resolve Yin Qiye's lingering worries and add the Rashamon Girl to the mix, making her betray them shouldn't pose any problem at all."

"The only difficulty is where to find the Formless Chapter of the All Heavens Secret Demon Scripture? It's known that the Secret Demon Sect collapsed many years ago, but I've heard that a Secret Demon Child has recently arrived in Demon City..."

Li Wenyan was speaking when Yu Yanshi suddenly interrupted.

"The matter of the cultivation technique can be handled by Mr. Jin Lin."

"As for the National Salvation Congress, we will give it our all to investigate the movements of the Taishang Demon Sect, the alchemists, Zhang Jiudeng, the Cao Gang, the White Lotus Sect... all these major and minor powers. We aim to uncover all of Prince Zhao, Zhu Qi's plans as soon as possible to prevent being caught off guard by whatever he initiates three days from now."

Having said this, Yu Yanshi still had a furrowed brow, evidently pondering another difficult issue.

He didn't try to hide his concerns and turned to speak to Tao Qian again.

"To stop Prince Zhao, Zhu Qi from unleashing a disaster that would spell doom for countless lives, the National Salvation Congress has an undeniable responsibility."

"However, you should also know that we are still in the preparation phase and don't have many powerful cultivators stationed with us."

"If my master and Uncle Copper Tripod Immortal were in Demon City, dealing with all these powers would be somewhat difficult, but thwarting their conspiracies and even snatching away the 'Mountain and River Map' would not be impossible."

"Unfortunately, as it stands, only Uncle Tianjiang Immortal provides any defense within the Demon City, as my master Weng Zhong Immortal and Copper Tripod Immortal have recently ventured to a secret site to retrieve some relics of our sect and won't be able to return to Demon City anytime soon."

After Yu Yanshi finished speaking, not only Tao Qian but also Shi Yingqiong and the others showed grave expressions.

The optimistic light in their eyes gradually dimmed.

Especially for Tao Qian, who had lured the National Salvation Congress into this calamity; naturally, he could not rely on the likes of Yu Yanshi and his fellow cultivators who could not even defeat him.

The Three Immortals of the Great Wilderness!

These three powerful entities, likely related to the Primordial Sect and whose cultivation had reached the Ultimate Happiness Realm, were Tao Qian's real targets.

"What should we do now? On the day Zhu Qi cultivates the 'Mountain and River Map,' the Supreme Elder of the Taishang Demon Sect, rumored to be both his master and his father, will surely appear."

"The rumor has it that this person is immensely powerful, considered one of the very top within the Ultimate Happiness Realm, capable of handling three or four regular cultivators of the same realm... Uncle Tianjiang Immortal himself admitted that he is no match for the Ninth Prince's master in single combat."

"This is expected, as the Ultimate Happiness Realm has three stages. Uncle Tianjiang Immortal seems to be in the middle stage, while the master of the Ninth Prince has reached the Great Perfection, and given his terrifying origins, taking on three at once is not an exaggeration..."

"Apart from the Taishang Demon Sect, there is also the enigmatic 'One of the Saint Heirs of the Alchemists, Huang Chong'. The organization is truly peculiar, and no one can predict the extent of their abilities."

"High-level combatants are extremely rare, but sometimes just one can completely change the tide of battle."

The conversation among them was quite disheartening.

But including Tao Qian, they all understood that this is the harsh reality.

Zhu Qi's grand scheme was actually not complex, but what made it difficult and despairing was:

Each of his moves was almost a transparent stratagem.

Even if you knew about it, there was nothing you could do and no way to stop it.

Not to mention the high-end combat power that could sweep the field, aside from anything else, even the legendary Supreme Elder of the Taishang Demon Sect alone was enough to match the entire Three Immortals of the Great Wilderness.

The lethal issue was, the Three Immortals of the Great Wilderness were not yet complete.

Tao Qian had no doubt about the validity of Yu Yanshi's words, as he had previously investigated Yu Yanshi's background and vaguely guessed that those two seniors might have gone to retrieve some Primordial Sect's legacy items.

But as a result, even though Tao Qian's plan wasn't fully ruined, it nevertheless missed the mark by half.

After all, just "Uncle Tianjiang Immortal" was not enough.

With a furrowed brow and clarity in his heart, he thought:

"I knew it couldn't be so easy for me to simply get through this disaster. Here comes the complication right on cue."

"When passing through Demon City before, the Returning Immortal Realm once mentioned: Zhu Qi's beast of a master and my teacher, Master Duobao, were sworn enemies for many years."

"Although my master is notoriously lazy, to the extent that he probably wouldn't even bother to step outside to chop down his so-called mortal enemy, the strength of that Supreme Elder from the Taishang Demon Sect, who can still live so comfortably under such pressure, is evident," Tao Qian mused.

"I'm currently scheming against his beloved disciple, who might turn out to be an illegitimate child. When the day comes that he rushes back, wouldn't he be able to crush me to death in an instant?"

"No, this won't do, I need to figure out a way to deal with this high-level battle power that I can hardly overcome."

"Could it be that in the end, I still need to go back to the sect for reinforcements?"

Having pondered to this point, Tao Qian temporarily suppressed his chaotic thoughts.

With a wave of his sleeve, he once again retrieved the Rashamon Girl back into the Holy Embryo Bag.

Afterward, he said to Yu Yanshi and the others:

"This woman, as well as the Formless Chapter of the All Heavens Secret Demon Scripture, I can handle myself. However, as for the matter of making contact with Yin Qiye, I must impose upon you all as I'm currently not in a position to interact with anyone from Zhu Qi's camp."

"Just use the name of the National Salvation Congress to seek him out, without mentioning Zhu Qi's conspiracy. That way, we won't startle the snake... Once you have a result, notify me. I will then send the girl and the cultivation technique over. As long as Yin Qiye accepts the girl and cultivates the Formless Chapter, the millions of disaster victims on the outskirts of Demon City will have no worry for their lives."

"Good, this plan is foolproof."

Knowing the secrets Tao Qian possessed, Yu Yanshi fully complied with his suggestions.

The two parties separated at the Xianheng Hotel and began to implement their respective plans.

...

Tao Qian swiftly returned to Zhang Mansion but didn't immediately concentrate and meditate to use the Refining Magic brought from the Outer Realm as instructed by Yuan Gong.

Instead, he took out the Yuan Gong Statue, bowed earnestly, and respectfully asked:

"Teacher Yuan Gong, when I was first led by my master with three Immortal Treasures to enter the sect, I passed through Demon City, and the Returning Immortal Realm once said: Zhu Qi's master is an Old Demon who resides here year-round, and is also a mortal enemy of my master."

"That Old Demon having the qualifications to be an enemy of my master suggests that his cultivation and methods are extraordinary. Now that I'm planning to harm his disciple, could Teacher please tell me all the details about this person?"

Perhaps the respectful address of "Teacher" did its magic, as Tao Qian finished speaking, the red smoke wafted out again.

Yuan Gong reappeared, looking at Tao Qian as if still holding a grudge, and somewhat taking joy in his misfortune, said:

"I saw you plotting against others with such confidence earlier, I thought you already had a brilliant plan to deal with that person."

"But to think about sharpening your weapon and praying to Buddha only when you're on the battlefield, how could that be of any use?"

"Teacher, this person, Yin Qiye..."

"Alright, alright, you're really tiresome."

Cut off by Tao Qian's words, Yuan Gong eventually started speaking, revealing the information Tao Qian wanted to know.

"The elder of the Taishang Demon Sect, who also dominates Demon City, and is the mortal enemy of that fellow Duobao, is undoubtedly Lingwa."

"As far as I know, since the Taishang Demon Sect lost its supreme treasure, it's still listed as a Major Sect of the Demon Path because of its profound heritage, but it often gets bullied by the Evil Sect, the Demon Buddha Temple, and a few other factions, and didn't have many standout individuals within the sect."

"Lingwa can be considered a strong person."

"Though he's somewhat shameless, his master gave him the title 'Primordial Demon True Monarch,' which he wasn't satisfied with. As soon as his master died, he gave himself the title 'Taishang Primordial Demon Manifestation Saint True Monarch,' not worrying about others laughing their heads off."

"Ridiculous as he may seem, his combat ability is indeed quite formidable. He practices the Six Desires Heavenly Demon Scripture, and is cunning and good at stirring up the desires in others' hearts, making him difficult to guard against... Unfortunately, he encountered a destroyer like Duobao, who has refined the Spirit Treasure Sky Displaying Skill to the point of surpassing the Spirit Treasure Sect Master."

"I've heard that in his early years, when he was treasure hunting in ancient relics, he clashed with your master Duobao and since then they have been enemies. He challenged Duobao multiple times, only to be defeated, battle after battle, defeat after defeat, so much so that Duobao gained fame at his

expense, earning the title 'Heavenly Demon Slayer,' and utterly disgracing our intermediaries in the Demon Path."

"Hmph, when my Secret Demon Sect was surrounded back then, he showed up as well, and Duobao, like a shadow behind, also showed up and ran away after suffering a hit from my Demon Cleansing."

Being Yuan Gong, he revealed the gossip and history of several powerful individuals in just a few words, along with some background information on Zhu Qi's master.

Taishang Primordial Demon Manifestation Saint True Monarch!

Good lord, such a long Daoist title; clearly, not someone easy to provoke.

As Tao Qian made his comment, Yuan Gong continued explaining.

He seemed unaware that he was gradually fitting into the role of a "Portable Grandfather," unable to extricate himself.

"The Primordial Demon Son, just like your master, surely has a great chance to advance to the Daoist Transformation Realm but never tries to do so, probably fearing the horrid Daoist Transformation Tribulation, worried that he might lose even the chance to reincarnate and cultivate again."

"Of course, even so, he's not someone you slick youngsters can deal with."

"Without saying anything else, if he notices you, even from tens of thousands of miles away, he can slay you with just a thought."

"If he finds out you're a direct disciple of Duobao, heh, you won't immediately die. Lingwa has a pettier mind than a needle's eye, given his grudge against Duobao, he will definitely capture you, torture you horribly, then use you as bait at the right moment to kill Duobao too."

"Eh? Speaking of scheming, among my peers, apart from that baldy from the Great Reincarnation Temple, no one can hold a candle to Duobao. He must be able to predict this encounter himself."

"How could Duobao willingly let you roam under the eyes of a mortal enemy...?"

As Yuan Gong muttered, he seemed to suddenly realize something.

Suddenly looking around, he then said with certainty: "Duobao, Duobao, stop hiding. Come out, your precious disciple is about to be captured and tortured by nLingwa."